

The Revolutionary Concept of Strategy

The U.S. is set on a path of empire building to maximize profits for the capitalist class at the expense of the masses' sweat and blood worldwide. To achieve maximum exploitation, capital must increase and maximize its control of the lives of the workers. The struggle is becoming one of survival of one class or the other.

How do we stop the avalanche of attacks on our daily lives – on our standard of living or civil rights? How do we insure a future for humanity – free of wars, free of hunger and persecution, free of terror. Answering these questions in the interests of our class requires strategy. Strategy is a carefully devised plan of action to achieve a goal within a particular stage of the revolutionary process.

The League of Revolutionaries for a New America's understanding of strategy is derived from historical revolutionary experience. "Strategy," Vladimir Lenin wrote in *State and Revolution*, "is defined as the determination of the direction of the main blow of the proletariat at a given stage of the revolution, the elaboration of the corresponding plan for the disposition of the revolutionary forces . . . and the fight to carry out this plan throughout the given stage of the revolution."

Revolutionaries rely on this understanding to draft a plan of action. They begin with an assessment in order to define the direction of the main blow. An assessment measures the strength of the contending forces – those of the workers' and those of capital – and the environment in which they operate. From this, revolutionaries can determine where to concentrate forces in order to achieve the end result.

Today, any assessment has to take into account the qualitative changes in the means of production. Production with electronics qualitatively replaces labor and creates a world market. In the creation of a world market, national corporations become multinational, multinationals become transnational, and transnational corporations become supranational. The national state transforms from an imperialist welfare state based on bribery, to a market state based on legal and extralegal violence to protect domestic and supranational capital. Supranational corporations blend into and become part of the national states. The emergence and merging of the economic and political struggles express the social and economic revolutions taking place in the objective arena. There is no resolution but the abolition of private

property and its transformation into public property.

These world historic changes have not benefited worker and capitalist equally. The widening gap between rich and poor is laying bare the antagonisms of an economic system in which the bottom line is profit at any cost. This is causing the mass dislocation of workers everywhere. This year, *Forbes* reported that there are 793 billionaires worldwide whose collective value is \$2.6 trillion. The U.S. is leading the pack with more than half of those billionaires whose collective value is almost half of the \$2.6 trillion. Meanwhile, millions throughout the world live on less than \$2 a day.

With electronics introduced in the production process, the basis of capitalism – the buying and selling of labor power – slowly erodes, creating a new class at least partly outside the capitalist system. These displaced workers must increasingly fight the capitalist system to survive. It is this new class of dispossessed workers that is emerging as the social vanguard in the fight for the necessities of life against the corporate state power. "You have nothing to lose but your chains" accurately reflects the content of today's times.

Poverty never made a revolution. As long as the workers remain tied ideologically and politically to the capitalists, they will never be able to achieve their goals of a peaceful and stable life. Historically, the strength of capital has relied in the support given by the masses. This support is based on bribery. Bribery is based on national imperialism. As the foundation for this bribery crumbles, openings appear for politicizing the masses about their class interests.

The breaking of the connection between the workers and the capitalists – already a reality in the economic sphere – must be mirrored in the ideological, and ultimately, the political sphere. Nothing can move forward until a broad section of the masses understand this, and a section, at least, is prepared to break with the interests of the capitalists and organize themselves politically in accordance with their class interests.

As a result, the strategy of the League is to politicize the masses, and to supply the emerging revolutionaries who are fighting around the practical demands of the class with the political propaganda and education that will round out their fight. The League conveys an understanding of the roots of the problem, brings ever to the fore the

class interests at stake, and disseminates a vision of what is possible and its strategy to achieve that vision.

But we still need to determine the main blow. Transformation proceeds through polarization and destruction. As the connections that have held society together start to unravel, the opportunity for real change presents itself. Once polarization begins, revolutionaries do not attempt to hold it back, but work in such a way as to throw their blow at the middle. In this way, they assist in breaking the process free of its confines, making transformation possible.

What's important here is the word direction. For example, do we spend time and resources on throwing the main blow at President Bush & Co. or at the Democrats? It is becoming clear to a growing number of revolutionaries that they will not be able to free themselves from their political enemy by "fighting the right," but instead have to throw their blow at the middle, the Democratic Party. It is this middle that ties the workers to their enemy and makes them politically impotent, and ties them by a thousand threads to the "right" making them incapable of fighting for their interests.

We throw the blow at the middle in such a way that we teach the class that they form a class with interests separate and independent from those of the capitalists. At every opportunity, the League hammers at this point. Without this independent class thinking, the workers will fall prey to the so-called leaders

who claim to represent their interests, but whose leadership intends only to make the corporations wealthier and leave the capitalists' political power untouched.

The League's mission is designed to accomplish its strategy: "Tens of thousands of socially conscious people declare themselves revolutionaries in opposition to the degenerating social and economic conditions. The League's mission is to unite these scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate and win them over to the cooperative, communist resolution of the problem." (Program, League of Revolutionaries for a New America, 2007)

Every day, events confirm the correctness of this mission. Revolutionaries are surging forward from the rubble that Hurricane Katrina left behind, from the ghost towns where steel mills and auto plants once roared with fire, from the peace movement and from the fight to make our government respect everyone's civil rights.

It is in these struggles and more that our members are building an organization of revolutionaries. It is here that the League has staked out its future – with these revolutionaries who hold dear the program of the new class – for peace and the eradication of poverty from the planet. It is here that we introduce into the struggle the class consciousness of who is the enemy, what is the solution to

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Prepare Now for the Battles Ahead

Political Report of the Standing Committee of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, December 2007

The outlines of political polarization are coming into focus. These beginning phases of political polarization frame our tasks, our work, and our policy. The League stands on its firm grasp of the content of the time to continually assess the particular stages of the revolutionary process. We do this in order to deliberate politically – to identify what to prioritize and where to concentrate, and the specific political and organizational steps that will advance us toward our mission and our vision.

The foundation for the political polarization we are heading for is very different from past periods. The polarization

leading up to the Civil War, for example, was based on a split within the capitalist class. It was a period when the capitalist system was expanding and the social connections, particularly between the workers and the capitalists, were strengthened. Today, we see that labor-replacing technology is destroying value, the very foundation of capitalism. Profound social destruction follows in its wake, breaking the connection (in production and society) between the capitalists and the workers. Antagonism and destruction – this is the foundation for the political polarization for which we are preparing.

The ruling class must guarantee that private property is protected at all costs. Our class must abolish private property and replace it with public property. The League presents the resolution of the problem, the necessity for political power to implement that resolution, and a strategy for achieving that. Everything we do follows from that resolution and that strategy.

POLITICAL POLARIZATION: WHY IT IS IMPORTANT

Polarization is the process of opposing poles being wrenched apart, destroying what held them together and made them what they were. As the relations that developed on the old material basis are torn apart, the opportunity arises to propagandize for and fight to establish new relations. Production without labor calls for distribution without money. This process begins as part of a leap, with the introduction of a new quality. It is only under such conditions that transformation is possible.

Faced with the fraying bonds that once held it together, all of society is pulled into the struggle to reconstitute society on the basis of the new means of production. Political polarization is the wrenching apart of the poles that formerly held together the quality they made up. The poles then confront each other externally (rather than within their former connection) and fight it out politically (and/or militarily) as external entities. Polarization in society is the result of polarization in the economy. As the society polarizes, the factions turn against one another. A process of destruction of the old order takes place and a new process emerges from this struggle and destruction. The culmination of this process is the class struggle for political power. It depends upon the conscious and deliberate action of one class against another – and more specifically, the action of one class against the political authority of another class, that is, against the state. This requires that each side fully understand its class interests and goals.

Political polarization is a process and proceeds through stages. It rests on and

eventually follows the stages of development of economic and social processes. The volatile and increasingly dangerous international situation is the overall context in which the political polarization will progress. War, geopolitical shifts, economic collapse, and the destruction of social institutions (including the two-party system) are shaping and accelerating the process.

Inevitably, people react on the basis of the world as it was, not what it is becoming. They seek ways to intellectually understand what they face. All kinds of forces struggle to determine the direction society should go. Step by step, the interplay of objective conditions and the battle for the minds of the class develop to a point where neither the ruling class nor the working class can live in the old way. A revolutionary situation then begins to mature. Objective factors create the possibilities, but without the proper intellectual, ideological and political understanding our class will fail in its attempts to transform society in its interests.

LOOK TO THE FUTURE

At this stage, the struggle is not presenting itself in pure class forms, but as a social struggle over the distribution of the necessities of life. All sectors of society are involved. It is a social motion in response to the massive destruction brought on by the changes in the economy, made worse by the ongoing transformation of the state, war, and the dismantling of social programs. The new class develops within this motion. The social struggle is the environment in which to prepare for political struggle.

The economic and social polarization is quite advanced. The destruction of value taking place in the real estate market and the effect that will have on the financial system is accelerating the polarization of wealth. We can anticipate a corresponding social response. The workers have little understanding of the meaning of the conditions they face or the significance of their historical role, but are beginning to find ways to carry on a fight against the eroding material conditions. It is in this environment we can make some headway in building an organization of revolutionaries by educating the people about their real interests – so that the social and political process is in line with and reflects the economic process.

The confusion that exists in the minds of the people should not distract us from the advances that have occurred or the possibilities and dangers that the situation presents. The general discontent, the disillusionment with the two political parties, the anti-capitalist sentiments arising in some sectors, are all impulses

the organization can rely on to break the people's reliance on the "leaders" the capitalists have chosen for us. Even the susceptibility to misdirection, populism, and agitation for a fascist movement can be seen as evidence of possibilities. People are looking for answers, and it is clear that they turn to what is available – religion (or at least the church) and fascism (or at least populism).

The resolution of society's problems requires more than an intensification of the social struggle.

Our tactic is to break the hold the Democratic Party has on the workers, keeping them dependent upon the capitalists. This is why our focus is to throw the blow at the middle. In this context, our tactic is to free the thinking of the revolutionaries from the ideological constraints imposed by the enemy class. Articulating a program that solves the problems of society is a first step in the political development of the new class. The committee system, the development of the press of the movement, and all the efforts to break out of our self-containment are designed for this moment. We have to be in position amongst the people in order to win them away from capitalism and to a system of social cooperation.

TASKS OF THE LEAGUE

We are reorganizing the League so we can disperse into the social struggle and make contact with the revolutionaries. We have an understanding of the problem, a strategy to resolve it and a mission that guides us. But this is just the beginning. We have to disperse with clarity of purpose, armed with specific assessments in each area of what it will take to properly introduce a class program into the social struggle, a plan for doing so, and a style of work that allows us to connect to the various networks of revolutionaries. It means using our political tactics and propaganda to push the process along. To do this, we need an accurate assessment of the mood of the people and what they are thinking. A system of ongoing education and consolidation is key to preparing the revolutionaries in the League to carry out the program.

Propaganda is our connection to the revolutionaries. Political polarization cannot develop as long as workers continue to think like their enemy. Our program clearly states our mission. Every committee is responsible to carry out that mission. The work of every individual and collective has to reflect our understanding of the objectivity of what is happening, and to act on that.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Rally
to bring back together and put in
a state of order, as retreating
troops [to return to attack]

Comrade
a person with whom one is allied
in a struggle
or cause

In this period of growing motion and developing polarization, *Rally, Comrades!* provides a strategic outlook for the revolutionaries by indicating and illuminating the line of march of the revolutionary process. It presents a pole of scientific clarity to the conscious revolutionaries, examines and analyzes the real problems of the revolutionary movement, and draws political conclusions for the tasks of revolutionaries at each stage of development in order to prepare for future stages.

It is a vehicle to reach out and communicate with revolutionaries both within the League and outside of the League to engage them in debate and discussion and to provide a forum for these discussions. Articles represent the position and policies of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America.

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Elections 2008: Fight for the Program of Our Class

*From the Standing Committee,
League of Revolutionaries for a New America*

The Presidential race is proving to be volatile and unpredictable with a growing number of Americans becoming increasingly dissatisfied with capitalist politics. Among some, there is an increasing awareness that people need to move to political independence from the capitalist class. There are those who do not see Democrats as the answer, but feel they have no other option in the electoral arena but to fight for whatever concessions they can get. They feel they have no choice but to support the “lesser of two evils” in order to make some difference or to eke out some small relief. But no matter where people fall in their discontent with politics today, most are not exactly sure what to do about it.

This presents revolutionaries with the opportunity to explain the growing polarization and its economic roots, and to present a resolution to the problems people face. As discontent begins to be expressed and people are pulled into political motion, the electoral process is creating the opportunity to break the

ideological and political connections that tie the workers to the capitalists.

Revolutionaries understand that the capitalist system cannot deliver the things people need. Corporations use the global competition between workers, widespread financial speculation and the replacement of human labor through automation and robotics to maximize profits. Society as we have known it is being destroyed. The state apparatus is being restructured to further the interests of the corporations, to guarantee the police occupation of our communities, and to facilitate the domination of the U.S. military throughout the world. Further economic, and thus, political and social polarization, and the growing threat of fascism are the results.

The billion-dollar hype around the presidential campaigns energizes people, but the capitalists seek only to harness and control the building political motion and legitimize their rule. Differences between the candidates are tactical only. Their success or failure is a means of determining what the American people will accept. On one side, there is the carrot of “progressive” De-

mocrats and populist platitudes, and on the other, is the stick of fear of a far-right victory. Both work together to tie the workers to the ruling class.

In this time of social destruction and unraveling, a new class is emerging. This new class consists of part-time and contingent workers struggling to make ends meet, as well as, the structurally unemployed and the absolutely destitute workers sleeping on the streets each night. Dispossessed, this new class is locked in a life and death struggle for survival.

The fights for homes for everyone, universal healthcare, quality education, living-wage jobs, disaster protection and relief, clean water and air, to name a few, are all needs the new class is demanding and fighting for everyday, not just during election season, but every season; not just on election day, but every day. The anger at the new reality and a tremendous distrust of corporations is building around the country, providing an opportunity to raise the agenda of the new class and to educate people about the possibility of building a communist society.

Our allegiance is to our class, not to

any particular candidate or ruling class party. Revolutionaries fight for the needs and agenda of our class, and the elections provide us with an opportunity to bring the demands of the class to those fighting in the electoral arena. People will vote their consciences, but the real fight is larger and long term. Key to this fight is to develop among people a strategic perspective that operates before, during, and after the elections. The first step along this strategic path is to unite the scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the practical demands of the new class, and to educate them and win them over to a cooperative, communist solution to the problem.

Editorial: To Think and Act Anew

“The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

*Abraham Lincoln,
Second Annual Message,
December 1862*

In this, his speech announcing his reasons for issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, President Abraham Lincoln acknowledged the essential ingredient of the mind in winning a war. Hard pressed by critics, sabotage, and a succession of military losses, Lincoln understood that just as the millions of enslaved were the Confederacy’s strength, so were they its Achilles heel. If the Union was to have a chance at victory, thinking had to be aligned with reality.

The LRNA Standing Committee report, “Prepare Now for the Battles Ahead,” shows both the opportunity and dangers in the current situation. The ongoing polarization in society will inevitably make itself felt within the political realm. In fact, we see the beginnings of this everywhere and across the political spectrum.

Polarization is the prelude to transfor-

mation. There is nothing pre-determined about the outcome. Where we end up depends on people’s understanding of the reasons for the problems they face, on their taking up a resolution that conforms to the possibilities, and on strategy and tactics that are designed to turn those possibilities into reality. Revolutionaries do not try to hold back the polarization, but work everywhere and always toward the goal of separating the workers intellectually and politically from the control of the capitalist class.

This is a huge task, and cannot be done without a clear understanding and application of strategy. The article, “The Revolutionary Concept of Strategy,” outlines this strategic perspective and details the methodology of approaching the work. By making an assessment of the objective conditions and the contending forces, we can see the opportunities, as well as the problems we face. We use the assessment to determine the direction of the main blow. The growing polarization dictates that we throw our blow at the middle – politically, this means the Democratic Party – and by doing so, begin to free our class to form itself according to its own class interests.

It is not enough however, for the old class connections to be broken. New

bonds must form; a new unity must be created. The common economic plight of the dispossessed of all colors is the basis for this unity. “African American Question Takes on New Meaning” untangles these issues of race and class, and shows how unity across the color line is not only objectively possible under today’s conditions, but is indispensable to the formation of the new class. Racial isolation is not the goal of the attack against the black masses today, but the growing reaction is directed at preventing the political unity of the emerging new class of dispossessed, regardless of color.

The American people are crying out for change; with few alternatives they can only gravitate toward the “change” the ruling class proposes. From different angles and perspectives, the goal of all the candidates of the main parties is to bring the American people into line with the solutions that protect private property and allow the corporations free rein to maximize profit.

The statement from the League’s Standing Committee “Elections 2008” calls on revolutionaries to take advantage of every opportunity during the months ahead to challenge the capitalists on their program, and to provide an alternative vision to the American peo-

ple. In doing this, we can carry out our mission of uniting the scattered revolutionaries on the basis of the demands of the new class, to educate them and win them over to the cooperative communist resolution of the problem. The article, “Health Care Today” submitted by the LRNA Committee on Health Care, speaks not only to revolutionaries in the health care movement, but provides an excellent example of how revolutionaries can approach this task. It speaks directly to revolutionaries within the movement for health care, but its perspective and method will be useful to others, regardless of their areas of work.

As we go to press, the primaries are just beginning to get underway. The articles in this issue show us that we are not simply facing politics as usual. Danger and opportunity come hand in hand. In the coming months we should always remember what is at stake, and as we do, think of Lincoln’s call to, “disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.”

ONLINE AT WWW.RALLYCOMRADES.NET

Health Care Today: Human Rights for All vs Profit Rights for the Few

*Committee on Health Care,
League of Revolutionaries for a New America*

The Democratic Party, after turning its back on majority sentiment on the Iraq war, is focusing on the nation's health care crisis in the 2008 Presidential election. It's a high-wire act. How can the Party appear to promote universal health care while reducing what little government responsibility still exists, and protect the needs of capital in health care reform?

The pressure is on. Once a battle over policy, the lack of health care is igniting a class struggle for survival. More and more, people understand that health care needs to be a guaranteed human right and that securing universal health care with a single-payer system – one which replaces multiple private insurance company payers – will advance this fight.

For a class increasingly made up of part-time, contingency, undocumented and low-wage workers with limited or no benefits, as well as unemployed, disabled and retired workers whose rights to employment-based health care have been destroyed, ensuring a conscious fight for class unity is a critical responsibility of revolutionaries. Furthermore, re-framing what is truly politically possible allows us to break through a politics of compromise, where compromise is no longer possible.

The historical role of health care under capitalism, to produce and reproduce a work force capable of commodity production, is changing. Since the late 1800s, health provision in the U.S. has been part of an industrial social contract, a privately negotiated relationship between workers and capitalists. Over the years, those with well-paying jobs had premium employer-based benefits, the elderly and disabled got Medicare, the poor got Medicaid, others got charity care at public hospitals, and some of us received no care at all.

Today, fewer workers are needed for production in a society where the tools of production are computers, robots and electronics. Where labor is needed, workers are forced to compete in a global labor market. To increase the rate of exploitation, workers are stripped of benefits like health care and pensions and wages are pushed to the minimum. Workers' health care is increasingly expendable, and increasingly exists only as a commodity to satisfy capital's frantic need to expand and speculate in the pursuit of maximum profits.

What we have accepted as unrelated components of health care provision are now beginning to be seen for what they are – as parts of one system. In a period when a large section of the working

class either held industrial jobs or jobs in spin-off industries and government service, a tiered system of distribution seemed to work for most of us. We are witnessing the destruction of this system, laying the basis for the awareness with common working class interests as a politically practical goal.

Health care agreements in the recent United Auto Worker (UAW) contracts are a prime example of a union-management restructuring that signals the beginning of the end of employer-based health care provision. General Motors/UAW negotiations create VEBA (Voluntary Employee Beneficiary Associations) which allow automakers to unload their retiree health care obligation on to workers and their union. When a Communication Workers of America agreement did the same thing a few years ago, retiree out-of-pocket health care costs increased from \$43 a month to \$690 a month. Such agreements put an end to corporate responsibility, while guaranteeing that workers' money and savings continue to move through insurers to banks and the stock market.

At the other end of the health care spectrum, public health care is being systematically destroyed. The extraction of profit from public health insurance hastens closures such as the King-Drew Hospital in Los Angeles. Charity Hospital in Louisiana, damaged but reparable after the Katrina disaster, has been permanently closed, while plans to subsidize the local purchase of private insurance continue. Atlanta's 113-year-old Grady Hospital will be shuttered or forced into a corporate governance plan authored by the Georgia Chamber of Commerce. Nationally, tax money used to support Medicaid is being channeled through private managed care corporations that make profit by restricting access to care. In the past, public health was an important part of the social safety net. Now looting of public institutions for capital is so important that even total destruction of the system seems warranted. Working people who have relied on these institutions, for jobs and for care, are increasingly out of luck.

Workers who used to experience different interests in health reform now have increasingly common interests. Some of these may be new generations of autoworkers who, because of other provisions in the new agreements, will labor under new, poorly-paid conditions. With high health premiums, and no pensions or retiree health care, the ruling class has made formerly high wage jobs into Wal-Mart jobs. Uninsured workers in large corporations rose from 7 percent in 1987 to over 11 percent in 2001. Those of us with job-based

health insurance have seen our premiums increase almost 60 percent in six years, reflected in the number of uninsured, which has exploded to over 47 million people.

The reality is that we are moving into a period when the fight over health care provision, like the distribution of other basic needs, is moving out of the arena of bourgeois policy negotiations, and into the arena of a political fight based on class interests.

Politicians tell us to be pragmatic, to get what we can or build on what already exists. But the health care system is being destroyed – there is nothing to build on. In fact, instead of meeting societal needs, both sides of the aisle promote proposals for one or another form of individual mandates to buy private insurance. This is a dead end political strategy, forcing individuals to buy private insurance while leaving a multi-tiered system of corporate health care intact and doing nothing to curb the corporate appetite for profits.

Consumer Driven Health Plans or Health Savings Accounts (HSAs), promoted more often by Republicans, also based on individual responsibility, give speculative capital direct access to workers health savings. Banks, insurance companies, credit unions, and money management firms are salivating at the prospect of making billions of dollars in the form of fees, investments and charges for debit cards each time a patient sees a doctor, gets a procedure or goes to the hospital.

For over twenty years, national health insurance has been the moral demand of a relatively small section of health policy activists. It is now the demand of millions of people, and leaders in this fight for reform are learning step by step that a broad social movement, not simply an alliance for legislative reform, is needed to win a fight for health care reform. By attempting to legislate some form of increased individual responsibility, both Democratic and Republican proposals are intended to stave off a political threat to bourgeois leadership.

As revolutionaries in the movement for health care, we play a key role in the fight. In a world economy dominated by speculative capital, achieving universal health care means a head on challenge to the system of profit and private ownership of the necessities of life. The introduction of new ideas that flow from an understanding not only of the current stage of the battle, but from a strategic understanding of the march of history, is the critical ingredient for creating a new politics of the possible.

Corporate profits and privatization have become sacred cows, and government run medicine the bogeyman. U.S. workers were told, "What is good for

GM is good for you". In truth, corporations run the country through their control of the government. Although most Americans see Medicare as an entitlement, fear of socialized medicine has kept our interests in government's responsibility for health care off the table. New realities have put it back on.

Some also believe that unity of the trade unions or the Democratic Party, rather than the working class as a whole, will achieve reform. In 1994, a California ballot measure for single payer health care failed largely because many voters, despite all facts to the contrary, were persuaded that immigrant workers, particularly those without legal documents, were responsible for the high cost of health care. Labor unity is essential, but that unity must be based on fighting in the interest of the entire working class.

Based in a history of slavery, genocide and the theft of native and Mexican lands, the capitalists' manipulation of inequality is our Achilles heel as a working class. This legacy has been expressed through a multi-tiered system of health care. Today most of us have worse or no health care than in 1994. Those of us who could rely on high quality insurance can no longer do so. Calls to exclude any of us from health care in this country, including undocumented immigrant workers, will doom the class struggle to achieve health care as a right for all.

The delivery of universal health care at one single high standard of care is incompatible with the realities of world capitalism today. At the same time, the very technology, knowledge and global relations that have rendered health care a scarcity for so many, actually sets the basis for such delivery. As workers come to understand that reality, challenging the profits of all corporations will lead many to question the private ownership of the public necessities of life. Revolutionaries not only have a responsibility to make this process conscious, but it is also the only practical politics for this time.

A movement demanding universal, single payer health care will increasingly come up against the needs of global capital. Revolutionaries participate in all forms of this struggle, within and outside the legislative arena, exposing lies and leading with new ideas about what is truly politically necessary and possible. As the possibility of health care for all is grasped, much more than national health care will be on the table.

Members of the LRNA Committee on Health Care are active throughout the country in the movement for health care. Email rally@lrna.org for more information.

African American Question Takes on New Meaning

Black History Month 2008 finds the African Americans, indeed the American masses, facing a grim and uncertain future. As in the past, we will examine the condition of the African Americans and project what their situation means for the country as a whole.

First of all, we can no longer speak of the African Americans as a "people." A nation has been defined as an historically evolved community of language, economic life, culture and territory. Communities with at least one of these attributes are generally referred to as a "people", such as, the Jewish people. Slavery, and especially post-Civil War segregation, set the conditions for the consolidation of the African Americans as a people. No matter which economic class they belonged to, they faced a common oppression, were forced to live in common segregated areas, and evolved a strong common culture. The elimination of de jure segregation allowed the black elite to leave the segregated areas, and work their way into the general American elite. To a lesser degree, this also applied to the growing ranks of black professionals, and even to a section of the upper strata of the black workers.

This dispersal of the African Americans into the various economic classes marked the beginning of the end of their cohesion as a community or people. Objectively, they no longer have anything in common. They have no common political goals, no common religion or social vision. The black upper strata are wasting no time distancing themselves from the poverty stricken mass. A change in the economic situation always brings about change in political outlook. Recently, The Los Angeles Times reported that a study by the Pew Research Center found "a majority of black Americans blame individual failings – not racial prejudice – for the lack of economic progress by lower-income African Americans" – a significant change in attitudes from the early 1990s."

There has always been a debate about how to characterize the African American question. Given such fundamental economic, social, and ideological changes in the black community, how do we describe it? Is the question one of class, caste, race, or nation? The reality is that this complex question has always held elements of each of these categories. Changes in the social, economic, or political environment bring different elements to the front. As an educated, economically stable black elite and upper middle class have moved into mainstream America, historical ties are being loosened. They become simply Americans who are black. This forces the caste element to take on new significance for the lower class that remains

locked in the "ghetto." Black History month demands we examine their condition – not simply point to the CEO's, the professors, and the generals, the black elite who have made it within the system.

Despite the dramatic breakthroughs by the black elite, the lower social strata is economically stuck and cannot move without fundamental changes in the entire social and economic system.

The masses of blacks suffer profoundly and disproportionately from disease and poverty. Black adults have a mortality rate of 30 percent to 40 percent higher than whites. Black men live approximately seven years less than other racial groups, and have higher death rates for all leading causes of death. Among black women between 25 and 34, AIDS is now the leading cause of death. Children are even more vulnerable. Infant mortality among blacks is higher even than some third world countries, and black teens have mortality rates 10 times that of whites, with homicide being their leading cause of death.

Poor health is tied to poverty. What is their economic condition? During the month of June last year, 360,000 workers lost their jobs. Almost half of them were black, an indication of the fragile condition of their economic "advances." While white unemployment inched up from 5.4 percent in May 2007 to 5.5 percent in June, black unemployment, already in double digits, rose from 10.8 percent to 11.8 percent in the same month (i.e., 10 times the increase in the white unemployment rate). In September 2007, the Department of Labor reported that forty percent of black teenagers were unemployed, nearly twice the rate for white teens. A study by the Economic Policy Institute found that the median net worth of black households is one-tenth of that of white households – \$11,800 for blacks compared to \$118,000 for whites.

Overall, about ten million African Americans (or 33 percent) fit the Census Department's definition of "poor." Statistics show what everyone knows – that the poor are getting poorer; that the 33% of African Americans who are poor are much poorer than they were twenty years ago.

What do the black masses face politically? The great migrations from South to North and from farm to city created the black urban population density that became the foundation for the rise of "Black Power" in the 1960s that restructured race relations in the country. Today that foundation is in jeopardy. A black urban political elite emerged that delivered limited reforms as a means for controlling the masses of blacks. Gentrification of the inner city, sky high rents and housing costs have generated an unprecedented "black flight." According to

U.S. Census Bureau figures released in September 2007, major cities throughout the country, such as, Chicago, Houston, San Diego, and San Francisco have experienced dramatic drops in their black populations. After years with a black and Hispanic majority, Boston once again became majority white in 2006.

A reactionary offensive, inconceivable a few years ago, is gaining momentum in the wake of these economic, social, political, and demographic changes. Past gains are now being encroached upon, as seen in the recent Supreme Court decisions against school integration. It hardly needs to be added that the spate of lynch law nooses appearing in public places is a chilling reminder that the lynchings that went from mob violence to police murder can be recalled to control the increasingly restless black poor.

Are we facing the kind of reactionary backlash that occurred after the defeat of Reconstruction during the 1870's? No. This time the reaction will not only exclude the black elite, that elite will be indispensable in carrying it out. No matter how pervasive this reactionary offensive, there is no going back for the African American poor. To go back would mean segregation based on color. Clearly, this is not possible. What is possible, and happening, is that color has become the fig leaf behind which to attack all those who are forced out of the economy, and are forming the new class of dispossessed in our country.

The strategic goal of the ruling class is American national hegemony over a globally integrated economy. This requires a degree of national unity. As the economy degenerates, as the revolution in the means of production deepens, a political awakening on the part of this new class will threaten this unity. Containing that awakening is already the number one political task of the ruling class. German and Italian fascism had to proceed from the most violent and brutal elements of their national history – so will the rise of fascism in America. This demands that the isolation and oppression of the African American must be again called into being, but in a new form.

The unity of the white and black elite is the condition for imposing fascism on the nation. It will not be possible to accept unity on the one hand and advocate segregation on the other. Their emerging political tactic is to aim at the poorest of the poor – which is black – and attempt to maintain the support of the rest of the black and white dispossessed at their expense. Globalization and robotics are undercutting this tactic. The poor of all colors are becoming poorer and the growing attack aimed at the black poor is bound to entangle the ruling class against the white dispossessed as well.

Black History Month 2008 finds our country and our class at a critical turning point. As throughout our history, the African American question is key. No longer a question of "racial" isolation, the African American question is at the very heart of the formation and politicization of the new class.

Errata: In our Nov/Dec 2007 issue the article "What is a Revolutionary" included the sentence "The old must replace the new." This sentence should read "The new must replace the old."

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the problems we face, and how to achieve victory.

The organization has to make an all out effort to achieve victory in this stage of the revolution. If not, the conditions won't be ripe to go to the next stage – a real political party of the class. No forward motion is possible until our class rejects the politics and the ideology of its class enemy and becomes conscious of its interests as a class. No step forward is possible unless it speaks to the interests of the growing new class. Consciously breaking with the ideas, interests, and organizations of the class enemy, fighting for the solution to the problems of those who have the least – this is the route to victory.

What has the League done to insure our fighting capacity? We have built an organization that is aiming to liberate the comrades' creativity and instill a sense of responsibility to build the League. We have developed an infrastructure of education, a political line, publications, organization and organizational principles that will arm the comrades with the tools they need. From this point on, we wait for no one to come and build the League. We view ourselves as pioneers, as organizers of the League to build the organization of revolutionaries that the moment demands.