

AURORA



May Day Statement:

The Only Future for Humanity is Communist Revolution

We are sure humanity is capable of recovering from the many evils that afflict it today, but only if the global economic and social order is completely overthrown. Humanity was already facing a series of problems brought about by a system based only on the pursuit of profit. Environmental destruction and climate change, increasing poverty and precarious working conditions, war and forced migration, oppression of this or that group, were all in evidence before the pandemic arrived. However the Covid crisis demonstrates yet again, and with extreme clarity, that the problem of **going beyond capitalism** is more urgent than ever.

Marx's prediction that capitalism tends to create obscene wealth at one pole, and extreme poverty at the other, has been confirmed by the pandemic. The world's largest companies have seen their already substantial fortunes increase. Thus the world's 2,200 billionaires increased their fortunes by 27.5% whilst 400 million workers were losing their jobs, and 130 million people were suddenly thrown into permanent poverty. The IMF forecasts that by the end of 2022 the average wage cut for "Western" workers will be a further 10%. It is even worse for the rest of the planet where 2 billion people live hand to mouth in the "informal economy". The World Food Program predicts that around three dozen countries will suffer famines.

crisis. There would have been a total economic collapse leading to the outbreak of a new world war but for two factors: 1) capitalism's ability to react through its **central banks**, which promptly supported the economy with an unprecedented injection of liquidity; 2) the substantial **passivity of the working class** which, has given the capitalists free rein to worsen working conditions for decades.

The capitalists have learned from their experience of 2008. Thus at the outbreak of the Covid crisis, central banks promptly intervened, with the most **colossal injection of monetary credit** to banks and large corporations in economic history: the IMF announced in November 2020 that the financial injection by central banks was already \$19.5 trillion, or almost a fifth of world GDP, almost equal to the annual GDP of the USA.

This immense amount of money is being lent at negative interest rates, or at rates close to zero. This has fuelled more speculation in the buying and selling of global financial securities (shares, bonds, derivatives, funds...) to the point that despite the very heavy economic crisis, the main **financial markets** thanked the central banks and ended 2020 with record rises!

Only a fraction of this enormous credit is entering production. Why? Because the world economy is plagued by such a **low**

competition go hand in hand. They are leading to bloody conflict across the whole world, from the borders of the ex-USSR to sub-Saharan Africa and down the new Silk Road, from the Middle East to the South China Sea... The fires of proxy war never go out but flare up in new areas all the time. Unspeakable horrors are committed daily in Syria, Libya, Yemen, Tigray and many other places far from the eyes of the global media circus. Most of these are proxy wars, financed and armed by the major powers. The USA remains the dominant super power but increasingly faces dangerous new challenges, and a trade war and an arms race with China is already underway. Generalised imperialist war remains the ultimate resort of a decadent capitalism in crisis.

Where the Working Class Stands Today

Our class has been on the retreat for decades, slowly losing ground in one way or another. In the old centres of capitalism large concentrations of production were dismantled and relocated to other areas of the planet, where labour costs less. In the traditional heartlands of capitalism the working class has been dispersed, while in the periphery it is concentrated in large units of production where, however, it lacks experience and a tradition of political struggle.

In many countries state aid and furlough measures are only temporary measures. Already, before the pandemic is "under control", "fire and rehire" (on more precarious conditions) is being used to cut wages. Thousands more companies are just waiting to have a free hand to lay off more. Indonesia, and other peripheral countries, are already enacting "more flexible" labour legislation to encourage future investments. In the immediate term the recovery of the capitalist economy has in fact only one option: to cut labour costs. Predictably, in the next few years we will see, if not a collapse, certainly a "non-recovery" of the lost jobs; in short, any "recovery" will be long and heavy, and the weight of it will fall on workers.

Although today the working class appears defeated, isolated and dispersed, there are **some signs that should not be underestimated**. 2019 saw global uprisings from South America to the Middle East to Europe. Even in the pandemic there have been hundreds, if not thousands, of strikes across the world against unsafe working and wage cuts. "Civil unrest is surging" (World Food Program). The working class has not gone away. History tells us that this evolving historical crisis will lead to ever larger movements. But it also teaches us that so long as these movements do not find within them **a revolutionary and internationalist focus**, the movement itself will end up ebbing away to another sterile defeat for our class.

Perspectives

Our revolution will have to be:

Proletarian: because the motive force for the change that's required resides in the millions and millions of wage workers (stable, precarious, underemployed or unemployed) who create, produce, transform, transport everything. It is only thanks to their work, and thus to their exploitation as proletarians of the whole world, that capitalism continues to survive its own contradictions.

Communist: where the working class holds political power, through historically discovered councils with their directly elected and revocable delegates creating a society where production is for use not for profit, and in which:

**The free development of each is
the condition for the free
development of all.**

**Each of us gives what we can and
is never left in need.**

We therefore invite all genuinely revolutionary elements to make contact and discuss with our comrades. We, standing in the tradition of the Communist Left, offer a platform that has emerged from the critical balance of two centuries of inspiring battles and tragic defeats of our class. Many younger workers around the world are beginning to rally to us in order to confront the burning challenges that we face but time is short. Our aim is to contribute to a new international, a revolutionary political leadership rooted in the working class today, in preparation for the struggles to come.

If you agree, get in touch!

The time is now!

**For a full version of the 2021 May
Day Statement of the Internationalist
Communist Tendency see leftcom.org**

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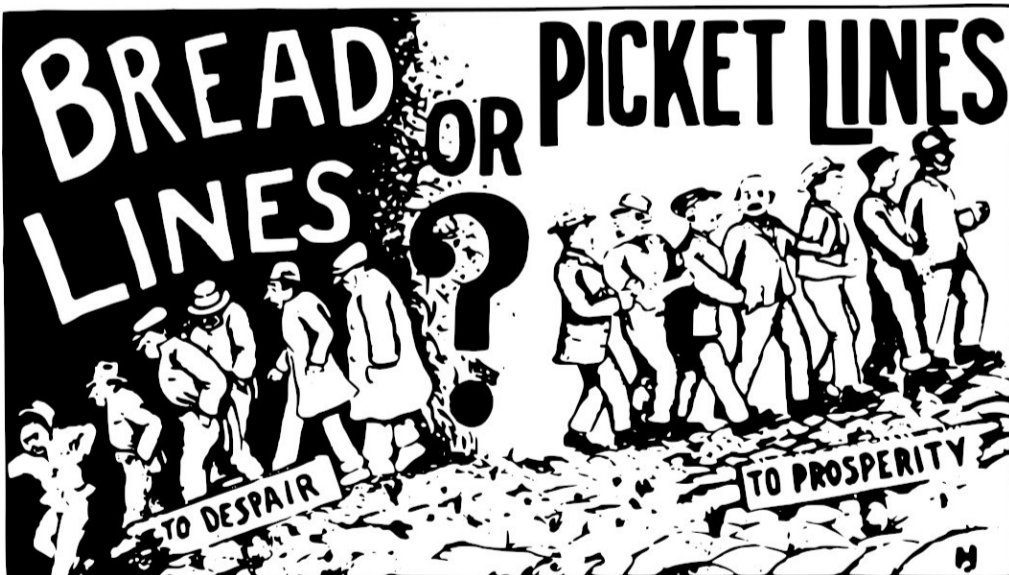
**1871-2021:
Vive la Commune!**



Mythology About the Middle
Class and the Class Struggle

Class Consciousness and
Working Class Emancipation

Communist Work in a Covid
Crisis



The roots of the current crisis go back 50 years. When the US abandoned the Bretton Woods agreement on 15 August 1971 it opened the way to the debt and the production of fictitious capital that we see today. The mass of global public and private debt has continued to grow, increasing in periods of crisis, but never completely paid off in periods of recovery. The mass of circulating financial capital is now more than ten times greater than the real value of the commodities it is supposed to represent. The rate of profit has fallen so low that speculation is more attractive than productive investment.

Covid has plunged us back into the nightmare of an endless recession even before there was a recovery from the 2008

rate of profit that the development of the means of production, i.e. their increased productivity, has been used to exploit workers to the point where we are today: which is to increasingly throw them on the streets, since the investment required is too expensive. This is especially the case during the Covid lockdowns when the economy is hardly moving and financial speculation offers much easier gains. So the capital that was supposed to be invested in the "real" economy remains in the financial sphere whilst another **speculative bubble** is growing hand in hand with the debt. Credit injections are only creating the conditions for future, even more devastating, economic crises.

Capitalist crisis and imperialist

The Capitalist Offensive...

The British state is no stranger to violence. In the last two decades, UK armed forces have bombed and murdered in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya and the Government is now enacting a law to prevent British troops from being accused of war crimes. Britain has sold munitions and other military equipment around the globe, fuelling such conflicts as the continuing war in Yemen (Britain is no longer the world's third-biggest arms dealer as it was two decades ago, but it is still in the top eight, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute). Currently, perhaps in a desperate attempt to appear significant in the wake of the Brexit debacle, it is seeking to project its military power in the Black Sea by sending two warships amid ongoing tensions between Russia and Ukraine.

Strengthening the State...

At home, though it's rare now to turn out the troops to defend capitalism's interests, the police are used to fulfil a similar role. From the Miners' Strike to the arrests of environmental activists and the heavy-handed policing of BLM marches last year, the state uses the police to crack down on dissent. Through the new Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, the government is proposing to give the police more powers to break up demonstrations and further criminalise protest. A

demonstration in Bristol against the proposed Bill at the end of March became a violent confrontation – the police alleged the demonstrators started the violence, but participants tell us that the police attacked a group of mainly angry women. Police claims of injuries to cops including broken ribs and punctured lungs were found to be fabrications lapped up by the press. This was only days after a vigil in London in memory of Sarah Everard was broken up by police in brutal scenes. Though these kinds of events do not generally pose an existential threat to capitalism and the state they still question the system – if nothing else by giving the lie to the idea that we are all passive and "consent" to the status quo.

...whilst Attacking Workers

Beefing up the state is not the only threat to the working class. Our living and working conditions are also under attack. More than 800,000 workers in the UK have been made redundant over the last year as the bosses use the downturn caused by the Covid lockdowns as an excuse to attack workers. The crisis began long before Covid (Carphone Warehouse, Monarch and Flybe, for example, all collapsed before Covid hit the UK) but it is the latest excuse for the inability of capitalism to provide a decent future. The reality is wages have remained almost flat since the financial crash of 2008 and the poorest 20% have

seen their incomes decline over the last 10 years.

We have written many times about the crisis of capitalism that has been unfolding for half a century. No matter what parties hold power, the crisis continues. They need to massively devalue existing capital to resume profitable exclusion but as they want to avoid the uncertainty of a Third World War, their only remaining option is to attack the working class, to make us pay for capitalism's crisis through lower wages, more precarious conditions and by rolling back the last vestiges of the welfare state. In January the TUC protested about the practice of "fire and rehire". It's claimed that over the last year, 1 in 10 workers has been told to accept cuts to wages and/or worsening working conditions, or face dismissal. According to research published in the *Observer* and on the *Guardian* website, over the last year companies alleged to be using these tactics include Centrica, where "hundreds" of British Gas fitters lost their jobs last week while Centrica made an £80 million profit, and Go Ahead North West (another profit-making firm that took government grants to keep workers employed).

Other firms such as ESS that supplies caterers and cleaners to the MOD and Goodlord which provides computer services to estate agents, are also accused of using "fire and rehire" tactics. The practice is not confined to private companies either – NHS



hospital porters in Birmingham and teachers in Loughborough, Leicestershire are also under threat of "fire and rehire".

These attacks are happening because the ruling class doesn't have any solution to the crisis. The only answer to the capitalists' problem of trying to increase profit-rates is to increase the exploitation of the working class, in the knowledge that this might provoke resistance from workers who see their wage-packets shrinking and conditions worsening, if they're not thrown onto the dole. So, on the one hand, the economic attacks, to try and restore profitability to a broken system that offers only catastrophe to humanity. On the other hand, the strengthening of the state apparatus in the face of expected trouble, in a desperate bid to cling on to power. Only the united working class has the power to do away with the whole rotten mess and build the future communist society.

As we said in the last issue of *Aurora*, bosses are seizing advantage of increasing unemployment to reduce 'labour costs'. It is encouraging to see a growing number of workers refusing to take this lying down. Certainly the insulting 1% pay rise nurses got for their key role in the Covid line of fire speaks volumes. When taking inflation into account this is a real-terms pay cut. Even the nurses union has been making motions towards strike action. Now every wage worker can expect their pay and conditions to come under threat.

Amongst those already taking action are around 300-400 bus drivers in Manchester employed by Go North West. They have been on strike for weeks trying to resist the company's attempt to cut sick pay and force them to work longer hours for less by "firing and rehiring" them on worse contracts. Throughout March, British Gas engineers staged walk outs to protest the same dirty trick. Across the country, electricians have been picketing Balfour Beatty and NG Bailey headquarters for weeks to oppose deskilling. Meanwhile, more precarious workers are rejecting impossible gig economy conditions. Over 200 Deliveroo couriers have refused to work and joined demonstrations demanding a guaranteed minimum wage, safety measures and worker status (their

...The Working Class Response

current "self-employed" status means they do not have the same rights to minimum wage, sick pay, etc., that employed workers have).

Whether the attacks come in the form of "firing and rehiring" workers on new, worse contracts, taking advantage of workers' "self-employed" status to circumnavigate the obligations of basic workers' rights, "raising" pay at a rate that hardly offsets inflation, or good old-fashioned arbitrary deskilling and pay freezes – all these are fairly typical tricks in the bosses' playbook. Their aim is to make their workforce pay, in a desperate attempt to boost their falling revenues, 'shareholder value', increased costs and ultimately their profit rates against the backdrop of a pandemic, Brexit, and an underlying economic crisis which refuses to go away.

Unions v Self Organisation

And that's the key. Capitalism across the globe is facing a crisis that threatens life as we know it. But the trade unions are an entrenched part of capitalism's survival system. And let us make no mistake, they are there to ensure a compromise with the bosses, not to get the best deal for us. Conflict between the contending classes is inherent to the capitalist system. The role played by the unions is that of a pressure valve – allowing different groups of workers to 'let off steam' while the system continues functioning unharmed.

At the end of the day, the trade unions owe their existence to the wage labour system that is capitalism and they will not rock the bosses' boat. For workers, on the other hand, our best chance of success is to fight on our own account and draw in the support of as many other workers as possible. This means going beyond the trade union perspective. The unions may well claim a victory in some of these sector-by-sector, workplace-by-workplace disputes, and some newly-unionised gig workers may be a little better off, but they must be seen for what they are: disparate battles in the wider class war, a war which

the working class has been losing for decades now.

What we need now is recognition amongst wage workers as a whole of the connected nature of all these struggles; of the fact that despite our kaleidoscope of different life experiences, we are united by our shared condition as an exploited class, and thus by our common interest in the overthrow of this system that is rotten to its core. For this we need to organise directly to express our interests and overcome the isolation and division that we face; struggle committees made up of delegates chosen at mass assemblies, selected from our own ranks and recallable the moment they cease to represent our interests as a class. These will necessarily be temporary bodies, which cease to exist when the struggle in question is over, lest they reproduce the same old bureaucratic structures.

In the wider sphere we also need our own political organisation: not by any means to put up candidates for parliament

but to put forward the only sane alternative to capitalism: the programme for a world community of freely associated producers. It is a programme not set in stone nor dreamt up from someone's head but the distillation of key lessons from past struggles won and lost, and from present struggles as our history continues to unfold. Those of us whose experiences have led us to communist consciousness must come together to form an organisation, or "party", up to that task. The ICT's goal is to work with other nuclei of that future party to provide a reference point for the revolutionary working class, a memory of the lessons of those past struggles, so that when the time does come and the class is ready to move from the defensive to the offensive once more, we are not just repeating the mistakes of the past and we know what we are fighting for – a stateless, classless, moneyless society, organised on the principle "from each according to their ability, to each according to their need".

What We Stand For

Aurora is published by the Communist Workers' Organisation (CWO).

The CWO stands for a global society where production is for need and not profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where collective power is exercised through class-wide organisations like workers' councils. This has to mean the active, daily participation of the majority aiming for the interests of all. Only then can the world be rid of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: we call it communism but this vision has nothing in common with Stalinist state capitalism and the old USSR.

In order to get there we are working to create a world working class political organisation – a 'party' for want of a better word – not a government in waiting but a guide in the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but we do aim to be one of the elements which will need to come together in its formation. As the working class is more and more faced with the consequences of a crumbling capitalist system it will have to unite and confront capitalist power.

We are not in competition with other organisations but seek to unite on a clearly agreed political programme to prepare the way for the majority of the world's population, the exploited of the earth, to overthrow the capitalist system and its bloody imperialist appetites.

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