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## Without a Revolutionary Organization There Can Be No Revolutionary Movement

Statement of the Manitoba Regional Committee, May 1, 2008

Times of great crisis are also times of great change. As we celebrate May Day, the international day of working class struggle, the world appears to be approaching the brink of such a crisis. As this crisis develops opportunities will present themselves to the working class in various countries to make a break with the old exploiting order and usher in a new society based on serving the needs of the working class and people.

However, the changes brought about by crisis do not automatically favour the interests of working people, as the experience of the working people of the former Soviet Union and countries of people's democracy shows. Positive change is only possible if the working class is prepared to challenge the capitalist class for control of society, establish itself as the new ruling class and vest sovereignty in the people. The Manitoba Regional Committee (MRC) is using the opportunity of May Day 2008 to make a proposal to prepare the Canadian working class to play such a role in the looming crisis.

It has now been over 17 years since the formal collapse of the socialist system of states and resulting total domination of the world by monopoly capital, headed by U.S. imperialism and a handful of other powerful capitalist-imperialist states. During this period capitalism has had an opportunity to show its true colours, unchallenged by an alternate socio-political system and unfettered by overt inter-imperialist conflict.

When the Soviet Union and its allied pseudo-socialist states collapsed in 1990-91, the world's people were promised an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity based on the supposedly

superior efficiencies of capitalist market economies. The reality, by contrast, has been continuous wars and increasing impoverishment for the vast majority of the world's peoples, while the ranks of the rich and super-rich have swelled as never before.

Currently, food riots are breaking out in numerous countries because of soaring prices for basic necessities. Inter-imperialist rivalries are growing, with at least two competing poles of monopoly capital – centred on the European Union and China – emerging to challenge the dominance of U.S. imperialism. The U.S. economy is on the verge of a major decline, with some predictions that it could sink into a depression rivalling the Great Depression of the 1930s. Since U.S. consumption has played a major role in propping up the international economy, including the boom in Chinese manufacturing, a major recession or depression in the U.S. will inevitably affect virtually every other economy on the planet.

Within this situation, Canada is also at a crossroads. Ontario has now officially entered a recession; a slowdown in the U.S. and other countries will eventually impact negatively on the energy and resource boom, which has so far been making up for the job losses in Southern Ontario. Prime Minister Stephen Harper recently met with U.S. President George W. Bush and Mexican President Felipe Calderon in an attempt to trade yet more of Canada's sovereignty for a bigger piece of the collapsing U.S. market.

Despite all of their promises about the wonderful virtues of the "free market economy", the monopoly capitalists have not succeeded in overcoming the inherent economic laws of the capitalist system. Do

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what they may, they cannot prevent the inexorable maturing of the global crisis of overproduction, nor can they prevent the looming international economic crisis from wreaking havoc on the world's people.

In addition, the monopoly capitalists cannot deal effectively with the looming environmental crisis. Over a decade has passed since the adoption of the rather modest emission reduction targets of the Kyoto Accord and most major polluters have done little, if anything, to meet their commitments. The U.S., which is a signatory to the accord, has refused to ratify it on the basis that to do so would put its corporations at a competitive disadvantage. The Canadian government signed and ratified the Kyoto Protocols but far from reducing carbon-dioxide emissions in Canada, by 2004 emissions had increased by 27 percent.

The Harper Conservatives have refused to implement the Kyoto protocols on the basis that to do so would reduce the profitability of Canadian corporations. In particular, the enforcement of emissions standards would impact on the profitability of the Alberta tar sands, which account for over 25 percent of Canada's total carbon dioxide emissions. Heavy oil in tar sands is the most expensive source of petroleum and has much smaller profit margins than traditional sources of oil. Making the oil monopolies in the tar sands meet the necessary emissions standards to protect the environment would probably make that oil uneconomical to extract. As a result successive Canadian governments have made it clear that the profits of the oil monopolies are much more important than the environment or the health of Canadians.

### **Objective Conditions are Ripe for Revolution**

Given this situation, it can be asserted with a fair degree of certainty that objective conditions are crying out for the revolutionary transformation of society from capitalism to socialism and communism. However, the subjective conditions are lagging behind. In other words, the Canadian working class and people are not prepared, at this time, to challenge the legitimacy of the capitalist system, let alone to overthrow it. There are a number of reasons for this state of affairs, but the main two are the disorganization of the revolutionary forces and the

total commitment of the trade union movement to the capitalist system.

### **Crisis of the Trade Union Movement**

The trade union movement, as a whole, tied itself hand and foot to the capitalist system during the late 1940s and early 1950s. In exchange for government recognition and a guaranteed source of revenues (the automatic dues check-off), the trade unions pledged their loyalty to the capitalists, embraced social democracy and class peace, and purged their ranks of communists and other opponents of the capitalist system. Now, even the biggest and most powerful trade unions are incapable of defending their members' basic economic interests and some are reduced to signing no-strike pledges in order to keep their revenues flowing. Most unions are faced with declining memberships as well as declining morale of their remaining members. The very relevancy of the trade union movement is being questioned.

This crisis of the trade union movement is closely connected with the crisis of social democracy. Social democracy is the political trend based on the thesis that capitalism is not inherently anti-worker, that capitalism can be administered by "enlightened" individuals in such a way that it can serve the interests of capitalists and workers equally. In the post-war period it adopted Keynesian economics, which is essentially a system of using workers' taxes to increase the buying power of the poorer members of society, thereby keeping money circulating in the economy. During the 1960s and 1970s most major capitalist countries adopted some form of social democracy as a means of maximizing the profits of the capitalist class.

However, social democracy and Keynesian economics hit a brick wall in the late 1970s, proving to be totally ineffective in reversing the steadily declining average rate of capitalist profit. As a result, the monopoly capitalists began looking for a more efficient method of transferring wealth out of the pockets of working people and into their own coffers. Their solution was neo-liberalism, which amounts to little more than a sophisticated means for big corporations to loot the public treasuries of various countries, through privatization, deregulation,

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free trade agreements, the bankrupting of entire nations and so on.

Another aspect of neo-liberalism is the increasing mobility of capital, which results in workers facing increasing competition from workers in other countries and downward pressure on wages and working conditions. Declining profit rates, increasingly hostile governments, the movement of manufacturing facilities to low-wage countries and rapid technological change have all conspired to reduce or eliminate the effectiveness of the trade unions in collective bargaining, health and safety issues and all of the other areas to which trade unions have confined themselves over the past several decades.

There is a solution to this crisis of the trade union movement, but it is one which no trade union is currently willing to take up. Fundamentally, the trade unions must stop lying to their members that there is a future for workers within the capitalist system. They must stop creating illusions about a return to the “good old days” of social democracy. They must be honest with workers that there are only two alternatives – submit to the will of the monopoly capitalists and give up all aspirations of prosperity and security; or work to transform the situation and the society by eliminating capitalism and establishing a socialist system governed by working people.

However, the trade unions are even incapable of transforming themselves and at present there is no movement to organize the working class into trade unions of a new type because of the other main problem with the subjective forces – the absence of organization of the revolutionary forces.

The organization of the first trade unions during the latter half of the nineteenth century was intimately connected with the rise of the socialist/communist movement in all of the more advanced capitalist countries. Then when many of those trade unions abandoned their socialist roots and adopted the pro-capitalist trade unionism espoused by Samuel Gompers and his ilk, the socialist/communist movement of the early twentieth century invented new types of trade unions – anarcho-syndicalist organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) (which essentially disappeared during the 1920s) and the industrial unionism of the 1920s

and 1930s spearheaded by the communists. The industrial union movement merged with the older craft union movement during the 1950s with the establishment of the Canadian Labour Congress.

Again today, there is a necessity for a new type of trade union based on class struggle and opposition to the capitalist system. However, the socialist/communist movement is too weak and divided to take the lead at this time in creating a trade union movement of a new type.

### **Necessity for a Revolutionary Movement**

In these conditions, the task facing the Canadian working class is to rebuild a revolutionary, anti-capitalist movement in Canada, including a new type of revolutionary trade union movement. However, whenever this issue is raised for discussion within the revolutionary, anti-capitalist forces, the objection inevitably raised is two-fold. On the one hand, it is argued that the “left” in Canada is too weak and divided to build such a movement; on the other hand, it is claimed that the organization of the revolutionary forces can only take place after a revolutionary movement comes into existence. In other words, a “chicken and egg” scenario is presented and nothing moves forward.

A long time ago V.I. Lenin stated that without a revolutionary organization there can be no revolutionary movement. That truth is as valid today as it was a century ago. Popular resistance movements of one kind or another will and do emerge spontaneously in response to attacks on the people, but such movements will not assume a revolutionary character on their own. They will remain defensive and reactive in nature and, hence, incapable of transforming the situation. Historically such spontaneous movements and struggles have only taken on a revolutionary character through the conscious and systematic work of a revolutionary organization.

Therefore, the most immediate task facing the Canadian working class is to establish a national revolutionary organization, a centre of revolutionary thought and action. This is not just a matter of issuing a manifesto or an action program. If that was all it took, it would have been accomplished years ago, as many such manifestos and programs have been

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drafted and released over the years. Nor is it a matter of declaring that such an organization already exists, as various groups do from time to time. If such an organization already existed, there would be no need to discuss creating one. Such an organization would have figured out by now how to unite the revolutionary forces and how to build a revolutionary movement, rather than being content to sit in isolation declaring that those who are not with them are not part of the revolutionary forces.

Clearly, at this time a majority of the revolutionary forces in Canada are not convinced that it is possible to establish a new centre of revolution in Canada, despite a general consensus that such an organization, in one form or another, is a necessity. Some are waiting for someone else to build it while others hope that such an organization will emerge spontaneously out of the oppositional movement.

The entire history of human civilization shows that organizations, revolutionary or otherwise, emerge solely on the basis of the work of those who agree that they are necessary. In many, many instances revolutionary organizations have been started by very small groups of people with virtually no resources other than their own abilities and their own labour. The key is that they not only recognized a necessity but also took upon themselves to create the possibilities. Those who think that there is an easier or different way to begin are ignoring not only the experience of the working class in general, but most likely their own personal experience as well.

The Manitoba Regional Committee has been working systematically on a non-sectarian basis for the past eight years to help to unite the revolutionary forces in Canada into one centre of revolutionary thought and action. This work has resulted in many successes and many failures, but the MRC remains determined to carry on working on this front until such a revolutionary centre becomes a reality, at which time other problems will present themselves for solution.

The MRC is confident that all those who genuinely believe in the necessity for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism will sooner or later also agree with the necessity and possibility of establishing the revolutionary

organization needed to make that goal a reality. The MRC is also confident that the youth, and not just the generation of the sixties, are seeking alternatives to capitalism and will inevitably arrive at the necessity for revolutionary solutions.

### **Proposal for Discussion**

Therefore, on this May Day, 2008, the day of International Working Class Struggle and Solidarity, the MRC calls upon all progressive and revolutionary individuals to begin a discussion of revolutionary alternatives to the status quo. The MRC also calls on workers to begin discussing alternative forms of organization to the existing capitalist trade unions. For its part, over the next several months the MRC will initiate a series of systematic discussions on the issue of the necessity for revolution and the necessity for a revolutionary organization with a modern and enlightened political culture.

In order to facilitate these discussions, the MRC will be drafting discussion papers and inviting a broad spectrum of the revolutionary forces to join in the discussion. The only precondition for participation in these discussions is a desire to discuss the problems facing the working class and how to overcome those problems. Neither broad ideological agreement, nor even agreement with the necessity for revolution, will be demanded of participants. The experience of the past several years indicates that without a very broad and serious discussion of these issues no problem confronting the working class and the revolutionary forces will be solved.

## **Modern Communism**

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