

## MEETING THE "BOYS IN THE HOODS"

It might seem a surprise, perhaps, that the Klan should show up in all places, Manhattan, at this time. But looking at the politics of Giuliani, the not-so-subtle encouragement to racism and police terror, it make sense that the hooded morons of the KKK would feel more welcome here than in many years.

The attempt of the Klan to march, whether they do or don't, shows that the growing politics of reaction has 2 faces. The 'moderate' public poses of the Giuliani's, Pataki's and now Bush Jr. can quickly turn around to show the other face of the Buchanan's, Falwell's and ultimately the fascists and neo-nazis. The ultra-right, in turn, provides ideological cover for the 'moderate' right, making them look ever so reasonable and helping them sell their particular brand of poison to the American people.

The advance of the right in this era serves a twofold purpose. One is to establish an ideological dominance that will preclude social struggles from ever advancing far enough to shake the tree of power, profit and privilege. The other is to forestall any crisis of the capitalist boom market by keeping wages low, working people divided against each other and large sections of the poor population marginalized and disempowered. They seek a return to the mythical 'good old days' when workers served humbly; blacks and women 'knew their place' (and gays and lesbians had no place at all) and smaller nations submitted to American power.

So what should we do? Certainly if and when the Klan marches here or anywhere, we need to meet them in streets and show them our unwelcome. We can't and shouldn't rely on the legal system, which serves the interests of the rich and powerful, to stop them. Tempting as it is, ignoring them would be a mistake, for even as small as they are, their potential for growth is not insignificant.

In confronting the Klan, it should be expected that other types of authoritarian political groupings will rise to the fore to push forward their own ideologies. Those of us who do not embrace the notion of 'proletarian dictatorship' a la Stalin, Trotsky, Mao or whoever can still demonstrate alongside those who do. But we cannot and should not ever forget that the view of a new society that they advance includes repression and terror as well, and we should not hesitate to point that out whenever it is appropriate.

Meeting the Klan in the streets, however, is not enough. We need go forward with organizing in workplaces and communities around issues of common interest to working people of all races, ethnicities, and orientations to develop a common program for social struggle. Remember that the Klan and the neo-nazis are actively seeking out disaffected white working-class youth in communities in around this City, pushing their own world view as an alternative. We need to develop a different alternative, one that shows who the real enemies are and who ultimately profits when poor and working people are divided against each other.

The Workers Solidarity Alliance is an organization of working people of various backgrounds who have a common vision of a new society without bosses, bureaucrats and fascists, a vision of a stateless society democratically run by people in their workplaces and communities. We call it anarchist unionism or anarcho-syndicalism, and we invite you to find out more about it. In the meantime, let's keep on fighting the Klan and show them the way out of the City.

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# **STAND WITH THE SQUATTERS!**

These days, to use the phrase "lying politician" is almost always redundant. In the case of Rudy Giuliani, this reaches a new height of viciousness. A clear example of this are his statements justifying the attack on the 13th Street squatters on May 30.

His "Honor" the Mayor claims that the squatters were depriving the working poor of housing. But ask the working poor of the Lower East Side and elsewhere and you will hear no such sentiment. There are hundreds of vacant and abandoned buildings that the City has let rot for years. It is the politicians and bureaucrats who rob housing from the poor, not the squatters.

Rudy and his cheerleaders (bankers, real estate speculators, local flunkies like Antonio Pagan and the various poverty pimps around town) claim that the squatters are "stealing" by occupying City property that they are not paying for. But remember that these buildings were empty shells, housing only rats and roaches, before the squatters moved in. Let the corrupt politicians and corporate greedheads clean their own house before they accuse anyone else.

The established media tries its hardest to paint a picture of the squatters as middle-class thrill seekers playing at poverty, with no regard to the needs of the community around them. There are a few squatters, to be sure, who might fit this description, but what group in society doesn't have its irresponsible elements (just read the tabloids to note the depravity of the idle rich). Most importantly, there is no justification for the use of police power against unarmed people just trying to get along.

The struggle for housing in the City is part and parcel of the larger struggle between those with power and those without. It is a struggle that goes on everyday in our workplaces, schools and communities--a class struggle. We of the Workers Solidarity Alliance call on unionists, community and student activists and all who oppose class rule to stand in solidarity with the squatters.

Send messages of protest to:

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## HOMELAND SECURITY?

There are millions of people today in this City who are living in fear for their lives and safety. A devious and secretive group of enemies are daily hatching new schemes to ruin their way of live and to terrorize them into submission. These enemies claim to be fighting for righteousness and are fanatical in pursuit of their goals. For many of their victims just to speak out against this enemy is to draw their anger and spite.

The millions who are so terrorized are the poor and working people of this City. The enemy is Bush, Pataki, Bloomberg and the rich and powerful whose paid servants they are. Their weapons of terror— budget cuts, elimination of programs, attacks on the standard of living, and ideological assault on their opponents (along with some political arm twisting as needed). Their ideology — tax cuts, the free market, a 'healthy economy' — a masquerade for their real agenda, to enrich their friends even further and to disempower those who they deem unworthy.

But there are mean by which workers and the disempowered can defend themselves against this enemy. We can and must build real workplace organizations — call them unions, councils, or whatever — that can not only defend our rights and conditions on the job, but work toward a better world where these kinds of attacks are just a bad memory. We need mass organizations in our communities to express our needs and concerns on that level. And we need to link our struggles with those of poor and working people everywhere.

But what we don't need are more self-serving leaders and bureaucrats to do our fighting for us—not that they really do any serious fighting. We don't need more Dennis Riveras and Randi Weingartens to sell us on what a friend of labor George Pataki is, get us to come out and vote for him, and then be surprised when he turns around and cuts health care, worker safety and in general kicks us in the butt for our favors. Let's send them back to their old workplaces and let them earn an honest living for a change.

What we need is a labor movement not tied down to political parties or the electoral system in general, with decisions made collectively by the membership and with delegates who carry out our mandates and are subject to immediate recall when they don't. We need a movement that embraces the widest spectrum of the poor and disempowered and seeks to unify them instead of dividing them up into competing sectors. We need a movement with a vision of a new society where power, profit and privilege are truly a thing of the past.

We of the Workers Solidarity Alliance are men and women like you who have a vision of how things can be and are working to bring it about. To do so we not only give solidarity to on-going struggles but try to put forward our ideas and seek to engage other working people in dialogue about them. We don't expect you to agree with everything we say, but we hope you will think about it and talk it over with ourselves and you fellow workers. By this sort of discussion we can hopefully find the way to real 'homeland security' for the working people of this city and of the world.

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# HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS & WORKING PEOPLE

The fight against homelessness and for housing justice is one that is fought on many fronts, through demonstrations, tenant and community organizing, rent strikes, self-help projects, and so on. But a front that it has not to a large extent been fought on is within the labor movement. Sad and ironic, since in a way working people have unwittingly helped bring about the current crisis.

Think about it...as you travel through Manhattan and the surrounding areas of this city and beyond, you see new office space and luxury housing springing up. You see older building being renovated for use not by the people who need them most but by those with the most to spend. Fancy retail stores and art galleries replace the places many of us used to work in.

Yet people like us do all the work--the construction, renovation, moving and hauling--that makes this all possible. Other working people become displaced from jobs, lose their homes and wind up on the streets or in shelters. Yet none of us can afford to enjoy the products of the labor we put into this process.

Over in Australia some years ago the labor movement came up with a tactic called the "green ban". Workers refused to work on, boycotted and picketed any construction or work project that they felt threatened their physical or social environment. Yes, you ask, but how can any of us afford to do that here, when jobs are so few and each of us struggles with a mountain of debt?

The answer is that no one person can change the system by making an individual "moral" protest, however good their cause is. Collective action, however, action that includes working people, unemployed, the homeless, and others can force the politicians and bureaucrats to change their tune. Further, workers who work for institutions like universities, hospitals and public agencies should challenge their employers' actions within the very communities in which they live.

The whole labor movement should keep in mind that the bankers, real estate developers and institutions who try to seduce us with nice phrases about "creating jobs" are ready to toss us into the waste basket once we've done their dirty work. Besides, their the ones who put so many of us out on the street in the first place. We need to learn to fight them not only on the job, around working conditions, wages, and so on, but as a social class as well.

The best means we have at our disposal are those which involve direct action--strikes, boycotts, demonstrations and occupations. Tactics of compromise like elections, lobbying and pursuing "common interests" with our enemies just won't cut it. gentrification and displacement are not going away unless we ourselves get rid of them.

The best type of movement to put these means into motion is one that is fully democratic, without self-appointed "leaders" to mislead or betray us. We need to develop new forms of organization that allow us each to participate and make decisions collectively without manipulation or domination. The kind of organization we build should serve as a model for the kind of world we want. We believe that this is a world in which no one should be displaced, in which society's resources are devoted to meeting everyone's needs fairly and equitably, in which communities and workplaces democratically make the decisions which affect everybody.

## Workers Solidarity Alliance

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# Rudy's Dream: Our Nightmare

While the vision of a "new New York" put out by Giuliani and friends during the election campaign may have appealed to some, it has not taken long to see what that vision is really all about. Public services cut to the bone, real estate speculators and bankers with a free hand to loot, police power with the gloves taken off--all these themes would be the key to Rudy's "revitalized City" if it were to come to pass. But like any demagogue, Giuliani knows that the people of this City must go along if his fantasy is to come true.

In order to sell this nightmarish vision, Giuliani and his cohorts must try to sugar coat it. They conjure up nostalgic images of a "happier time" when New York City was a good place to live, when the streets were safe and when people of color "knew their place", when public workers had few rights and when politicians ruled behind closed doors. The economy of the City ran "smoothly" because the plans and schemes of developers and corporate bigwigs went virtually unopposed.

But to really make the thing work Giuliani needs to use the time-honored strategy of divide and conquer. He tells white working people that the problem is the "unruly elements" (i.e. people of color), he tells people of color the problem is each other (African-Americans vs. Latinos vs. Asians) and all of the above that the problem is gays and lesbians. He tries to set one group of public workers against another in order to set off a downward spiral of givebacks and concessions that will leave little left in the way of job security or decent conditions, which have already been savaged over the last two decades.

What's needed to put an end to this political shell game and to begin to take the future into our own hands is our own return to some time-honored principles of the workers' movement:

--unity and solidarity among all poor and working people, along with a complete rejection of the lies, suspicion and hatred put forward by Rudy and company,

--militancy, which is to say a refusal to accept what the politicians and bosses define as "reasonable", but rather to demand what we know is right, and

--democracy, not the will of our so-called "representatives", the union leaders and political hacks, but through organizations in our workplaces and communities that we run directly.

But in the final analysis what we really need is our own vision of a new society, of a City revitalized and rebuilt by all its people for their own benefit, not for the power, profit and privilege of a few. It is this type of vision that has brought us of the Workers Solidarity Alliance together, to work for and fight for a world without bosses, bureaucrats or politicians, without race hatred and with the fullest freedom for all. We are ordinary men and women like yourself, from all backgrounds, whose shared vision calls us to spread our ideas and seek common ground with others who have the same interests and concerns.

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(the above was reprinted from our newsletter, ON THE LINE. Please write or call for a sample copy)



# THE FRENCH LESSON

A conservative government comes to power. They declare that it's time to make the national economy more hospitable to business, so they move toward austerity (perhaps the French government needed to save money to set off more nuclear weapons in the Pacific). Health care benefits and pensions for senior citizens are slated for cuts. Public service workers are the first to feel the bite.

Sounds familiar? It's happening in this country, as well as in France. But something happens in one place that's different.

What's different is that public service workers and their allies in France take to the streets. 150,000 demonstrate in Paris, another 100,000 demonstrate in Marseilles. They strike and bring the cities to a virtual halt.

So why not here? Partly because the organized labor movement in the U.S. has let itself become too beholden to politicians, too used to begging instead of demanding. Partly because the sense of militancy which the French workers are showing today has been overwhelmed by the self-serving posturing of our so-called leaders, whose big salaries and bigger ambitions don't allow for actions like those being taken in France. Partly because the French workers have a real sense of the history of their class and the struggles it has waged, while many of us American workers are largely unaware of our own rich history. Partly because we have become too afraid of the laws and the rules of behavior set by the bosses to take matters into our own hands.

So how can we, as American workers, begin to change all that? The French labor movement has many of the same problems of bureaucracy and timidity as the American movement, but the workers there have historically shown a willingness to go beyond the constraints imposed by the bosses, the government and the union 'leaders'. We need to do the same.

We need to rebuild our labor movement from the bottom up, not just elect new leaders who are a little younger and a little more energetic than the old ones, such as is happening recently. We need to seek new forms of organization, based on direct democracy and collective decision making. We need to develop bolder and more innovative forms of fighting back, beyond the 'polite' ways that haven't gotten us what we want. Further, we need a vision of a society in which power, profit and privilege will be a relic for the museums.

We of the Workers Solidarity Alliance are working to build such a movement. We call ourselves anarchist unionists, and we are part of an international federation of like-minded groups called the International Workers Association. As you read this our affiliated organization in France the Confederation Nationale du Travail (National Confederation of Labor or CNT-F) is part of the fight against right-wing attacks on the working class that is being waged in the workplaces and on the streets. We aim to do the same right here.

If you agree, if you want to know more, or if you just want to discuss these ideas some more, please get in touch. We can all share the French lesson.

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# Let's Make Every Day Labor Day!

No, we don't mean let's take every day off from work (although it sounds like a nice idea). Nor do we mean that we should have massive traffic jams of returning summer vacationers every day either.

But Labor Day is supposed to mean something more than a day off or the end of summer vacation. Labor Day, or so we are told, is a day to recognize the contributions of working men and women here in America. The fact that almost every other country in the world celebrates labor or May 1 has to do with those who, over 100 years ago, worked to split the American labor movement away from the rest of the world labor movement.

But wait a second...no matter what day we celebrate, didn't working people create all the wealth of this country? Don't we keep the offices, schools, factories and other workplaces running? And for that we get one lousy day a year?

We also are told Labor Day is a day for the labor movement to show its strength, to flex its political muscles. While too often this has meant cozying up to politicians (who just go ahead and continue to screw us the next day) still, we couldn't object to any show of strength for workers. But why not show our power every day of the year?

To make the power of the working people in society an everyday matter we need a labor movement not tied down by high-paid bureaucrats or political hacks but free to set its own course based on the needs of all its members. We need a movement without divisions by trade or craft but based on unity of interests. We need a movement which has banished racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination and is based on equality and freedom for all. We need a movement which is based on full direct democracy, not top-down bossism. We need a movement which is militant and uncompromising in terms of our needs and interests, not willing to settle for crumbs.

The kind of movement we are talking about can only be rebuilt from the bottom up, starting in our various workplaces and communities. It should not only seek all the goals we stated above, but should function like the type of society that we want to build. To succeed, it needs the participation of all those left out of the ranks of power, profit and privilege, not only the workers of today but those who were and those who one day will be working people.

We call this type of movement anarchist unionism. Even if you don't agree with everything we say, but if you at least agree that the current state of the labor movement is not to your liking, or even if you just want to discuss the situation further, get in touch.

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