

Where We Stand

● The role of the State

We believe that the capitalist system and the modern state play an increasingly negative role in the organization of production, distribution and social life in general. They are clearly unable to deal with the deepening economic and political crises that they themselves have created. Since governments and capitalism have always rested upon domination and exploitation, both are inherently oppressive and cannot be reformed, won over, or used in a progressive way in the modern-day struggle for human emancipation.

Although the government and individual companies do not always see eye-to-eye, the basic function of the State — the courts and prisons, police and army, regulatory agencies and other State institutions — is to defend the collective interests of the employing class. It is useless to try to change the system by electing representatives to government office. Nor do we advocate the seizure of State power. A state is a top-down institution that puts power into the hands of a few. All efforts to construct a "workers' state" have only led to one form of oppression being substituted for another.

Russia, Cuba, China and the other countries that have a top-down system based on the fusion of economic and political power in the State, are not societies run by the workers, nor are they a step in the direction of human emancipation. The conflicts between these countries and the capitalist nations are not merely ideological but are dangerous skirmishes over territory and profits. Since states exist to defend the power and wealth of the bosses, wars are struggles between the bosses in different lands. Organized slaughter under state auspices will continue to happen as long as society is based on exploitation, hierarchy and competition.

● Workers' role in social change

Since oppression and exploitation take a variety of forms in this society, so must the struggle for social liberation be multifaceted. Movements expressing the will of various communities, women, sexual minorities, young people, national and cultural groups, the aged, the disabled, and those who have specialized knowledge help-ful to social progress must be seen as having equal footing and input into decisions affecting the welfare of the people. We are opposed to all forms of discrimination and oppression that bar people from fully participating in society and realizing their total potential as free individuals.

Educational work carried out by working class organizations on a multi-cultural and multi-racial basis is basic to any movement for working class self-emancipation. The best aspects of working class culture must be preserved while new forms of interaction and discussion in workplaces and communities are developed. Movements in this direction serve as an organizing force as well as a

● Exploitation

Introduction: The following is the provisional statement of principles adopted by the Workers Solidarity Alliance at its founding conference in New York City in November, 1984. We do not regard statements of this sort as if written on gold tablets — unalterable for all time. A statement like this tries to state how we see things at a given time, but is open to change based on future experiences and discussions. This document in particular is incomplete in that the WSA conference did not reach agreement on sections dealing with sexual and racial discrimination, which are to be added after the organization has more discussion on these topics. Groups have taken on the task of developing proposed sections dealing with sexism and racism. These proposals will be submitted to the membership for discussion and approval. Those with comments or ideas on these issues, as well as comments on the statement in general (whether favorable or critical) are urged to communicate them to the WSA National Secretary so they may be considered in future discussions. The address of the National Secretary is: Workers Solidarity Alliance New York Group, 339 Lafayette St. Room 202, New York, NY 10012.

Under the existing social system — capitalism — we can only live by selling our time, our talents and energies, to employers for a wage. When people must work, not simply to do things for each other, but to build up the power and wealth of a few, this is exploitation. This system of wage-labor gives to the bosses the power to make the decisions about what will be produced, how it is produced and, thus, how we spend our time. This hierarchy or pyramid of power divides society into "classes" with a basic and irreconcilable conflict of interests. The struggle between workers and bosses will go on as long as society is thus divided.

What the individual bosses do is shaped by how the system as a whole operates. Though each company makes its own decisions, these decisions are determined by what will make a profit in the marketplace. They will pollute the environment, speed up work, lay people off or ignore unhealthy conditions if these things will help them make more profit.

People in this society are encouraged to define "freedom" in terms of buying things. Yet, a healthy environment and genuine control over our lives are not to be found in the marketplace.

The capitalist market, which subordinates human life to money-making, is a global system. The bosses' control of production, communication and finance has become increasingly integrated across national boundaries. Since the bosses' system is international, effective workers' struggle must become international as well, based on direct solidarity and coordination of struggles across national frontiers.

● Direct action

The way to fight for social change is through direct action. Action is *direct* when it is people fighting for their own aspirations, not relying on politicians or trade union leaders to fight for them. For direct rank-and-file control over struggles against the powers-that-be, movements have to be based on the direct participation of the people in the struggle. Direct action must be *collective* because only solidarity provides the power to transform society.

Forms of direct action that we favor include "sit-down" strikes, where people maintain control over the place of work; "squatting," where people jointly occupy unused buildings for their own use; "hot cargo," where workers refuse to handle products in order to support the struggles of others; "social strikes," where workers continue to provide their labor for the benefit of other working people in the community but deny the revenue or control of their labor to the bosses; and community-wide or nationwide general strikes, which demonstrate the power that the workforce has when it is united.

On the other hand, a strategy that relies on *indirect* action, such as electing representatives to government office, encourages a division between leaders and led, between those who make decisions and those who follow them. Electoral politics also leads to statist solutions because it tends to define the issues in terms of what State policies a set of leaders will implement. Because a political party is a vehicle for putting a leadership into State power, a political party cannot serve as a vehicle for people intent on creating a non-authoritarian society.

We particularly reject the so-called "vanguard" party as a model because it can only serve as the embryo of a bureaucratic state machine, as we see in the "communist"