

Presentation to NEW TECHNOLOGY, UNIONS & CHANGES IN WORK

*8th Annual Midwest Radical Scholars
& Activists Conference Oct 24-25 1997
Roosevelt Univ, Chicago.*

Abdul Alkalimat

Greetings. It is a pleasure to speak again at the Midwest Radical Scholars and Activist Conference. The eight years of this conference process has been a task of building an intellectual bridge into the 21st century, and I would like to salute people like Carl Davidson, David Williams, Rado Mijanovich and many others for keeping us meeting and on task.

The year since we last met has been one in which systemic symptoms of crisis have erupted. One of the major events was the UPS strike, the first nationwide strike by the new class of marginal workers, in this case part time workers. Another major event was the over throw of the

criminal regime of Mobutu in Zaire, by the Democratic forces led by Kabila. This marked the emergence of a new independent coalition of militant leaders representing new political options for Africa as she enters the 21st century.

These two events are the background for my remarks.

I would like to address three related topics:

- a. The relationship between technological revolution and class struggle;
- b. The class struggle in Africa in the era of globalization;
- c. The challenge this represents for revolutionaries in the USA

My first point can be stated clearly in a simple syllogism:

- a. the capitalist revolution of information technology is producing a permanent qualitative downsizing of the global workforce;
- b. this economically marginalized and socially excluded new proletarian class must fight global capital to survive
- c. therefore the capitalist technological revolution is producing the condition for a new era of class struggle.

This simple syllogism might seem obvious and tautological, but it reveals a fundamental fact about this emerging historical period, the rise and birth of a new class.

The debate over this new class emerged as chronic unemployment became known as structural unemployment leading eventually to the debate over the "underclass."

Generally, a great deal of the descriptive statistics one finds in works by William Wilson among others was useful and correct. He made a contribution as he helped launch the debate, but he was wrong on at least three fundamental points:

- a. The contradiction between the "truly disadvantaged" and capital is irreconcilable and therefore can't be transformed through a New Deal type policy of reform
- b. The new class is objective and material, but also it has its own subjectively and political potential as well;
- c. The revolution is both possible and practical.

This is critical for radical scholars and activists alike to understand. We can represent it by referring to

the tools of basic Marxist political economy. Let me quote a recent analysis by the LRNA:

The widespread introduction of electronics-based production has led to a dramatic rise in the organic composition of capital (the relation of constant to variable capital). Variable capital (the purchase of labor power) as a component of capital is beginning to be driven down towards a minuscule proportion of the total composition of capital. Although Marx discussed this process in relation to the falling rate of profit, under today's conditions it becomes the determining factor in the end of the capitalist system. Since variable capital is the sole source of surplus value and hence profit, the very foundation of the capitalist system is called into question. Capitalism is a system of production based on

profit being extracted from the exploitation of labor power in the process of production. Exploitation becomes increasingly difficult when production begins to involve fewer and fewer workers.

What the UPS strike points to is that permanent well paying jobs are being exchanged for temporary part time and minimum wage jobs. The UPS strike also points to this new class group as being a vanguard force in this new period of class struggle. But we must make a distinction between the economic struggle and class war, one is the fight for reform and one is the fight for revolution. I am using the term class struggle in terms of class war as Van Clausewitz might have put it: war is an irreconcilable conflict of opposing forces in which one side tries to annihilate the other. When labor was necessary as in the rise of

industrial capitalism a social contract to mediate conflict was fought for and expressed in terms of agreement over mutual interest. If labor is increasingly not necessary, then the conflict of people being pushed down will increasingly be a fight for survival against genocidal conditions.

My second point refers to an article I have in the new collection called Cutting Edge: Technology, Information Capitalism and Social Revolution. I want to comment on how this theoretical argument in my syllogism applies to Africa

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*Amela
Caren
Rados
Jim*

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Detailed Schedule as of October 21, 1997

Networking for Democracy

presents
the 8th Annual**Midwest Radical Scholars & Activists Conference****A Teach-In On Labor & New Alliances:
Strategies for Workplace, School & Community in the 21st Century****October 24 & 25, 1997**

Co-sponsored by:

Committees of Correspondence
Democratic Socialists of America
Midwest Center for Labor Research
Open University of the LeftRoosevelt Co-Sponsor:
School of Policy StudiesLocation: Roosevelt University
430 South Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois**Program****Friday, October 24****12:00-1:00 PM Registration, 2nd Floor Michigan Room**
1:00 PM Book Fair Opens, Michigan Room**1:00-3:00 PM Concurrent Sessions****A. Media, Labor & Labor's Media**Roger Kerson, editor & publisher, *National News Reporter*
Bob Ginsburg, Research Director, Midwest Center for Labor Research
Liane Chlorfene-Casten, Chicago Media Watch, Chair**B. Radical Theory: Why Dialectics? Why Now?**Bertell Ollman, Politics, New York University
Peter Hudis, *News & Letters*
Ron Aronson, Philosophy, Wayne State University
Kevin Anderson, Sociology, Northern Illinois University, Chair**3:00-5:00 PM Concurrent Sessions****A. Labor's Alliances: Learning from History**William Adelman, Illinois Labor History Society
Frank Girard, Editor, *Discussion Bulletin*
Jack Metzger, Labor Education, Roosevelt University
Rado Mijanovich, New Union Party, Chair**B. New Technology, Unions & Changes in Work**Abdul Alkalimat, Africana Studies & Sociology, University of Toledo
Pavlos Stavropoulos, Managing Editor, English Language Edition,
Democracy & Nature
Mike Parker, *Labor Notes*
Jerry Harris, History, DeVry Institute of Technology
Carl Davidson, Chicago Third Wave Study Group, Chair**C. Unfair Burdens: Working Women, Today's Inequalities & the Tasks of Unions**Judy Raight, former official UAW Local 600 in Ann Arbor
Carole Travis, union activist
Anne Zacharias-Walsh, labor writer
Ana Tennyson, teacher of independent living & problem solving skills,
National Louis University
Jan Boudart, Solidarity, Chair

6:00-7:00 PM Dinner Break

7:00-9:30 PM Plenary SessionCall to Order: Carl Davidson, Conference Organizer
Greetings from Roosevelt University School of Policy Studies

Speakers:

Helen Shiller, Alderman, 46th Ward
Bill Fletcher, National Education Director, AFL-CIO
Carole Travis, Political Director, Illinois SEIU
Manning Marable, African American History, Columbia University**Saturday, October 25****10:00 AM-12:00 Noon Concurrent Sessions****A. Market Socialism: A Debate among Socialists**David Schweikart, Philosophy, Loyola University; For
Bertell Ollman, Philosophy, New York University; Against
Rado Mijanovich, New Union Party, Chair**B. Race, Nationality & Winning Alliances**Bill Fletcher, National Education Director, AFL-CIO
Manning Marable, African American History, Columbia University
Mike Goldfield, Labor Studies, Wayne State University
[Chair to be assigned]**C. Structural Reform, Mass Campaigns & New Alliances**Bob Brown, South Shore Communiversity
Dan Swinney, Director, Midwest Center for Labor Research
Harry Targ, Political Science, Purdue University
Sondra Patinos, Committees of Correspondence, Chair**D. Cabrini-Green and the Future of Public Housing, or Do We Really Want to Live in a 'Communitarian City'?**Wardell Yotaghan, Co-chair, Chgo Coalition to Preserve Public Housing
David Peterson [to be confirmed]
Larry Bennett, Political Science, DePaul University, Chair**E. Building Worldwide Resistance to Unfree Trade, Corporate Greed & the New Global Austerity Program**Keith McHenry, Food Not Bombs, San Francisco
Two members of Baladre, an Iberian organization fighting unemployment,
poverty and social exclusion
panel members are presently on a North American Tour to End Corporate
Domination
session organizers: The Autonomous Zone (A-Zone)

Saturday, October 25 (continued)

12:00-1:00 PM Lunch Break

1:00-3:00 PM Concurrent Sessions**A. Democratic Schools in a Democratic Society**

Linda Voss, Chicago elementary school teacher
 Beth Meeker, Chicago Public High School teacher
 George Searfoss, Coordinator, Labor in the Schools Program, Indiana University South Bend
 Edna Pardo, League of Women Voters
 Bill Ayres, Small Schools Workshop, UIC, Chair

B. Globalization, NeoLiberalism & Labor Strategy

Kim Moody, *Labor Notes*
 Dave Ranney, Center for Urban Economic Development, UIC
 [third person to be announced]
 Mel Rothenberg, Mathematics, University of Chicago, Chair

C. Independent Politics: Labor-Community Alliances

Doug Gills, Center for Urban Economic Development, UIC
 Todd Reardon, Independent Progressive Political Network
 Helen Shiller, Alderman, 46th Ward
 Julie Brow, IL Committee for Proportional Representation
 Dennis Dixon, Jobs With Justice, Networking for Democracy, Chair

D. Welfare Reform, Income Policy & Trade Unions

John Hagedorn, Criminology & Sociology, UIC
 Helen Slessarev, Director, Urban Studies Program, Wheaton College;
 author of *The Betrayal of the Urban Poor* (1997)
 Wendy Pollack, Poverty Law Center
 Ken Gagala, Labor Education Service, University of Minnesota
 Rhon Baiman, Sociology, Roosevelt University, Chair

3:00-5:00 PM Concurrent Sessions**A. Expendable Youth: America's Child Welfare and Penal Systems**

Rennie Golden, author of *Disposable Children: America's Child Welfare System* (1997)
 William Ayers, author of *A Kind and Just Parent: the Children of Juvenile Court* (1997)
 John Hagedorn, author of *Forsaking Our Children: Bureaucracy and Reform in a Child Welfare System* (1995)
 Richard Doonan, Illinois DCFS worker, Chair

B. Anarchism, Ecology & Inclusive Democracy

Pavlos Stavropoulos, Managing Editor, English Language Edition,
Democracy & Nature
 Vic Speedwell, Autonomous Zone

C. Abolishing Lawyer Tyranny

Jane Doe, author of *Abolishing Lawyer Tyranny*, activist for across-the-board legal reform, founder, Just Cause for Legal Reform
 Bill Wendt, College of Complexes

D. Radical Philosophy at the End of the Twentieth Century

Bill Martin, Philosophy, DePaul University
 Ron Aronson, Philosophy, Wayne State University

E. Contested Terrain: Identity, Space and the Social as Political Battlefields

Dennis Bryson, Ph.D. in History, UC Irvine "The Politics of 'the Social'"
 Talmadge Wright, Sociology, Loyola University, "Homeless Exclusions, Homeless Resistances: Urban Social-Physical Space as Contested Territory"
 Lauren Langman, Sociology, Loyola University, "The Political Economy of the Self"

F. The Role of Culture in the Movement

Janet Kuypers, Scars Publications & Designs, "My Experience in the Small Press"
 William Leahy, foreign correspondent, *Irish Times*, "Reportage"
 Fred Whitehead, publisher of newsletters *People's Culture* and *Freethought History*, "The Need for Cultural Strategy"

G. Workshop on Proportional Representation: What is PR? Models of PR, Here and Abroad; What's Being Done and What Can You Do?

Dan Johnson-Weinberger, founder of Illinois Citizens for Proportional Representation
 Julie Brow, Independent Progressive Political Network, IL Citizens for PR

H. Nix-MOX: Is There A Way Out of the Nuclear Trap? (Plutonium-based mixed oxide)

Sydney Baiman, Nuclear Energy Information Service (N.E.I.S.) on the health effects of radiation
 Corey Conn, N.E.I.S. on the dangers of high-level nuclear waste transport through Chicago by train and truck, and pending bills HR 1270 & S104

I. Free Liberation Nation: The Drug War & It's Cure

[to be confirmed]

J. So You Think You Know Everything about Anarchism?

Bill Burns and the A-Zone Free Skool Anarchist Study Group

K. Green Politics, Green Movement, Green Future?

Lionel Trepanier, Greens Forestry Network
 Bob Rudner, Chicago Arcology Network, Chicago Greens Calendar
 Wes Wagar, Greens Regional Representative, Green Party, Greens Calendar

L. Mideast [to be confirmed]

Dick Reilly

M. Helms-Burton and Democracy in Cuba

Slides & Discussion from recent visit

N. Civil Liberties & the Prison Growth Industry

Todd Reardon, National Lawyers Guild
 [others to be confirmed]

P. Will Teach For Food [tentative]