



Announcement on the Formation of the Johnson City New Labor Committee



We, the founding members of the Johnson City New Labor Committee (JCNLC) and its Editorial Board, are excited to publicly announce our formation and wish to outline our immediate goals, tasks, and summations for this initial period of expansion and consolidation! For membership inquiries, organizational correspondence, thoughts, criticisms, or advice, please reach us at jcnlc@proton.me.

As a New Labor Organization, JCNLC is fundamentally based in the struggle of the U.S multinational working class (proletariat) for independent, class-combative, and class-conscious trade unionism and towards socialist revolution. The New Labor Organizing Committee¹ (NLOC) currently represents the highest form of class-conscious labor organization in our country, and we are beholden to the NLOC for its leadership, general political line, and structure. As part of the developing campaign to construct a New Labor Center and New Industrial Trade Unions throughout the U.S and the World, JCNLC exists to expand and consolidate our local forces of proletarian leadership/class-consciousness and to train, educate, and mobilize these forces along the line of revolutionary trade unionism.

As a New Labor Committee, JCNLC functions as a geographic-based mass organization tasked with establishing a mass-line of democracy and leadership between us, the NLOC, and the workers and oppressed peoples of Johnson City, the Tri-Cities, and Tennessee, coordinating the common activity of our membership, and initiating/leading campaigns principally geared towards the demands of wage-earners inside their workplaces. To support our members' union/shop campaigns, JCNLC must also conduct internal campaigns of expansion, consolidation, organized mobilization, social investigation/class analysis, and education/propaganda, all towards the formation of a revolutionary united proletarian front and popular front of anti-imperialist, anti-Yankee, and anti-fascist struggle.

One of our first internal campaigns will be based around the construction of a newsletter that can be utilized to collect, expose, and advance the grievances, conditions, and demands of Johnson City's working class and oppressed masses. We must construct a voice for the working people— an independent and self-sustaining press of newsletters, shop-papers, artwork, propaganda, and educational literature that will genuinely represent the interests of the masses and won't shrink away from revealing the under-belly of capitalism at work.

As a New Labor Worker Circle, we do not exist to coordinate the work of local shop-organizations or other mass organizations for them, as our external campaigns are specifically initiated for the purpose of constructing independent organizations with their own areas of responsibility and specific networks of masses, contacts, and leaders, and putting them on their own two feet. As outlined in the NLOC's Charter for Workers Circles, the democratic centralism (structure, discipline, and leadership) of the NLOC and its affiliated shop-committees supersede our own, and voting rights in the NLOC are to be gained through membership in these committees. JCNLC will serve as a launch-pad and basis of support for these specific organizations and their campaigns, as well as other organizations and campaigns like the People's Defense Committees.

While the mean hourly salary in JC is around \$25² (which includes proletarian wage-labor, petty-bourgeois salaried labor, and even bourgeois salaries and is calculated by dividing average annual salary by average annual hours worked), 70% of JC's population makes less than this average³, with actual working class jobs (proletarian wage-labor in the retail/sales, food preparation/serving, office/call center, logistics, construction, and manufacturing industries) only paying an average hourly wage of \$12-\$17⁴. Despite our "growing economy", JC has a high poverty rate of 21.1%, which is 6% higher than the state average and 8% higher than the national average⁵— 9% of JC's population actually makes less than 50% of the poverty-line⁶. With a population of 73,337, a 3.2% increase since 2020 (2023 saw the biggest increase since 1997) our per capita annual income is \$36,210 on average⁷ (about \$5,200 greater than it was in 2019) and has increased proportionally with inflation. This statistic, however, is heavily skewed by our bloated middle class, one that has existed for all of JC's history from its start as a petty-bourgeois settler-colony, but is today based out of the local medical and educational industries, both of which have seen increasing investments amidst an ongoing gentrification campaign led by the local ruling class (ETSU, JC Schools, Washington County Schools, Ballad Health, the Veterans Health Administration, and Frontier Health together employ 21.1% of Washington County's workforce⁸). It should be clear to most workers that increases to the small amount of "educated", wealthy, and middle class positions there are does not mean a better life for the majority of people, but can actually ruin lives due to inflation, gentrification, and a larger police presence.

In addition to our more recent influx of high income residents, spurred on by below-average costs of wealth after decades of capital flight, investments from the city (like the Downtown Improvement Grant Program⁹ and the Johnson City Remote Work Campaign¹⁰) have created a higher demand (of rich people) for housing, inflating property-value and in turn increasing the property taxes the city can collect. Most recently, a 25 cent increase to our local property tax was passed that will fund the development of consumerist and government infrastructure, as well as raises for the pigs¹¹. This shows that JCPD has a vested interest in brutalizing poor and homeless people out of downtown JC and JC as a whole so they can maintain the inflation of property-value (consumption by the rich) and thus their own salaries.

Although it may be the property-owners who directly pay property taxes, it is actually the workers, whose value is extracted by the capitalists and landlords, who pay for these taxes with their labor. Every tax on the rich is a ten-fold tax on the workers they exploit. The current median rent is \$1,084¹² while it was only \$860 in 2021¹³, with 42% of people having to pay upwards of 35% of their income on rent¹⁴. These rent hikes have lead to increased evictions and homelessness, with many of those not immediately thrust onto the streets being displaced to the poorer surrounding towns like Erwin, Unicoi, and Elizabethton.

None of these issues are unique to Johnson City, however, and only reflect larger trends in the Tri-Cities, the United States, and World-Wide. The Tri-Cities region's estimated population has reached 524,885¹⁵, up more than 14,000 since the 2020 census¹⁶. Most of that growth has been since 2021, as the region grew by 1.2% in 2022 and 1.3% in 2023¹⁷. Kingsport and Bristol are already going through similar forms of gentrification while their local ruling classes maintain the illusion of economic growth at the expense of the working class and oppressed masses.

Clear examples of this are the fact that 46% of those living in Northeast Tennessee are living paycheck-to-paycheck¹⁸, with the unhoused population in the Tri-Cities increasing from under 400 to over 900 since 2020¹⁹! Campaigns that ignore the class realities of Johnson City only serve to accelerate and deepen this inequality and gentrification. There are too many grievances to list here, but the revolutionary movement that will wash away all of them starts with basic organizations of the working class like trade unions that build the revolutionary foundation from which our further political struggles can grow.

A. Lozovsky²⁰ describes how, in the fight of labor against capital, "the only social force possessed by the workers is their numerical strength. This force, however, is impaired by the absence of unity. The lack of unity among the workers is caused by the inevitable competition among themselves, and is maintained by it," competition that is an inevitable result of being forced to sell ourselves on the labor market, and so "the trade unions developed originally out of the spontaneous attempts of the workers to do away with this competition, or at least to restrict it, for the purpose of obtaining at least such contractual conditions as would raise them above the status of bare slaves." But beyond the role of unions in the day-to-day economic struggle of wage-laborers against their employers, struggles for demands like higher pay, insurance, vacation time, etc., "the trade unions, without being aware of it, became the focal points for the organisation of the working class, just as the medieval municipalities and communities became such for the bourgeoisie. If trade unions have become indispensable for the guerilla fight between Capital and Labour, they are even more important as organised bodies to promote the abolition of the very system of wage labour²¹."

The working class is dying, starving, and crippling under the system of wage-labor, and those less fortunate than them, those who cannot even work to survive, are left on the streets or in the prisons to rot. We need a genuine, revolutionary labor movement that can meet the demands of the masses and will oppose those reformists, opportunists, and capitalist agents that seek to "resolve" the antagonistic contradiction between labor and capital using the medium of the capitalist State and class-collaborationism, only winning gradual pay-bumps that increase the amount of dues the union bosses can extract but that don't even correspond to the short-term market-rate of wages, much less the long-term cost of living.

Those short-term “benefits” promoted by the establishment state unions do more harm to the workers than good by deceiving us into thinking that performative “picket lines”²², labor racketeering²³, and State-certification²⁴ actually represents our interests. The only thing capable of resolving the struggle between labor and capital is revolution. State unions like the AFL-CIO only end up resolving the capitalists’ fear of losing money and political power due to work-stoppage and militant labor action. State unionism²⁵ exists to incorporate organizations of the working class into the capitalist State and make it that much easier for our employers to break a strike, purge revolutionary elements, or implement an exploitative, sell-out contract.

By far the dominant state union in the Johnson City area is the AFL-CIO, with UA local 538, CWA local 3871, APW local 365, UAW local 2155, IATSE local 699, etc.²⁶, literally every single union in our area except for one, BLET local 781²⁷, being affiliated to the AFL-CIO. Johnson City is also the seat of AFL-CIO’s Upper East Tennessee Central Labor Council. The AFL-CIO is notorious for its use of workers’ dues to pay-off its favored politicians and to organize the same pigs who break our strikes and brutalize, arrest, and murder our co-workers, friends, and family²⁸.

Almost all of the above-mentioned unions serve as labor-brokers, not basic organizations of the working class, extracting a training-budget from workers’ dues rather than out of the employers’ pockets and openly collaborating with the employers to sell their laborers off for the “best” price. UA local 538, for example, advertises that “we deliver on our promise to churn out highly-qualified Skilled Workers & place them in excellent jobs with our Signatory Contractor Network²⁹,” making no mention of how they would actually protect their laborers from exploitation or horrible working conditions. Even though these unions dominate our local labor movement, they simply do not have the political or economic reach to become a primary or even secondary force of political repression, with the local ruling class preferring their internal, corporate structures of management and private arbitration, as well as tactics of coercion and deception by the schools, cops, and churches.

The lack of even basic political activity like propaganda against “unfair labor practices” is endemic to any unions operating under right-to-work laws³⁰ that seek to do everything “the right way,” through the “necessary channels,” which simply means liquidating any attempt at political-organizational activity out of fear of being charged with “coercion” by the State. This causes these “unions” to devolve into bare economic organizations of capitalism— training schools, labor brokers, pension managers, banks, and insurance groups. The political activity of these unions are so low or blatantly Fascist that even our local DSA³¹ chapter steers clear of them at all costs. All of this is to say that there are fertile grounds for constructing genuine shop-organizations of the working class in the vacuum left by state unionism in the South. If sewn, these grounds can produce genuine fruits of labor— concessions and victories against our employers and the capitalist State, and the foundations for socialism.

**Join the Johnson City New Labor Committee and the New Labor Organizing Committee
in Reaping the Fruits of Our Labor!
Down with U.S. Imperialism and State Unionism!
Up with Revolutionary Trade Unionism and Liberation!**



¹See “Introduction to the New Labor Organizing Committee” on newlaborpress.org.

²https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes_27740.htm

³https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes_27740.htm

⁴https://www.bls.gov/oes/2023/may/oes_27740.htm

⁵<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/johnsoncitycitytennessee#>

⁶<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSST1Y2023.S1701?g=160XX00US4738320>

⁷https://issuu.com/kshoun/docs/final_budgetbook_fy25?fr=sNGY4ZTYzMTA5OTc (p. 27-28)

⁸https://issuu.com/kshoun/docs/final_budgetbook_fy25?fr=sNGY4ZTYzMTA5OTc (p. 21)

⁹<https://www.thejcda.org/dig>

¹⁰<https://www.bcurbanreview.com/gentrification-is-here>

¹¹<https://www.wjhl.com/news/local/johnson-city-commission-gives-final-approval-to-budget-property-tax-hike/?ipid=promo-link-block1>

¹²<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2023.DP04?g=160XX00US4738320>

¹³https://issuu.com/kshoun/docs/final_budgetbook_fy25?fr=sNGY4ZTYzMTA5OTc

¹⁴<https://data.census.gov/table/ACSDP1Y2023.DP04?g=160XX00US4738320>

¹⁵<https://www.wjhl.com/news/local/tri-cities-sees-record-population-growth-for-second-consecutive-year/>

¹⁶<https://www.wjhl.com/news/local/tri-cities-sees-record-population-growth-for-second-consecutive-year/>

¹⁷<https://www.wjhl.com/news/local/tri-cities-sees-record-population-growth-for-second-consecutive-year/>

¹⁸<https://www.wjhl.com/news/local/report-46-of-northeast-tn-households-struggling-financially/>

¹⁹<https://www.wjhl.com/news/local/homelessness-increased-in-northeast-tn-according-to-2025-pit-count/>

²⁰Solomon Abramovich Lozovsky (1878-1952), Ukrainian Bolshevik and General Secretary of the Red International of Labor Unions (1921-1937).

²¹*Marx and the Trade Unions*, p. 16-17.

²²For more info, read editions #8-10 of *New Day at UPS* at newdayarchive.wordpress.com.

²³See *Political Economy of the American Labor Movement* on newlaborpress.org.

²⁴Read “A Worker’s Intro to the NLRB” on newlaborpress.org.

²⁵For a definition of state-unionism, please read *State Unionism in the US* by the Southern New England Labor Council (SNELC) at newlaborpress.org.

²⁶A full list of JC’s unions can be found at <https://www.causeiq.com/directory/unions-and-employment-organizations-list/johnson-city-tn-metro/>.

²⁷Affiliated to the IBT (the Teamsters), another notoriously corrupt and class-collaborationist state union. For more info, read *New Day at UPS* (linked above) and *New Day at Amazon* at newdayatamazon.wordpress.com.

²⁸Read “Get the Pigs Out of Our Unions!” by the Working People’s Association of Charlotte at workingpeoplespress.news.

²⁹<https://www.local538.org/about-local-538#OurTeam>

³⁰For more info on right-to-work laws in the South, read “On Right-to-Work Laws and State Unions” at newlaborpress.org

³¹To better understand the reactionary role of DSA in the labor movement, please read *DSA: Bourgeois Center in the Labor Movement* on newlaborpress.org