

Factionalism in the Labor Movement: Real and Imaginary Obstacles to Unity

Although he claims to be non-factional, Trotsky is known to everybody who is in the least familiar with the working-class movement in Russia as the representative of “Trotsky’s faction”. Here we have group-division, for we see two essential symptoms of it: (1) nominal recognition of unity and (2) group segregation in fact. Here there are remnants of group-division, for there is no evidence whatever of any real connection with the mass working-class movement in Russia. And lastly, it is the worst form of group-division, for there is no ideological and political definiteness.

- Lenin, *Disruption of Unity Under Cover of Outcries for Unity*

The outcry against “factionalism” has become a system. The enemies of the Marxists are deliberately using it to bamboozle the workers. When some decision adopted by the workers is not to the liking of some intellectual or group of intellectuals, the outcry is raised, “Help! ‘Factionalism’! Help! ‘Factional coercion’!”

- Lenin, *The Narodniks and ‘Factional Coercion’*

When a worker becomes convinced of the need to organize, the first question they usually ask themselves is, “What organization should I work with?” In the US, there are numerous establishment state unions, and generally, each state union has at least two major caucuses within it that are responsible for the bulk of union literature, organizing campaigns, etc. Not only this, but large firms are frequently divided into multiple unions, sometimes with competing organizing campaigns. And then within those unions, the leadership may be from diverse professions or even simply career bureaucrats with no professional experience outside the nonprofit sector. The labor movement in the US, at least superficially, appears to be a colossal mess of jurisdictional warfare that the average worker simply cannot navigate.

In fact, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) system was created this way on purpose. A similar situation predominated in the 1920s, where the overwhelming majority of American workers were unorganized and the labor movement was a loose conglomeration of gangsters, careerist hacks, and reform-minded idealists. But when the Great Depression hit, the American workers were rapidly awakened to the facts of imperialism and more and more were organized by the Communist Party. The capitalists who formerly were thrilled by the ineptitude of the union leaders realized this ineptitude made them equally inept at maintaining their reactionary control over the workers. The struggle between the reactionary factions in the labor movement weakened the ability of each faction to keep the rank and file under control. Thus, the need arose to manage the factional warfare in the labor movement to a certain extent, and for the state itself to formally encourage and promote the domination of “trade union capitalism” which had been developed by the original business unionists. This need was met by the state unionization of the trade unions, which allowed the state to directly manage “union democracy”, by restricting which unions/offices would be up for election, who would be eligible to run

in those elections, controlling how the elections would be carried out, and being the ultimate arbiter and mediator when it came to union recognition and so-called “labor disputes”. This system continues today, although it has developed to a much greater extent thanks to the invention of intra-union caucuses which also hold their own elections, and the intervention of nonprofit organizations (which aren’t beholden to anyone but their funders) in union activities.

Thus, the apparent diversity of organizations in the American labor movement is in fact an illusion. The numerous state unions and caucuses taken together create the illusion of choice, but in actual fact they all practice the same nonsense of filling out government forms and working with the employers to standardize/raise the rate of exploitation. The closest thing to “freedom of choice” in the labor movement in the US is whether one joins the CIA-backed Democrat-supporting AFL-CIO or law-enforcement-infiltrated Republican-supporting unions like IBT or UBC. Even though each union claims to be for unity, not a single one of them has been able to unite a significant chunk of the working-class for a major strike in decades, and they cannot even manage to unite themselves into a single national union center. It is objectively in the interest of the working-class that as many workers as possible be as united as possible, and for the labor movement this means raising the proportion of organized workers and straightening out the line of their organizations until they are able to merge into a single union center that is based on industrial unionism. However, the preponderance of factionalism throughout the labor movement ensures the vast majority of workers remain unorganized and ideologically, politically, and organizationally backwards.

What is Factionalism

Factionalism was originally identified by Lenin who analyzed the formation of groups who were fighting for control inside the Communist Party: “Even before the general Party discussion on the trade unions, certain signs of factionalism were apparent in the Party, namely, the formation of groups with separate platforms, striving to a certain degree to segregate themselves and to establish a group discipline of their own.” [*Preliminary Draft Resolution Of The Tenth Congress Of The R.C.P.[b]*] Of course, if factionalism simply meant the creation of any group, then it would not be possible to organize workers without factionalism. Mao, in his criticism of “Twenty Manifestations of Bureaucracy” during the Cultural Revolution, pointed out how factional bureaucrats behave: “There is no organization; they employ personal friends; they engage in factionalism; they maintain feudal relationships; they form cliques to further their own private interest; they protect each other, the individual stands above everything else; these petty officials harm the masses. This is sectarian bureaucracy.” Essentially, factionalism is a substitute for real organization. It replaces voluntary, goal-oriented teamwork with loyalty-based personal profiteering. Factionalism allows for small organizations of the minority to organize parallel to, and attempt to influence and control, the will of the majority. Thus, factionalism can be confused with genuine working-class organization by the unconscious worker, and indeed often is in a labor movement saturated with criminal gangs.

It is not difficult to see how factionalism harms the labor movement. If each individual organizer prioritizes themselves and their personal clique above the masses and their peers, even a popular and progressive labor organization will rapidly deteriorate into a war of all-against-all. If each bureaucrat is simply scrounging as much for themselves as possible, there can be no teamwork among the paid organizers and the bulk of the rank and file will turn on “their” union sooner or later.

What differentiates a reactionary faction from a principled split (as Lenin carried out against the Second International) is political line, class stand, and conduct towards the workers. None of these factions apply criticism-self-criticism, the mass line, or unity-struggle-unity. This is how Lenin demanded factionalism be defeated:

In the practical struggle against factionalism, every organisation of the Party must take strict measures to prevent all factional actions. Criticism of the Party's shortcomings, which is absolutely necessary, must be conducted in such a way that every practical proposal shall be submitted immediately, without any delay, in the most precise form possible, for consideration and decision to the leading local and central bodies of the Party. Moreover, every critic must see to it that the form of his criticism takes account of the position of the Party, surrounded as it is by a ring of enemies, and that the content of his criticism is such that, by directly participating in Soviet and Party work, he can test the rectification of the errors of the Party or of individual Party members in practice. Analyses of the Party's general line, estimates of its practical experience, check-ups of the fulfilment of its decisions, studies of methods of rectifying errors, etc., must under no circumstances be submitted for preliminary discussion to groups formed on the basis of "platforms", etc., but must in all cases be submitted for discussion directly to all the members of the Party. [Resolution: On Party Unity]

By applying the principles Lenin lays out for working-class revolutionaries to the labor movement, we can clearly outline a set of methods that class-conscious workers should employ to avoid and combat factionalism. In particular, Marxism provides us with the tools of criticism/self-criticism, democratic centralism, and open, aboveboard two line struggle to combat the illness of factionalism in all organizations, including labor organizations. There must be *no* concealment of failures or organizing defects by leadership from the rank-and-file members, there must be complete transparency regarding differences in opinion and freedom of discussion based on previously established principles, criticism must be scientific (i.e. have some basis in practice and not be literary pronouncements against perceived factional enemies), and ultimately everything must be based in the struggle of the working-class, not loyalty to a slate or platform. (One could cite a number of "platforms" in the labor movement adopted and subsequently discarded immediately after union elections, as well as slates composed of former enemies.) Factions in the labor movement rarely give themselves a clearly defined area of responsibility within which they hold themselves accountable for failing to win the masses' grievances. (For instance, contrast the self-criticism of the West Charlotte New Day at UPS organizers with Teamsters Mobilize adopting the slogan of "take back our union" despite the fact they are a tiny minority of the IBT membership with even less support than O'Brien.)

Factional Activities

The existence of factionalism and gangsterism in the labor movement is completely taken for granted. The multinational US working class is literally held hostage by the so-called "organizers" meant to "represent" them. For instance, a [poultry worker in Hammond](#) "organized" by the UFCW had to appeal to the NLRB to toss out their union, claiming the officials were "dragging their feet and have not been negotiating good contracts... This union doesn't represent us, and it's ridiculous that the UFCW is manipulating this one dated NLRB policy to keep us trapped in the union, even though most of us have expressed interest in voting the union out. My colleagues and I – not union officials – should be deciding whether the union stays or goes." The NLRB ruled against the workers in favor of the UFCW. Imagine that—the capitalist courts protecting the "union representation" from workers trying

to toss them out. That should give pause for reflection on what precisely the role of these “labor organizations” is in the workforce.

That is only one, minor instance of factionalism. But it is a matter of routine that “organizing” in the American labor movement means organizing a faction for imposing an agreement on the rank and file and extracting dues money from them.

What is characteristic of all of these factions, and what enables their organization to persist even while the union collapses around them (for instance, TDU in the Teamsters), is factional discipline. This means that the members behave one way in union meetings or on picket lines and another way in their factional organizing. What this means on a practical level in the labor movement is that members of organizations like TDU/TM in the IBT, CREW in IATSE, UAWD (when it existed) in the UAW, act like bog-standard state union officials 99% of the time, but then 1% of the time, usually in private to the rank and file or among their fellow factionalists, or buried deep at the bottom of lengthy think-pieces on the alleged progressive potential of the state unions, they are willing to criticize the union. What this means on an individual level is every “organizer” is prepared to defend “their” state union, local, or caucus to the death, but will shamelessly distribute blame for the problems facing the labor movement everywhere else—including on the rank and file.

Here is an example. UPS is conducting layoffs on a national scale. UPS offers to pay drivers to resign in order to reduce headcount. Do the Teamsters spring into action to fight layoffs? No. Do they fight for a severance package for non-drivers? No. Instead, [they victim blame the UPSers](#): “We urge you not to make a shortsighted decision that could jeopardize your retiree health coverage, pension, and financial future—while giving UPS exactly what they want: fewer Teamsters.” Do the Teamsters for a Democratic Union criticize this obvious jab at the rank-and-file and failure to take responsibility on the part of the IBT officials? Of course not! Instead, [they say](#), “we need to stick together.” Not “we” as in the laid off inside workers and the rest of the existing UPS employees, but “we” as in the drivers being offered money by UPS and the Teamster officials that failed to stop layoffs and buyouts in the first place!

Another example. The Amazon Labor Union successfully organized a major Amazon warehouse in New York. (JFK8.) The ALU is not able to secure a contract and Amazon uses a protracted legal battle to steadily drain the union of support. The original leader, Chris Smalls, declines in popularity after appearing in public with such notorious imperialists as Joe Biden and the AFL-CIO leaders, and an opposition faction develops among the ALU officials under the name “Democratic Reform Caucus.” This faction is able to win an election in which 250 out of 5500 eligible workers participated. (Less than 5 percent!) One of the victorious slate members said of this, “So there’s a large number of people still disengaged... Our caucus did as much as we could to campaign and get the word out.” [Evidently](#), it is not that the ALU organizers (the slate included the then-current treasurer) failed to engage with the grievances of the Amazon workers, but the Amazon workers who failed to engage with their union! And what was the “democratic reform” this faction instituted in the ALU? Affiliation to the gangster-ridden, pro-Trump International Brotherhood of Teamsters!

Actually, one of the prototype state union factions, Unite All Workers for Democracy in the UAW, dissolved in 2025. The entire process that led to its dissolution proves the caucus model is fit only for factional warfare and not at all for democratic reform. UAWD won the presidency in the UAW by endorsing career bureaucrat Shawn Fain. Fain, like O’Brien in the IBT, had previously been implicated in union corruption. Then, after this “victory”, Fain and UAWD lead a “sit-down strike” (really a lockout on behalf of the auto companies that kept most workers on the job) which is concluded with a

sellout contract that, just like at UPS, is immediately followed by mass layoffs and plant closures. Fain, like O'Brien, [also pandered to Trump](#) by promoting his tariffs. Then after all this, UAWD simply closes up shop in the summer of 2025 having accomplished the goal of whitewashing Shawn Fain and the UAW. In the background of all this, DSA member Brandon Mancilla started in the UAW as President of UAW Local 5118, the Harvard Graduate Students Union in Cambridge, MA. (This is important because all of the largest UAW organizing drives have been grad students, [who in fact make up Fain's base in the UAW](#).) He was able to work his way up to UAW Region 9A Director, a position he used to endorse fellow DSA member Zohran Mamdani in the New York City Democratic primary for the mayor in 2025. So the process is this: a grad student gets an important job in the auto workers union, union leadership “organizes” thousands of grad students who will pay dues and not question the auto workers contracts/conditions, union leadership completely sells out the auto workers and even liquidate the “opposition”, leaving the corrupt union bureaucrats totally untouched and conditions in the auto industry unchanged save for layoffs—and all this supposedly on the road to socialism represented by the union’s endorsement... of a Democrat!

Not all factions have to formally constitute themselves as such. For example, there is intense group-division in the Starbucks Workers United, mainly around the issue of prioritizing strike organizing over establishing a national contract with Starbucks at all costs. The latter is supported by an informal faction of SEIU officials. The existence of a pro-SEIU faction within SBWU opposed to the workers [was undeniably proven in the course of the Chicago strike](#), in which the pro-SEIU lawyer called law enforcement to alert them of the work stoppage before it even started—against the interests of the actual striking workers. The paid organizers of the state unions are literally rats for the capitalists, and if they are inclined to go against the decisions of the workers—in this case because they deluded themselves into thinking arrests would cause negative press which would cause Starbucks to establish a contract with SEIU—then workers be damned!

One of the largest employers in the country is the United States Postal Service. This employer is divided into several craft unions. One of the larger of the USPS craft unions, the National Association of Letter Carriers, now has a faction called Build a Fighting NALC. This faction describes their origin as, “[Taking] inspiration from the Rank and File Movement which came out of the 1970 Postal Strike. Starting in Branch 36, the rank and file leaders of the strike organized an opposition group dedicated to transforming the NALC in their time. They won One Member One Vote for national officer positions, and eventually succeeded in electing Vincent Sombrotto president of NALC in 1978.” Note how they specifically identify themselves with the sellout leader that was elected after the wildcat strike, and not with the wildcat strike itself. This is not an accident. And in case that was too ambiguous, [they specifically identify themselves](#) with the traitors in the IBT and UAW: “The gains made by unions in the past few years, like the Teamsters at UPS, and in particular autoworkers in the UAW, show what’s possible when unions get organized around a fighting strategy to fight for our interests.” The NALC officials have had years to organize against the Delivering For America initiative, they have had years to organize a strike since their collective bargaining agreements expired and the rank and file was locked in arbitration. They deliberately chose not to. Isn’t it odd that BFN’s response to this isn’t to chuck out the NALC officials that created this mess in the first place? Instead, this is [what they say](#) to do to “get organized”: “We have to create organized BFN chapters parallel to our NALC union structures to effect change. Despite what some may say, we are not an outside group—we do not counterpose ourselves to the union, nor do we seek to compete with it. We are dedicated union members who are seeking to change our union for the better, because we understand that it is where our power lies.”

Strange! BFN wants to set up a parallel structure to NALC but not “counterposed” to NALC. Is it not

obvious this is a reactionary faction set up by union loyalists for protecting the union officialdom? If you “are not an outside group”, why set up “chapters parallel to our NALC union structures”? BFN is clearly contradicting themselves here. This is for the purpose of swindling the rank and file.

They published an [article](#) titled, “NALC Needs To Prepare To Fight Privatization”, which claims, “Build a Fighting NALC has advocated winning the right to strike since our inception. The importance of the strike weapon has never been more clear. After years of protests and reasonable appeal, President Nixon forced our hand in 1970. Now, President Trump is poised to do so as well.” Yet nowhere is the word “wildcat” even used. Nowhere does BFN demand NALC defend the right to strike. This is the same nonsense pushed by the Teamster factions in 2023, where they vaguely allude to striking, but don’t actually prepare one or even discuss the obstacles to preparing one. This is because the number one obstacle to a letter carriers’ strike is NALC, and clearly, BFN prioritizes the reputation of NALC over the needs of the rank and file USPS workers. *In a state of a formal legal ban on striking, which currently exists for the USPS workers, the issue of the wildcat strike is the fundamental problem for labor organizing.* The pro-wildcat strike people are objectively on the side of the proletariat, whether they are communist or not. And on the other hand, NALC is on the side of the bourgeoisie by definition through their collaboration with the strike ban. Organizations like BFN have a disorganizing effect because they try to blur the line between these two sides, by wrongly claiming the right to strike can be won through factionalism inside NALC.

One final example: the Caucus of Rank-and-file Entertainment Workers in IATSE. IATSE, like the IBT, is rife with organized crime and has a lengthy history of imposing sellout contracts and collaborating with fascist thugs against the labor movement. Yet here is how CREW describes the problems in IATSE: “So why has the leadership gotten so distant from what members want? ‘The less members know about their union, the less control they have over their union,’ said Alex McCarron, a draftsperson in Local 52 and 829 in New York. ‘In the short term that ignorance benefits leadership, because it makes their jobs much easier; but over time it undermines their bargaining position as well. Without the members, leadership has no real power at the negotiating table, and gradually their power (and the union’s) slowly ebbs away. If CREW can organize individual members with common grievances into larger campaigns for change, we will make the union stronger in the process,’ [said McCarron](#).” In other words, IATSE leadership didn’t betray the workers. They’ve merely “gotten so distant from what members want”. On the contrary, it’s the stupid idiot rank-and-file whose “ignorance” is undermining the union!

However, in addition to the labor factions, there are also the revisionist factions that are active in the labor movement. The Democratic Socialists of America is the largest such faction, and they have [already been discussed by the NLP](#). It is worth examining certain features of the smaller revisionist organizations.

One such faction operating across the labor movement in New England is the Independent Socialist Group. The ISG includes a member of the International Steering Committee of the Railroad Workers United ([Nick Wurst](#)), itself a faction operating across the railroad brotherhoods (i.e. the rail unions affiliated to the Teamsters) and SMART-TD. The ISG also includes Peggy Wang, an organizer in the Massachusetts Teachers Association (specifically its administrative affiliate, the APA), and a supporter of Teamsters local 170. These people literally function as rats and propagandists for the state unions, with Wurst telling UPSers in 2023 to “give O’Brien a chance” and actually argued against a UPSer who claimed a \$21/hour starting PT wage was a sellout on the grounds that it would be a 5 dollar pay cut from UPS’ market-rate-adjusted pay at the time. He was joined in this effort by Evren Pallares who was rewarded for his wrecking activities with the position of chair of the local 170 futures committee. The

fact that the railroad workers and UPSers legally have no right to strike and are forced by law to kick up dues to a propagandist for the Trump administration (Sean O'Brien) is of no significance to these “socialists”.

It might be objected that there was no way of knowing ahead of time O'Brien would sell out the UPSers. Even if one were to ignore his twenty year career leading up to the 2023 contract, there were in fact plenty of warnings. Here is one from January of 2022: “Our Teamster members critically supported O'Brien against the Hoffa-backed TP slate, but we have no illusions in O'Brien. *Many of the top leaders on the TU slate, including O'Brien, are former bureaucrats who broke with Hoffa opportunistically. There's a real possibility these leaders may go back on their promises*, especially once they've held office for a while.” [emphasis added] This was written by none other than Pallares and published by the Independent Socialist Group. Isn't that curious? Before the betrayal, they were fully aware of it. Then in the course of the contract campaign, they actively worked to cover it up—and then afterwards, were rewarded with a lame position in the Teamster local. That is how many of these factions in the labor movement work: they are essentially extortionists trying to use propaganda to either squeeze the union for sops or, failing that, ride its coattails. In the event of a mass rejection of the contract and a wildcat strike, no doubt Pallares and the ISG would have held this article up as a credential to boost their image in the eyes of the rank-and-file. Since no such strike happened, they can just pretend it was never written. This is not Marxism, this is called speculating on the defeat of the masses and hedging bets with reaction.

It's worth noting that local 170 went from over a thousand workers participating in local elections to no local election in only six years. These are the conditions the revisionists come to power under: NOT a militant uprising of the victorious advancing rank and file, but sneaking into office after the victory of the corrupt labor bureaucrats and the betrayal of the rank and file.

Actually, also active in New England on behalf of the state unions is the Maoist Communist Union. MCU dishonestly presented its recent labor work thus: “For example, out of frustration with TDU, a section of Teamsters split off a few years ago and formed a new workers organization called Teamsters Mobilize (TM). After its formation, some of our comrades joined this organization. Teamsters Mobilize played the leading role in opposing the sell-out UPS contract in the summer of 2023. In contrast TDU supported this contract and tried to discredit those opposing it.” [Lies—TM never “split off” from the IBT or even TDU, whose convention they attended and put forward resolutions at. It was TM, not TDU, that “tried to discredit those opposing it” i.e. New Day at UPS. Strangely, TM was quoted in state media praising the prospects of the Teamsters under O'Brien in an article dishonestly claiming UPSers have the final say on Teamsters contracts. “There are other organizations, like TM, which represent the advanced workers in given unions and industries. These include groups like Railroad Workers United (RWU) which was the leading force in the push for the railroad strike in 2022. [Lie! Not only did they not organize a strike, they demanded the rail workers accept the sellout agreement and then turned around and told the UPSers to “give O'Brien a chance”.] Across the union movement a number of smaller groups have formed in recent years, often with the involvement of communists and semi-Marxists, which have as their aim the ousting of corrupt union leadership, breaking the alliance of the Democratic Party with the unions, and the establishment of an independent working class politics.” The fact that they have accomplished none of those goals, and are in fact working with people opposed to them, is evidently not worth mentioning.

Contrast this ISG article whining about DSA doing entryism in the Democratic Party with another article praising a DSA chapter which is opposed to a “dirty break” with the Democratic Party. This same article complains about the same conservative unions ISG members hold office in and

actively defend from the rank and file!

When "they" do opportunism, its because they're unprincipled sell-outs. When "we" do it its because we are pragmatic coalition-builders. We aren't working with liberals, Trotskyists, and pro-Trump union officials in a factional war on the logistics workers, we are working with "semi-Marxists" against the "sectarian" New Labor line. See how that works? MCU said a "key task" at UPS was to start a newsletter. New Day at UPS had already started that a year earlier, but [that doesn't count obviously](#) because its not controlled by their faction. They talk about "the task of uniting left-wing forces in the unions around a joint program of struggle against the capitalists and reactionary union officialdom"—the fact that New Labor organizations were already doing exactly this doesn't count because its not controlled by their faction. And so on.

Groups like the ISG, DSA, or MCU, that is, nominally socialist factions organized within the labor movement, are highly reactionary utopian socialists. They defend the representatives of US imperialism inside the labor movement and attack the rank and file and insist their demands and struggle be limited to what is approved by the state. (Recall that it was MCU, not O'Brien, who came out openly against New Day at UPS after the 2023 UPS sellout. Strangely, these "Maoists" forgot to self-criticize for a fellow TM member appearing in bourgeois state media promoting O'Brien.) Even though they claim to support a socialist revolution led by the proletariat, in practice they support the uppermost, most reactionary stratum of the petty bourgeois. Revolution in the US will be something like a labor-liberal revolution led by the pro-imperialist labor bureaucrats, not a socialist revolution led by the proletariat--that is the substance of their line.

Most, perhaps even all of these factions, are connected to Labor Notes in one way or another. Labor Notes essentially functions as an organizing center for factionalism in the American labor movement. It was founded by three members of the Trotskyist organization "International Socialists". It's worth examining how founder Kim Moody [described](#) the creation of Labor Notes. This is the context of Labor Notes' founding in 1979:

Deregulation in transportation was working its way through Congress and soon to pass, threatening national agreements in trucking and airlines. Chrysler went begging to Congress for a financial bailout and soon extracted concessions from the mighty United Auto Workers. These, in turn, opened the floodgates to union give-backs in industry after industry. Federal Reserve chief Paul Volcker jacked up interest rates that soon brought on a double-dip recession that cost two and a half million manufacturing jobs, brought strikes to a screeching halt, and effectively undermined a decade and a half of labor upsurge even before Reagan fired the striking air traffic controllers in 1981. The industrial unions that had been the major sites of rank-and-file rebellions, black caucuses, wildcat strikes, and contract rejections during the upsurge lost two million members by the time the recession bottomed out in 1982. The era of labor insurgency and mass social movements was about to give way to that of neoliberalism, union decline, "the end of welfare as we know it," and lean production. [emphasis added]

Note how carefully Moody is to avoid blaming the union leaders. The reality is that the unions supported virtually all of these measures. Reagan [was endorsed](#) by the Teamsters and National Maritime Union and Carter was endorsed by the AFL-CIO. Actually, deregulation in transportation didn't "threaten national agreements in trucking"—the first national master agreement between UPS and the IBT was in 1979. The fact that strikes virtually disappeared from the political landscape is attributed *not* to the unions, but to the Federal Reserve! And most curious of all, the disappearance of "rank-and-file rebellions, black caucuses, wildcat strikes, and contract rejections" is not explained. The

real insidiousness of Labor Notes, however, lies in the leadership's willingness to deceive the rank-and-file and profit off of factionalism in the labor movement. Like typical revisionists in the workers' movement, they over-emphasize external factors when explaining US labor's weaknesses while under-emphasizing internal factors such as class collaboration and opportunism. These internal factors are, as Mao teaches us, the true determining factors behind the weakness or strength of the workers' movement.

Here is how Kim Moody describes the unique "line" of Labor Notes: "We also knew, based on over a decade of IS experience in workplace and rank-and-file newsletters, movements, and organizations, that **Labor Notes could not be seen as, or be anything like, a 'front group.'** [...] Jim West, editor from the start until 2003, describes the basic purpose of the project: 'The idea all along was that **there were all these grassroots activists and groups in various unions around the country and that our mission was to bring them together** — to give them a sense that they were part of a bigger movement.'" [...] And this meant working with and aiding rank-and-file union reform movements, such as the Teamsters for a Democratic Union... As West put it, '**No sectarian language**, open to anyone with a rank-and-file perspective, and pretty much focused on trade union issues.'" So, on the one hand, Labor Notes must never be seen as a front group—but on the other hand, Labor Notes must never use "sectarian language" and must work with actual front groups. (TDU was also founded in part by the IS!) Moody is a very well-trained Trotskyist: he knows how to take the objective fact that Labor Notes has functioned for decades as a propagandist for the most reactionary union leaders in the labor movement and make it sound "left-wing". We aren't collaborating with the Republican-supporting Teamsters, we just aren't using sectarian language towards them. We can't be setting up a "front group"—so let's just drop socialism altogether and accept anyone with a "rank-and-file perspective"—oops, the UAW and IBT leaders we endorsed support Donald Trump. What all this really amounts to is a handful of Trotskyists decided to wreck the labor movement by uniting the various reactionary factions in the state unions behind a program of swindling the rank-and-file, and they have turned quite a handsome profit for themselves in the meantime. The fact that the labor movement is far worse off than when Labor Notes first started speaks to the *actual* role they have played as mere cheerleaders applauding the destruction of the trade unions and the looting and suppression of the rank-and-file.

It is clear that in the US labor movement, there are two disciplines. There is the discipline of the rank and file, who is expected to abide by the union leaderships' decisions regardless of how negatively it impacts them and regardless of whether or not they even have majority support, and must at all times obey the contracts and pay dues. And then there is the discipline of the leadership, which is allowed to do whatever it wants, regardless of majority vote and regardless to the cost of the rank and file and even regardless of the actual law. (See IBT General President Sean O'Brien threatening union members, his extralegal activities in local 25, and his \$20m racial discrimination lawsuit the Teamsters' rank and file paid for.) The various labor factions think they can square the circle by establishing their own factional discipline around advocating the rank and file support the leadership. This is sheer utopianism, and as evidenced by the last decade or so, has only driven the American labor movement to new lows.

Conclusion

There are two conditions for the creation and development of factions in the labor movement: first, the existence of imperialist superprofits which attracts not only cynical profiteers but even "honest" workers seeking a more equitable distribution of wealth under capitalism; second, the fact that it is the petty bourgeoisie that is best able to organize in the labor movement owing to its superior education and living and working conditions compared to the proletariat, who have less free time and resources, less education, and higher professional turnover which hinders organization. These two factors constantly give rise to petty bourgeois factions which in turn keep the American labor movement in a uniquely backward state. Blaming the preponderance of factions on "sectarianism" or "ultra-leftism" is an un-scientific analysis of the American labor movement that erases class distinctions and covers up the insidious influence of imperialism.

The panic over the NLOC among certain revisionist and legalist organizations in the labor movement reveals their real loyalties. Any honest worker, who is for trade union unity and the rights of the rank and file, has absolutely nothing to fear from the New Labor organizations. But the dishonest wreckers, who are for their own factional privileges and favor the "right" of the union officials to plunder the rank and file and ignore the rank and file's majority decisions, are rightly concerned with the "sectarianism" of the NLOC. This division highlights how there are basically two lines in the American labor movement:

1. The line of the NLOC and independent labor, which takes into account the existence of state unionism as the predominant form of opportunism and the overall dominant trend in the American labor movement, the decisive importance of the wildcat strike, the preference for fascism over communism of the established trade union leaders as evidenced by their collaboration with Trump and support for Israel, and the connection between revisionism, imperialism, and opportunism in the labor movement. The spearhead of this line is directed against American imperialism.
2. The line of the revisionist factions and state unions, which denies the systemic corruption of the American labor movement and hinges everything on the attitude of the existing trade union leaders, fails to recognize the impossibility of a decisive victory within the framework of state unionism, rejects the right to strike as fundamental to the labor movement, and attributes all "progress" in the labor movement to the establishment of collective bargaining agreements with the capitalists. This line adopts the standpoint of American imperialism and consequently pushes the masses away from the trade unions. It directly weakens the labor movement as a whole by funneling resources into the dead-end of electoralism in the state unions.

The basic error of the revisionist organizers is that they underestimate the importance of wildcat action by the rank and file. What has become to be known as "wildcat" action was for a century the bread-and-butter of even business unionism, that is, labor stoppages decided on collectively by workers independent of capitalists and their laws, courts, or state. Adopting the standpoint of the reactionary labor officials, they deny the necessity of organizing millions of workers outside the framework of the NLRB, whose legal dictat is accepted without question despite the fact that not even the capitalists recognize NLRB decisions as legally binding. They do not appreciate the fact that the existing labor organizations are unable to organize the masses of unorganized skilled laborers as a direct consequence of the NLRB framework, which limits the labor movement to what is acceptable to American imperialism. They do not recognize that within the establishment organizing framework of the current labor movement, not a single task of socialist revolution can be meaningfully carried out among the workers at the point of production.

Factionalism has had a disorganizing effect on the labor movement by converting would-be opponents

of state unionism into its lackeys. Factionalism blurs the line between the rights of the rank and file and the rights of the bureaucratic overlords. Factional publications generally spread ignorance. This is hardly a new phenomenon in the US, which has always had numerous competing labor and revisionist organizations riding on the backs of the masses, but it is an obstacle that must be overcome if there are to be any significant gains. The logistics industry is a perfect example of what happens when factionalism is allowed to develop. Gangsters rise to power in the trade unions, the rights of the rank and file are sold off for pennies, and working conditions deteriorate and eventually the industry itself grinds to a halt under the weight of fraudulent dealings and mass layoffs of productive employees. Factionalism can only be defeated by putting principle above everything else. Unity-struggle-unity, the mass line, and criticism-self-criticism cannot be optional features for labor organizing. They are fundamental principles of trade unionism. These powerful tools must be wielded by the rank and file to differentiate between renegades and honestly mistaken workers and strengthen the unity of the rank and file against imperialism.