

Labor Day 2025: No to dictatorship! Mobilize the working class against Trump's coup!

Socialist Equality Party (US), International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees
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This Labor Day, as workers gather in hundreds of cities and towns across America, one question dominates above all others: How will the transformation of the United States into a military-police dictatorship be stopped?

Trump is operating in the White House as a fascist. He has deputized gun thugs and masked men to terrorize cities and working class communities. Trump is beginning with immigrant workers, but it will not stop there. Having deployed the military and National Guard to Washington D.C., he threatens to send troops into Chicago and every major American city. The specter of Hitlerism now stalks the United States.

In a statement posted before Labor Day, AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler struck a pose of opposition, denouncing the domination of "CEOs and billionaires" and describing the government as an "oligarchy." But this is little more than empty demagogic. Tellingly, she speaks of oligarchy but not a word about capitalism or the corporate, financial and ruling class interests it serves.

In practice, the AFL-CIO has aligned itself with Trump's reactionary nationalist policies. In March, Shuler declared that "unions have always seen tariffs as one of the tools in our trade policy tool box."

There is no demonstration on Labor Day in Washington D.C., the political center of the country and the location of the AFL-CIO headquarters only blocks from the White House. Instead, the trade union officials have deliberately scheduled a separate and smaller demonstration in Washington D.C. for another week.

This is a calculated act of political cowardice and capitulation, designed to separate today's protests from any broader nationally coordinated struggle against Trump and to keep the issue of dictatorship off the agenda. The bureaucracy, composed of a privileged layer of officials, fears that such a demonstration would immediately expose the weakness of the government and, even more, the union apparatus itself.

The deployment of the military in US cities is not an empty show. It is the iron boot prepared to enforce a sweeping assault on the rights of the working class. Labor Day must be transformed into a show of strength and serve as the starting point for the building of a mass movement against Trump's unfolding coup.

The Socialist Equality Party and the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) urge workers everywhere to take the initiative in establishing rank-and-file committees, independent of the union apparatus, as the organizing centers of opposition to all attacks on the working class, and we pledge our full support in this effort. Every factory, workplace and neighborhood must be transformed into a center of coordinated struggle.

Such committees are necessary not only in the fight for higher wages and better conditions, as critical as this is, but to organize the working class against the threat of dictatorship. Under conditions of a military-police regime, no rights can be defended. Workers face the threat of police-state dictatorship and the stranglehold of a pro-war, pro-capitalist bureaucracy. To fight back, the working class needs its own independent strategy.

What is the situation that the working class now confronts? The scope of the attack spans every sphere of life. The Trump administration has launched a systematic assault on democratic rights, gutting federal agencies, terrorizing immigrant communities with ICE raids and deploying military forces in American cities. Concentration camps have been established for mass detention, while the National Guard is being mobilized to suppress any resistance to the emerging police state.

Economically, workers face unprecedented attacks on their living standards, as the Trump administration claws back all the gains won by prior generations of workers through decades of struggle. Trump's tariffs function as a regressive tax on working families and small businesses. Cuts to Medicare and Medicaid threaten healthcare for tens of millions and are only a prelude to the gutting of Social Security. Social inequality is at historic levels. Cultural institutions are being decimated, as Trump seeks to establish ideological control over all of society.

The assault on science and public health represents another front in this social counterrevolution. As we mark the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, climate change has dramatically worsened. Such catastrophes recur with ever-greater frequency throughout the world as the climate crisis deepens and will only be hastened by Trump's policies. Over the past five years, 1.5 million people have been killed in the US and over 30 million globally during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, while hundreds of millions more have been debilitated by Long COVID.

Every day in America, at least 15 workers are killed on the job (more than 5,200 annually), while nearly 3 million die worldwide each year from work-related injuries and diseases. These are not accidents but social crimes produced by a system that values profit over human life. The death of Ronald Adams Sr., a 63-year-old skilled tradesman crushed by an overhead gantry at Stellantis' Dundee Engine Complex in Michigan this past April, reveals this reality with searing clarity. His fate is shared by workers at US Steel's Clairton Works, those struck down by COVID-19 in every industry and by communities poisoned by chemical spills.

Internationally, American imperialism wages war on multiple fronts. The US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza has killed over 63,000

Palestinians, while billions in military aid flow to Ukraine in a proxy war against Russia that threatens global nuclear catastrophe. The same ruling class that imposes austerity at home squanders trillions on war abroad.

For those who cast ballots for Trump believing his populist rhetoric, the reality should now be perfectly clear. The man who promised to “drain the swamp” has filled it with billionaires. Workers who put their hopes in Trump must recognize that he has played them for fools, cynically exploiting their frustrations while carrying out the most reactionary policies in US history.

But there is no serious opposition to Trump within the Democratic Party or any other institution of official politics. The Democrats accept and legitimize Trump’s rule, block mass opposition and serve the same financial oligarchy. Together with the Republicans, they form two factions of a single ruling class, united in the defense of capitalism and hostile to the interests of workers.

Perhaps the most damning indictment is not only the brutality of the ruling class but the absence of genuine opposition from those organizations that claim to represent workers. In the face of the threat of fascist dictatorship, where is the American labor movement? The truth is that there is no labor movement worthy of the name.

What are called “unions” today bear no resemblance to the organizations that once fought to defend workers’ interests. They function instead as appendages of the corporations, a labor police force that blocks struggle rather than organizing it. UAW President Shawn Fain has openly aligned himself with Trump’s tariffs, while many other union leaders have rallied behind Trump, embracing the nationalist poison designed to divide the international working class.

When Republic Services workers struck this summer, when healthcare workers conducted Rhode Island’s longest hospital strike, when teachers walked out in Washington last week, and as Boeing and GE Aerospace workers continue their ongoing strikes, these struggles have been systematically isolated and betrayed by union officials more concerned with maintaining their privileged positions than defending workers’ interests.

The unfolding American catastrophe is a world catastrophe, threatening to plunge humanity into barbarism. The way forward cannot be found through the trade union bureaucracies, nor in working within the existing political system.

This is why the SEP and IWA-RFC encourage workers to build rank-and-file committees in every workplace. The IWA-RFC provides the impulse for and urges workers to take power out of the hands of the corporatist bureaucracy, establishing structures that enable genuine self-organization independent of the existing apparatus. There needs to be an organization within every workplace and factory to stop Trump’s coup.

The IWA-RFC is international in character, reflecting the objective unity of the international working class under globalization. Workers in every country face the same multinational corporations, to which the nationalist trade unions have no progressive response. To correspond with the changes in world production, workers need a global orientation and new forms of organization that transcend national boundaries.

In the struggle against dictatorship, war and social inequality, the IWA-RFC raises the following core demands:

No to dictatorship! The working class will not accept a fascistic military dictatorship in the United States. This is the central question facing the working class. There must be the organization of mass resistance. The working class must use its industrial and economic

power to defend democratic rights and stop the descent into barbarism.

Defend immigrant workers! The attacks on immigrant communities are attacks on the entire working class. Workers of all backgrounds must unite against ICE raids, concentration camps and the nationalist poison that divides us. The same capitalists who exploit immigrant labor at poverty wages are the ones destroying the living standards of all workers.

Against nationalism and war! The billions squandered on imperialist wars abroad must be redirected to meet human needs—healthcare, education, infrastructure and environmental protection. Workers have no interest in the geopolitical conflicts of the ruling elites.

Oppose the attacks on science and public health! The deliberate suppression of climate science, the banning of vaccines and the dismantling of all public health measures amid the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic serve only corporate profits.

For workplace safety and workers’ lives! The industrial murder of workers like Ronald Adams Sr. must stop. Every workplace must be made safe. Workers must organize independently to expose corporate crimes and hold the guilty accountable.

All of these demands cannot be separated from the broader questions of social organization and political power. So long as production is controlled by private owners motivated solely by profit, workers’ lives will remain expendable.

American workers carry the revolutionary heritage of those who fought the American Revolution and the Civil War. A central lesson of the Civil War was that the North could only defeat the Confederacy when it took on the system of slavery itself. Today, American workers must directly confront the capitalist system of wage slavery in order to achieve victory.

While Trump and the oligarchs seek to recreate America as if the Civil War had been won by the Confederacy, imposing the most brutal conditions of wage slavery on the entire working class, it is high time that workers organize and prepare their own counteroffensive.

The working class possesses immense social power to shut down production, bring the entire economy to a halt and overthrow the ruling class. But this power can only be realized through independent organization and political clarity.

This Labor Day, every worker must confront the gravity of this crisis: The organizations that claim to represent your interests have betrayed you; the politicians who seek your votes have deceived you; and the capitalist system is ruthlessly destroying your life and your children’s lives. The task now is to build independent organizations run by workers themselves—the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC)—to initiate an independent movement in the working class and prepare for the struggles that lie ahead.

Fill out the form below to contact the IWA-RFC and set up a rank-and-file committee at your workplace or neighborhood today!



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