

TALKING ABOUT WAGE SLAVERY AND COMMUNISM

This lively discussion took place between Stan, an MTA bus driver, and Ben, an ICWP organizer, after an ICWP workers' meeting.

Stan: Sorry I was late.

Ben: I'm glad to see you. Look, the latest *Red Flag* has an article about racist assistant manager Richard Herpers verbally assaulting a mechanic at Division 15.

Stan: Didn't hear about that. Wasn't my division. Heard anything about Dion?

Ben: He is suing the company for wrongful termination. Hope to meet with him to write more about his case.

Stan: I'd like to see him come back.

Ben: We too. Shop steward Pacheco was present when Herpers cursed the mechanic in his office, once again.. Pacheco did not mutter a word.

Stan: Yes, shop stewards are powerless. The union honchos took their power away.

Ben: All union officials seek to reform capitalism, not to destroy it. Even if honest, they only help perpetuate the bosses' wage slavery. In this crisis, however, UTU officials are openly supporting MTA's reign of terror, cameras, rotten contracts and all. Besides, why do we need unions to negotiate the terms of our exploitation? Under slavery, would we have fought to negotiate with the slave master how many lashes to give

us, or built a movement to destroy the slave master and slavery?"

Stan: To destroy the slave master.

Ben: Today, we fight to get rid of wage slavery. Have you seen the movie *Burn*?

Stan: No.

Ben: It's about a heroic slave revolt. In it, Marlon Brando tries to win some slave masters, sugar producers, to free their slaves and convert them into workers. He argued that it would be more profitable. He compares slaves to wives that must be fed, clothed, housed and taken care of even when the harvest is over. Workers he compares to prostitutes, paid for their services and discarded when no longer needed. It's a sexist image, but it makes a point.

Stan: Sounds very interesting.

Ben: You should also see *Quilombo*, about rebellions of African slaves in Brazil. Escaped slaves built cities in the jungle, lived collectively and shared everything in common without money or bosses, like in pre-class communism.

Stan: Sounds like a good movie too!

Ben: Yes. Today we continue their tradition. As wage slaves, we fight to break the capitalists' chains and build scientific communism. Workers' rebellions, rocking the world today, clamor for a better world.

Stan: You're right. But I question if workers here will rise and sacrifice as workers around the world are doing.

Ben: US workers have a rich history of class struggle. There are, for example, the black workers' rebellions in the sixties.

Stan: That was then but now is different.

Ben: For workers, the past never dies. It serves to build the future. The 1967 Detroit Rebellion showed that soldiers can support industrial workers' uprisings against the bosses. The armed rebellion was led by black ex-GIs recently back from Vietnam. Also, many soldiers stationed at Ft. Hood, Texas, refused to go to put down that rebellion and were sent instead to the stockade.

Stan: I guess you're right. Workers here might move. I have another question: Who decides what a worker is worth?

Ben: That was decided a long time ago when capitalism first began. Capitalism created the working class: a class with nothing but its labor power to sell to the capitalists in order to survive. The capitalists decided the price (wages): just enough to keep workers alive, and raise the next generation of wage slaves. The capitalists called it "continued wanting." Wages are the chains that enslave us to our bosses.

Stan: Yeah, *Red Flag* is always saying we are wage slaves.

Ben: We think we can't live without the chains (money). But the English capitalists had to impose capitalism brutally. They passed vagrancy laws. If you were caught without having a boss, they cut off one of your ears. The second time, they cut off the other ear. The third time they hung you!

Stan: I see we have to do something. I tell people to join the organization.

Ben: We only want to build ICWP.

Stan: That's what I tell them to join. You should know that corporate MTA must get *Red Flag*.

Ben: Good. We say that "to be attacked by the enemy is a good thing." What we are doing must be hurting them. We should be careful.

Stan: I'm not afraid. Let them come. I'm not doing anything illegal.

Ben: Just like it was illegal for slaves to plot to organize rebellions, it is illegal for us to organize against the capitalists. Let's not be fooled by their legality. They will use brute force when needed. We must build networks of *Red Flag* readers and ICWP groups to survive and grow under any and all conditions.

Stan: OK. Give me 5 extra copies of *Red Flag*. Here's a \$20 donation. I'll get together a group at work for you to talk to. Good night."

