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To: The Editor

The MILITANT'S coverage of the national truck shut-down and the program projected for that movement by Farrell Dobbs in his interview has been excellent.

I disagree, however, with Dobb's characterization of independent owner-drivers as being workers with expensive tools. In my opinion, this grouping must, sociologically speaking, be placed in the petty-bourgeoisie for the following reasons among others:

1. An independent trucker not only sells his/her labor power. They essentially are selling transportation of goods as a commodity, a transportation package that includes the utilization of capital equipment, i.e. tractors, sometimes trailers, etc.; raw materials - fuel and so on. They are capitalizing their own labor - an essential trait of the petty-bourgeoisie and qualitatively different than a proletarian's relationship to the means of production. Not only is the cost of their "tools" (tractors sell anywhere from \$25,000 - \$80,000 and up) qualitatively beyond the cost of a craft person's shop tools, it is utilized in a different way. As another reader of the MILITANT here put it, an analogous situation would be asking a tool and die maker to not only have several hundred dollars worth of shop tools but to also have their own lathes, jig bores, pay the electricity, rent, etc. Such a tool and die maker would no longer be a proletarian but a petty job shop proprietor.

2. Farrell Dobbs correctly points out that most of these independents are deeply in debt for their equipment. But that is irrelevant as far as their economic classification. Many capitalist enterprises are in debt and many fail all the time but that does not change their economic character.

3. Many of these independents employ wage labor on a job basis. This is particularly true in the moving sector of the industry where "day labor" is employed well below union scale.

4. The ambition of nearly every independent is to be able to buy more rigs and employ wage labor to become a successful capitalist. Many of them have and some will in the future.

A fleet driver or a worker in industry may have the same ambition but there is no opportunity for capitalizing their labor. All of their surplus value, no matter how efficient they are or how hard they work, is expropriated by their employer.

To classify these drivers as petty-bourgeois is not to demean them or suggest that they do not have a progressive role to play.

As a grouping they are economically unstable and very vulnerable to the deepening crisis of American capitalism.

They are certainly being affected by the current radicalization and are using proletarian methods of struggle. They can, and must, be won over to the side of the working class. The first

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priority in the struggle today is to dump the rotten IBT bureaucracy and utilize the Teamsters Union to mobilize and lead the fight of the independents as well as the fleet drivers. However, we must also recognize that should a severe social crisis develop while the workers movement is still dominated by criminals like Fitzsimmons, petty-bourgeois layers like the independents could become material for a fascist movement. This was tragically confirmed in Chile. It is also interesting to note that at the St. Paul mass truckers meeting reported on in the MILITANT, a right-wing tendency was distributing a leaflet calling on American truckers to emulate their Chilean counter-parts.

This political instability, inherent from their economic relationship in society, is why I think it is important to correctly label the independents - an unstable, largely economically unviable, layer of the petty-bourgeoisie.

I want to end by reaffirming my complete agreement with the political tasks outlined by Farrell Dobbs and congratulating the MILITANT on its coverage of this important movement.

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