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By Workers World Party
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Defund means abolish police!

“Defund the police!” has leaped to the top of the demands that mass demonstrations have been making since the May 25 police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. After that city’s 3rd Police Precinct building burned to the ground to the cheers of a majority of the U.S. population, there was no way for the U.S. rulers to ignore this demand. (tinyurl.com/y7lsqoh5)

Something had to be done — and not just arresting and charging the killer cop and his accomplices with murder.

The message rang clear: Take the bloated budgets away from police departments. Starve them for funds. Cut off the tanks and armored cars. End this repressive, racist force that uses lethal power.

The openly racist president and his party attacked the “defund” slogan. His Democratic Party opponent Joe Biden was just as quick to say he would add funds for the police — for additional training in “sensitivity.”

It was another reminder that both imperialist parties collaborate regarding the police. While they might argue over police procedures, both expect the police to continue their essential role. As Marxists, we know that this role is to stand above civilian society and impose the capitalist ruling class’s domination on all working people.

In all class societies, the police forces originated from those mercenary elements that the rich — landowners, slave owners, capitalists — hired to “keep the poor in their place.”

U.S. police evolved from those paid by the slavocracy to capture fugitive enslaved people. This origin has left its racist imprint on capitalist law enforcement.

Police protect the capitalists’ ability to exploit — that is, to steal — the wealth produced by working people (which capitalists call profits) and concentrate it in the hands of a few. To the U.S. ruling class, police are the best servants.

A debate has arisen over what “defund the police” means. Originally, it meant to eliminate police budgets or “abolish the police.”

Some participants in the movement have argued for more limited demands, such as: stop the Pentagon from supplying the cops with heavy military hardware like tanks and helicopters; cut police budgets by 10 percent and use the funds to supply social services to the people; establish civilian boards that answer to the community to recruit, train and run the police.

Workers World supports those forces in the movement that raise the slogan “Defund the police!” In the midst of an unprecedented uprising of the African-American community, one with broader support from the general population than ever before in U.S. history, any battle over specific demands merges with this living struggle and pushes it forward.

The police and the racists will fight even the smallest reforms. A struggle to defund police must be won against not only the Trump forces but also against the Democratic Party establishment.

As Marxists who see the police as a central component of the state, a state that imposes the rule of the capitalists on the workers, we from Workers World especially solidarize ourselves with those who extend the demand “Defund the police” to mean “Abolish the police!”

Only by abolishing the racist, capitalist police — what Marx called “the bodies of armed men” that enforce class rule — and replacing them with popular organizations that answer

to the working class and all oppressed sectors of the population — can the victories of today's massive movement be made permanent.

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