Fight divide & rule schemes

by the revolutionary union

The big struggle in Boston over the busing of school children is a contradiction intensifying the ruling class's divide and rule schemes and what we must do to strengthen our unity. The struggle pits Black, Latino and white working class schools against each other - just like they are in working class communities everywhere in this country. For example, when they say that black kids are bused to, has the lowest percentage of people in Boston who go to higher education.

To find decent schools with modern facilities, adequate number of teachers, etc., you have to go to the working class neighborhoods. That's why the capitalists send their own kids. And these may as well have a big sign saying, "working people keep out!"

BLACK SCHOOLS THE WORST

Black schools are even worse than the white working class schools. They predominantly black Jeremiah Burke High School, for example, that the white students there had to organize to demand toilet paper and hand soap in the bathrooms.

And now, with a deepening economic crisis, the ruling class is increasingly cutting back in social services such as education. In the latter part, they talk about "local control." (i.e., local schools should use local funds) And, with federal funding of education has been cut back significantly, including programs for remedial math and reading bi-lingual education, student loan assistance, libraries, construction, etc.

It was in this context that the ruling class this year put the Boston busing plan for the purpose of pitting the various nationalities against one another for the shrinking educational crumbs (the plan was drawn up by RISU, ordered into effect by a federal judge).

When the plan went into effect last fall, School Committeeman John Kerrigan and City Councilwoman Louise Day Hicks led groups of several hundred white people to attack Black children and seized leadership of a boycott of the schools (which originally included large numbers of Black people). People within the various nationalities had different reasons for boycotting. Some kept their children home because they didn't want to improve education, some for racist reasons, and some because they feared for the safety of their children.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION INTENSIFIED

Instead of protecting the black children from attack, the Boston cops intensify the ruling class against the Black community (rammacking a day care center at Columbia Point, indiscriminately beating up black people) and to a lesser degree the white working class communities.

The combination of more rapidly deteriorating schools and greater police repression of what Marxists call national oppression.

For centuries the Black people of this country have been ruthlessly exploited and oppressed. First brought here as slaves to serve the rich, after the Civil War black people were denied the rights they had fought for.

They remained chained to the land in the "Black Belt" South, where they developed the powerful nation, mostly made up of sharecroppers and tenant farmers; dirt poor themselves, but producing plenty of profits for the big banks and landlords.

Today, the Black people remain an oppressed nation, only now most of them are workers in the big cities - spread out all over the country, and at the same time forced to be concentrated in the cities. Most of these workers are part of the lower paid, "last hired, first fired" section of the working class. But, can't continue to be a source of super profits for the ruling class.

THE BUSING QUESTION

The national question - the struggle against the oppression of the minority nationalities, and the relation of this struggle to proletarian revolution, is at the heart of the United front Against Imperialism that exists to overthrow the monopoly capitalists and their system of oppression and exploitation in this country. This UPAI is the strategy to replace the old bourgeois democracy with the dictatorship of the working class.

It is the duty of communists, when dealing with all aspects of the national question, to analyze the contradictions in a scientific way and to develop a line which will point the way toward ending national oppression, forging greater unity in the working class, developing people's understanding of who their friends and enemies are, and building the struggle to overthrow the ruling class.

Using the method of Marxism-Leninism (scientific materialism), we must begin with a concrete analysis of concrete conditions.

It would be idealist (idealism and subjectivism) to say, as some so-called Marxists have, that because Boston is a general rule, that busing is okay in every particular case. Bottom line is that busing is good because it integrates the children of different nationalities so that they can learn from one another and thus develop greater unity of the different nationalities and of the working class.

We oppose this particular Boston busing plan because it doesn't really do anything to improve education for either Black or white students - or really do anything about discrimination and miserable conditions in the Black and Latin communities. In fact the busing plan is an attempt to intensify and other minority nationalities.

FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION

The fundamental contradiction (the one which defines the essence of the revolutionary struggle) in the U.S., as a capitalist country is between the capitalist ruling class and the proletariat.

This contradiction is intensifying as the current economic crisis worsens. To keep the working class distracted and divided the monopoly capitalists (imperialists) will try to heighten the contradictions among the people in order to intensify national oppression.

And now, precisely what is happening in Boston. The ruling class wants the white and black workers to fight over whether to allocate educational crumbs! The ruling class wants white workers against Black and Latin peoples for their deteriorating standards of living! Yes, and the imperialists (capitalists) want the Black people to fight the white workers.

How should communists deal with this? To lead the workers of all nationalities who the main enemy. This is why the RU strongly disagrees with the October League (OL); Socialist Workers Party (SWP); Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (PFL); Front for Imperialist Peace; others, when they say that the only main issue is racism. This means treating a contradiction among the people as the primary thing, while hardly even mentioning what in fact is the primary contradiction - the conflict between the working class and the ruling class.

But doesn't racism (white chauvinism) exist among the workers in South Boston? Of course it does. Racism is created and seized upon by reactionary bourgeois politicians like Hicks and Kerrigan, who are in the leadership of the anti-busing movement in order to maintain their own profits and protect their own hides by getting different sections of the working class to fight among themselves.

DIVIDE THE ONE INTO TWO

What should be the position of Marxist-Leninists be, then, on the "white boycott"? It should not be the OL's line of denouncing the boycott as totally racist and fascist. Why do we say this?

Let's look at the boycott from a dialectical perspective. The boycott has two aspects as does the opposition to busing in general among the people of the white South Boston community.

One of these aspects is racism. The other is a genuine defense of the white parents to participate in a busing plan that does nothing to improve education for their children. These two aspects are in contradiction because while better schools are in the interest
of white workers, RACISM IS NOT!
course only one aspect of a contradiction, one dominant at any one time. And if the chauvinist line of Hickey and Kerrigan went unchallenged in the white community, the racist aspect would remain dominant. But it is not challenged by the R& other progressive groups and individuals.
Some people may object that the situation isn't favorable for getting the white workers to see that white racism is self-defeating. Let's see what Mao Tse-Tung, the Chinese Communist Party, says about this kind of problem.
At certain times in the revolutionary struggle, the difficulties outweigh the favorable conditions and affect the principal aspect of the contradiction and the favorable conditions constitute the secondary aspect. But through their efforts the revolutionaries can overcome the difficulties step by step and open up a favorable new situation; thus a difficult situation yields to a favorable one.

The R& believes that Mao's point is at the heart of our problem. It underlines the importance of the white opposition to the busing and struggle to turn a bad thing into a good thing by utilizing the workers of all nationalities in the fight for quality education for all nationalities and the opposition to the ruling class in the crisis as well as a racial leadership of the boycott.

The fact that racism is not the only opposition to the busing plan among whites in Boston is revealed by an incident from last night. At that time a Haitian worker was beaten by a crowd in South Boston when white workers living in the area who were active in the boycott came to his aid. When the таки chores came they arrested two of the Haitian man's defenders and charged them with violating the Haitian's civil rights!

STATE NOT PEOPLE'S FRIEND

Many of the white workers talking about the boycott are racists, also call for federal troops to be sent into Boston to "break up the fascist gangs" in order to "protect black people." Isn't it wonderful. The same federal troops who were sent to smash the CTU's and millions in the cities during the 60's are now going to "protect black people." Rubbish! And these people have the nerve to call themselves communists.
We would also point out that if what's behind this line is an attempt to raise Black people's consciousness about the role of the state then it is equally bankrupt. Marxists never manipulate the masses to lecture them. Communists would never have any credibility if they did such things!

BUSING PLAN: DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS?

What about the line that says we should support the busing plan because of the right of Black people to be free to go to any school they want? Black people have the right to go to any school they want but, if you look at the concrete conditions around the busing plan it is clear that in fact it doesn't help Black children attend the

worse all white schools are considered integrated and all-black schools are to be destroyed under the plan.

NO TO FRAUD "EQUALITY"

Some people say that the busing plan in Boston, at least creates equality between the black and white students being bused, but what is meant here by "equality"? That blacks and whites can "equally" share a shrinking educational pie? This is a defeatist—no revolution position. We want the whole pie and we want to take it from the bourgeoisie who stole it from us in the first place. And since we're the ones who bake the pie anyway, we're also planning to make it bigger so that it can feed all the people.

Black people want, and the working class as a whole demands, the ending of oppression—not "equal," "democratic" sharing in oppression.

THE WAY FORWARD

The way to build the unity of the multi-racial working class and the oppressed nationalities in the Boston busing controversy is to fight the ruling class's divide and conquer schemes and to fight for decent and equal education.

Within this fight it is essential that a struggle be built against the Boston school committees politicize the race question and segregation. And it is crucial to fight all attacks on the oppressed nationalities in Boston and to organize and support self-defense in the face of attacks on these minority nationalities.

In addition the busing plan must be exposed as part of the ruling class's divide and conquer schemes and must be opposed. And it is necessary to fight actions by the state (through the army, police, etc.) on all the people.

Better Schools Not Better Busses

All Workers Unite

Busing struggle in San Francisco two years ago.