

SF Newsreel

Expels

Racist

Leadership

Major changes have been going down in the San Francisco chapter of Newsreel. Four white members, all in leadership, and closely connected with the Revolutionary Union, were asked to leave because of their racist and arrogant treatment of Third World people. The expelled "leaders" responded by breaking into the Newsreel office and stealing more than half of the organization's equipment, prints, and organizational papers.

Newsreel is a nation-wide revolutionary film organization. For almost eight years the sisters and brothers from Newsreel have been serving the people's movement by producing and distributing some of the best films documenting all aspects of the struggle against imperialism: films about the Vietnamese people's struggle, Black and Chicano liberation movements, about the liberation of women, about the struggle of all poor and working people against exploitation and oppression.

About five years ago, a collective of white revolutionaries involved in film-making started in San Francisco. Over the years, many new people, including Black, Chicano and Asian people, have joined in the work of Newsreel. However, the leadership and ownership of the Newsreel Corporation has remained in the hands of the few skilled whites who were there all along. Over a period of time, the growing membership of Newsreel, most of them Third World people, became increasingly aware of the secret control, manipulation and racism of this owning and governing core-group of white "officers".

After many frustrations and difficult struggles, the majority of Newsreel workers have found it necessary to purge this white "leadership" in order to continue to serve the needs of the people. The background of the purge was laid out in full detail by the remaining Newsreel staff. Here is what they have to say about their former "leaders".

"In practice the owner-leadership was:

1. Racist--giving token leadership to Third World people. There was token representation of Third World people in films, as well as a failure to train Third World Newsreel members in film-making skills.
2. Elitist--the core-group saw themselves as more politically advanced than the membership, and therefore maintained nearly all areas of responsibility within themselves.

3. Opportunist--fund-raising was done for Third World training programs, yet no Third World people were ever trained.

4. The quoting of Marxism-Leninism was used to stifle people's development of self-reliance and responsibility rather than to help each other grow.

5. In general there was little practice with the people they were always theorizing about."

Newsreel tried to deal with these weaknesses in a series of general meetings. However, it became clear that the "leaders" were unwilling to recognize or struggle with their own racist and dishonest practice. When members of Newsreel discovered that these "leaders" were also the official owners of the Newsreel Corporation, they realized that this economic and political control was the basis of their resistance to change.

The practice of these people since their purge has borne out the criticisms made against them. Shortly after being expelled, they broke into the Newsreel office at 3 A.M. and stole over \$6,000 worth of equipment and prints vital to Newsreel work.

Newsreel responded to this vicious attack in a patient and principled manner. A meeting was called and a number of groups and individuals were invited to hear both sides of the struggle. Widespread support was received for the demand that everything the expelled members stole be returned as a condition for further discussion.

The purged members, backed up by the Revolutionary Union, refused to recognize any wrong-doing. They even defended their thievery by basing it on their right to own private property. They refused to return the stolen material, but said that there should first be "negotiations" to work out a "fair" arrangement. They spoke as though there were two organizations, Newsreel and themselves, each with an equal claim to the equipment.

Newsreel did not "split" into two organizations. Certain individuals were purged because of acts and behavior unacceptable to the majority of Newsreel's members. These individuals have no right to the equipment or holdings of Newsreel, and their attempt to steal it is an act of gangsters and enemies of the people. They have shown themselves for what they are by their actions.

In the minds of the expelled members they were doing what was necessary, because they had a higher understanding of the revolution and

the needs of oppressed people. They claim that their work is more in the interests of working people, because they have mastered the theory of working class revolution. Whereas the other Newsreel workers, mostly Third World people, are confused and inconsistent, and lack the necessary skills.

Their political theory claims there is one broad movement of working people fighting against exploitation and the struggle of Black, Chicano, and Asian people is part of that movement. They pay lip-service to the idea that Third World people are fighting for self-determination as nations, not just as workers. They've shown by the way they wanted to make films and the way they related to Third World people, that they don't really recognize the right of oppressed people to self-determination.

Based on this theory, the white officers of Newsreel decided that the majority of Third World membership wasn't ready to determine the organization's direction, goals, and priorities. They did not recognize that the Black, Chicano, and Asian Newsreel workers are engaged in struggles for the liberation of their peoples. These struggles are the highest form that the fight against U.S. imperialism is taking at this time.

Imperialism rigs everything against Third World people, including sections of the working class movement itself and so-called revolutionary organizations. This white supremacy towards all Third World people is the most powerful weapon of the ruling class, and the most severe obstacle to revolutionary solidarity.

All along, leadership and control of Newsreel should have been based on sound political practice and the necessity for revolutionary Third World leadership, not on some abstract theory or technical skill, and in no way on private property. It is because these white officers failed to recognize and put into practice these principles that they were acting elitist and racist.

The members of Newsreel, Third World and white, are showing what self-determination is all about. They have exposed and gotten rid of their paternalistic "leaders", who must now be isolated throughout the revolutionary movement. With Newsreel in the hands of Third World revolutionaries we can count on a film organization which once again serves the people.

*Solidarity with Newsreel
Venceremos Organization*



Over 2,000 people from the Black community in Queens took to the streets on May 3rd to protest the unprovoked police murder of 10-year-old Clifford Glover.