The 13th National Convention of MCHR, held the first week in May in Cincinnati, Ohio, saw an escalation in the struggle against ultra-leftism in that organization.

After a largely successful struggle against the formerly dominant right forces in MCHR representing primarily by the CPUSA and elements close to it, the organization in the last year has been threatened by an infantile brand of "left" under the leadership of the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP).

A KEY ISSUE: Should MCHR be a narrow organization of health professionals or should it seek to broaden itself by including health workers and consumers?

Ultra-leftism condones right wing practices by dressing them up in revolutionary sounding clothing. At the rate of the RCP advocates, when we strip away the militant sounding rhetoric and analyze the actual political line, what we have is a politics that at every point weakens the masses in their struggle against monopoly capital.

To use a favorite phrase of the RCP, it is time to "turn up" their work in health.

MCHR CONSTITUENCY
One of the major issues in MCHR historical ly and at the convention is whom should it attempt to represent and organize.

Under capitalism, almost everyone suffers the effects of a health system based, not on human needs, but on profit. MCHR is not, however, to wage successful battles for better health care, must be a broad-based organization that unites students, nurses, workers, professionals and students in a common fight.

The RCP, however, believes that MCHR should be an organization of health professionals and students and should emphasize taking up the struggles of these groups. They have opposed MCHR taking up consumer-oriented issues like patients rights, and have opposed reaching out to the broader working and class movement around issues of occupa tional health and safety.

We support joining in the progressive struggles of workers and students. What we oppose is a narrow perspective which limits MCHR to those struggles, and excludes from MCHR health workers and consumers - groups who have the most to gain from changing the health system, and who have been disarmed and militant fighters for change in the past.

At the MCHR Convention, increasing numbers of people spoke up against a nar row line on constituencies. The issue was put more directly when a Minnesota consumer activist from Denver who stated that supporting MCHR as an organization of professionals was counterproductive and excluded professionals from consumers when our goal, in his argument, should be to maximize unity. We could not agree more.

REFORMS - BROADEN THE STRUGGLE
As communists, we understand that capitalist cannot be reformed out of existence; however as communists we must stand at the head of all the mass struggles of the people. We must simultaneously be exemplary fighters for progressive reforms while we raise the consciousness of the masses as to the limitations of those reforms.

The RCP has put forward the line that MCHR should deal only with local struggles against outbreaks and injustices and it should ignore broader reforms, especially those that might involve legislation. They have thereby driven away from MCHR many honest workers who have felt these struggles to be important.

We know that reforms like the right to or ganize and strike, the 8-hour workday, and better against racial and sex discrimination have been won, not through the beneficence of the ruling class, but through the determined mass action of the people. We know that the ruling class fights for the defeat of all progressive reforms (including legislative ones) and if it passed fights to mi nimize their impact.

Yes - the reform struggle presents us with difficult tasks, but so does making a revolution. Unlike the RCP, however, we do not fear the masses or any of their just struggles.

The line of the RCP serves only to narrow two ASFSCME locals at PGH, a few footloose, and some community people representing the social movements like SCLC, PUSH, and the NAACP.

The reason for remaining aloof from these groups, according to the RCP, is that it is dangerous to enter into coalitions contaminated by trade union bureaucracies and opportunist community leaders.

This stand exposes the essence of ultra-leftism: Save yourself from possible right wing errors by isolating yourself from the struggles of the people. It also exposes the RCP's white chauvinism in steering clear of mass organizations of black people, allegedly because their leadership is not consistent.

But the RCP has been defeated in the case of PGH. Provo, USA, the majority of the local Philadelphia MCHR chapter, and the overwhelming majority at the convention, have enthusiastically supported MCHR's participation in this coalition. Our strategy is to urge a broad coalition to unite behind a progressive pro gram: to develop an organizational structure that will maximize united action; and to reach out to rank and file PGH workers and the huge number of community people concerned with the threatened loss of our only public hospital; and even to win the fight to keep PGH open!

RACISM AND SEXISM - SUPPORT THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS
Our health system is thoroughly racist and sexist at every level: the inferior health care delivered in minority communities, the discrim ination against women and minorities in health related jobs and schools, and the denial of women's right to control over their bodies around questions like abortion and forced sterilization are only a few examples.

It would seem obvious for MCHR to be in the forefront of the struggles against racism and sexism in the health system, but the real test of the validity of taking up these struggles (or for that matter almost any struggle within MCHR) on the grounds that it raises "secondary contradictions" (racism and sexism) to the level of the "primary contradiction" (class).

We have seen, nationally, how this bankrupt and discredited line has led them to liquidate the struggles of women and national minority groups. They have opposed the desegregation of schools through busing, which in Boston, has opened them in the same camp at the Ku Klux Klan and other reactionary, racist elements. Similarly, their opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment has placed them in the same camp as the John Birch Society.

Within MCHR, the result has been that they ignore the struggle against racism and sexism and they take a contemptuous attitude towards those who have pushed MCHR to address these issues.

As communists we obviously agree that the class contradiction is primary; however, we understand that the struggles for democratic rights are crucial - not only for minority women, but for all of us, in order to defeat the right and keep us all united. These struggles are part and parcel of the class struggle, not something alien to it.

While the Convention did not spell out in detail a new strategy in this area, there was the beginnings of self-criticism around the organization's failures. Several people pointed out at least one obvious result of this failure - that nationally expressed health and social demands have been for the most part steered clear of MCHR.

PROGRAM
MCHR needs a program - a clear, comprehensive statement covering all major aspects of health care. This was not on the de mand at the convention. Over and over people talked about the lack of a program was hurting their work.

Without a program, it has been difficult to explain what MCHR stands for nationally, and has retarded the ability to educate both ourselves and others about health issues of concern and importance to the broad masses of US people.

A broad program would help to reverse MCHR's drift into narrowness. It would help to attract new members who presently assume that MCHR, as an organization, con siders many broad issues unimportant.

Given their dichotomous position on constitu ency, on reforms, on work in trade unions and coalitions, and on racism and sexism, it is no wonder that the RCP has in the past, consistently opposed the development of a broad program.

In response to the overwhelming sentiment of the convention, however, they did a total about face and called for a broad program. Even with this apparent change of heart, however, it seems clear that their ultra-left positions on the issues will lead them to push for a program that is equally narrow.

THE CONVENTION - A SUM-UP
While not detracting from the dedication and determination of those present, the de claining attendance at MCHR conventions is distressing: attendance at the 1974 conven tion was 300; in 1975 - 150; and this year - only 90. This is a reflection of the problems noted here and at the convention itself - namely the tendency to narrowness at all levels.

While the convention was generally self-criti cal around these errors, the special role of the RCP in formulating and perpetuating them is evident. The RCP's approach to the struggle has not been to come under sharp criticism, both for their incorrect line and for their sectarian and divisive methods of work.

While the RCP, understandably, did not cri tique themselves for their basic political approach, they were forced, under intense pressure, to finally admit to narrowing MCHR's program, and to a "style" of activity that was "sometimes unprincipled and subjective." Although these were superficial criticisms at best, it was a significant victory considering their total resistance to any criti cism or self-criticism in the past.

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Black member on the International Executive Board, the 22-person governing body of the UAW between conventions. Even though Black workers made up a large portion of the UAW membership and were subject to vicious discrimination in hiring and upgrading by the auto and aircraft companies, Reuther called the demand for Black representation on the IEB "racism in reverse" and a demand for "special privileges."

He led the opposition to this proposal at the 1943 convention, and the motion was defeated. The same debate with the same results was repeated at convention after convention, for more than twenty years, until after the organization of several caucuses of Black unionists and the Black redistricting of the 1960's did the Reuther caucus support a Black candidate for the Executive Board — Nelson Jack Edwards.

Early in 1951, the Detroit Negro Labor Council, led by William R. Hood of Ford Local 600, launched a petition drive in Detroit for a local Fair Employment Practices Ordinance. Reuther responded by issuing a directive to all locals in the Detroit area, calling on all UAW members who had signed the petitions to withdraw their names.

The directive offered this lame justification: "this irresponsible Communist-inspired approach to secure FEPC by referendum" had been started without the prior OK of the "United Negroes..." or other sincere advocates of FEPC in this community.

**REUTHER'S PRACTICE AROUND RACISM**

In response to the problems of hiring and upgrading discrimination in the auto and aircraft industries, the UAW had gone on record in its early years in favor of FEPC clauses in all UAW contracts. Reuther had included a demand for such a clause in the 1946 negotiations with GM, but quietly dropped it during the course of that strike.

During Reuther's campaign for UAW president at the subsequent 1946 convention, he spoke to a Black caucus about his stand for equal rights. During Reuther's presentation, the head of the UAW Fair Practices Office, George Crockett, Jr., rose and criticized Reuther for dropping the demand for a FEPC clause in the GM contract. After his victory in the presidential race, Reuther sent Crockett a letter suggesting that he quit the UAW staff.

In short, it's one thing to make a speech about segregation in Alabama, and quite another thing to fight racism in your own back yard. Unfortunately for the union, neither Reuther nor Woodcock measured up when it came to that.

Racism and discrimination remain rampant in the industry and the union, especially the area of upgrading, and the unity of the UAW has been badly weakened as a result.

**THE RANK AND FILE VOICE**

But the UAW rank and file have not been asleep all these years. Wildcat strikes have increased, as the International signed no-strike clauses tying the union to binding arbitration and limiting the right of locals to call strikes on their own authority. And every 2 years now since the 1974 convention when local union officials face election, over 50% of them are voted out by the angry rank and file membership. But most important and effective in achieving real change have been the many organized efforts to reform the union and bring it back under the control of the membership.

Throughout the 50's, 60's, and into the 70's, the rank and file has continued to organize and fight for a democratic militant union. The rank and file forces have fought on many issues — the 1968 extension of terms of office from one to two to three years; the 1958 sell-out of the short work week; the 1973 sell-out on voluntary overtime; the elimination of the right to strike; they fought for the demand for referendum vote for UAW International President and officers, and an end to racial discrimination.

Some of these fights, such as the fight against the 3-year term of office, have been partial victories for the rank and file. Opposition at the 1974 Convention forced the International to allow a compromise resolution on the 3-year term, which allowed local unions to retain the 2-year term for stewards and committeemen. Many locals then voted to retain the 2-year term against the wishes of the bureaucrats.

**CAUCUSES FIGHT FOR BETTER UAW**

There have been several organized, national caucuses in the UAW since 1950, whose main objectives have been to return democracy to the union, fight racism and discrimination and demand a militant fight against the Corporations. The Committee for a Democratic UAW, formed in the early 50's by President Carl Stellato of Local 600, and the National Committee for Democratic Action in the UAW, formed at the 1968 Convention in order to fight for referendum election of officers and a dues increase. Now both defunct, they played an important role in organizing and leading rank and file workers in their fight to strengthen the UAW.

The National Negro Labor Council, the Negro American Labor Council, and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers have all served at one time or another as the focal point and organizing centers in the fight for full equality of Black UAW members. The NNLC and the League were also leaders in the fight for a more democratic and militant union generally, and by playing that role set an example for all auto workers, whites as well as Black.

The center of organized opposition in the UAW today is the United Negro Caucus, formed in 1967 to fight for a $1/hour wage increase and against the surrender of the Cost-Of-Living clause in the 1967 contracts. Since that time, the UNC has taken up the fight for membership referendum election of International Officers, the short work week, the right to strike, and for a decent contract in 1967, 70, 73, and 76.

**LOCAL RANK AND FILES ORGANIZE**

In addition to these national movements, there have been hundreds of local rank and file caucuses in the UAW over the past 25 years. These local groups have taken up the struggle for the right to strike, against speed-up, against the retiree vote in local inplant elections, for real health and safety protection, for equal hiring and upgrading of Black and women workers, and for a better union in every way.

It is to this movement, organized and still unorganized, that auto workers must look when we search for a better future for the UAW. Our union has a rich history, full of heroism, struggle, and unity as well as elegant and a majority of us to use the lessons of that history to build the kind of union we need for the battles that lie ahead.

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**MCHR SET BACK IN**

**MCHR**

The isolation of the RCP forces was seen in the election of national officers where their candidates won only the two positions which were uncontested. The other three national officerships were won by independents from Boston, Denver, and Philadelphia.

The general mood of the convention was also reflected in the resolutions passed on the final day. The first resolution directed the national officers and the National Executive Committee (chapter representatives) to develop an MCHR program that is to be broad in scope and include positions around such issues as racism, sexism and NHI.

Another resolution stated that any state meetings at the national level are to define MCHR's constituency as "people who are concerned with fighting for better health care," rather than the RCP's formulation "professionals and students."

Finally, the convention defeated a resolution, proposed by an RCP cadre, that MCHR go on record as supporting the July 4th "Man of the Year" campaign by the Back's Backs demonstration in Philadelphia.

In conclusion, this 13th national convention must overall, be considered a victory for those who want to build MCHR as a broad based mass organization.

However, the narrowness the RCP seeks has to a large degree already been achieved, as indicated by the size and scope of the convention. Holding key offices such as national chairperson and a majority on the NEC, it retains its stranglehold on MCHR.

Unless independent forces are able to rebuild the organization—vigorously broadening our organizing and struggling sharply against sectarianism — MCHR, along with the RCP, is doomed to oblivion — the ultimate fate of all dogmatist and sectarian organizations.