

one reads: "Organize armed self-defense committees linking the black, Latino and other minority communities to the unions." This talk of armed struggle is just militant posturing, which the proposed organization is not supposed to take seriously. But it puts forward the attitude that militancy depends, once again, on the unions. This helps promote the attitude, wait for the unions, wait for NOW, wait for someone else to really bring in the large masses. This makes militancy into an empty pose and actually demoralizes the activists about what can be done now.

Furthermore, RWL doesn't put forward the methods that could be used right away to improve the sweep and power of the pro-choice movement. These methods don't require

waiting for that wonderful 32nd day of March when the AFL-CIO has its second coming. These include bringing pro-choice agitation directly to the masses of workers, and not banking on union resolutions. These include strengthening the impact of clinic defense actions by improving the use of pickets, leaflets, and other methods of making a statement to the masses.

These are some of the serious problems in RWL's proposed resolutions for the conference. Let us not wait for the union leaders or reformist bigshots. Let us have faith in our own forces and go out and organize the working masses for women's rights. ■

## Rebel warriors who long for establishment support RCP and "Refuse & Resist" are silent about NOW's attacks on the movement

The group "Refuse & Resist" takes part in clinic defenses. Last December it held a national conference on *The battle for reproductive rights—where to next? Strategies for mass resistance*. It talked about targeting government institutions, the church, etc. But it failed to say a word about the attacks of the NOW leaders and other bourgeois liberals against the militant clinic defenders. It didn't say a word about the class differences between the various forces on the pro-choice side, and what can be expected of them.

This was no accident. The Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) is the most influential force within Refuse & Resist. RCP poses as great revolutionaries. It is fond of various militant slogans. But it is constantly on its knees before the bourgeois liberals as part of an effort to reach an alliance with them.

### Opposition to fascism is supposed to rule out class differences

RCP carries out most of its work in the pro-choice movement through Refuse & Resist. Although Refuse & Resist contains people with various views, RCP formed it and is the most influential group within it. And RCP's view seems to be that opposition to fascist outrages will unite the workers and liberals in a common struggle. Class differences are supposed to become irrelevant.

Thus RCP and Refuse & Resist may at times appeal to "outraged youth and outraged elders", it may refer at times to poorer women, minorities, etc. But it does not bring out the different class stands of the working class and the bourgeois liberals. Instead, it may refer to different

views about the U.S. Constitution and say that some people in Refuse & Resist think that it is a guarantee of rights, while others think it is oppressive. But, Refuse & Resist stresses, everyone can unite against the current outrages. The idea seems to be that the differences between liberals and revolutionaries only refer to abstract questions, while everyone can unite on the practical struggle against fascism.

In fact, the political differences with the NOW leaders and other bourgeois leaders concern such issues as whether there should even be militant clinic defenses. And on this, both the RCP and Refuse & Resist are silent.

### Refuse & Resist's plan of action

The December 18, 1989 issue of RCP's newspaper "Revolutionary Worker" promoted Refuse & Resist's *Plan of Action for the Battle for Reproductive Rights* which was presented at the December conference.

This document avoids all mention of NOW and other liberal women's organizations. Evidently it does not consider NOW's stand an important issue for the movement. But in fact NOW's leadership has directed tirades against the militant activists. They preach the dead end of working with the police and relying on the courts and any bourgeois politician who says a word about abortion rights.

### RCP is silent too

And RCP is not only silent about NOW in its work in Refuse & Resist, but it also refrains from fighting NOW

in its own newspaper *Revolutionary Worker*. For example, its November 6, 1989 issue contained a special 48-page pamphlet on abortion rights (entitled *Women are not incubators!*) as a supplement. This pamphlet says nothing about the hostile stand of NOW and the bourgeois liberals towards the militants.

The pamphlet plays down class politics. Oh yes, it is full of talk about minorities. And it has militant phrases about "unleash the fury of women as a mighty force for revolution". But the only bourgeois forces it directly identifies are the "Christian fascists". Otherwise it is vague, talking at most about the "ruling class" and "mainstream politics". It doesn't even mention who this mainstream is, and it doesn't talk about the bourgeois liberals. It doesn't even refer specifically to the conservatives, just the "fascists". This presumably is an appeal to the liberals—everyone can supposedly oppose the fascists, but opposing the Democrats and Republicans, well, that's another story.

RCP apparently thinks that it is enough to say a few words against "working within the system" and carry out some actions to be a revolutionary force. They do not see the need to develop the political consciousness of the masses concerning the class basis of the capitalist offensive on the masses or concerning the differences within the pro-choice movement.

### **RCP on the Nov. 11 clinic defense In Washington, D.C.**

Indeed, when they do mention NOW, it may turn out to be to prettify it. Consider the Nov. 11 clinic defense in Washington, D.C. This was one of the actions which the NOW leaders tried to squelch. The NOW leaders assured one and all that the police would handle everything; they formed a line to prevent the mass of activists from getting at Operation Rescue (OR); and they denounced the militants as allegedly being responsible for the clinic being closed. (See "Activists defeat 'Vets for Life'" in the December 1989 issue of the *Workers' Advocate*.) But *Revolutionary Worker* described NOW as right in the forefront of the action. (See the issue of November 20, p. 15)

And at one point, they quote a militant statement from a woman in a South Dakota NOW chapter. In fact, there were rank-and-file activists around NOW, or who had gone through NOW non-violence training schools, who sympathized with the militants anyway. But this increases the importance of dealing with the stands of the NOW leadership and explaining the debates that broke out at the action between NOW and the militants. Instead RCP hides the treachery of NOW's line from circles around NOW, and from other activists growing discontented with NOW's policies.

Thus RCP's prettifying of NOW is especially harmful considering the present situation among the pro-choice activists. Militant activists have organized actions that go beyond the bounds set by NOW, while NOW has here and

there issued open denunciations of the activists. What is needed at this time to bring consciousness and clarity to this conflict with NOW, and along with this to show how to bring the pro-choice movement closer to the working masses.

### **Class Analysis**

RCP's friendly attitude toward the liberals prevents them from agitating on the class basis of the struggle. In theory, of course, RCP is all for class analysis. Some of their documents may say some correct things about the class forces in the abortion issue. But in their practical work in the movement they fear that too much about this will drive the liberals away.

This is reflected in the Refuse & Resist's *Plan of Action*, as it was in the RCP's pamphlet *Women are not incubators!*

Take the question of who is behind the "pro-life" movement. The *Plan* confines itself to the statement: "We will target government institutions, bodies, courts and politicians who are behind these attacks." All well and good. But it's not just a matter of this or that politician or institution. The *Plan* never explains that the capitalist class controls all these forces. It never mentions that the capitalist class is behind the anti-women crusade. It even leaves vague whether it is against all or some institutions, and if so, which ones.

Indeed the *Plan* avoids any political characterization of the forces involved in the abortion rights issue. It doesn't even mention the Bush administration. It makes a complete mystery of who is attacking women's rights, and what stands the politicians are taking.

Dodging the question of the class forces involved in the assault on women's rights makes the *Plan* more palatable to the liberals. After all, the liberals may get mad at this or that politician or court ruling. But they advocate reliance on the capitalist institutions overall.

In this light it is notable that the *Plan* fails to say a word about the "pro-choice" Democratic and Republican politicians. These politicians participate in the capitalist drive to impoverish the working people and have supported cutbacks in social benefits that affect poor women. They are incapable of a serious fight on behalf of women. Meanwhile NOW wants to convert the women's movement into a voting machine for these characters. Refuse & Resist may not be excited about campaigning for politicians. Yet the *Plan* passes over this issue in silence.

### **On Whose Shoulders Should the Movement Be Built?**

The lack of class analysis also obscures what forces the women's movement should base itself on. Instead of centering attention on the tasks needed to mobilize the working masses, the *Plan* only specifically singles out a desire to "rally and bring forward support from the medical community and clinic owners and operators...."

But already there are a number of cases where clinic owners have shut down their clinics at the first sign of pressure from the "pro-life" forces or even threatened to arrest both sides. RCP does not explain to the activists what they should really expect from the petty-bourgeois and bourgeois sections of the medical community.

## Will PL support choice?

The right-wing attack on abortion rights has aroused the anger of progressive people across the country. Naturally, one would expect that groups that consider themselves progressive would support the movement to defend the right to choose an abortion—right?

Well, not every left organization. The Progressive Labor Party, the self-described "egalitarian communists," is still missing in action. They have had virtually no coverage of the movement in their newspaper, *Challenge*, no organized presence in the movement, and no explanation of their position on the question. Their self-imposed exile from the movement has even bothered some of their own followers who began to write letters to *Challenge* questioning PL's boycott. Today, while the movement forges ahead, PL is still mired in a debate amongst themselves over whether to support the pro-choice struggle.

### PL Condemns the Mass Movement

What's behind PL's abstentionism is revealed in a *Challenge* article of Dec. 6, 1989 entitled "Pro-life or choice?: Where should the party stand on abortion?" This article was "offered as a kick off point for the formulation of the Party's line on abortion." Despite the headline, which makes it appear that PL isn't even sure whether they support abortion rights, so far all the articles *Challenge* has published seem to recognize them. But PL isn't sure they should have anything to do with the struggle to defend these rights. The article shows that PL's sectarian stand toward the struggle is based on the idea that the movement should be condemned because the bourgeois liberals are influential in it.

The article states: "The absence of a Party stance on the abortion question is harmful because it leaves a choice between the pro-choice movement, which is broadbased only among the middle class in the U.S. and does not address the problems of the working class, especially minorities, or the pro-life (anti-abortion) movement which has the potential of turning into a mass fascist movement." (*Challenge*, Dec. 6, 1989, p.9)

This statement demonstrates that PL equates the abortion rights movement with the bourgeois stand of the liberals such as the NOW leaders.

The efforts of the RCP to curry favor with the liberals is not just some minor flaw. It undermines the whole orientation of the movement. It obscures who the movement should target and the tasks necessary to strengthen the struggle. No amount of militant phrases can cover up this political cowardice. ■

Now it is true that the liberals only pay lip service to the demands of working class and poor women. And true again that the liberals oppose a militant fight against the anti-abortion forces.

But PL is unable to see any further than the bourgeois misleaders. Thus they falsely contend that the "pro-choice movement...does not address the problems of the working class." They ignore the fact that the working class and poor women will pay the heaviest price if abortion rights are curtailed. Moreover, the anti-abortion crusade is part of the whole capitalist offensive of war, racism and profit-grabbing.

The workers support abortion rights not because some liberal bigshot told them to, but because they know banning abortion will simply add to the cruelties capitalism heaps upon them. The PL article itself concedes "the soundness of the premise that a woman in a modern capitalist society is entitled to an abortion on demand." But then, pray tell, what is wrong with a struggle to obtain this entitlement?

### Running From Politics

PL's stand reflects their inability to deal with politics, which involves the stand of all classes on how society is to be run. PL is bankrupt in face of the fact that different class forces participate in the pro-choice movement. Evidently, they feel that cursing the whole movement because of "middle class" participation is sufficient.

But different classes in society inevitably express their stand on all important issues. One would think that so-called Marxists like PL would understand this ABC of political life. After all, the women's movement is not the only one with bourgeois and petty-bourgeois influences in it. The anti-racist struggle has its NAACP's and SCLC's. Bourgeois influence is carried into the workers' economic struggle by the sellout trade union bureaucrats. And the powerful movement against the Vietnam war had to contend with many liberals who sought to keep the masses from breaking with imperialism.

Following PL's logic, all political struggles would have to be dismissed as worthless while the activists sit on their hands waiting for the immaculate "pure" workers' struggle to magically appear. Of course PL isn't completely consistent, and they haven't abandoned agitation on all political