

DISCUSSION BULLETIN
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**FRATERNAL GREETINGS TO THE
TRADE UNION CONFERENCE!**



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CALL FOR A TRADE-UNION CONFERENCE

12 November 1976

To All Leading Committee
Members, Local Organizers
and Trade Unionists:

The Trade Union Commission hereby calls for a Trade-Union Conference, in accordance with the motion passed, to convene in the Midwest on Friday, 31 December 1976 and to continue for two more days, concluding on Sunday, 2 January 1977. The motion passed at the 6, 7 October meeting reads approximately as follows:

"The current economic stagnation and political difficulties are being acutely felt by our most submerged, vulnerable and irreplaceable section, i.e., our trade unionists. This has produced a variety of deformations including the beginnings of programmatic generalizations of opportunist impulses. Therefore, we project a TU conference to take place the weekend of December 31 in the Midwest. We will endeavor to make this a sophisticated conference to provide the trade unionists with insight into problems of trade-union work in the framework of the state of the organization. All fraction members, industrialized members with probability of fraction perspective, and appropriate others shall be entitled to attend. Further preparations, including the production of a memorandum and pre-conference bulletins, shall be undertaken by the TUC."

The 6, 7 October meeting also cautioned the following:

"Considerable care should be taken to minimize personal risk in travel over a wintery New Year's weekend."

Agenda

The following is the proposed outline for the agenda for the conference:

- I. General Report
Intersection of the general social, economic and political situation, and state of the organization
- II. Commissions
covering fractions and areas of general RO interest
- III. Educational
(Early Movement Trade-Union Work)
- IV. General discussion, proposals and summaries

Pre-Conference Bulletins

In accordance with the previous motion, the TUC is selecting previous and soliciting new written material for the Trade Union Discussion Bulletins to open discussion in preparation for the conference. The closing deadline for submitting lengthy written contributions to be published in the bulletins is Wednesday, 15 December. Brief contributions may, by prior mutual agreement, be submitted somewhat later. In any case, contributions of over 20 double-spaced pages cannot a priori be assured of publication. All contributions must be typed and double-spaced.

Conference Attendance

Attendance at this trade-union conference will be tightly restricted in line with the motion to allow the leadership of the organization to devote concentrated attention to the comrades who are "most submerged, vulnerable and irreplaceable" in their area of political work. Attendance will, accordingly, be limited to relevant Leading Committee members, local organizers, trade unionist members, industrialized members with probability of fraction perspective, and appropriate others.

Proposed Conference Assessments and Finances

Because the conference will be held over a short three-day weekend and because of the dangers of travel over wintery roads, most comrades will be flying. Road travel is not recommended. The conference will fail if fraction members, particularly those in the most distant and isolated areas, do not attend due to insufficient funds for travel. All comrades attending the conference will be assessed a flat rate of \$40 as a condition of attending. The central and overwhelming purpose of the assessed money is toward equalizing the travel expenses. Hence comrades will have a claim on the money in proportion to distance traveled, together with personal need. In order to be able to apportion this money equitably, it must be paid in as early as possible, not later than 15 December.

We are trying to arrange housing in homes so the only expenses incurred for the conference will be travel, food and a comfortable meeting hall. Local treasurers will collect the assessments. Remember, the deadline for assessments to be paid is December 15!

Conference Preparations

Housing: Participants who have friends, relatives or any other leads for housing accommodations should immediately and aggressively pursue them.

Time off: All conference participants, particularly trade-unionist members, must immediately begin to make arrangements to get time off work.

Travel: Once more, it must be stressed that comrades take the

utmost precautions for safe travel arrangements. Under winter conditions, air and train are the safest means of transportation. Reservations should be made immediately due to the unusually crowded travel conditions over the holiday period.

Fraternally,

Walter Jennings,
for the TUC

MOTIONS FROM THE WEST COAST CC GROUP
AND THE POLITICAL BUREAU ON TRADE
UNION WORK IN THIS PERIOD

From PB No. 17, 7 April 1976:

Motion: That this PB has a hard projection that Comrade Knox, on his return from Australia, will go to assume leadership duties for the Mid-West in Chicago. passed

The following motions were passed by the West Coast CC Group Meeting of 4 and 5 July, 1976, and were approved unanimously by the Political Bureau meeting of 14 July:

Motion: Noting the incapacity of the North American and Mid-Atlantic II fractions and the retrograde character of the Mid-West II fraction, that these comrades are absolutely banned from issuing written material over the next period on local issues and that their friends will only issue written propaganda on general questions that has originated elsewhere and passed through the TUC. It is our intention that over the next period the org paper will be our main agency of intervention into this arena and that given the weaknesses of our fractions only general passive propagandism be exhibited by us from inside the industry.

Motion: The laterally expanded West Coast CC Group notes that of course reduction of a local to OC status also covers all of its subsidiary fractions.

Motion: Given the failure and/or indiscipline of some of the recent operational leadership of our II fractions we not only hope the above motion embarrasses and damages them in their intended plant work but that it does in fact give them the necessary setback in their personal connections such that they may reemerge at some date as better communists, and so that perhaps within the fractions a new and more stable, principled and balanced leadership will be facilitated in emerging.

Motion: In accordance with the authority extended by the PB and in light of the demonstrated incapacity of the LA leadership to organize and lead the LA local, this body hereby degrades the LA local to an OC for the next period.

Motion: We recognize the general party obligation to work for and we look forward to the transformation necessary for the early reversions of the Detroit and LA OCs to full local status.

Motion: To recommend that SC PE fraction be liquidated noting that the liquidation of the PE fraction is long overdue and noting that the LAOC would be advised to anticipate the PB directive.

Motion: Our criteria for a reconcentration of LI [on] the [West Coast] is the transfer in of either Waters or Clarke. We will start applications for all indicated transfers immediately, but will not activate them until the above criteria is satisfied. In order that these transfers go through all friends must be exemplary in attendance and performance and we note that any departure in the past is a part of our present crippled situation in LI. We will not accept transfers that will result in a qualitative loss of job classification, i.e., from plant to traffic.

Motion: DaSilva's inability to maintain the company attendance standards necessary for an upgrade transfer into plant resulting in the loss of that opportunity was an act of party irresponsibility and reflected a lack of communist discipline and consciousness.

passed in bloc
Vote: unanimous

ON THE PICKET LINE QUESTION:
EXCERPT FROM 7 APRIL 1976 PB MINUTES

7. Picket Lines. Report by Cobet (15 min.), Report by Knox (15 min.). disc: Robertson, Jennings, Cantor, Crawford, Nelson, Brule, Burroughs, Melt, Norden, Shepherd, Brosius, Samuels, Adrian

Proposal: To hold a 10 minute recess. passed

[The meeting recessed at 2:10 a.m. and reconvened at 2:30 a.m.]

Proposal: To have five minute summaries. passed

Summaries: Knox, Cobet

Motion (Robertson): A "no" vote on the first [following] motion means support for the second two [following] motions. passed

Vote: unanimous

Motion (Cobet): Given a picket line the intent of which is obviously and explicitly not to prevent our access to the plant, our actions are governed by our refusal, on principle, to replace struck labor, and then by a complex of tactical considerations, the most immediate and important being whether or not to cross the line. No actions are to be taken prior to consultation with the TUC. failed

Vote: Brule, Cobet in favor
 Remainder opposed

Motion (PB): Picket lines are a crucial historical and necessary means of struggle for the economic advancement of the working class--they are battle lines of the class war--and therefore crossing picket lines, or any arguments however sophisticated justifying crossing them, is a betrayal of the class struggle of an elementary sort. The issue here is not a defense of Leninism as opposed to trade-union consciousness, but of a defense of basic trade unionism. Therefore we struggle to root out such attitudes and arguments for betrayal from the working class. passed

Vote: Brule, Cobet abstaining
 Remainder in favor

Motion: To endorse the TUC motion of 8 March 1976:
 "Motion: That the Midwest BI fraction had to have three rounds of discussion on whether it is unprincipled to cross a picket line is deplorable. It is a matter of principle that we do not cross picket lines! The fraction is

also to be condemned for failure to report the existence of the question to the party. This is a split issue: crossing picket lines is punishable by expulsion."

passed

Vote: Brule, Cobet abstaining
Remainder in favor

ON UNION ELECTIONS

[Comrade Seymour encouraged Luxen to write the following letter and forwarded a copy to the center on 25 May 1976. This is how the TUC first became fully informed of the "voting booth question."]

May 16, 1976

Dear [Tott],

This is in regard to the discussion we had on the 14th on the question of voting for union officials that were not supported by the RO. You advanced two positions: one that members could vote for those individuals running for union posts even if they were not supported by the RO, and two that this was an established org position. You cited the fact that JR votes for the SLP every four years even though the RO gives no support to that organization. In discussions with Gilman and Seymour it was made clear that JR no longer does so because the organization took a formal position in 1972 that members vote for only those candidates in union or public elections that are supported by the RO. To do otherwise is a clear violation of discipline.

Politically, it should be apparent that when the RO refuses to give support to a candidate, it is because we have no confidence in their ability to lead the class qualitatively better than the present misleadership. To vote for them either means that you disagree with that characterization (in which case you should fight it out politically) or that you expect that one bureaucrat may offer you as a militant better protection from the company than another. There are two errors in this line of reasoning. The most serious is the illusion that, in the absence of a base mobilized to take militant action in your defense, a bureaucrat could defend you against a boss intent on firing you. The second involves the same kind of exceptionalism that allowed Mid-West Biers to cross a line: that is, because we are the only hope of the international working class, we may subordinate principle to maintaining our place in the shop (more simply to save our jobs).

Finally, in the RO, discipline is more than publicly defending the line of the org, it is also acting in accordance with it.

Comradely,

Dave Luxen

cc: Waters, Detroit
JR
file

VOTING BOOTH INCIDENT:
EXCERPTS FROM PB MINUTES

From PB Draft Minutes of 17 June 1976:

4. Local Crises and Cadre Transfers.

b. Detroit TU Scandal. Report by Samuels. discussion: Douglas, Cantor, Knox, Jennings, Crawford, Robertson, Gordon, Brosius, Adrian, Seymour, Norden, Gordon, Samuels (summary).

Motion: Not voting the class line in elections, including union elections, is not merely a breach of discipline, but a fundamental class betrayal and would be an expellable act.

passed
Vote: unanimous

Motion: That Detroit be degraded to an OC.

passed
Vote: unanimous

Motion: To condemn Douglas for the voting booth incident, a totally cynical and irresponsible act. Transcending the weaknesses which led to this act is a precondition to Douglas becoming a communist leader.

passed
Vote: unanimous

From PB Draft Minutes of 14 July 1976:

Motion: The status of Detroit as an OC is an anomalous situation, untenable over any extended period. It is necessary to recognize that the struggle to reforge Detroit as a full local is a fight for the existence of our organization in this city.

passed
Vote: unanimous

REPORT ON DETROIT

by Knox

Chris K.
Detroit

24 September 1976

PB
New York

Dear Comrades,

I have had several discussions with Comrade Douglas while here in Detroit and I think I can adequately report on his general state of mind, although I have not had the opportunity to observe his interaction with the OC in a meeting. He has pulled back considerably to examine his position, and his general subjective attitude at the moment is good. He seems to be taking the loss of his political leadership position and smashing of his authority without any bad will. I think he is genuinely shaken by what has transpired, and is for the first time, perhaps, critically examining his whole political methodology. He does not want to launch a fight over differences which he feels to be secondary to such an examination. And he is cooperating with party leadership on the question of what to bring into OC meetings when.

Yet a massive problem remains, as exemplified by a problem over portions of the II West Coast leaflet he had rewritten to address the local OROs. His formulations were incredibly soft on Spark and the RCP, giving the former credit for "correctly pointing out abuses" in the plant (!) and the latter for raising "several good demands" (barely true at best). Not wishing to defend such softness, his explanation for arriving at the formulations was interesting: they were based on his verbal approach in explaining these groups to contacts in the plant. The approach seemed too dependent on the concessions involved in bringing out a point through the eyes, so to speak, of the advanced worker.

That Douglas has actually dropped most of the positions that the discussion with him has been about, now including his position for entering the TDC, is not surprising. In the past he has always admitted to opportunist errors while continuing to see these errors as isolated events in an otherwise correct general course. One ("secondary") difference he substantially retains, through the crack opened by which most of the rightist methodology still creeps, is his attacks on the articles dealing with Pete Camarata and the TDC. These he continues to view as "wrong and abstract" and "ineffective." The TDC is incorrectly portrayed as "just a bunch of Hoffa bureaucrats" and Camarata is completely misread, through equating him with bureaucrats like Louis Peick (Camarata has never held office), and through slandering his character by saying that he is ready at this moment to accept a payoff from Fitzsimmons.

What is the real substance of these criticisms? After all, WV can't be perfect, and Douglas may be on to something despite a generally soft approach. Looked at from another point of view, it is much easier for Douglas, having been forced back on his hard positions (voting booth, enter TDC, etc.), to express a generally divergent thrust through attacking WV, which is bound to make slips now and again. However, a quick review of the quotes in question reveals that basis for complaint is practically non-existent. Despite the fact that most of the articles appearing before the strike were clearly written about national TDC, not Detroit (the one place where TDC managed to pick up some mass support), most of the characterizations of the TDC were substantially more generous than Douglas' implied "just a bunch of Hoffa bureaucrats."

Thus in the paper (12 March) characterized the TDC as "a catch-all of Hoffa supporters, opportunists, out-bureaucrats, rank-and-file Teamsters who simply want a better contract, and even scattered militants with real impulses toward class struggle." Douglas singles out a characterization in the next issue--"Where it has gone beyond a small number of I.S. supporters, the TDC has become a home mainly for disgruntled Hoffa supporters"--but this article is clearly based mainly on the West Coast, where the characterization was most apt.

In the paper (2 April), in an article which notes that the TDC "has performed some elemental services," and that TDC rallies "have attracted large audiences," Douglas objects to a conclusion near the end, following a paragraph on TDC's simple trade-unionist program: "This is the program of aspiring union bureaucrats. The only difference between TDC and Louis Peick is that no one has bothered to buy off the TDC yet." Douglas read into this an over-sensitivity to the individuals involved and also a Detroit parochialism. That is, somehow it was not a political characterization of the TDC generally, but a comment on its Detroit leader Camarata; and furthermore it was an implication that Camarata was ready to take an under-the-table payoff tomorrow, rather than a political characterization of Camarata's inevitable course given his already clearly chosen program of simple trade unionism. The statement was an angular but accurate way of saying that there is absolutely nothing politically separating the TDC from yesterday's trade-union militant-of-the-moment who is now bought off with high office: only the TDC's episodic and relative unimportance keeps it--temporarily--"on the outs."

When I learned while still in Australia that Douglas had added to his Camarata position with a similar objection to the characterization of leaders of the UMW Miners to Stop the Injunctions--today's "honest trade-union militants" who were the "candidates for strike-breaking bureaucrats tomorrow" --my conclusion was that this represented a pre-factional generalization. Although Douglas is now frozen in his tracks politically (and lacks subjective factional intent), the assessment stands. This generalization has the implication that we should soften our approach to the militants-of-the-moment in the unions in which we have no forces. What is the tactical conclusion flowing from this softening? Though Douglas does not take it this far, it can only lead to a perspective of maneuvers or

alliances with such elements as our way of relating to these unions from the outside. In such situations we would be forced to be the horse, not the rider. Douglas' approach to these articles generally tends to ignore our lack of physical presence, our lack of fractions. He seems to be thinking in terms of a tactical sensitivity to momentarily popular militants which, while certainly not irrelevant in fraction tactics. The other aspect of the same point is that he misses most of the general, pedagogical purposes of such articles, which is to expose to readers primarily outside the unions concerned the essentially fixed course of militants who persist in defining their struggle strictly within the bounds of trade unionism: they will sell out, they should not be supported politically, etc.

Douglas retorts that he is for calling the Camarata and UMW militants reformists, and that he is for warning that they will betray. What he is against, he continues, is false attributions of a more factual nature which can be easily taken out by our opponents. Perhaps. But his objections to these characterizations are more than just objections of "style" or "effectiveness of the polemic." They are statements that it has departed from ROism in these instances by implying a linear uniformity to the trade-union bureaucracy which doesn't exist, i.e., that the rank-and-file leader thrown up by the struggle is somehow the equivalent of the case-hardened careerist bureaucrat who stabs such militants in the back every night in his sleep just for practice. But Camarata is not a rank-and-file leader thrown up by the struggle in the sense of a leader of a wildcat strike. He is a militant who consciously picked the TDC as his organization and built it locally, becoming rapidly swept into its national leadership as a result. And of course, it is much more politically central in this period to recognize that the trade-union bureaucracy is essentially politically homogeneous than to recognize that, in the course of its own regeneration, it corrupts some good militants (in addition to attracting more already opportunist careerists).

Much more could be said about the subject matter of the above paragraph. One important observation is that Douglas has lacked the RO's analysis of the period. He too quickly makes an analogy between today's process of regeneration of a fossilized bureaucracy with the process of its generation in the 1930's. Camarata is not the rank-and-file CIO militant of 1937, nor are we saying that the stalwarts of Flint, or of Minneapolis, I might add, are the political equivalent of William Green or Daniel Tobin. Opportunities for united-front maneuvers were qualitatively different then. An important corollary to this is that Douglas has seen the development of the revolutionary movement in too linear a fashion. In other words, what the SWP was able to do in the trade unions and still be considered to have been the revolutionary party by us today is not the same question as what we "can get away with" today. To paraphrase something Cannon said about the IWW, we stand on higher ground than the SWP did, not because we are better than they were, but because we have the benefit of their experience. We are not frozen in time: we have the benefit of Trotsky's critique of 1940 and Cannon's analysis of the origins of

Cochranism. We have the result of SWP trade-union work to examine. The SWP committed the crime of the voting booth incident a hundred times over (in public, of course), through critical support to one wing of the bureaucracy which was politically indistinguishable from the other(s); yet we know that given the opportunity, the SWP would have made the revolution. For us, however, to generalize on Douglas' methodology and return to this practice would be August 1914.

Allow me to make the rather obvious statement that Douglas' Camar--ata position represents, rather blatantly, the same general thrust as the characteristic errors of the North American II fraction. These can be seen quite handily in Hillquist's general review of the fraction (much appreciation to Comrade Hillquist!); they include, in addition to a general activist and impatient pressure, a tendency to entertain somewhat naive illusions in the militants-of-the-moment: it was the "pro-labor party" unit president who knifed the fraction in the back, not vice versa. They can also be generalized as a tendency to over-optimistically assess the possibilities of the period and the possibilities of maneuvers and campaigns. They also involve a tendency to liquidate politically into maneuvers and campaigns, as shown by the busing campaign particularly, in which the fraction saw labor/black defense as possible and imminent, and wanted to drop the demand for busing itself in consequence. These tendencies, combined with a tendency to isolate analysis of individual errors from analysis of the overall course constitute Comrade Douglas' elusive "method." But Douglas himself expressed it to me on a more fundamental level. Trained as a debater, he approaches the immediate application of the program in a formally logical manner. An aspect of the objective situation combined with an appropriate slogan or two to be applied form a premise from which he builds an argument for a campaign or similar line of intervention. This argument sometimes includes assumptions about the development of the objective situation or about the course of the campaign which are at variance with reality, yet the argument remains a rigid course which must be followed through to its logical conclusion.

Though pulled back from his position on entering the TDC, I think this has a superficial and abstract quality in Douglas' mind. He was convinced by an argument of mine that entering the TDC would have been unnecessary to accomplish the stated purpose of reaching the large numbers of militants under its leadership since an independent class-struggle caucus could have intervened in the mass meetings and wildcat strikes just as well. Yet this is only the most minimal of arguments. Why did Douglas think in terms of entry in the first place? I believe he overreads the possibility of linear growth of the crude reformist formations such as TDC and UNC: he thinks these formations as presently constituted have more of a future than they probably do. They would split before they would attract large numbers of militants in the process of breaking in some serious, political aspect from the trade-unionism of the bureaucracy; therefore in general we do not want to think in terms of entry any more than we do of critical support.

Douglas claims to agree with the thrust of Hillquist's document. He

objected to me only of the rather strongly stated accusation of maneuvering in the party: the accusation that he consciously set the party up to make a decision on electoral intervention by beginning an implementation of a policy which was as yet undecided upon. He linked this to similar statements reportedly made by Comrades Crawford and Adams in the Detroit OC over the summer, and to a statement by Seymour in the voting-booth discussion in the PB ("I don't believe you, Douglas, when you say that you were not aware that this act was politically controversial," is I think fairly literal) which he interpreted as essentially an unmitigated charge of lying.

In my opinion implications of personal dishonesty and maneuvering in the party are not the proper ground on which to discuss with Douglas. So far as I know he has always been very responsible about reporting his plans and going through channels. In fact, someone reportedly made the charge that Douglas "maneuvered" because he called me to clear his plans rather than Crawford, who he knew would have been more likely to scrutinize them carefully three times and reject them.* This is slanderous, since I was the channel he was supposed to go through. Douglas very carefully cleared all the campaigns enumerated in Hillquist's document with the TUC.

The above raises questions concerning the TUC's role, the answers to which I believe contain some useful lessons, albeit not very new ones: there is only so much an agency in the center can do in regulating local work. Successful arena work, especially in the trade unions, depends in the not-so-long run on competent, autonomous fractions monitored by competent local leaderships. Of course the TUC shares responsibility both for the particular errors of the North American II fraction which were approved in advance (such as the unemployment committee maneuver in Hunter's unit), and for allowing a general drift to disaster to occur (such as, most notably, the emphasis on campaigns at the expense of contacting/recruitment). Yet the TUC's role in these things is much less easily reduced to political generalizations. The overall political thrust was being provided by Comrade Douglas, who was providing both the perceptions of the arena upon which decisions were based and the thrust with which they were applied. There is no substitute for conscious agents in the arena, nor is there a substitute in the long run for fractions, local execs and locals in the area running the work through thorough discussion.

One of the problems in the past period in the relationship between trade-union work, the locals and the TUC has been the lack of authoritative, developed fraction leaderships and local leaderships with sufficient expertise in trade-union work (as well as general political authority). This tended to set up a dynamic in which trade-union work got insufficient attention in the locals, and trade-union work got "run" through the center, over the telephone. But it is basically impossible to "run" trade-union work in this manner for any length of time, and so attention was episodic at best. And yet

*reference to period after Crawford left Detroit

established links to the center tended in some cases (Detroit particularly) to reinforce the lack of control over TU work in the fractions and locals. Partly unavoidably and partly through lack of foresight in dealing with this problem, the proper links tended to be either stillborn or atrophied.

Thus the problems of Detroit and trade-union work in the Midwest particularly are part and parcel of weakness in local leaderships in the org caused by the shifting of priorities into the weekly press, the CO and international work. The strong CC group in the Bay Area and the shifting of myself and Reuben into Midwest locals tends to alleviate this pressure, though weakening the CO, and, in particular, raising the danger that Comrade Robertson will become too enmeshed in the day-to-day work of the CO. The case of the TUC worries me less in this regard than it did at first however. The TUC must be seen as a changing phenomenon. In the period governed by the Transformation Memorandum, new and developing fraction and local leaderships needed more centralized direction in implantation and the problems of early development of TU work. Now, while the problems of weak local and fraction leaderships are obviously still with us, the direction of the solution has got to be in the direction of more competent leadership work in the locals.

To sum up the Douglas discussion it has to be seen in the context both of the generally weak local leadership (during the recent period since George's departure to New York), and as an expression of the frustrations of the period. The latter include the lack of real openings for exemplary trade-union work, the lack of real bases in any arena (particularly in Midwest branches), the lack of real functioning fractions, etc., all in the context of a general rightward drift in the country and rightist consolidation in the trade-union bureaucracy and OROs. If I am soft on Douglas it is because I see his kind of talents as particularly useful in building real work and helping break us out of isolation in the trade unions; his errors, which have been counterproductive to these ends, notwithstanding.

The danger that Douglas represents, however, is a possible rightist political generalization, feeding on the frustrations of the period and leading straight out of the RO. His voting booth atrocity liquidates our position on critical support and our whole conception of the primacy of politics in the struggle for leadership; his entrust thrust liquidates the programmatic, class-struggle caucus; his Camarata position opens us up to rotten blocs, etc., etc. Furthermore, his record on fraction functioning, taken together with his positions on unions in which we look in from the outside, have a common element of underplaying the role of the fraction and fraction building. On the one hand, maneuvers and committees tend to substitute for the real work of building a political base through contacting and recruitment, and on the other hand, there is too much tactical sensitivity to arenas which are heavily shaped--negatively--by the lack of real communist presence/intervention. Though a somewhat distant underlying factor, I see these things as putting a question mark at some level over Douglas' understanding of the party question.

Saving the situation at the moment is the total lack of Douglas' political authority in the party now, his unmitigated good will and his genuine political tendency to pull back from the various concrete directions--most of them, anyway--which his thrust tends to lead him in. I think his subjective effort at methodological re-evaluation is quite real and more qualitative than it has been in the past. The perspective of cooling things down in the local and allowing this process to continue is thus correct.

The presence of Waters as organizer is related to our ability to accomplish this cooling down, however unfortunate that may be in view of the question mark over her continued stay here. Her direct, straightforward and balanced leadership has made a big difference in defusing some of the personal tensions in the local which have to a certain extent exacerbated things here in the past. In particular, she has gained authority and good collaboration with both Tott and Barry, which enables her to provide a crucial bridge over what can only be described as pre-Cluquist poles in the local.

One of the worry spots is the No. 6 II fraction, which has new fraction development--it is as well as difficult personnel problems. Watson, the No. 6 fraction head, tends to be rigid, inflexible and commandist with subordinates, although he is quite collaborative with other leadership. In particular, he and Tott don't get along since he gave her an instruction on not having a personal relationship with an OROer in the plant (which she subsequently violated). Clarke, the overall II fraction head, seems a bit distant from the work particularly from the No. 6 fraction and particularly (understandably) from shop-floor work, which is now being discussed since the company seems to be on the offensive. The No. 2 fraction is more stable and Hunter is doing a good job, indicating a favorable note for future regeneration of indigenous II leadership.

Finances is another worry point, as the local is going through a minor crisis; but I don't think things are radically out of control. The local is down \$1200 on collections, mainly because of major arrears problems of Tott, Hillquist and Mike A. It has been forced this month into a position of 20 percent retention, after going through the summer on 10 percent. The low summer retention plus the purchase of a \$300 camera plus lenses accounted for the low balance at the beginning of September; this was then struck by office moving expenses (they really needed the new office and it's a nice one) and big unexpected bills for typewriter and mimeo repair. Ed T. helped drive up the mimeo repair bill through abuse of the machine, and he is being taken off it. Other than that, a little anticipation of problems getting the apparatus, rusty over the inactive summer, back in shape for Fall might have helped. Also, things have been a little slow getting the weekly collection system (formally implemented when I was last here) off the ground. Paul seems a bit slow but adequate as treasurer; I have not really investigated closely enough to say much more than that. Waters is getting on top of it more, and in general the problem seems containable.

I had a good discussion with Barry, which is good; the last time

I was here I was more negatively impressed with his subjectivism. He is doing well in a regime which seems to be pulling things up; yet he told me he wants out of the leadership because of inability to control his subjectivity! Actually, it's more than this based on resentment at the leadership at not backing him up enough against "rumors" about him in the local (i.e., against Tott). I don't think he will follow through on this, although it is disturbing since he is doing better and seems to be more in control of his subjectivity.

With Waters working through Clarke and Barry, and Hunter's promise in II, I would say that the local leadership and II fraction leadership basis for a return to local status is being laid, or beginning to be laid, despite the worry points. However, it's hard to say what will happen if Waters has to be pulled, so projections are difficult. For Douglas, it's a long road back to political authority in the party, but he might make it. I hope he does.

Communist greetings,

Chris K.

cc: Bay Area CC group
Collins
JM - Detroit
Douglas
file

enc: rpt on JH case

ADDENDUM TO
REPORT ON DETROIT

by Knox

Chris K.
Chicago
29 October 1976

PB
New York

Dear Comrades,

In my report of 24 September concerning Detroit and Comrade Douglas, I made a formulation on the trade-union bureaucracy which requires clarification. I said that Douglas "lacks the RO's analysis of the period" because he "too quickly makes an analogy between today's process of regeneration of a fossilized bureaucracy with the process of its generation in the 1930's." "Process of regeneration" might better have been stated, "process of recruitment to" a fossilized bureaucracy.

The bureaucracy today is the self-satisfied, putrified remnant of the opportunist, trade-unionist leadership which congealed out of the upsurge that built the CIO. The changes of leadership which have occurred since then have often been reflective of the major shifts to the right which the bureaucracy has gone through, but in no sense have they been part of a "regeneration," or making anew, of the bureaucracy; nor is the bureaucracy being fundamentally re-made (or even much changed in personnel) today. Abel, Woodcock and Meany are the (somewhat diminished) linear descendants of Murray, Reuther and Green.

The struggle for industrial unionism opened up opportunities for communist recruitment of trade-union militants which today's struggles for "militant and democratic" unionism do not, since the latter lends itself more easily to reforming the bureaucracy while the former meant confrontation with the bureaucracy. The opportunities of the 1930's flowed both from the absence of real unions in the central industries and the relatively greater strength of the revolutionists (or ostensible revolutionists). But while the AFL of the 1930's repelled militants by denying them unions, today's bureaucracy absorbs them by providing an arena for trade-unionist politics. The more conscious strike militants of the 1930's created a layer of leadership that regenerated the bureaucracy, but which was also open to communist recruitment. The present period lacks the rank-and-file upsurge needed to push such a leadership layer forward.

Thus Larry Wing is not Harry Bridges and Pete Camarata is not Bill Brown. This is not to say we have no hope of ever recruiting the Larry Wings or Pete Camaratas; we do. But the political clarification which became increasingly important for separating the militants from the bureaucracy as the 1930's waned is much more--

qualitatively more--immediate today. Without it, the half-life of non-bureaucratic militants is short. They quickly fall into the process of recruitment to the fossilized bureaucracy.

C.G.'s

Chris K.

xc: Crawford, Foster, Douglas, file

ON SHOP-FLOOR UNION REPRESENTATION

30 May 1976
Detroit, MI

Dear [Fournier]:

...

You have produced some fine material, in particular the second leaflet I saw.... I did raise an eyebrow however at one of your Local bargaining demands: "There shall be no less than one full committeeman for every foreman".... Since elsewhere in your material you raise the need for elected working stewards, I presume you do not mean by this "full committeeman" but indeed one full-time, non-working, regular committeeman (as they are defined today, for each foreman. That is, given 20-25 workers per foreman today, you would have one full-time union committeeman for every 20-25 workers, or for a plant of 5,000 employees, about 200 full-time committeemen.

We have raised two related demands in this regard: for more union representation (an open-ended formulation similar to "a substantial wage increase," but which could be codified, just as wages could be), and for elected working stewards. But to raise one full-time committeeman for every foreman seems to be stretching it a bit far. Our demands have to have some felt relationship to the needs of the workers and the real situation. One full-time committeeman for every foreman, to me, seems to fall outside that. It would mean an increase in union representation on the shop floor of at least tenfold. I do not believe this is a very "believable" demand. I even wonder what a committeeman for every foreman would do! Write a grievance every five minutes and then start over with each worker ever hour on a new one?

In short, the demand strikes me as lacking credibility and a felt need in the workforce. If you have discussed this and decided it is a good demand, I would like to hear the motivation. Perhaps a report or letter could be sent to me, the TUC and other II fractions.

...

Comradely greetings,

Douglas

SHOP FLOOR REPRESENTATION:
REPLY TO DOUGLAS

by Robinson

[West Coast]
June 11, 1976

Dear [Douglas]:

Line stewards are now a non-implemented provision of our local constitution not included in the local agreement. Therefore any such elected stewards (not now in existence) would have no contractual power to do anything and, worse yet, in this unprotected capacity could actually be disciplined for "interfering" between management and another worker. The regular committeemen in our plant cover up to 350 workers and often don't answer calls for three days. Clearly, we must call for something more specific than "more union representation" which, like "job security," is vague and could mean any minor reforms the bureaucracy might define it as.

It cannot possibly hurt to have a high ratio of representatives to workers--what is wrong with a large unruly bunch of 200 in a local stewards council?

We want a strong network of union representatives easily available to every worker on the line with full powers and full protection by the union. You have confused our demand for "full (power) committeemen" with "full-time" committeemen. Not even our present-day committeemen are necessarily full-time. Many of them work a nominal hour on the line at the start of the work day before suiting up to go answer calls. A line committeeman or steward would work on the line until called.

But the important point is the strong shop-floor network--one person on every line who could empty a plant like a firedrill at the drop of a hat. Because at the heart of shop-floor representation is the need for the right to strike at the local and departmental level over issues like safety, firings, harassment, overtime, what-have-you.

Now whether we want to call these line reps committeemen or stewards and the role of the present committeeman becomes the overseer and communication link like the zone committeeman, we can work out the terminology. We do now call for the implementation of the steward system, but it must be contractually guaranteed and protected. The key is that these line reps must be fully empowered.

The felt need for this fully empowered network is there. Our fraction has found no difficulty in making this demand "believable." It addresses concretely a real need which is central to everything else we have to say about a "toothy" grievance procedure, the local right to strike, and an alternative leadership whose program does make a difference on the shop-floor level. In fact, without it, the rest of our program becomes less believable. We can only guess that your objection about believability springs from a backward situation in your own plant.

After a fraction discussion on your letter which included Foster and Nelson, we passed the following motion:

"The objection by [Douglas] (letter dated 30 May 1976) to the formulation 'one full committeeman for every foreman' misses a main point: consistent with our demand for a real grievance procedure, i.e., the right to strike over all issues, we need a high ratio of authoritative union reps for every plant worker unit to have a sufficient shop-floor structure to swiftly carry it out. (Work units correspond roughly to present foreman distribution.)

"In contrast, [Douglas'] conception of the function of committeemen (filing ever-more grievances) is overly legalistic."

passed
Vote: unanimous

Foster inquired whether a copy of your letter had been sent to the TUC so we are sending the relevant portion along with this response.

C.G.s,

Robinson

MOTION ON LI

The motion that follows was passed by the West Coast CC Group Meeting No. 2 of 29 November 1975, and was subsequently approved by the PB:

Motion: Facing the necessity of the qualitative reduction in the LI industry and other things being equal, we will struggle to maintain a presence in LI, but if that struggle threatens to damage the friends involved, we would terminate that presence rather than face the threat of losing the friends involved.

passed

NORTH AMERICAN LI

The perspective for the NA LI fraction is liquidation, preferably through transfer to the WC LI fraction. Dan has had his transfer in for six months without any results. He plans to go out there in November and push for it further. Our other friends have not submitted applications. Brad has not been in his new skilled job the required year and a half to be eligible to put in a transfer. It is probably unlikely that he would get a waiver of this requirement, especially since he still has less than a year in this job. Phil has several bad remarks on his record which we have not been able to remove via grievances yet. These will make a transfer impossible. Even after Brad gets more time in and Phil gets them to clean off his record, these two friends have very little chance of transferring.

Besides Dan, Mac has the best chance of transferring. He is not identified with any of our other friends. He should begin to apply; this process is dependent on getting a waiver to allow him to transfer with only 13 months.

As you can see the transfer situation is not very good, although the transfers may come through if our friends just continue to hang in there. At a certain point we will have to consider the liquidation of the fraction through quits, especially for those friends who are virtually untransferrable.

In line with this perspective the fraction has been resisting the temptation to intervene in the union.

That's all that's going on here.

--D. Clarke
4 October 1976

EAST COAST LI

by Salzburg

Local Situation: It's the biggest local in the industry--about 10,000 members. Everybody remembers the long 1971 strike as a militant, formative political experience and still talks fondly about it all the time--"the good old days when we didn't take shit from the company," etc. Since then the local has been on the skids. Attrition is taking a tremendous toll as new equipment wipes out hundreds of jobs each year. They haven't hired since the late sixties. The local president who was a hot-shot militant in 1971, and was supported by the IS when he ran for president then, is a rabid anti-communist. Since he came in, the radical and militant shop stewards have been systematically decertified. This past summer the local bureaucrats put the IS supporters up on charges of bringing the union into disrepute in an attempt to drive them out. But the IS supporters threatened, and are going through with, a court suit. The charges were so trumped up that the bureaucrats backed down somewhat and only fined them. Nonetheless, there is a vicious red-baiting atmosphere rampant--radicals get physically attacked at union meetings and some goons tried to waylay the IS supporters in an alley after a stewards' meeting last winter. The bureaucrats got the by-laws changed to hold only two union meetings a year and now they are finding ways to get around holding even these.

The IS has a [lot of supporters] and they've been in for years. To the degree anybody's got it, they have the left hegemony in the local--they got 40 percent of the vote for convention delegate this summer. But they don't know what to do with it. I can name two of their best ... who quit in the past year--one with left criticisms, and the other (who was the most well-respected left militant in the local) who quit to the right, but quit because he felt they couldn't organize their way out of a paper bag. He got disgusted and decided to go independent. They have two black supporters in their caucus, I believe.

The local is almost all men except for a wing of women clerks in the craft department and a layer of about 50 women (largely ORO and feminist types) hired in craft since the affirmative action program came in. This is a real disadvantage to us because at union meetings it doesn't really matter what you say--they still think you're a feminist. This is hard, but not impossible, to combat.

Despite all of these problems, it's still a big, political local--besides the supporters of the IS, the CP and YAWF, a few supporters of Maoist collectives are there. And the ranks are dissatisfied--at the convention delegates' election this summer, the IS supporters got 40 percent of the vote and a group of black reformist bureaucrats who are "outs" now got over 50 percent, but everybody believes the tally was jimmied so the bureaucrats won, of course.

Most important: there's a black woman in craft with a long history, first around the SWP, now believed to be in a collective of some kind who is to the left of the IS supporters and quite articulate as well as beautiful. She blocs with us on TU questions and just now said she wants to see about forming some kind of bloc with us

around the contract. I don't see the basis for this bloc. But she has some kind of group or retinue around her and it is good she wants to talk with us, so we are pursuing discussion of our program with her.

Our Situation: Bleak. The only one left in the local is Salzburg who has seven years seniority. Marin transferred to the West Coast [and is no longer in the industry]. The other two remaining people just quit the RO, although they are still on the job and friendly. There is one solid contact in the local--he's been patiently waiting for three years to be in our caucus if we only set one up. He comes to RO functions like demonstrations and contributes money at times and has a sub. But he is a TU militant and gets nervous if you talk about RO recruitment to him.

Transfers: It looks bad in or out. They aren't taking in-transfers. I called the union about this and they said forget it. We could still try on a "hardship" basis to sneak someone in, but the objective basis that existed for this a few years ago has dried up since the women's quota is filled and the industry is dying of automation. Transfers out: My boss likes me and I have a good skill and high seniority. But it's problematic about getting transferred elsewhere. For one thing, I was a public caucus member in LI on the West Coast and I think my name would be recognized when I apply to transfer in. Also, one of our people was told that the West Coast hardship board is only accepting "life and death" transfers. We could try, I guess, but I'm dubious about the prospects.

--Salzburg
6 October 1976

WEST COAST LI REPORT

by Redmon

Right now there are two fraction members who successfully transferred into the [West Coast west-side] location; Kollwitz in the main downtown location who started three weeks ago, and Redmon, who started June 5th. Redmon will be able to put in a transfer out of her department on December 5th, and the District Committee passed a motion instructing her that maintaining a satisfactory work record to enable transfer is her primary party assignment. Redmon has almost seven years seniority, Kollwitz has eight. Redmon's transfer could be jeopardized by being placed on a warning if her index goes below 97 in another month before the end of the year, or, in other words, if she makes more than one error in any one month. Even if Maurice should win her job back, which we have had strong indications will be the case, she would go back on indefinite final warning for index. If her index went below 97 she would automatically be fired. Also she would be on an indefinite final warning for insubordination. We were considering the possibility of filing a class-action suit against the company's use of secret monitoring for purposes of discipline since this is in direct violation of law. But such a suit would take months, probably years, and is an iffy thing at best. Therefore, because Maurice has started working at a high-paying job in a strategic industry within the [West Coast] labor movement, the District Committee voted that she accept her job back, thus ensuring the victory for the union, and then resign. While this may cause some small consternation on the part of a few contacts, given her objectively untenable situation with the bureaucracy refusing to reopen the previous indefinite final warnings, it is necessary. There is some worry about the deal that has been accepted by Waters in returning to her job since her office will close four days after her return. But the guarantee that she will be upgraded to a craft position before the end of the year is very important. The rehiring of Waters represents a tremendous victory which will enhance the authority of our friends' caucus, and coming on the heels of another probably successful defense campaign will create a situation favorable to recruitment. The fact that our friends Redmon and Maurice, even though they were extremely new and isolated in the local personally, were able to successfully build a defense campaign for Maurice is proof of the authority that this caucus has accumulated in the local. Several key and important stewards were real and active members in the defense effort, and with the upcoming trial of the fink within the union, campaign activities will continue. The trial and the upcoming contract period also give them the opportunity to make real a part of the program regarding union members who hold semi-supervisory titles and management off the shop floor (the fink who is being tried attempted to short-circuit the procedures by resigning from the union, which didn't work. So now our friends can have no qualms about the local collecting a fine from him through the courts.) Our friends have one extremely good contact--a male--who Waters met last year and was drawn into her campaign. He pulled back and transferred into a non-union covered job but now wants to get back into a union job and has started coming to forums, classes and shown sure and rapid movement toward us. Our friends have some other contacts who are

much less political and will have to be worked on over a long period of time.

In addition to contacts, five persons have gotten jobs in the industry to make money. Virtually all of them are slated for other assignments such as youth organizer, youth comp, State fraction, etc., but Drummond will make an excellent addition to the fraction if personal conditions don't precipitate his return to New York City. In that case, they have their eye on Robert.

Drummond will have some previous security problems given the fact that he has given RO forums as a member of the RO which have been attended by several LI contacts. But if he stays in the area he will simply go underground for awhile and do some fancy footwork with contacts. This was unavoidable because we didn't know if there was going to be a viable fraction, and he is too valuable to submerge indefinitely.

On the OMOs. All of them have self-destructed except for two PLP supporters who have not been doing anything. They are pretty discredited and while they will pose dangers to the workers in the upcoming contract period, they do not at this time nor will they represent really serious competition for our friends. Note that this is possible to say only because Waters is returning.

The victory of the LI fraction represents a victory for the entire organization.

--Redmon
31 October 1976

FRACTION REPORT AND PERSPECTIVES: WEST COAST II

by Robinson

Plant Atmosphere: Generally dead. The attitude toward the contract is fatalistic; a typical remark is "The union is as bad as the company--there's nothing that can be done about it." High absenteeism, especially on the night shift.

OMOs: The OL has six friends in the plant, three of whom are indigenous, two of whom are black. They have taken to calling themselves OLMs and selling their press at the plant gate every week. The RU has four friends and we suspect one or two possible implantees. The newest Maoist OMO in there has nine new hires who have recently surfaced a caucus and entered into a marriage of convenience with the OL friends.

Bureaucrats: After the raucus union meeting last month where our friends' motion for mobilizing the union passed, the bureaucratic cliques have all united around something of a backlash effort against the OMOs. The International and possibly the FBI appear to be instructing them on how to squelch the reds.

Plant Conditions: Since our friends' recall, there have been 1,000 new hires in the plant, pushing everybody else up the seniority ladder. Both our friends on the night shift, R. and D., have utility jobs now. There has been no real contract speedup/disciplinary campaign this year, perhaps reflecting the company's desire to keep production rolling. The main method of labor intensification is, of course, overtime. Our friends are working more hours than ever before--two out of three Saturdays instead of one in two. There will be a two-month curtailment of production next summer during July and August.

Fraction Condition: Zombie-fied. The fraction head has not been up to par and everyone is affected by the 54 hour a week stupor. This has wrought havoc with fraction functioning with every leaflet draft a disaster and personal tensions and atomization going on.

Contacts: There are no recruits on the horizon. There are several in our friends' close periphery who would die for them but who won't join their caucus. A middle layer of eight or ten who are barely able to articulate the difference between our friends' and the other OMOs' caucuses but who are very helpful on different levels. The friends are in the midst of a discussion now on contacting and involving people in the caucus work.

RO Work: The RO press sales have been miserable. Less than a dozen copies of the last three issues inclusive have been sold at the plant, and these are the three most important issues to have gotten in there. The RO has been able to contact on a minimal level three plant contacts who were brought to RO events. They are all politically quite distant.

Implantees: Ken, our friends' new implantee, will finish his probation period in less than two weeks. He is in the heaviest department and is holding up very well. We may or may not get in one other male friend who is pursuing a route through the union.

Perspectives: See addendum for motion passed on fraction tasks and perspectives last May.

--October 2, 1976

ADDENDUM TO WEST COAST II REPORT

The following motion was passed in the West Coast II fraction meeting of 1 May 1976 under the point "Mini Tasks and Perspectives":

Motion: to reestablish political/organizational identity in plant and, taking into account reduced forces of fraction, we establish short tight list of priorities:

- 1) literary frequency of approximately not more than six weeks, being careful to look for issues of interest that enable us to display the components of our contract strategy;
- 2) begin formal caucus meetings approximately monthly to intersect issues and/or union meetings;
- 3) bear down on individual contacting with a sharp eye for OMO periphery on race and Africa issues. passed

NORTH AMERICAN II FRACTION NO. 2:
TASKS AND PERSPECTIVES

(The following motion was prepared to delineate the immediate tasks of the No. 2 fraction, since the tasks and perspectives for the next year depend on the resolution of the political discussion in the fraction and the RO.)

Given that the NA II No. 2 fraction lacks the political capacity to conduct work in the arena, and remains in receivership to the RO, the public work of the fraction in the next period will continue, in line with the recent authoritative RO motion, to remain subordinated to the necessary process of political reorientation of the fraction and the development of a leadership capable of conducting the RO's work in this arena. The priority of the fraction is to conduct, along with the RO, a systematic review of the fraction's political history and to continue the internal political education sponsored by the RO. This process of political clarification is a precondition to the further development of the fraction's work.

While at present the political situation in the fraction remains fluid, it is recognized that for the fraction to remain in receivership for an extended period of time is untenable and would raise the question of our continued presence in the industry at this location.

Coming after the contract period, the next few months should be characterized by a political quiescence in the II union, resulting in less pressure on the fraction to intervene. In any event, the fraction is incapable of anything more than the most passive, propagandistic intervention in union affairs, under the close direction of the RO. Our friends should continue to develop new contacts and review carefully those the fraction has had in the past, using the RO press extensively.

If the company offers the upgrading eligibility test, our friends should apply, although the question of reinforcing our friend in the upgraded workers section remains linked to additional implantation because of our commitment to maintain a viable fraction in section A.

With the exception of the RCP-supported group, none of the OMOs at No. 2 have been active in the recent period. While the RCP-supported group remains our friends' OMO priority, particularly in contacting their periphery, it will be difficult to intersect them because of our geographical distance and lack of active political work to counterpose to that of the RCP-supported group. The CP and CLP supporters were notable for their complete inactivity during the contract period.

--2 October 1976

ADDENDUM TO NA II NO. 2 REPORT:
ON PLANT ORIENTATION

The following motions are excerpted from the NA II Fraction No. 2 minutes of July 17, 1976:

Motion (Douglas): 1) The fraction members should not see the next period as a time to push their images as shop-floor militants. Consistent with the recent authoritative RO motion, their images must be subordinated to the task of political reorientation.

2) The fraction should have a generally very conservative orientation on shop-floor beefs, avoiding unnecessary confrontations with management, limiting ourselves largely to self-defense.

3) The fraction neednot, however, attempt to act like new hires just off probation.

4) Except when a situation presents itself in the plant requiring an on-the-spot decision, this perspective should be implemented by refraining from action pending consultation with the RO. failed

Vote: in favor 2
 opposed 9
 abstaining 1

Motion (Hillquist): In this period our friends at No. 2 should not attempt to put themselves forward as militant leaders of the workers. At the same time, they should not actively undermine job standards or working conditions. Nor should they feign ignorance on contractual matters under discussion by their co-workers. Their profile on the shop floor should be strictly limited to:

a) defending clear contractual rights from flagrant company attacks, and

b) informing co-workers of their rights when asked about them.

Our friends should distrust their own instincts on these questions and consult with the RO before taking any actions along these lines. failed

Vote: in favor 2
 opposed 9
 abstaining 1

Motion (Watson) : To do anything on the shop floor other than maintain a minimal profile as trade-union members is absolutely inconsistent with the RO motion.

Implementation of this perspective will necessitate discussion of individual cases and consultation with the RO and CO before any action is taken. passed

Vote: in favor 9
 opposed 3
 abstaining 0

NORTH AMERICAN II FRACTION NO. 6

by Watson

1. The No. 6 fraction is composed of five friends with from four to seven months seniority in a workforce of approximately 5,000 dispersed over six separate facilities. Four of the friends are in the main facility; the fifth, who has been on medical leave for three months, is in the second facility. There has been a recent reorganization and expansion of production in the plant which, however, has not resulted in any significant increase in the workforce. This expansion, the semi-commercial nature of the main commodity and a government contract suggest greater stability in this plant than in other sectors of the industry.

2. All the friends are on second shift. The shift was added in 1973 and was laid off for the last six months of 1975. The workforce is predominantly young, approximately 50 percent black, includes a noticeable number of Arabs and is 10 percent female (in the main and second facilities; the workforce in the other facilities--which are smaller--is probably older, with fewer blacks and women). The workforce is less volatile than was at first believed probably due to the recollection of the 1975 layoffs and of the 1974 wildcat which resulted in the victimization of 13 workers without winning anything. Union consciousness is low, cynicism high. There is significant discipline and harassment for absenteeism, tardiness, infractions of minor regulations, etc., without effective opposition from shop floor union representatives.

3. The union bureaucracy is overwhelmingly black and was elected following the 1974 wildcat. Shop floor union reps are in general despised because of their incompetence and lack of militancy. However, what is particularly interesting about the bureaucracy is its excellent track record in getting dismissed workers (even probationaries) rehired and it has a social base and a reputation based on this fact. The fraction's knowledge of the bureaucracy and of the history of the local is minimal and a major internal task of the fraction is to eliminate this deficiency.

4. There is a large implantation of OROs. The Revolutionary Communist Party, the October League, the Communist Labor Party, Spark, the Communist Party, Progressive Labor Party and perhaps the Revolutionary Socialist League all have supporters present. The most active of these has been the RCP fraction which has several supporters on both shifts. They issue a plant newsletter and leaflets as well as distribute their national caucus material, and they built for their recent national industry conference and rally. Their most prominent black spokesman was fired but was rehired after a few weeks and their supporter who has been victimized as a result of the 1974 wildcat still attends union meetings.

Spark issues a biweekly plant newsletter and has a shop-floor union rep in the second facility but is otherwise inconspicuous. The CLP, which has several supporters known to us, issues an irregular newsletter and initiated a petition over delayed payment

of cost-of-living checks but has been otherwise inactive. The OL has at least two supporters who sell the Call in the plant and issue and selectively distribute irregular leaflets. The other ORO supporters are inactive as far as we can determine.

Both the RCP and the OL supporters have attempted unsuccessfully to initiate shop floor actions over (respectively) speedup and heat.

None of the ORO supporters have the authority and popularity that the RCP supporter who was victimized in 1974 apparently had. On the other hand, there is significant ORO consciousness in the plant and widespread acceptance of the presence of communists.

5. Two of the friends have been involved in low-level defensive activities over work load/speedup and company harassment. The least serious of these, which did not involve a real threat of company discipline, was successful in getting work removed from the job without resort to the grievance procedure; the other, which involves filing a grievance and taking the initiative among co-workers, will probably be successful as well, and in any event has significantly heightened the profile of the friend involved.

The friends have also uncovered several potential contacts who are distinguished either by their militancy or by their interest in broader social issues.

6. The fraction is in receivership to the RO. This fact, as well as the following objective factors, dictates an overall conservative perspective for the coming period: a) four of the five friends are subject to [special security precautions for an 18-month period]; b) the quiescence and cynicism of the workforce which will probably increase in the post-contract period; c) the high concentration of ORO supporters; d) the weakness of the shop floor union reps; e) ignorance about the bureaucracy and its explicit hostility to "people who put out leaflets." Additionally, the fraction's newness to the arena necessitates as a basic task a close critical observation of the unfolding political dynamic in the plant. This overall conservatism cannot preclude emergence but must condition it.

7. Within this context the fraction projects the cautious emergence of fraction members as individual militants. This perspective means: a) the judicious initiation of shop floor activities of a defensive character including the filing of grievances on health and safety issues, company harassment, speedup, etc.; b) aggressive contacting; c) regular attendance at union meetings; d) when the opportunity presents itself intervention at union meetings with trenchant points that will not brand fraction members as supporters of the RO (this may include introduction of motions). The fraction projects no literary activity in the next year and no link-up of its members (except perhaps of a very minimal sort, e.g., when one member speaks in support of another at a union meeting or on the shop floor).

An important part of emergence will be done in contrast to the stupidity and adventurism of the ORO supporters. The friends will seek to distinguish themselves from the ORO supporters by their sensibility, intelligence and principledness without pitting themselves against the ORO supporters in open combat.

8. The fraction has been underled and has received insufficient attention from the RO leadership; in particular the fraction head and the RO leadership have not paid sufficient attention to the process of individual emergence, especially of those friends who are new and inexperienced in trade union work.

The inexperience of the fraction and the untested character of its leadership motivates close monitoring by the RO leadership as well as extensive and intensive internal education, frequent meetings and much informal discussion.

--Watson
5 October 1976

P.S. This document is the product of collaboration among Watson, JM, DC and KD, and was run through the fraction in outline form.

ADDENDUM TO NA II NO. 6 REPORT:
PROFILES AND SECURITY GUIDELINES

In the coming period our No. 6 friends who have completed their probation should begin evolving toward a profile as concerned trade unionists with firm opinions on key social issues. The following are general and necessarily not exhaustive guidelines [passed unanimously by the fraction] to orient the friends in this process:

1. Learn the contract with the perspective of establishing a reputation as someone who knows the rules and can be turned to for advice.
2. Evaluate your work area as to its problems and the attitudes of your foreman, union reps and co-workers.
3. Develop a network of reliable friends.
4. Avoid the OMOs.
5. Read OMO newsletters and leaflets and appear thoughtful and curious about union issues.
6. Develop a profile as socially aware individuals with definite opinions on key issues. This means the elaboration of anti-racist and anti-sexist views and a cautious and thoughtful indication of anti-government, anti-company and anti-capitalist views.

Internally our tasks continue to be education and the acquisition of technical skills and to research the history of our local.

* * *

No. 6 Fraction Security Guidelines (Revised)
[passed unanimously by the fraction]

1. In the coming period friends should continue to maintain their separation in the plant.
2. Friends should not buy newspapers from the OROs at the plant gates.
3. Friends should not read the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, ORO press, WV or political books at work.
4. Friends should not appear together or with members of the RO or the No. 2 fraction in public areas where there is a likelihood of running into OROs or people from the plant (e.g., or plant-area bars, restaurants, theatres, etc.).
5. Friends should not appear anywhere in public together in groups larger than two people.
6. Friends should not appear anywhere in public with members of the RO or No. 2 friends in groups larger than four people.
7. If a friend is with another friend or a member of the RO or the No. 2 fraction and a known ORO is spotted, the friend(s) should immediately leave without attracting attention.
8. Friends should not ride in the organizer's car or any car used for the No. 6 sale.
9. All reference to the plant should be by number.
10. The term "friends" should be habitually used.

--5 October 1976

MID-WEST II FRACTION PERSPECTIVES

by Mid-West II Fraction

1. The internal relations within the fraction remain unstable, tense, and sometimes openly hostile. There is very little communication between the working members, causing a real problem in collaboration. The fraction has been in formal receivership for over a year and has not had stable RO leadership. Tweet is the sixth fraction head in the last 15 months (Jess, Green, Meyers, Seymour, Garcia, and now Tweet). Just as the fraction head gets to know the personalities and the arena, it has been replaced. The fraction has been unable to develop its own leadership. All of the working fraction members have made a number of serious mistakes in the last year and none have been able to win the necessary respect of the others or of the RO for being a fraction head. At the present time it does not look as if any of the working members will be able to develop sufficiently to play this role. For the coming period at least receivership will have to continue until a fraction head can be sent in from the outside.

2. Thus the most important priority for the fraction is getting someone else, who is able to become a fraction head, into the work. This means making someone accessible who is able to get hired (a woman would have the best chance) and getting this person into the area to apply at least six weeks before jobs become available. (The company checks out the whole application of most applicants.) A fraction head, not simply a good middle-level comrade, is needed. The fraction could easily destroy someone who is not stable, solid and competent.

3. The immediate situation for implantation does not look good. A few hundred people are already laid off, with more layoffs approaching soon. Our friends may themselves be hit before long. There is no indication of when production might pick up again and hiring start. The contract expiration and the possibility of a strike also complicate matters. A rough guess is that hiring will not begin before next winter--perhaps not for a year or so. Thus for the next period the fraction will have to continue to hold on, and to have outside leadership while attempting to develop one of the working members to fill this position if at all possible.

4. The preceding point emphasizes that a priority of our friends in the coming period will have to be internal education. An important aspect of their inability to collaborate in the course of their activity is political differences and approaches to the questions which arise in the course of work in the trade unions. It is only through political education and discussion of the broader political questions which underlie the past mistakes and problems of the fraction that they will be able to overcome the difficulties which have faced them in the past.

5. At their workplace, the friends have a quite good reputation. Their mistakes have not been recognized either by the bureaucrats or by other left groups or individuals. They are generally given credit for the successful defense campaign which they essentially ran. The shortcomings of their work in the campaign were not noticed by others in the plant because their work was qualitatively better than anyone

else's. But this good reputation has not made them any real contacts. Periodically individuals claim they want to join our friends' group, but they invariably do not know what they are getting into and after a short time fade away. Our friends do have a small circle of supporters who would defend them, donate some money, aid in leafletting, etc. But they have as yet been unable to make real contacts of these supporters or bring them into contact with the RO. Because of the weakness of the fraction, contact with the RO is seen as absolutely necessary for all serious contacts.

6. In the contract and pre-contract period our friends have played virtually no role at all. They passed out a single, highly propagandistic leaflet and had only a single propagandistic intervention into a strike-vote union meeting. Their perspective is to maintain this low profile throughout the whole of the contract period.

7. All of our friends are in the same department. It is young with a fair share of militants. There are constant problems on the line and impatience with the spineless collaboration of the steward and the rest of the union leadership with the company. On a number of occasions our friends might have been able to take the lead in various kinds of work actions. Because of their internal weaknesses and the West Coast CC motion, they have not done so. Rather they have taken a back seat, participating in the actions but assuming no responsibility for them. This perspective will have to continue throughout the next period unless the fraction is substantially strengthened.

8. The major work of the fraction will be contacting--trying to reach militants who are open to our full program, especially those who are not simply attracted to the shop floor aspects, to attempt to bring these contacts into contact with the RO and to recruit them. At the present time our friends will probably not be able to bring anyone new into their group unless the person also becomes a close contact of the RO. They have not sufficient cohesion to run themselves, let alone a raw militant.

9. Our friends will cut back significantly in their literary production (from last year) concentrating in what they do produce on broad political issues: the elections, the tense racial situation in the city, etc. They will shy away from shop floor issues to the extent possible. But we recognize that they will not be able to avoid shop floor issues entirely for a lengthy period and still maintain their reputation as militants.

--Mid-West II Fraction
5 October 1976

EXCERPT FROM MINUTES OF
BI FRACTION GATHERING
OF 18 APRIL 1976

2. BI Perspectives (open to LC, local exec members and BI fraction)

Motion: 1. To recognize the need for consciousness transformation of the [Mid-West] BI fraction; and that the fraction is in de facto political receivership to the org. The RO must play an active role in developing the cadre and work of the BI fraction.

2. To recognize the importance of getting into the smaller-company section of BI as soon as possible in [East Lakes] or [Mid-West], but to oppose doing this by sacrificing any seniority at [East Lakes] BI for any alternative BI location or perspective until we can satisfactorily reinforce the latter in order to maintain a viable fraction.

3. That we have no perspective of running in [Mid-West] BI delegate elections at this time, although such actions can and should form a part of our tactics eventually.

4. To reaffirm the perspective of a minimalist application of our critical support to the RSL-backed slate in [Mid-West] BI No. 1.

5. To refer to future discussion with the TUC the questions of assistant [steward] posts and delegate elections in [East Lakes] BI.

6. To encourage close RO attention to the [Mid-West] BI No. 1 location with a view toward facilitating links between our friends' contacts and the RO as part of recruitment perspectives.

Passed

Vote: unanimous

MID-WEST BI

by Cobet

Mid-West BI-5: This is a massive and expansive plant with a large component of black workers. Although the previous president decided not to run for another term, the current bureaucracy is essentially a continuation of that which existed prior to this year's local elections. While they could be considered conservative and episodic supporters of BI's Arnold Miller, they can in no way claim the label of dissidents.

Those supported by the CP are submerged in the [... rank and file committee], a totally rotten bloc which is itself submerged and quiescent. Two supporters of the OL are engaged in active contacting and little else, while the three to five RCP supporters content themselves with flash-in-the-pan literature distributions. Recently, two to three friends of the IS have joined a couple of RSL supporters in an aggressive sub-reformist campaign against inadequate women's wash rooms and under the banner of "Pissed off and nowhere to go!" So committed were some of the "militants" that they didn't even wait to get off probation before leading this sterling struggle.

Mid-West BI-1: To a significantly greater extent than at BI-5 BI-1 is a real OMO circus--replete with clowns. The new "progressive" rotten-bloc bureaucracy is progressively deteriorating and exposing an unexpected level of incompetence; the unseating of the BI-1 delegation to the convention was a direct result of this incompetence, as is the repeated inability of these folks to prevent union meetings from lapsing into sub-political chaos.

The CP, RCP, OL, RSL and even YAWF have friends in the arena. Those who support the CP have no independent presence, reconciling themselves to their role of loyal, and occasionally embarrassed, supporters of the current president. A heavy RCP-influenced operation apparently includes literary and union meeting activity in conjunction with aggressive contacting; these are the "critical supporters" of the bureaucracy. Those supporters of the OL and YAWF do nothing whatsoever, while the friends of the RSL, after an extended period of total inactivity in the arena and liquidation into the [anti-racist] suicide marches, have finally produced a new issue of their newsletter where they inform us that "a real election program" would be based on (and limited to) 1) the right to strike, 2) the right to ratify the contract, and 3) a national strike for 1 and 2--exit the transitional program.

Mid-West BI, General: Obviously, the upcoming presidential elections, the international elections [early 1977], the contract expiration [next summer], and the ever-increasing economic attacks resulting in a new wave of layoffs in BI, provide a fertile field for Bolshevik propaganda. Of particular importance, however, is the current Labor Department investigation of the BI-1 localelections and the near inevitable rerunning of those elections early next year--an excellent and necessary focus for intervention. Finally, the above comments should suggest the necessity for the careful, conscious and consistent development of OMO work at Mid-West BI.

The Mid-West BI fraction, currently in receivership, has exhibited a series of false starts, a continued lack of collectivity and political homogeneity, and a tendency towards maneuverism and right errors--all reflecting the intersection of a difficult and backward arena and the absence of politically and organizationally adequate fraction leadership. While the state of the fraction has been conditioned by the geographical isolation of its members, this isolation has been reinforced by a tendency of the senior component of the fraction to be overly content with its south-side TU life-style: being determines consciousness, and this component displays symptoms more suggestive of political atrophy than of demoralization. Meanwhile, the newer entrants feel disoriented and, not surprisingly, underled; for these comrades demoralization may well be a more serious and immediate potentiality.

The establishment of Larkin as fraction head following the TUC Conference of August 1975 resulted in little more than a lower level of activism and an improved administration of fraction functions. This was due in part to this friend's own limitations and in part to a conflict of perceived political authority between this friend and his predecessor. The response of the fraction to a strike initiated by an auxiliary union in the arena--a response of enormous passivity and political weakness on the part of the senior fraction members--clearly exposed the necessity of placing the fraction in political receivership. Since then, a heated and necessary (though, initially, not very clarifying) discussion around piece-work related grievances has dominated a significant portion of internal fraction activity, while the composition of the fraction and its leadership has markedly changed.

Currently we have a working fraction of nine, with recent implantations expanding our presence at BI-1 to five members. Of these nine, three have recently completed the industry's probation period and a fourth, the present fraction head, transferred to BI-1 from East Lakes BI in mid-July. Two members of the fraction are women; all members of the fraction work in craft positions. Excluding the three recent entrants to BI work, the fraction members average four years in the common movement; all but one of these friends could be characterized as rightist to one degree or another.

It is clear that the transformation of the Mid-West BI fraction will very much depend upon the qualities and capacities of the evolving fraction and local leadership. While there exists ample reason for concern, there also exists every potential for the transformation of the fraction. The current fraction head is both committed and competent, and should be expected to play a positive role in fraction and local leadership. On the other hand, this friend was the most vocal and precise representative of the anti-working-class position...and could legitimately be characterized as a moderate rightist. Nevertheless, his transfer to Mid-West BI, and the balance resulting from the presence of Collins as exec rep and the future addition of Knox to the local, should provide a sound basis for fraction development.

The critical tasks facing the fraction are those of internal

consolidation and the development of a meaningful periphery. The role of the former becomes all the more important given the new implantations of relatively junior friend.

Research and education must finally become a stable and viable component of our internal work, aimed at forging Bolshevik work in the arena and at securing political homogeneity and collectivity within the fraction. It must further serve to develop our shop-floor tactical ability and to ensure our capacity to engage the OMOs.

A black worker at BI-5 remains the fraction's only real contact. His consolidation as an RO contact is an immediate priority. Furthermore, it is obviously mandatory that the Mid-West BI fraction concentrate on overcoming its current poverty of periphery and contacts. This will require an emphasis on shop-floor activities, aggressive contacting and the development of a network of friends and supporters, and a corresponding deemphasis of those literary and union meeting interventions which do not serve to "build a base in the working class." Thus, the May 29, 1976 "Motion on BI-5 External Work in the Coming Period" remains valid for the fraction as a whole. Having only recently established a numerically viable sub-fraction at BI-1 it is here necessary to begin selective literary and union meeting interventions while seeking to avoid the uneven development of political profile which has tended to characterize our work at BI-5.

--Cobet
5 October 1976

ADDENDUM TO MID-WEST BI REPORT

Motion on BI-5 External work in the coming period, passed May 29, 1976 by the BI-5 fraction:

With the BI-5 bureaucracy's evident decision to prevent our friends from using the local meeting as a forum for presentation of our program, the need for our friends to make adjustments in their functioning has become pressing. It is necessary to: a) allow them to reach sections of the workforce other than literarily; b) build a following on the shop floor that could compel the bureaucrats to reverse their policy; c) expand their effect on the OMOers in the plant, whose own situations have changed.

We therefore recognize five tasks that should guide our friends at BI-5 for the coming period:

1. The development of a "network" of acquaintances among those attending union meetings, which will consist of people not necessarily sympathetic, but interested in our friends' ideas. Informal discussions before, at, and after local meetings could both bring knowledge of our positions to broader sections of the plant through these people, and develop future contacts. Many of these people our friends already know, but must learn to use.
2. While maintaining our friends' orientation to selected interventions on the union floor there is a felt need for increased emphasis on the shop-floor activities and discussions of our friends, monitoring more by the collective of the process of building a base among immediate co-workers and toward bringing a periphery to union meetings to support our friends. Given that we lack an established periphery and are isolated to a degree, we recognize the danger in a policy of consistently pushing ourselves to the fore in shop struggles and the necessity therefore to refine our orientation toward utilization of existing union shop-floor machinery, the grievance procedure, etc.
3. Especially through points (1) and (2) above, to develop genuine contacts, that is, potential MOers and RO friends. This must be done conscientiously, seeking gradually to bring contacts to full programmatic agreement; as part of this it will be necessary and important to orient contacts to the RO for further contacting. The ability to attract and recruit from the arena will be a key index of the long-term viability of our friends' work.
4. With the election of a CP supporter to shop area rep (and the more stunning victory of CP-supported elements elsewhere in the region) and the recent implantation of three supporters of the RCP, a more definite approach to OMO work [is required]. a) Regarding the RCP supporters, our friends' seniority, knowledge of the arena, and established reputations put us at an advantage; nonetheless, as long as our friends lack a base of support, even a raw fraction such as theirs is a potentially serious competitor. The black and woman questions will provide firm ground for discrediting them. b) The CP supporters, all but one of whom have about as much or less seniority

than our friends, nonetheless represent a historically massive obstacle. Their capacity for capitulation, back-room bureaucratic maneuvering and betrayal, as well as the CP's history and program, already on a certain level mark them off from our friends; this process of differentiation of Trotskyism has to be pursued, especially among their periphery, to the CP supporters' discredit. It is very important to follow up on the CP's friend who has shown a partial openness to us. Cracking a CP-supported BI fraction would be of national significance, and the basis for accomplishing this in the future must be laid in our friends' work today.

5. We affirm that our literary interventions have to be selective, depending not only on our desire for literary intervention around important questions but, as well, on the need to modulate literary frequency given the fraction's collective profile.

These tasks are certainly basic; that we reaffirm them now reflects our friends' recently more restricted external situation and their previous relative deemphasizing of these tasks and over emphasizing of presentations on the union floor outside the context of concretely building a following.

LETTER ON EAST LAKES BI

October 5, 1976

RO (TUC)
New York

Dear Comrades,

...

As for our TU work it is really up in the air. This is a trade-union city, we have nothing in the city proper and to do anything we have to rip apart the youth where we will get our recruits. Something has to give; like people sent [here]. But I haven't the foggiest as to where you will find them. Again I feel the local is doing fine now (excellent sub drive) but if we don't create stable TU fractions in a year or two this local will not be viable.

BI

What can I say but that our friends desperately need reinforcement so we can reconstitute this fraction. With the center of our BI work now definitely in Mid-West we still need to develop other areas. I believe that this location, while not the hot spot in the industry, can make real contributions to a national fraction. Our oldest friend is going into his fourth year and is beginning to develop a little authority. Our other friend is unstable and we sometimes wonder why he is still around. A real fraction is a life or death question for him.

As for the plant the OMO, while not being able to get its members elected to anything, still manage to attract to itself on a periodic basis, some good young material. If we had an organizational presence we could be real competitors. I don't think this plant has much potential for RO recruitment but there is real material for caucus recruitment. But we must have that political nucleus and that, in all likelihood, must come from the outside. The possibilities vs. the capabilities are real pressures; there were a few eyebrows raised when our oldest friend did not run for delegate to the convention. And the OMO knows this!

So we hang on; and do a few leaflets (like labor party question and one on the out-bureaucrat's campaign next year). We need early commitments for reinforcement here because of special hiring problems that you are aware of. Right now there are layoffs.

...

We have a number of union cards floating around but with the exception of BI no real irons in the fire. We need to reinforce BI and we need a city TU fraction for the long-term health of the branch. Likewise we can't afford to give up our youth work because it's the only way we will recruit and grow in the immediate future. So I can sum up in one word--help!

Comradely,

Travis

T2 PERSPECTIVES AND TASKS

by Edwards

The central task facing the T2 fraction in the next period is the development and consolidation of a fraction regime which can provide consistently correct political leadership. The internal organization of the fraction has improved markedly so that it is now self-sufficient, relieving what had been a serious drain on the local party apparatus and finances. The determination to develop literary skills by assigning more fraction members to produce drafts has resulted in increased capacity in both sections of the fraction, but the fraction leadership must conscientiously develop editorial capacity to consolidate this advance. The friends in strategic are providing more accurate reports, facilitating fraction policy-making, and Sam has taken a much more active hand in fraction affairs than formerly. However, politically the fraction still needs continual correction from the RO leadership. The fraction leadership lacks a clear understanding of the role a group our size should play, tending toward over-activism, plunging into situations without sufficient thought and then being forced to react to them.

This lack of perspective at times leads the fraction, particularly in base, to react like a pendulum. It swings from an over-estimation of its ability to shape events to disappointment at the lack of results on through to an overconservatism and pessimism. This intersects a residual conservative and parliamentary tendency on the part of the strategic friends stemming from pessimism that the class, beginning with its more conscious elements, can be won to our program. In combination with a certain bureaucraticphobia which has always characterized the fraction, a full-blown security deviation can result. In the aftermath of the strike such a conjuncture of conservative impulses gave rise to the fraction's opposition to the RO's proposal that a newsletter on the bourgeois elections be published during the base elections. While the RO proposed to tailor the publication to the restrictions on campaign literature imposed by the base union constitution, the fraction resisted, taking a position which boiled down to making security a strategy.

If the fraction leadership had a clear understanding of the necessarily limited role a group with our small forces can play, the fraction would not have emerged from the recent strike so unnecessarily disappointed at our seeming lack of success, and the security deviation could have been avoided. Our forces represent what in other circumstances would be a pre-caucus formation--we have substantial roots and influence but lack decisive weight. With such a relationship of forces, we could not expect to capture leadership of the strike. We should have focused on recruiting militants by predicting and explaining the betrayal of the strike while fighting to present an alternative strategy which we might be able to demonstrate on a very limited basis through agitation in those areas where we had added leverage--such as the successful hot-carguing of scab goods during a recent small strike.

The fraction leadership's failure to clearly anticipate the

general course of events led to a sense of defeatism which caused the fraction to approach the bourgeois elections from the end of fraction security and not from the perspective of what the RO would like to accomplish. The fraction's position reveals that it still suffers politically from arena parochialism. Under pressure the fraction tends to see its position in isolation from the RO's. The historic tendency of the fraction to run scared must be overcome--this latest manifestation caused the IRO to lose an unusually favorable opportunity to advance the call for a workers party, which is central to our strategy for achieving a workers government.

While on the whole the fraction is functioning far better, on decisive political questions the role of fraction head is being played by the RO rep. Such a situation is unstable and cannot last. As the RO's representative in the arena, the fraction must be able to function autonomously where necessary. The fraction must learn what questions to pose to establish a perspective both for a particular period and a particular situation: the general background of a problem, the general RO perspective on it, the relationship of forces in the arena, will a given intervention or campaign give the fraction the opportunity to advance a unique characteristic position, etc.

To overcome the continuing pressure toward fraction parochialism generated by trade-union work and to learn to anticipate problems instead of merely reacting to them, the fraction leadership must make a conscious effort to work in a more collaborative relationship with the local RO leadership.

Fraction members must be more closely integrated into local RO work. Jake, whose diligent efforts to improve his reading skills have paid off, has taken on certain apparatus responsibility resulting in a greater understanding of RO functioning. Special attention must be given to insure that the fraction has time to get educational reading assignments done. While fraction members do regular sales, they should, where secure, be brought into on-going regional youth work on campuses to broaden their political exposure, and they should be involved in contacting other than strictly trade-union contacts.

Perspectives in Base

In the aftermath of the strike there is for the first time widespread dissatisfaction with the leadership but the dispersed nature of the industry will make it difficult for a spontaneous opposition to sustain itself. The membership unrest caused by the leadership's demonstrated inability to defend the union has generated a greater "every man for himself" attitude in the local bureaucracy, rendering it uncohesive. Those who are closest to the leadership seem to want to get out of the line of fire. Two-thirds of the incumbent members of the local's executive board are not seeking reelection.

While we may be able to capitalize on the anti-leadership sentiment (we had a renewed periphery with one likely RO recruit),

it is possible that the ranks will withdraw further from active participation in union affairs out of discouragement with the bureaucratic back-stabbing in conjunction with the depressing effect of the economic downturn. This would affect both our reelection prospects (otherwise good) and our medium return recruitment possibilities. The likely lull in struggle in the coming period means our contacts will move slowly and dictates great patience and perseverance. It is as likely that we will recruit individuals looking for broad political answers directly to the RO as that we will coalesce a disciplined TU periphery.

If we win the election, the role of opposition will be almost entirely in our hands, increasing the pressure toward over-activism against which we must guard. Reelection will give us an important opportunity to destroy the RCP supporters in the arena at least in the division of concentration since it will further discredit their strategy of ignoring the fight for leadership. Their fraction is disorientated, their press irregular and they are boycotting the present election. Their periphery is negligible and the other Maoists in the industry, with the exception of the OL, are exiting, discouraged by the failure of workerism. The open alliance of China with U.S. imperialism and the current clique fight in Peking provide an excellent opportunity to demoralize the Maoists among whom there seems to be little recruitable human material. The fraction must aggressively seek out chances to polemicize with them.

The CP supporters constitute a far more significant opponent. While the CP has not recruited in the arena, it has strengthened its implantation considerably with top-level cadre, particularly on the west side. CP supporters already hold several important local offices and are running for a variety of lesser posts. The CP supporters' vulnerability lies precisely in their failure to distinguish themselves from the leadership's increasingly discredited policies. Significantly CP supporters failed to campaign for their presidential slate in the union [during the national elections].

To increase the influence of the caucus, our friends should run for steward positions while devoting little time to division-wide committees which are dominated by the bureaucracy. We need to establish a beachhead in the city where the bureaucracy and its goons together with the CP supporters reign virtually unchallenged, and where, in our absence, even the RCP supporters look like an opposition. A single-man implantation on the west side is not viable. The current implantation must be reinforced with a middle-level cadre and we must proceed very cautiously with Larson's surfacing, holding back until there is backup in the arena.

If we lose the election, our tasks will remain essentially the same though it will give our opponents, particularly the RCP supporters, an added lease on life. While the bureaucracy's fire against us will intensify and it will be tempted to move against us, its internal disarray will intensify as the International convention approaches and the succession fight and the merger question heat up

again. While our local president might find an anti-red campaign useful to promote his candidacy for higher office, he knows that the leadership has not been able to rally the ranks even where it wants to. The leadership is conscious that it is vulnerable to attack for holding seats in local government thanks to Democratic patronage at the very time that the west-side's attack on labor has moved into high gear. Significantly, at no time did the union leadership in the area try to mobilize the membership for Carter despite the union's paper endorsement. These factors make a purge attempt quite unlikely, though an unknown factor enters the picture when merger possibilities with T1 and T6 get bandied about. While T6 plays little role in local T2 internal affairs, the terms of the alliance in base clearly allow the T6 bureaucracy, representing two-thirds of the organized workers, to set over-all policy.

Perspectives in Strategic

We are in a unique position to discredit the CP nationally through our work in strategic. The polarized state of the local pressures the CP supporters to posture militantly, which leaves them wide open to exposure when they back down as they did on the contract fight and the Chilean and South African cargo boycott while our friends stuck by their guns. The CP supporters have an unstable periphery and apparently have failed to recruit. They have no one comparable to replace their notorious fraction head who should retire within the next year. Our recognized authority in strategic forced the CP supporters to pull back from their planned attack on Sam. Significantly, the local bureaucracy gave no public support to this attack. However, response in both locals to the attempted purge served as a clear warning both to the CP supporters and the bureaucrats that any attack on the caucus would be fought throughout the union.

Politically, our friends are sensitive to criticism from the anti-International forces and feel pressure to accommodate to them. However, since the debate in January over Harlan and Sam's position against fighting for a strike with the present leadership still holding office, both friends have been firmer in publicly differentiating themselves from the "anti" camp and in fighting to mobilize the local.

The local is volatile as the job crisis deepens. Where only 18 months ago we were only a hardly known and very isolated left wing struggling to make our friends programmatically known, we are today a tiny but influential pole of opposition, able to get strike motions adopted but unable to organize a sufficient following to get them implemented. While the anti-International leadership still has considerable prestige, their ranks are increasingly responsive to our ideas. There is a singular imbalance between our episodic ability to get strike motions passed and the fact that we have only one real contact. This may be partially explained by the fact that the membership is extremely reluctant to strike given the experience of 1971-1972 and the recent serious defeats inflicted on area labor.

Thus, potential contacts still remain in the orbit of the CP supporters and the other compromisers to the right of us. However, our friends must be much more aggressive in contacting and must use the upcoming strategic election as a vehicle to draw their periphery into common work.

If we can recruit, we will be in an excellent position to affect the course of things to come. If an explosion occurs before we have recruited then we may not be able to give it sufficient leadership to make a difference, although given our influence as the left wing of the local, such an upsurge certainly will not pass us by. If the struggle is deferred too long, the employers may be able to gut the local as a fighting unit through layoffs. Without a fight for jobs and at the present level of automation, the local can be turned into an essentially craft union politically hostile to our program. The bureaucracy is openly pursuing such a course. It is trying to police the ranks for the employers in a drive to force large numbers of men out of the industry while simultaneously seeking to isolate the local from the rest of labor by pushing raiding as a solution to the jobs crisis. The question of raiding will be a central political battleground in the period to come.

So far there is no sign of active opposition anywhere else in this industry. However, the northern local seems to have swung into opposition on the question of the steady workforce. The farthest northern local, with a drastic drop in work and a more politically conscious workforce, could be a source of resistance. Our attendance at the spring International convention, either as delegates or observers, must be used as an opportunity to ferret out potential class-struggle militants from other locals in this crisis-racked industry.

--B. Edwards
8 November 1976

T-1 REPORT AND PERSPECTIVES

by Jennings

The state of the industry has largely determined the nature of our work in the arena and our expectations. Far from being a "dying industry," T-1 productivity has increased more than five-fold and the bourgeois state has maintained a large measure of direct interest and control for military as well as economic reasons. The dominant industrial trends are spectacular automation and runaway shops, which have eliminated about two-thirds of this union's jobs within the past eight years, along with the entire human service aspect of the industry. The membership of the union, having declined by almost 50 percent, reflects these industrial trends. The dominant base division is composed of older members (55 years of age average), with a majority black and Hispanic, reflecting the limited access to the industry by new workers. The remote smaller divisions of the union, which are socially and politically more backward and represent tangential industries, have larger numbers of younger, but almost exclusively white, members in their 20's and 30's. Overall the union membership is passive, demoralized, intimidated and tired.

The union bureaucracy has been organizing workers in unrelated industries, most of whom are least suited to militant unionism: secretaries, some government workers, and conceivably even military personnel! These ploys are designed to provide more dues money and votes for an already repressive, corrupt and anti-communist, super-social-patriotic bureaucracy.

The shortage of jobs has produced a plethora of raiding between competing unions in the industry. As a result a projected merger with the other main T-1 union (a goon-dominated union with a history of racist practices and anti-communism from its inception) seems unlikely in the next period. Interestingly, the bureaucracy is now flirting with the idea of merging or affiliating with the T-2 union where we have friends. A further destabilizing factor is a major federal grand jury investigation of the union, which is largely based on a former top union official informant and directed at the highest levels of the bureaucracy. The MO's well-publicized positions of no raiding by any union and opposition to government intervention in the labor movement are unique and are, in fact, generally unpopular among most workers.

Since its formation 10 years ago, the MO occupies a distinct niche in the union: it is recognized as the only organized opposition (and generally known, at least in the geographical base, as "red" or "leftist"), which is not the same as having hegemony over any major section of the union. That is, while the MO does not have many serious political contacts or a large base of political support, it is accepted and respected as a bonafide, legitimate part of the union. The membership, generally distrusting and detesting the bureaucracy, is gripped by backward consciousness which undermines any inclination to change the world, much less the union. Another important factor in the MO's isolation has been its inability to attract any black or Hispanic members or even close supporters.

The workers enjoy MO literature and interventions as interesting, titillating and revealing. In this regard the MO has a wide periphery of loose and diverse supporters, although this is partially attributed to the strong conviction of most members in the democratic necessity for opposition and criticism. The black and Hispanic old-timers are also sympathetic because they remember that it was the "reds" who helped win their equal rights. Most of this kind of support is concentrated in the geographical base, but it has been demonstrated in remote areas as well.

Despite its many years of activity, the MO is still less well known than the big-name reformist oppositionist, whose heyday was eight to ten years ago. This must be attributed to the workers' low consciousness in identifying individuals and personalities more easily than organizations and programs, although he made the initial impact as an ostensible organized opposition for the first time since the purge of the Stalinists in the late '40's, which was reinforced when union thugs attacked him.

Presently, the only other oppositionists in the union besides the MO are the following: 1) the former big-name reformist leader who is now totally inactive in union affairs, quietly pursuing a few court actions primarily directed at winning financial settlements from the union; 2) two hard, active old-timer CP supporters, with a couple of sidekicks who take up a cause occasionally and issue leaflets signed by individuals (no caucus); 3) a nut who issues gutter-style leaflets, who was supported by the equally nutty IWP and who we suspect has links to the East Coast T-2 union (on one occasion this nut provoked a physical confrontation with the MO which bore the potential for heavy violence.) This oppositionist's antics have conveniently provided a ready excuse for the bureaucracy to issue repressive measures and smear the "opposition"; 4) We suspect the possible existence of two PL contacts or friends in a government division of the union; 5) There are various self-styled, short-term, narrowly focused individual "oppositionists," who could provide a base for a reformist or even reactionary opposition.

Although there are no real competing poles of attraction in the union at present, the fraction must be on guard against the coalescing of any new opportunist formations. The key to this is not allowing a vacuum to develop at different junctures and relentless polemics against even potential embryonic formations. The MO has the advantage of wielding the program with the authority of long-time veterans of the union's rank-and-file movement.

The MO is probably the oldest continuously existing OMO in this country. It is important for ORO work because it is well known within the left as a standard bearer of RO-supported trade-union work. Although there is no substitute for real fractions in active union situations, the pulling back of some of the most vital trade-union fractions (i.e., North American and Mid-Atlantic II, North American LI, South Coast PE) adds additional responsibility for T-1 to conduct exemplary RO-supported work. There is also the usefulness of this fraction's work and propaganda in the international

movement.

The T-1 fraction has four members: two are seniority employees with high profiles in the industry; one does mainly internal MO/fraction and literary work; a fourth has yet to be fully implanted and integrated in the industry; and a fifth, who was in the RO movement since its inception and had almost 20 years in the industry, resigned from the RO and MO and quit the industry for personal/functional reasons and remains politically sympathetic. The MO has two additional members, both of whom have been perennial RO contacts. One is a long-time, on-and-off MO member, who will probably quit the industry out of both personal and political frustration (he has strong syndicalist tendencies). The other is more loyal politically, but also has personal difficulties that make him frequently non-functional and may be forced out of the industry for medical reasons. Over the past three years the resignations of three MO members were tendered because of functional problems, although in two cases this was rooted in political differences. Due to the small size and nature of the MO and RO now and the unusual nature of this industry, a disproportionately large number of eccentrics is attracted to our movement, reflecting the T-1 milieu.

Although there is a low level of activity in the union and T-1 members are used heavily for other RO assignments, the MO has generally not missed opportunities for intervention in the union. One exception was a supportable picket line set up to protest another union's raiding, where the MO was absent. This occurred because of lax monitoring of the union hall, and a large part of the responsibility should be shared by the fraction leadership. This failure gave an opening (perhaps the first) to the union bureaucracy to demagogically attack the MO, causing a temporary setback for the MO.

The MO actively intervened around the last contract, entering work locations to urge a "no vote" and counterpose the MO program. The campaign was generally well received by the workers and successful in the negative sense, i.e., it won a majority of those contacted to vote "no." However, this did not represent positive support for the MO program. The campaign was necessarily limited because of sparse MO resources and obstruction by the union bureaucracy. Growing out of this was a legal case directed against the companies' interference with the MO's right to propagandize in work locations. This case was probably ill-advised from the start, because of the strong likelihood of the union interjecting itself on the side of the companies. When this occurred the case was immediately dropped.

While the fraction felt safe about maintaining effective legal control of this case, there was concern that the case could be misconstrued by the union bureaucracy to create the impression that the MO violated its principled opposition to government interference in the unions and attacked the union. This in fact did happen, but in a very low key, unobtrusive manner. This slander of the MO and the necessity to drop the case are both derived from the peculiar character of the class collaborationism of the T-1 bureaucracy which is more overt than in most other unions.

On one occasion, in an attempt to expose and undercut the CP supporters who were pulling some union members together around a popular job-sharing scheme, the MO found itself momentarily in a de facto propaganda bloc. This occurred for the duration of a day when the CP supporters issued an unapproved leaflet on the sly, "explaining" the joint petitioning effort for job sharing. On the following day the MO was expelled (no formalities, of course) from the "joint" effort while at the same time the MO extracted itself from this bloc by issuing a leaflet critical of the CP supporters' and bloc partners' maneuvers. The fraction impulse was healthy and not incorrect but care was not taken to guard against Stalinist dirty tricks. The fundamental problem with this campaign was the nature of the issue: it is not a cutting issue of the MO program and can lend itself to opportunists.

The latest intervention was around the union convention. The MO conducted what was generally a high-quality campaign, marred only by a certain routinism expressed as a lack of aggressiveness, which is characteristic of this fraction, in protesting the bureaucracy's exclusion of an elected MO delegate who was denied credentials because of bureaucratic manipulations.

The campaign demonstrated that only individuals committed to our full program (and ultimately only those in the RO) can be relied upon. Before the campaign there was a dispute in the fraction centering on the issue of encouraging MO contacts to run for delegate on an abbreviated five-point program. The correctness of rejecting this perspective was borne out at the convention itself, when a delegate who had been regarded as a sympathizer of the MO totally caved in to the bureaucracy.

Given the heavy pressure of other RO work in conjunction with the great time demand of the industry and the concentrated hostile attention the MO receives from the bureaucracy, the fraction correctly decided to run a limited campaign with only its two most experienced members running for delegate. One was elected (but not seated) while the other was narrowly defeated.

With a significant implementation of protectionist and nationalist policies, T-1 could increase greatly in scope. However, this is not likely to be the case in the next period. The projected continuing low level of activity in the union dictates a moderate level of activity for the MO: monitoring the union hall, following up contacts, publishing one or possibly two tabloid newspapers per year with occasional supplements, intervening in monthly union meetings. Activities of the MO will be governed by two major considerations: major union events (i.e., conventions, elections, referendums, etc.) and exemplary stands on key political/programmatic issues when they arise or when we want to assert them.

--Walter Jennings,
for the T-1 Fraction
12 November 1976