

Core 9

SWP

discussion bulletin

Published by the
SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

Vol. 18 No. 13

October 1957

116 UNIVERSITY PLACE
NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK

Contents

COMMUNICATIONS ON THE TROOPS SLOGAN

	<u>Page</u>
Letter from San Francisco (February 28, 1956)	1
Contribution to the Discussion on the Slogan "Send Federal Troops to Mississippi" -- Letter from Fraser, Seattle (March 10, 1956)	4
Letter from Milt Alvin, Los Angeles (March 18, 1956)	10
Letter from George Breitman, Detroit (December 14, 1956)	12

15c

C O P Y

San Francisco, California
February 28, 1956

Dear Farrell:

We have studied over the material sent out dealing with slogan of "Federal Troops to the South" and would like to add some thoughts to the discussion as well as give some information on local union experience dealing with the slogan.

We are in general agreement that the slogan is a democratic demand being raised by the Negro people in their attempt to get enforcement of the Federal Court decision on desegregation and thus deserves our support.

Some Negroes -- more of the petty-bourgeois leadership than the rank and file -- have the illusion that the Federal government is sort of on their side against the Mississippi White Citizens Councils and other terrorists organizations. They thus raise the demand for troops and possibly expect success in getting Federal assistance on their side of the fight.

Others, who don't have such illusions, want to put the Federal government on the spot by demanding that they enforce the laws which they have passed. This is a positive and effective way to combat the illusions that exist about "democratic" government in Washington and we should certainly support any such combatting of illusions.

The truth is, however, that Federal troops will, under present historical circumstances, act on the side of the white supremacists against the mass of the Negroes, in the interest of "law and order" and not to enforce the Supreme Court decisions on desegregation. Our problem is to find a way to demand that the law be enforced -- a democratic demand -- and at the same time not express any confidence in the "democracy" of the Federal government.

This can be done by linking up the slogan of Federal troops to our military policy. Several possibilities in this direction present themselves. A draft army is composed of large numbers of workers -- thus we could call for volunteer troops of Negroes and soldiers holding union cards. Or, we could call for Federal troops under the control of the NAACP and the unions. The idea was raised by a Negro longshoreman that the army that goes South should be a desegregated army with a mixed officers corps. This is perhaps the most immediate and realistic way of raising the idea of lack of confidence in the Federal government and at the same time demanding that the Federal government intervene in the South with troops.

Just to raise the democratic demand of troops to the South when we, and the Negro masses, already know which way white troops will most likely shoot seems a bit inadequate. If we link up the slogan to our Proletarian Military Policy we will be well on the way to developing the democratic demand into a transitional demand (workers control of the armed forces of the state) and we will appear much more realistic to the masses of Negroes who have no illusions as to the real role of the Federal government and the U.S. army.

The Stalinists introduced a resolution at the last ILWU meeting on this question. The resolution called for letters to the president, congressmen, etc. H. proposed an amendment to the resolution calling for Federal troops to the South. He did not push for a vote, since his intention was to do a propoganda job on the Stalinists, but asked that the maker of the motion on the resolution include the

amendment in the resolution. This was refused and the resolution was passed as introduced.

After the meeting a large group of men -- mostly Negroes -- gathered and carried on an extensive, heated debate on the question. The Stalinist had spoken of the "education" needed in the South. Answer from the crowd: You think those professors and college students need education? In opposition to the troops slogan it was pointed out that they would not be on the side of the Negroes. Answer to that was that we don't send all white troops but demand a desegregated army with a mixed officers corps. The Stalinists really took a beating in the debate and we took a leap forward in our standing with the Negroes in the ILWU as a result of the episode.

Comradely,

F. and H.

* * *

Additional summary of results of the introduction of the slogan of "Troops to the South" at the meeting of ILWU:

We did not push the slogan to a vote as the object was propoganda and exposure of the phony Stalinist slogan, which called for the usual letters, etc. and for the president to use his "police powers" (whatever that meant). This turned out well. The onus for rejecting the troops slogan rests with the Stalinists. Their boy in the chair even tried to cut me off the mike, to stop me from explaining my reasons. The membership didn't even get a chance to vote. (About 800 were present, approximately one-third Negro).

After the meeting the two speakers against me, both Negroes -- one Stalinist, one non-Stalinist -- were surrounded by angry (and I'm not joking!) members of the union, over a dozen, asking them to explain their actions. What did they mean by saying that the main problem in the South was one of education? What did police powers mean, the FBI? Also questions like this: Don't you guys read the Negro press? Don't you know what H. advocated is the slogan of the NAACP? Don't you think what those KKK'ers need is a bayonet in the rear? (Rougher language, of course.) This is the kind of education they need!

The discussion, hot and heavy, lasted for half an hour, with me putting in my two bits worth of course. My opponents were vanquished. The Stalinists finally saying, well, maybe he was wrong and would "study" the question more.

For days afterwards, I had guys approach me on the job expressing agreement and calling my opponents "stupid, ignorant, Uncle Tom," etc., (I already had a good reputation on the Negro Question) and asking me to bring it up at the next meeting.

This was the high point of the entire matter. My non-Stalinist opponent (an educated guy who believes education will solve everything) parried one thrust with the following argument: The army would help the white supremacists! A Negro brother answered him thus, "You jackass! Don't you think we would insist that it be a NON-SEGREGATED ARMY WITH A NON-SEGREGATED OFFICER CORPS? Wouldn't it be stupid to send a segregated army to enforce desegregation?"

All the other Negroes present agreed with him. It ended the argument. Since Monday I've spoken to at least fifty brothers on this question, not one disagreed with the slogan as modified. Perhaps we have something here.

Reasons given by Negro brothers for the Stalinists opposition to the slogan (1) They are opposed to the NAACP so they don't accept the NAACP slogan, (2) they didn't like it because you brought it up, and (3) they're waiting for Kefauver to come out with it!!!!

H.

Seattle, Washington
March 10, 1956

Contribution to the Discussion on the Slogan "Send Federal Troops
to Mississippi"

The first P.C. discussion of Comrade Marcy's point of view on the slogan "Send Federal Troops to Mississippi" revolves largely around the questions of consciousness, transitional vs. immediate demands, etc. These are rather exhaustively discussed without serious consideration being given to the concrete objective effects of the use of Federal Troops in the South, regardless of the ostensible reason for their being sent there. I feel that this is a weakness in the discussion, and that this aspect of the question has a priority in the discussion. For the objective result is the final test of the principled nature of a slogan.

Concretely, it is highly probable that Federal Troops will be sent to the South some time during the coming period whether we ask for them or not. The social antagonisms are too great to be indefinitely contained by the traditional terroristic police regime, and sooner or later the troops will be called in. Any analysis of the problem should begin with this probability.

Troops most probably will be sent to the South under quite different conditions from those envisioned by the P.C. -- at a time when the Negro masses are in motion. If we advocate that the Federal Government send them there, we will bear political responsibility for the consummation of the demand.

We have advocated a broad movement involving a March on Washington for the purpose of effecting the demand. This will take time. The movement will be removed from the specific current situation and will have the character of a general demand, which it really has become now: "Send Federal Troops to the South for the purpose of defending the Negroes against terrorism and establishing democratic rights." This is how it is understood by the Negro leaders who have raised it, and it is apparent from our discussion and use of the slogan in the paper that we do also.

Under either Eisenhower or Stevenson, the most probable condition under which the Federal Government will send troops to the South will be that the Negroes hold the initiative in the struggle. As long as the white supremacists have the initiative and the lid of repression is clamped on tightly, the social equilibrium is not upset by a lynching or other terrorist actions. When the Negroes take the initiative it is a "race riot" and the public security is threatened and an excellent reason is given to the government to intervene.

When the Negroes hold the initiative it will be the function of the Federal army to restore law and order on the basis of the existing social system, and will involve severe repressions against the Negroes. There hasn't been a "race riot" in this century in which troops were used that they didn't do just that -- and there is not likely to be one.

At such a time we might be able to stop short, and reassessing our dangerous position, reverse direction and demand that "No Federal Troops be sent to the South." But it would be impossible to reverse the direction of a mass movement led

by people who are convinced that U.S. troops could have a beneficial effect upon the South.

I do not believe that it can be demonstrated that there is a qualitative difference in our use of this slogan as compared with the Stalinists calling upon the use of troops during the Little Steel Strike. They were, after all, only calling upon the government to enforce the right to organize and bargain collectively. A right that had been written into the laws of the land. In the comparison of these two cases, I don't think that there is a difference in the objective actions of the troops, or a difference in the kind of illusions which will be fostered, nor even a substantial difference in political responsibility.

* * *

So far, I have considered the problem only on the assumption that troops would be sent to the South as a result of the need to protect the status quo from a powerful movement of the Negroes which would upset the social equilibrium. It must, of course, be considered from the opposite assumption as well. Although unlikely, it is not theoretically excluded that given sufficient social pressure in the North, the government might be forced to make a move with troops ostensibly to prevent a lynching, enforce a court order, or upon some other occasion which would place the troops at the inception of the move in opposition to the apparatus of the southern system. In such a circumstance there would be an appearance of conflict between government and capital, as we saw during the war when the government took over industrial plants during labor disputes.

Such an action would tend to create at least momentarily, a relaxation of the oppressive machinery which maintains the South in its fascist-like police state. The temporary enlargement of the area of struggle thus made possible would be an immediate signal for a social explosion on both the political and economic front.

In the present stage of the struggle only the most elementary democratic demands are being pushed by the southern masses. This is only because there is an insufficiently wide area of struggle to permit the consideration of other demands. However, it is the super-exploitation of labor which is at the foundation of the southern system and the immediate result of any relaxation of the traditional agencies of repression which might follow, temporarily, the interposition of Federal Troops between these agencies and the Negro people, would be a social upheaval with a tremendous strike wave as its probable focal point.

There can be no doubt about what the role of the Federal Troops would be in this circumstance. They would become strike-breakers and the conditions of civil war which would accompany the strike wave would force the army into a firm alliance with the white supremacists and the equilibrium of the traditional southern system would be restored by the use of Federal Troops.

The high probability of such a series of events is one reason that it appears most unlikely that the government would risk the consequences of this kind of "cold" occupation of the South. More probable is that the government will use the agitation in favor of sending troops to the South to do so under conditions of "public emergency." The government can indeed claim that it is acting to protect the Negroes, but the logic of events and indeed the class character of the army will impel it to protect white supremacy against the Negroes.

* * *

In the first P.C. discussion, Comrades Dobbs, Stein and Hansen analyze the question of slogans in general, the nature of transitional demands in general, and the question of principle involved in setting the capitalist army in motion under any conditions whatever. And in so doing they correctly take issue with Comrade Marcy's exposition of some of these matters, although none of them touches the heart of the question.

In this respect Marcy's document has a one-sidedness and contains a schematism and formalism which detracts from and tends to obscure a fundamentally correct position: That irrespective of the question of consciousness, the slogan is wrong; essentially because it leads to strike breaking and other repressions.

For instance, Marcy contends that because of the class character of the capitalist state and its army, to put it into motion in any manner at all is wrong. Therefore, it is wrong to call for it to be sent to the South. This is an oversimplification of the problem and is a formalistic schema. A fact which others have observed. The real reason that it would be wrong to use this slogan is to be found in the relationship between the southern social system, American capitalism, and its state. Marcy makes his excellent analysis of this relation subordinate to his schema of the state, and this is a misfortune.

Even the most elementary democratic demand which is general in form tends to transcend the limits of American capitalism. In this sense while it is true that the demand for equality put forward by the Negroes is a democratic demand in the historical sense, it is at the same time a very good example of Trotsky's definition of a transitional demand. For racial equality transcends the southern social system and consequently American capitalism.

The South is a fascist-like police state and its social relations can be contained in no other. Therefore, any general demand put forward in the South today tends to become transitional in content for there will be no general alleviation of conditions there under capitalism. (It would be wrong to confuse a general demand with specific democratic demands which may not necessarily by themselves be anything more than an immediate demand which has at least a theoretical possibility of being realized. I refer to such demands as "justice to the lynchers of Emmett Till," the present boycott demands, this or that individual problem of integration, specific strike demands, etc.)

Any one of the general grievances of southern workers, moreover, leads immediately to the others, so closely interwoven are the democratic, economic and racial problems there. Once the movement breaks out of the pressurized circle of the police state, around one question, all others will spring forward demanding solution. Under these conditions, the presence of the U.S. Army in the South during such a period could lead only to disastrous consequences for the southern workers. This would be particularly true if the presence of the troops was initially welcomed by the northern supporters of the movement, for this would tend to disarm the southern workers and prevent them from making whatever plans they could to defend themselves against this army in its inevitable role.

So actually, in spite of its formalism, Comrade Marcy's statement needs but a slight alteration to fit the situation quite well: The nature of the southern social system and its relation to American capitalism dictate that the army would play only a reactionary role in the South. Furthermore, the nature of the Jim Crow system and its relation to capitalism seem to me to justify Marcy's criterion of transitional demands when dealing with the South.

Two peculiarities of the "troops" slogan. The slogan reveals the following contradictions:

1. That it is motivated around the question of consciousness of Negroes of the North and West for the solution of a question involving directly only the Negroes in the South. I think that this is substantially correct, irrespective of the fact that some middle-class southern leaders are apparently in favor of the demand.

2. That it arose in the Negro petty-bourgeoisie and corresponds perfectly, not so much to their illusions about the Federal Government, but to their fear of the Negro masses. That is, as opposed to the tendency of the workers toward mass actions, the petty bourgeois proposes a legal-military solution. To the demands by the workers upon the petty bourgeoisie for leadership in the struggle, the middle class attempts to get the masses off its back by turning the whole thing over to the government.

Regardless of the fact that there are sections of the Negro working class movement which do and will continue to support middle class slogans and leadership, there is a very strong current among the workers both North and South, of hatred and fear of the U.S. Army. They have never seen or heard of the army doing anything to the advantage of the Negroes. In such groupings, any illusions which may exist about the Federal Government do not extend to its armed forces.

The Negro leaders envisage a re-enactment of the Reconstruction in their proposals to refuse to seat congressmen and to send troops. While we could easily find a formula to support the former demand, we have no business supporting the latter. During the many strikes during the NRA period we never once called for the use of troops to enforce Section 7a, although we certainly supported the act of inserting this clause into the law. (And incidentally, the question of an FEP with enforcement provisions has nothing whatever to do with a general appeal to the government to send troops to the South.)

In connection with the historical aspect of the question, therefore, it would be wrong to over-estimate the progressive uses to which the U.S. Army was put during Reconstruction. Besides, the factors which Comrade Marcy has already mentioned, there are two others which should be recalled as modifying the progressive character of the military occupation of the South during Reconstruction.

One is that the question of the success or failure of the Reconstruction was in some cases influenced not by the presence of the U.S. Army in general, but specifically, of Negro troops. On more than one occasion the demand of the white supremacists was not for the removal of troops altogether, but specifically for the removal of the Negro troops. If there were today a completely segregated army, the Negro community would be responsive and unafraid of the demand to send the Negro regiments to the South. And such a slogan would tend to have an altogether different social content than the one proposed. This is obviously not possible, as it would cut across the main line of the struggle for equality -- it would be, in effect a demand for segregated units in the armed forces.

The second recollection of the Reconstruction which pertains to the discussion is that on many occasions, the southern Republicans and the Negroes both through the Republican party and independently, requested, pleaded and agitated for Federal Troops to protect them in given areas, only to have the government turn a deaf

ear.....until the Negroes began to arm and protect themselves. In these instances the army, even in this revolutionary period, was brought into action only when the masses gave evidence of being prepared to embark upon an independent solution to their problems.

While the generally progressive character of the occupation of the South during the Reconstruction is not questioned, at the same time it must be recognized that one important feature of this occupation was the frustration of the independent action of the masses in the solution of their problems. Theoretically, the main tangible reason that the Reconstruction failed so miserably in the end was precisely because of the bureaucratic-military control which the presence of the Union Army enforced over the revolution.

* * *

The problem of elaborating correct slogans for the present situation is obviously a difficult one -- principally because we are dealing with several different layers of consciousness. 1. The Negro petty bourgeoisie in the North and West. 2. The labor bureaucracy. 3. The Negro petty-bourgeois leadership in the South. 4. The Negro masses. 5. The organized working class.

The "troops" slogan obviously pertains largely to the need of the northern Negro movement to do something in support of the actions of the southern masses. For instance, the southern workers would tend to be hostile to the idea of a mass March on Washington from the South. They would justifiably feel that this would be a means of removing the most militant sections of the population from the scene of struggle. And inasmuch as it is the March on Washington which is the present active feature of the campaign, it can have little significance for southern workers.

I was rather surprised that the paper did not develop the idea (once commented upon) of a "March on Mississippi." Such a slogan contains a direct transition to the Workers Defense Guard. It corresponds to the requirement of the northern workers to do something to express their solidarity with the struggles in the South.

It is perhaps further removed from the agitational stage than the "troops" slogan principally because neither the Negro petty bourgeoisie nor the labor bureaucracy have picked it up -- nor are they likely to. Propagandistically, however, it has some rather substantial advantages. It provides the framework for explaining the real nature of the southern social system and its relation to American capitalism; it counterposes mass action to the legal-military type solution of the NAACP lawyers, just as we counterposed mass picketing to the use of troops to enforce Section 7a, a government arbitration award, an NLRB order, etc. The audacity of the slogan is a means of revealing the depth of the social crisis in the South.

This slogan or one like it would be necessary in any consideration of the problem of union organization of the South. Pending an overturn of the southern system by the workers of the South, the union movement cannot hope to achieve the degree of democracy consistent with the requirements of a mass union movement short of massive intervention from the organized working class of the North and West.

(I am aware that the P.C. is planning a separate discussion on this question, and it is not my intention to attempt to divert this discussion to that one ahead.

However, the intimate connection between all the social problems involved in the Negro question will break through somewhere in any discussion, and sometime we will have to integrate these separate problems. In this case, it seems impossible to ignore completely the relation between the use of the "troops" slogan and the problem of labor organization in the South, not only for the specific reason mentioned above, but secondly, because the slogan is incompatible with union organization in the South).

A Workers Defense Guard -- a giant flying squadron half a million strong -- corresponds to the needs of the objective situation, is easily explained and justified, will find response in the working class, and would be a means of dissociating ourselves from the legalistic approach of the middle class reformers, and unless we are prepared to do this we are going to postpone indefinitely the building of a left wing movement in the Negro community or specifically in the NAACP.

"March on Mississippi" coupled with the demand on Congress that it purge its bodies of the Jim Crow congressmen and senators would at least give us an active position in the present situation which would not be in violation of principle. We demand of Congress that they do the legal end of it and leave enforcement to the people. The March on Mississippi would guarantee the legal elections and the other democratic rights contained in the anti-slavery constitutional amendments.

It is difficult if not impossible to develop at this time general action slogans for the southern movement itself. I don't think that the southern Negroes require a slogan in order to create defense guards, for this is already in their consciousness. They have been preoccupied with the business of self-defense ever since World War II. Comrade Dobbs has pointed out their tendency to create defense guards when the situation permits. However, they do not possess the necessary legal organizations to develop defense guards.

However, the idea that they are thrown upon the necessity of self-protection, because nobody else is going to protect them, is very strong among the Negro masses of the South. This represents a very advanced stage of consciousness -- far in advance of the slogan of "Federal Troops to Mississippi." It would be wrong in my opinion to advance this slogan for this reason alone. Even if it did correspond to the consciousness of the whole mass of Negroes in the North, and even if it were not wrong in principle, it still would be wrong to try to send the consciousness of the southern militants backward for the sake of their northern allies. On the contrary, our slogans should flow from and reflect the most advanced thinking of the Negro masses, rather than the fearful and treacherous thinking of the petty bourgeoisie.

Fraser

Los Angeles, California
March 18, 1956

Dear Farrell:

I have been following the discussion in the Committee on the slogan of sending federal troops to the South with a great deal of interest and would like to contribute a few remarks to it.

The main propaganda and educational task that faces us is to dispel the illusion held by the overwhelming majority of the workers and the Negro people that their goals can be reached through capitalist governments.

This illusion is very widespread. It is reinforced by the present crop of union leaders and Stalinists who teach that Roosevelt gave the workers their unions. It is further reinforced by the Supreme Court decisions on segregation.

This illusion is the basis for the alliance of the union leaders and Negro leaders with the Democratic Party. This alliance could not endure for a moment longer were it not for the fact that the masses of workers and Negroes really believe that it is the correct political way to achieve their aims.

Our task of dispelling this illusion is a formidable one. It appears to me that once the experience of the masses themselves, accompanied as it will be with our contribution in propaganda and education together with actions wherever possible, teaches them the complete hopelessness of supporting capitalist parties, a good half to three-quarters of our work will have been done. From then on, some form of independent political action on a massive scale will be inevitable.

If this is a correct evaluation of the main task that is before us, and I think it is, then any slogans that we advance that help to expose the real nature of the government and its real attitude towards the mass struggle are certainly in order.

The demand that the government send troops to the South to defend the constitutional rights of the Negroes is entirely correct. It serves to expose the real attitude of the capitalist state towards its own constitution which the federal office-holders are sworn to uphold.

Of course, there is very little likelihood that the government will send troops to the South unless a condition of near civil war breaks out there. In that event, it is likely that the troops, feigning neutrality, would suppress both sides and attempt to restore the status quo. But even if we take the worst variant, that the troops would, instead of defending the Negroes, put down their struggle, even this should not cause us to withdraw the slogan.

Our demand is that troops be sent to enforce equal rights for Negroes. If these same troops actually proceed to enforce the present Jim Crow set-up, as some comrades fear, that will once and for all dispel any remaining illusions about the nature of the state for all the Negro people at least and for many other people as well.

However, the problem of what the troops will do after they are sent to the South must necessarily be one of speculation at the present moment. What faces us now is this question: Does the demand that troops be sent by the federal government serve to expose its real aims or does it sow further illusions?

I think it obvious that the slogan serves to expose the federal government and thereby to dispel some of the illusions about it. It would be fatal for us to assume that we can wave off the illusions that persist almost everywhere about the government, the Supreme Court, etc. We cannot approach the mass movement with the bald statement that the government is capitalist and reactionary and that they should not look to it for help, but should depend only upon their own selves. This is true enough but the trouble is that too few people know the truth.

We have here an example of where the truth can be best brought home to the mass movement and its consciousness brought to a higher level by demanding of the federal government that it enforce its own constitution and laws. This course is imposed upon us by the existence of illusions about the government which are deep-seated and widespread, virtually fetishistic.

Of course, we accompany our demands with analyses of what the government has done (or not done) in the past and predictions of what to expect as well as other slogans.

Finally, should the Democrats win the coming election with the aid of workers' and Negroes' votes, we will have to elaborate whatever slogans will be required to expose its anti-labor and anti-Negro nature.

Fraternally,

Milton Alvin

LETTER FROM GEORGE BREITHAU

Detroit, Michigan
December 5, 1956

Dear Comrades:

The coming plenum will have to consider a number of questions that may be crucial for the party's development for a considerable period, and all the time that's necessary to discuss them adequately should be provided. Still, time can also be found, and should, to permit the settlement of some unfinished business that is also important -- a decision on the "federal troops" question that was left unsettled at the last plenum. The discussion of this question that preceded the last plenum was so thorough and so well documented in written form, that it should be possible to proceed to a vote on it at this plenum without consuming too much time. Anyhow, good housekeeping and the education of the party require that we settle the question without further delay. I, therefore, ask that a place be found somewhere on the plenum agenda for this point and for a vote on the motion below.

This is unfinished business because the last plenum, while leaving the way open for further discussion, withdrew the slogan from use in the press, but without discussing the merits of the question and without giving any political motivation for the withdrawal. This unusual procedure did not contribute to the education of the party; on the contrary, the members, after reading the PC position in the press and after defending it publicly for six months, found and could not help finding the withdrawal confusing, especially since no political explanation was offered. If the slogan is wrong and impermissible, the NC should vote accordingly and tell the party why. If it is right and permissible, the NC should reverse the position taken at the last plenum.

My own view is that the slogan is correct in principle and was on the whole correctly presented in the press, although on some occasions a little one-sidedly and without enough stress on other slogans that should accompany this one. We were not the originators of this demand, but it was progressive, and supporting it by giving it our own content gave us an opportunity to intervene effectively, expose the class enemy, differentiate ourselves from the petty-bourgeois line, and promote militant struggle tendencies.

I had intended to write a defense of this view, but other things interfered. Anyhow, as I realize after re-reading the documents of last winter, the question was adequately debated and clarified in the Marcy letter of January 21st and the PC discussion stenograms of February 9th and 13th. Rather than burden myself and the staff with another long document on the subject that would say nothing substantially new, I urge the members of the NC to be sure to re-read the above documents along with the other letters sent on the subject.

Properly understood, the slogan was not something radically new, I think, but the extension of a demand we have been raising for a long time. When there was a wave of lynch-terror after World War II, we demanded that the federal government intervene to punish the terrorists and protect the rights of the Negro victims. What did we mean by that demand? It surely implied that we wanted the capitalist state to use the forces at its command -- not just command -- not just some of them, but all that would be necessary. When we raised that demand, and asked the labor movement to raise it, we did not mean, "Punish the lynchers, protect the victims -- but don't use troops to do it."

This year our election platform called "For the immediate enforcement and implementation of the Supreme Court decision against segregation." This didn't mean we want enforcement only after the social revolution; we want enforcement now. Enforcement by whom? By the labor movement, the Negro people and their allies; that's the only kind of effective, complete and lasting enforcement we know of, and that's what we are working to achieve in the last analysis. But in the meantime don't we also want enforcement (partial and limited though it can be at best) by the capitalist state? I say we do, and that this is part of the meaning of our platform. If this is so, then I see nothing wrong in adding to such demands for enforcement the explanatory clause, "with troops if necessary." Especially when this addition serves to distinguish us from the liberals and to further expose the state's opposition to genuine enforcement.

No slogan can be judged independently of the way it is used. The best slogans can be and are misused -- even the slogan for Soviets has been used against the revolution by reformists. The troops slogan can certainly be used to foster illusions and discourage independent mass action, and this is a danger against which we must be on guard. But it can also be used to overcome illusions and to encourage independent mass action. A lot depends on the way you use it, the level of consciousness of the masses at the time you use it, and the actual policy of the class enemy at the time you consider using it.

I understand that some of the NC members who considered the use of the slogan proper both in principle and tactics a year ago are inclined against its use at the present time because they think it conflicts tactically with the needs and possibilities of the mass movement resulting from the Negro struggles that have developed in the South this last year. Not having heard or read any systematic presentation of this view, I reserve judgment on it, although I tend to think that it can be applied and combined with other slo-

"Federal Troops"

-14-

gans, under certain conditions, even during the extension of such movements as have taken place in Montgomery and Tallahassee. But I would be willing to defer a discussion of this question until after the NC takes a stand on whether or not the use of the slogan is permissible under any circumstances. Those who agree on the principle of the matter should not have any great difficulty in reaching agreement on when and how to apply it.

The important thing now is to lift the restriction placed on the use of the slogan by the last plenum. The motion I want the plenum to vote on is as follows:

"The NC considers the 'troops to Mississippi' slogan presented in the press a year ago to be correct and permissible in principle, and authorizes further use in the press of this slogan, or variants of it, when tactical conditions warrant."

Comradely,

/s/ George Breitman

George Breitman