

I N T E R N A L I N F O R M A T I O N B U L L E T I N

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CONVENTION REPORTS

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THE CASE FOR AN INDEPENDENT BLACK POLITICAL PARTY

Report for the PC to 22nd
National SWP Convention

by Clifton DeBerry

The resolution before us now is entitled "The Case for an Independent Black Political Party." The general line of this resolution was adopted by the National Committee early in June. It was approved in written form by the Political Committee and submitted to the pre-convention discussion in the first half of July.

However, the report will be broader than the resolution. I am sure that the discussion from the floor will also be broader, just as the written discussion in the bulletin before the convention was broader and covered other aspects of the black struggle.

There are several reasons why this is so, and why it should be so. The Independent Black Party resolution was not intended as a document that covered all aspects of the black struggle; it was intended as a means of calling attention to what we consider to be a central task of the party, and did not pretend to do more than that.

In addition, there were a number of very important events that occurred after the resolution was adopted, and it was only natural and correct for the comrades to examine the resolution in the light of these events, and to ask what effect they had on the resolution and the task indicated in the resolution. And finally, there have been some questions raised that are not really related to the resolution, or at least are not directly related. Since there is no other point on the agenda where they can be discussed, it is most convenient to discuss them under the present point. So I will do that, and I assume that the other comrades will do the same.

Stated very simply, what the resolution proposes is that in the coming months and years -- this covers both the 1968 election campaign and beyond that -- we should engage in propaganda and educational activity showing why Afro-Americans should break with the capitalist parties and capitalist politics and build an independent party of their own, controlled by them and dedicated to fighting for their freedom.

This is not a new position for us. We discussed this idea and adopted it four years ago in the Freedom Now resolution at the 1963 convention. As we all know, the essence of this position was adopted almost 30 years ago, although it did not become concretized until 1963.

Some of the advocates of "new politics" and the "new left" put heavy stress on "newness" -- although they themselves usually have little that's new to offer. But for us the chief criterion for an idea, a tactic or a strategy, is neither newness or oldness -- but fitness, appropriateness. So the fact that the call for an independent black party is not new does not discredit it in our eyes. What we want to know is whether or not it is appropriate. An appropriate idea is a hundred times more valuable than an inappropriate innovation.

Our answer is that the independent black party proposal is appropriate at this time. It is even more appropriate today than it was when we adopted the resolution four years ago. In fact, it is the most appropriate, timely, necessary and fruitful proposal that can be made today.

When we adopted this position four years ago, one month before the March on Washington, the main forces of the black movement were just coming to the end of one phase and had not yet entered the next one. That was the era of "civil rights." Civil rights was still the relatively restricted goal of such organizations as SNCC and CORE.

That year, and in the following election year of 1964, SNCC and CORE could not see past the Democratic Party. SNCC's chairman at that time, John Lewis, prepared a militant speech to be given at the March in Washington in 1963, but he also let it be consored before he gave it. Today can you imagine any SNCC chairman letting his speech be consored?

Those days already seem remote. The movement has changed. SNCC and CORE have moved to the left and form the chief organizational base of the Black Power movement. They have lost many of the illusions they had in 1964 about the Democratic Party, capitalism and the American way. In 1963 and '64, their illusions about the Democratic Party were so great and deep that they hardly listened to the call for an independent party; and most who listened couldn't even understand it or its logic.

Today, therefore, we can say with certainty that there is a bigger audience ready to listen and able to understand proposals for a break with capitalist parties and the construction of an independent party.

In that sense -- in that subjective sense -- the proposal is more appropriate now than it was 3 or 4 years ago. But it is equally true in an objective sense. The development from the level of "civil rights" to the level of black power -- the turn from what is called "integration" to black nationalism -- if you put it in personal terms, from the model of Martin Luther King toward the model of Malcolm X -- represented a great leap forward for the black community.

But without in any way underestimating or belittling this leap, we must recognize that this process is unfolding. The changes are incomplete. The Black Power movement still suffers from a number of defects and shortcomings.

The chief shortcoming is in the area of politics. The major defect is the lack of clarity about the political road -- about how to reach the masses, how to organize them politically, how to mobilize the political power lodged in the black masses.

If this power is set into motion it will begin to shatter the whole political structure of American capitalism. I don't think anybody can point to an explosion that would be more important

from our point of view; or have more repercussions for the present and the future than that kind of explosion would represent.

Our proposal supplies exactly what the black power tendency lacks, what it needs, what its best elements are groping for.

Our proposal is the key that will open the door through which the black militants and radicals can pass towards the realization of what they talk about and yearn for -- the mobilization of political black power.

We should clear up a misunderstanding about what we mean by political action -- political party.

Comrade Gloria Allen describes the kind of party we are propagandizing for as one "with an orientation towards electoral politics." The implication is that we want to make electoral politics its role or main orientation. But there is simply no basis for such an implication. I think the resolution makes that clear. If it doesn't make it clear enough, then we should change the wording.

By political action we mean engaging in the political struggle; fighting politically against the capitalist enemy. Against those who hold political power and use it to carry out the will of the ruling class. We mean the whole range of political action from contesting election campaigns to getting people to register to vote, to running candidates, to struggle in the streets and elsewhere for power. We mean the whole range from the ballot to the bullet if necessary.

There is only one organizational form that permanent political action can assume -- that is a political party. It may not call itself a party. It may be called a liberation front or movement or league or army. But if it mobilizes the masses to engage in political action, it is a party. Lenin's party was like that. It fought on every front. It even ran candidates for posts in the Czar's Duma. Sometimes they boycotted elections, other times they participated, at Lenin's insistence.

That didn't mean that the Bolshevik Party's orientation was toward electoral politics. What it meant was that Lenin's party tried to engage in every possible area of political activity that would get their ideas to the masses and help to organize the masses politically. It was a party that knew there was a time for the ballot and a time for the bullet. And that if you confuse the two you can set the struggle back and create needless victims.

But the real question that Comrade Allen and other comrades are raising is not whether the proposed party should be purely electoral, but whether it should be electoral at all. Beneath that are other, more basic questions which have been raised by the explosions that have continued to rock the cities of the country ever since this resolution was presented to the party, such as:

Hasn't the black struggle leaped over or bypassed the stage of electoral politics?

Have we reached the point of a final showdown?

How much time is there -- is it a short-term perspective or do we face a long, complex process?

Is guerrilla warfare on the agenda?

Has the time of the bullet superseded the time of the ballot?

If the answer is yes, then isn't it too late to be talking about independent election campaigns or candidates?

Isn't the only thing on the agenda armed struggle?

Isn't the need for an army rather than a party?

Some of the comrades thinking these questions come to the conclusion that the resolution is or may be inadequate, or irrelevant. So let us talk about the uprisings, and some of the questions they pose.

These explosions testify to the revolutionary potential of the black struggle for freedom in this country. They mark a high point in that struggle. They are partial confirmation of the theory of the permanent revolution and of our prediction that the Afro-American minority is destined to play a vanguard role in the social changes leading to the American revolution.

Despite the fact that the uprisings run out of steam after a few days, or are put down by force with heavy casualties and suffering by black people, they are an inspiration to all genuine revolutionists, which can only strengthen our confidence in the future. We have not been able to draw all the lessons of these uprisings, but we will. It will take time and further events to see and absorb all the lessons.

Did the black masses suffer a defeat in these encounters? Their uprisings were put down or subsided, but with few exceptions the masses in the ghetto did not experience the feeling that they had suffered a defeat. On the contrary, their self-confidence has grown. That is an important omen for the future. At the very least, they felt they had taught something to the ruling class and to all white Americans -- they had smashed the image of their alleged "docility."

They dealt an impressive blow to the myth that in modern, sophisticated, urbanized America, mass action by workers is no longer effective. And they had shown that the demand for black control of the black community is not just the notion of a small

wing of the ghetto but reflects the will of the masses. They compelled the mayor of a big city like Milwaukee to shut the city down tight as a drum.

These are only some of the accomplishments of the uprisings, but surely they are enough to refute the concept of the so-called "powerlessness" of the ghetto.

While the uprisings are a source of optimism for us and a spur to help our understanding of what happened and what is to come, to the ruling class they can only be a source of pessimism, apprehension and concern. Here they had thought they had everything in control at home, giving them a free hand to conduct their imperialist wars abroad, and now they find that their major cities are subject to being upset and disrupted any day. Their Uncle Toms have less and less authority, their poverty programs and promises of poverty programs do little or nothing to pacify the black masses. Whatever concessions they have granted only whet the appetite of the masses for genuine change. They see no solution. Just about now I think that some of the capitalists are wishing that their great-grandfathers hadn't brought black slaves here in the first place.

But we must not close our eyes to certain facts. These uprisings are spontaneous; nobody organized them, despite the lies of the witch hunters now seeking new repressive measures on the one hand, or the inflated claims of ultra-left militants who want to claim credit for leading them on the other hand. They are uncontrolled eruptions against intolerable conditions. They lack leadership and clearly defined goals. Therefore, although they are the most impressive protests this country has ever seen, in scope and depth, they do not yet go beyond the stage of protest.

They clear the ground, but when the explosion subsides, the task of building a movement and equipping it with a perspective still remains to be done. Social and economic conditions in Watts are essentially the same today as they were two years ago.

Let us also be sober about other facts. The authorities and the newspapers, for their own reasons, greatly exaggerated the extent of so-called sniping that took place in Newark, Detroit and elsewhere. The fact that any took place is of great symptomatic significance, but we should not be carried away by wishful thinking. The numbers involved were quite small, despite the panic of the cops and guardsmen; they were not as effective as the newspapers first reported, if you consider the small number of casualties that the cops suffered.

Stokely Carmichael said in Havana that guerrilla warfare was the answer and that it had already begun. This has caused some comrades to raise the question of whether we should advocate or support guerrilla warfare at this time. As Marxists, we know what guerrilla warfare is and we must not confuse it with armed struggle because the black militants do.

Some of the black militants confuse the two terms, "guerrilla warfare" and "armed struggle." Actually, they are not the same thing at all. Guerrilla warfare is one form of armed struggle, but not all armed struggle is guerrilla warfare. Armed struggle will in all likelihood be necessary before capitalism is abolished, but the particular form of struggle known as guerrilla warfare may not occur at all in this country, or may play only a minor role.

Let me add that we do not think that the stage of generalized armed struggle has arrived either. We will, of course, defend all who engage in struggle against the capitalist class, whatever means they use, but armed struggle is not what we see on the agenda today, nor is that what we advocate. Least of all do we advocate armed struggle today as the strategy for achieving what is most needed -- the organization of the masses and the equipment of their mass movement with a political leadership, program and perspective.

The ghetto uprisings were spontaneous. They lacked leadership and clearly defined goals. When they were over nothing had changed fundamentally. Small bands of armed men cannot serve as a substitute for organizing the urban masses, no matter what they call themselves.

Have the stages preceding armed struggle been exhausted in the United States? Has the electoral arena been bypassed? The black masses haven't even tried yet. Black people can tear up a city, and even force production to be shut down for a few days, as in Detroit and Milwaukee. But many of the very same people that went into the streets for such action will vote Democratic in 1968. Think about that and its implications.

Those who say electoralism has been bypassed should explain why 95% of Cleveland's registered blacks turned out for Stokes early this month. This was after the Newark and Detroit uprisings of this year. It was after the major uprising in Cleveland itself just last year.

Some will say that's a bad sign, showing the backwardness of the black people. What is bad is black people did not organize their own party to get rid of the hated mayor instead of doing it through the Democratic Party. If a black candidate on the Democratic ticket could get such a response, think of what would happen with the candidate of an independent black political party.

The black masses still have to enter and go through the experience of an independent political party. It is around the many-sided struggles to form and build such a party, and not by armed struggle alone, that they will be organized. And when they are organized as an independent political force, then the

explosions they produce will make Newark and Detroit seem like child's play.

Slowing up the Democratic Party is of a magnitude a thousand times greater than burning down some stores. Smashing the two-party system -- which our resolution shows the strategically-located black minority can accomplish --- will do a thousand times more damage to American capitalism than burning down some stores, or even a whole city. Because the capitalists will always be able to build new stores and a new city, but they cannot rebuild their political structure when it is shattered beyond repair because of the impact of political independence starting in the ghetto and inevitably spreading to other sections of the population, including the organized workers -- black and white.

The fate of the American revolution is going to be decided in the cities. These cities are vulnerable to mass action; the black uprisings give only a small-scale indication of how vulnerable. The black people are concentrated in these cities, and they will become increasingly concentrated there. The percentage can only rise; in a few years they will be a majority. That means they are already a majority of the working class of several cities. And despite the fears about automation which some radicals have mistranslated to mean that black workers will no longer be needed, even as a reserve labor force, comrades from Detroit tell us that blacks are now a majority of the production workers in UAW Local 600 at the big Ford Rouge plant. The black people, and especially the black workers, are going to play a key role in the revolutionary developments that lie ahead.

Despite all the talk about race wars, the uprisings have not had a predominantly or exclusively anti-white character. They are anti-cop, and anti-gouging merchant. That is why poor whites were able to join in the Detroit action. The black people are moving in response to their needs and around their own slogans, which is the only way any mass movement can move. The slogan that sums up best what they want now is black control of the black community. Slum or not, this is where the black people live. This is where they have power. In fighting for black control of the black community and mobilizing the black masses around this fight, the advocates of this slogan will come increasingly into combat with the capitalist class, with the labor bureaucrats and with the Uncle Toms. Especially in the political arena. Politics is the place where the first test of black power will come. But it can't be a real test unless and until the black community transfers this slogan into the area of independent politics. That can only mean an independent black party, around which we must conduct a large-scale propaganda campaign -- not only in 1968, but after.

As a concretization of the slogan "black control of the black community," the thing I would stress about that statement is the word "propaganda." We must be very clear about that matter this time. In 1963, some of us tended to underestimate the difficulty in building an independent black party. Let us study what happened with the Freedom Now Party and draw the necessary lessons from it. The subjective conditions for a black party do not exist yet, and we will make all kinds of mistakes if we don't recognize that. The black party can't be built in 1967, and it can't be built in 1968 (the only exception will be local parties). It will take time. First the future leaders of that party must be convinced of its necessity and how to go about the difficult task of preparing for its building. That's why we emphasize propaganda. Our job is to educate and convince others of the need for such a party, the steps and stages to be followed in preparing for it, etc. Propaganda, education, explanation.

And to whom do we direct ourselves? Three tendencies:

(1) Non political -- those who ignore politics with the mistaken notion that politics ignores them. Their abstentionism leaves monopoly of the political power in the hands of the white capitalist parties, who use that power to perpetuate, defend and extend racism.

(2) Pro-Democratic -- those who recognize the need to participate in politics but only in the two white capitalist parties. Those whose main concern is electing Negro puppets and Uncle Toms to office. We can explain why these Negroes become captives of and apologists for capitalism; why, once they compromise themselves, they cannot represent the black community; why these Negro candidates become defenders of racism at home and abroad.

(3) The ultra-lefts -- who are seeking instant freedom, instant independence, instant black power, and think they can be obtained without solving the problem of organizing the masses.

The idea can be introduced and popularized generally, to anyone who will listen. And many will listen during an election campaign. But the main audience to whom we must direct our propaganda is the smaller group of advanced elements -- the black militants, the black radicals -- especially the young ones, the people in, around and sympathetic to SNCC, CORE and so on. They will be the ones who will understand first, and who will act on that understanding; they will be the founders of the party, and many of them will be in its most radical and anti-capitalist wing together with our black comrades. And in the process, if we do this job well, there is good reason to think we can convince some of them of the validity of Marxism and make recruits to the SWP.

But again a word of caution. Just as it will be hard to build a black party, so will it be hard to convince the present young black radicals of the need for a black party and of the need for them to take the initiative in creating it. The reasons for this are complex, and I will have time to discuss only one aspect -- ultra-leftism. I have to go into it because it is something we must deal with and is not covered in the resolution.

As with so many other things we know, our consciousness about ultra-leftism comes from Lenin. He called it an infantile disease. It is a disease or failing to which young people especially are prone, although it afflicts some to the age of 70. Unfortunately, ultra-leftism is not an easy thing to cure. It takes skill. And it even takes a certain kind of courage.

When the Communist International was formed, Lenin saw that several leaders and sections were infected with ultra-leftism and he set out to combat it. He was dealing with revolutionaries, and he had to correct their course from what they considered to be a rightward direction -- a rather unusual position to be in. But he undertook the job of educating and inoculating the movement against it because he knew it would flounder in certain defeat if that wasn't done.

The members of the black fraction in New York have been talking about the problem of Afro-American ultra-leftism and the need to deal with it. It will take a conscious effort. Most of our black comrades are not experienced in this aspect of our work. We don't like to be put in the position of seeming to be to the right of anybody; it embarrasses us.

Young people, lacking experience in the struggle, suddenly become aware of the need for revolution and then begin to act as though everybody, the mass of workers, can also make a quick transition to revolutionary consciousness and action. The problems of strategy, the complexities of tactics, are overlooked or brushed aside impatiently. Just tell everybody the truth and the workers will storm the barricades. Unfortunately, life is not so simple. And those people afflicted by this disease can commit all kinds of errors of either adventurism or abstention, or peculiar combinations of both, that can set the movement back. This is a sickness suffered not only by individuals but also by parties and groups, especially the new ones.

When somebody, a young black radical, advocates guerrilla warfare, our comrades hesitate about answering him because they don't want to be thought of as opponents to armed struggle. When somebody says it's the time of the bullet and nobody can call himself a revolutionary unless he has a gun and is ready to use it, our comrades feel on the defensive. And most of all, when an ultraleftist sneers at our proposal for an independent black party, saying that's reformism or electoralism, and that a black party would be pressured into becoming part of the status-quo,

or co-opted by the power structure, and so on and so on, then our comrades find it hard to handle and even begin to have doubts about the correctness of our course. Especially if they are new and inexperienced in the movement themselves.

We must teach our new comrades how to distinguish between a blowhard who is substituting ultra-militant talk for action and genuine young revolutionaries who are going through a natural stage of development. Those who are exploiting nationalist sentiment and those who are serious.

To young black militants who are beginning to understand that victory involves a violent struggle to the death, we may appear naive or reformist, because they do not understand the thing like a political party. They don't understand that these are tactics to win over and organize the masses in the ghetto. So we'll have to explain it as effectively as possible. It may not make us popular. It will not be easy. But we are correct and in the course of their development serious black militants will recognize our correctness and make the necessary adjustment.

And even if we don't succeed at first in explaining and convincing, we must be on guard against letting ultra-leftist misconceptions affect or influence our own strategy. We must be clear about our strategy, or, under the pressure of ultra-leftists, we ourselves could become disoriented. And then there would be no possibility of ever helping black radicals to overcome their ultra-leftism.

Now I will take up Comrade Weinstein's proposal. First I should say that Comrade Nat does a very good job in explaining the difficulties in building an independent black party. His document is useful and helpful in this regard. It is the conclusions he draws that I want to address myself to.

I do not believe Comrade Nat has thought through the serious implications or the logic of his proposal. Nor the obligation involved in making such a proposal. What I am talking about is Comrade Nat's proposal that the SWP advocate the establishment of a black counterpart to the SWP. Here he presents his proposal as an exclusively practical one. We disagree completely. Before any such proposal can be discussed practically, it must be first examined from the standpoint of principle and strategy. The merits of his proposal from a practical standpoint, whatever they may be, cannot even be talked about until we decide that it is permissible and proper from the standpoint of principle. Marxist principle.

When the Communist International was formed, one of its principles was that there could be only one Marxist or Communist Party in any country. When the Fourth International was formed,

it took the same position. In general, they took this position because they held that only a centralized party is capable of defeating and abolishing the capitalists and their state; that anything less than a centralized and unified command of the revolutionary forces could not accomplish the job. When there is one state, one government, that has to be overthrown, there can be only one revolutionary party to lead the struggle. This is how they thought; this was the line of their reasoning. And this was the organizational principle which they derived.

So first we ought to ask why did they reach this conclusion? If we think it was wrong, or that it is not a principle, we ought to say so before we begin changing it on the basis of the practicality of any proposal. Or, if we think that it is right in general, or that it used to apply but no longer applies now, we ought to say that, and show why; or, if we think that American conditions are so exceptional in this regard that new principles ought to be elaborated, then we ought to say that too and present arguments to support it. But let's not stumble into such a serious question.

Lenin was the greatest revolutionary advocate of self-determination that the world has ever known; he contributed more to our understanding of this question than any Marxist before or since. Lenin fought fiercely for the Bolshevik Party to advocate that the oppressed nations and national minority groups had the right to separate from the Russian empire, before or after the revolution. No one equalled him in this. And yet, in the end, after some experimentation, Lenin was also the strongest advocate of a single revolutionary party uniting the Russian, Polish, Ukrainian, Georgian and other Marxists. Remember, Poland was a nation where most Poles lived; Finland was a nation where most Finns lived. In spite of that, Lenin insisted that all the Polish and Georgian and Finnish Marxists should belong to the same party. Do you think Lenin was wrong about this? Or do you think that he was right about it so far as Russia went, but America is different; not just different, but so different that Lenin's principle does not apply here? If so, you should explain why. I don't think he was wrong, I don't have to do that.

I hope everyone understands what we are talking about. It is a proposal that we, the SWP, should advocate the establishment of a black counterpart of the SWP -- that we should advocate it. This is not the same situation that would arise if a group of black radicals outside our party, who were drawing closer to our ideas, should decide that they don't want to join our party but that they want to build a black counterpart of our party. That would be a case of them advocating it and trying to build it. Our attitude toward such a group would likely be fraternal and friendly. If they actually built a party, we would surely try to work together with it in the closest and most comradely way. And if it came close enough programmatically, we would surely consider offering to unite with it into a single party; and we

would maintain comradely relations with it even if it rejected such an offer.

But for us to advocate such a move and even initiate it is an entirely different thing. It would create more problems than it would solve; problems both of principle and practical party-building and black cadre-building. Because what is a "black counterpart of the SWP"? Can there even be such a thing? The essence of the SWP is its program, its Marxist program. A central part of that program is the decisive role of the working class in leading the revolution. The composition of the party as well as its attitude to the various sections of the working class flows from this central aspect of our program. That is why, among other reasons, the party is open to both black and white.

But what about the projected black counterpart of the SWP? It would presumably also believe in the decisive role of the working class. But apparently it would bar revolutionary white workers from membership; it would tell them, "No, you can't join, you go on downtown to 873 Broadway" (or the addresses of the different cities' party headquarters).

In other words, the all-black conception it held of itself would be in contradiction to the program. I doubt that the new members of such a counterpart would get a full and genuine Marxist education. And since the very form of the black counterpart would be at variance with important parts of the program, I am afraid that the result would be a black caricature, rather than a black counterpart of the SWP. And that the problems of building a revolutionary Marxist party, capable of leading the workers to victory against the most powerful capitalist state the world has ever known, would be compounded and increased, rather than the other way around.

That is why our general strategic aim is the construction of a single centralized combat party capable of unseating the most powerful ruling class in history. Our attitude to all other formations -- not only labor parties, black parties, but also any revolutionary currents that may arise -- is determined by the way they strengthen or act as a detour to the accomplishment of this central task.

Comrade Weinstein's assumption is that the main deterrent to our recruitment of Afro-Americans is that the overwhelming majority of the SWP membership is white. It is still a predominantly white party, unfortunately. There is no question about that. Our comrades find it harder to recruit blacks, especially blacks under the influence of black nationalism at its present stage, because whites are a majority of the SWP. And our own black comrades are under pressure and even attack from nationalists because they belong to a party that is mainly white in composition.

We all know that, and we are all keenly desirous of finding ways of changing this or at least improving the situation. But I still question Comrade Nat's assumption. The main deterrent to recruitment of blacks is not the party's composition, though it appears that way; but the party's program. If you can convince black contacts of our program, they will join. If you convince them that socialism is the answer to their problems, they will join. If you can convince them about the decisive role of the working class, they will join. But that's the rub -- they think we are crazy when we talk about the role of the working class. All they can see is a dormant white working class.

They may agree with some parts of our program, but like many New Leftists, they balk when we insist on the working class nature of the coming revolution. A black counterpart of the SWP would run into the very same problem; if it really had the same program and not just parts of it (having parts means having really a different program.) Most black radicals would think that a black counterpart that really had the same program was similarly crazy, unrealistic, dogmatic and so on. Another bag whitey has set up for blacks.

I know that black radicals would listen to a black counterpart more readily, but I question that it could recruit and hold members at a substantially different rate than we can, or than we may be able to do in the near future. Example: all-black organizations, SNCC or CORE, nationalist organizations, have their problems of recruiting, educating and holding their members.

So, we think Comrade Weinstein's proposal is a long, long way from being "almost unchallengeable," even before you get around to considering its practical feasibility. He himself recognizes that it is not practical now -- that we don't have the forces to do what he suggests; we don't have the forces to do things a lot less difficult than launching a new Marxist party.

And on this other practical criterion: the "inclination" of the black comrades, I think I can state with certainty that the only inclination held by a sizable number of the black comrades with whom I have discussed this question is against his proposal, against it in principle, against it as a tactic as well as against it on practical grounds, or don't feel strongly about it one way or the other.

I do not question Comrade Nat's right -- or anyone's right -- to raise any questions, however speculative or impractical. We can benefit from discussion of even such questions, if the discussion improves the level of our understanding and consciousness. But I hope the discussion of this proposal can be concluded without too much delay and that it will not divert us from more pressing problems.

In their hunt for solutions, in which we all should engage, some comrades are stumbling over panaceas and shortcuts that are really longcuts. Perhaps we can avoid some of this by keeping our eyes on changes in the situation and new trends, a dialectical attitude, rather than letting ourselves be hypnotized by over-attention to the present or by the deadly error of thinking that the future will be the same as the present -- only more so.

A lesson from party history might be useful here. In 1954, which was the year of the Supreme Court decision against school segregation, Dick Fraser opened up a campaign to have the party denounce and renounce black nationalism and assert that the only possible road could be integration. Young comrades, those who have been in the movement three or four years or less, find it hard to understand how such a proposal could have been put forth so seriously and tenaciously. But it was not at all fantastic. Organized black nationalism was spotty and uninfluential at that time. What Fraser was saying would probably have been endorsed by most of the black militants of that time. But we rejected his demand.

Armed with Trotsky's advice, and an understanding of how things can change, we refused to renounce or reject black nationalism. We admitted that the prevailing trend was toward integration, but we refused to rule out the possibility of a black nationalist development in a new upsurge or in a revolutionary situation. This was indeed fortunate. Because, when the upsurge began in the early 1960's, and when black nationalism began to appear as the incipient left wing of that movement, we were theoretically prepared to meet it with an open mind, to see what was progressive about it, to approach it in a friendly way, and even to influence it to a degree.

What a calamity it would have been if we had followed Fraser's advice and prescription! If in some ways we are relatively isolated from the struggle now, we would have been totally cut off from it if we had done what he demanded; so cut off that the present discussion would have been unimaginable. The lesson is this: Study the present, learn everything there is to know about it, pay attention to every problem and obstacle and never stop trying to solve them. But at the same time, don't become impatient, don't lock yourself in with any fixed and fast formulas based solely on the present, and never lose sight of the fact that things will change. We are witnessing a process unfolding, that will be constantly changing.

Today we have difficulties in recruiting because of a phase that the black community is going through. But don't make the mistake of thinking that this phase will last forever; any more than that the conservatism and apathy of the white workers will last forever.

Suspicion of all whites and hostility to all whites are not necessarily permanent aspects of black nationalism. We shall see the day when black nationalism no longer needs them. They have been necessary to help black people throw off the shackles and restraints of white liberalism and reformism; they have been necessary to help mobilize the black people for their own liberation struggle. But once the influence of liberalism has ended and once the black people have been mobilized and united, what reason is there to think present moods and present attitudes to all whites will last forever? As Malcolm X correctly stated, there must first be some black unity before there can be any real black-white unity.

What do we learn from the evolution of Malcolm X, the most articulate spokesman for black nationalism? He came from religious sectarianism to internationalism. Malcolm X changed from a suspicion of all whites, hostility to all whites. In the course of his development he began to differentiate between whites. This was reflected best in his attitude toward the party and YSA. Why should we assume a fixed attitude in Malcolm's heirs? Let us not rush to adopt new strategies too hastily. Or we may find ourselves closing off a road just when it is about to open.

During our 1964 election campaign we made some modest gains. We got the ear of some of the black community. But, by and large, the majority of the black militants were cool to us. I believe Comrade Derrick had a similar experience in Atlanta during the summer of 1966. But only a little more than a year later, Comrade Derrick went to Atlanta again, this time as campaign aide to Comrade Boutelle on their first southern tour. And this time SNCC leaders showed up at the large campus meeting where the SWP candidate was speaking, and they had friendly talks afterward, and exchanged literature and so on. I don't mean that SNCC leaders are flocking to join the SWP, or that they will be next year. But the fact that Boutelle belongs to a mainly white party doesn't prevent him from getting a hearing from even black nationalists. Nor is our literature rejected in many parts of the country merely because a majority of the party is white. White comrades in New York attended a black rally. They had literature to sell and distribute. They were not permitted to attend the meeting. They were asked to leave but the black militants kept the literature and distributed it to the black audience. Doors are open to us, there is no need to despair or become impatient. We should concentrate on ways of making an impact after the doors are open, and of opening new doors rather than wasting time with shortcuts or gimmicks.

The chances of building an effective and relatively large black cadre in the party -- the key to all our other problems -- is not worse but better than it has been in years. Not all our problems are solved, or can be solved immediately, but I for one feel greater confidence and optimism about how our black cadre will grow. My reasons for this confidence are threefold:

(1) The changing objective and subjective conditions in the black community. There never have been so many conferences, local and regional, being planned and held in the ghetto to discuss program and perspective. This points to a deep hunger for answers, which inevitable will get us a better hearing if we know what to say and how to say it. Now, at last, we are not the only voice in the community speaking against capitalism and the need to replace it with a different kind of system. If that is competition, it is the kind we can only welcome and benefit from. The language is coming closer to the language we have been talking all along. Common language will mean the growth of common action of all kinds.

(2) The whole party is being armed and rearmed by the present discussion and the further study and understanding that it will lead to after this convention. More than before and better than before, this will lead to incorporating an understanding of black nationalism into our full program. This will make our program and party more attractive to the many new contacts we will make during the election campaign, and I am talking about white contacts as well as black. White contacts will join us because of our uniquely revolutionary program for the black struggle. White members having a better understanding will be able to help us improve and expand our work in the ghetto. We don't at all believe that white comrades have little or nothing to contribute in this area. On the contrary. And the better equipped they are theoretically and practically, the bigger contributions they will make. This is particularly true in areas where we have no black comrades, or where we have only one or two black comrades.

(3) Through our 1968 election campaign already we can see signs of open doors to possible work with black militants. Along with the black comrades in the New York local we have possibilities of reinforcements of black youth and older experienced comrades to be transferred into New York. We have already begun to improve the organization and better coordination of the work of the black comrades and the building of our black cadre, and we expect to continue the improvement in the period after the convention. Some of our concrete plans will be presented and discussed at another time during the convention.

AMERICAN POLITICS AND THE 1968 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN
Report for the PC to 22nd
National SWP Convention

by Jack Barnes

We've already had reports and discussion on the international situation, the current stage of the Afro-American struggle and the resolution entitled "The Case for an Independent Black Political Party." Later today and tomorrow there will be reports and discussion on the antiwar movement and on the youth movement. Thus some sections of the report on the Political Resolution will be shorter than proper balance would dictate, if it were the sole report.

One week ago the American governors were discussing the 1968 elections on a cruise ship heading for a conference on the Virgin Islands. The Republican governors issued a statement which said, "The presidential election year will be the year of the Great Debate on the foreign policy of the United States."

The next day, a little nervously, one of Johnson's chief foreign policy advisors, Walt Rostow, spoke at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, Kansas. He warned, "The domestic debate over Vietnam is not what it seems today." Mr. Rostow asserted, "It's not simply about Vietnam, it's not simply about current United States foreign policy, but if it continues, it threatens to raise the question of whether the United States government should abandon its entire post-war foreign policy." Those statements by spokesmen of the ruling class accurately forecast the axis of debate in the coming election year.

The Vietnam war and the struggle against it remains the central question, not only in the class struggle on a world scale but in the domestic politics of the United States itself. The Political Resolution discusses the divisions inside the United States which the war and the opposition to it have engendered, and the growing impact this is having on other issues in American politics. These divisions and this impact have deepened in the four months since the resolution was drafted.

In the last two years, the political consciousness of the great mass of the American people has been raised. The mass of the American people are involved and will be involved further in debating the character of the foreign policy of American imperialism like they have not been for decades, and the great debate on foreign policy threatens to go well beyond the limits that the ruling class would like to impose.

At the same time that this debate and division over foreign policy is growing, the war and the opposition to it has set loose, pushed further, acted as a catalyst on, and is the background to

the struggles carried on in the various sectors of the mass movement. The students, the Afro-Americans, the workers -- and all of their misleaders -- face new situations and problems which they didn't count on two years ago. The war impels the American people to think more and more in political terms. The general interest in politics which is always raised by national elections is thus heightened further.

The election campaign presents a platform for our ideas, with qualitatively improved opportunities for us compared to any of our previous presidential campaigns. It has also become clear that the issues surrounding the war, international and domestic, will not be settled by or during this campaign. They are basically determined and brought into sharp focus by (1) the character of the epoch we're living in and the conditions American imperialism faces on a world scale and (2) the unexpected depth of the domestic consequences the Vietnam escalation has produced.

We must put our campaign, its limits, its purposes and its opportunities in this perspective.

THE DILEMMA OF THE RULING CLASS

The ruling class itself faces dilemmas. The continuation of LBJ's course of gradual step-by-step escalation of the war has become the least acceptable variant to a growing section of the ruling class. The factors responsible for this shift were enumerated in the Political Resolution. The deepening Americanization of the war itself, the growth of the casualties, the change in the scope of the war in Vietnam and the effects this has on taxes, wages, and other conditions at home, are the roots of this growing dissent. For instance, Robert Kennedy, in a letter mailed last week to his constituents pointed out that in the last 6-month period American casualties in Vietnam have been higher than the entire draft calls of the South Vietnamese army. In other words, the war in no sense can be considered a war of Vietnamese against Vietnamese, with Saigon simply aided by the Americans.

This opposition within the ruling class has forced the Johnson Administration to shift ground. Last week Johnson and several Administration spokesmen stated that neither our treaty commitments nor our "moral commitments to South Vietnamese democracy" are basically involved in the war. What is now involved, LBJ said, and what is put before the American people for their consideration in this election campaign, is the national security of the United States. Under the impact of these speeches the congressional "dove" opposition has deepened. Several Senators who have been silent on the issue for a year of two, and some who have previously been "hawks," switched.

"Will it be possible," they ask, "to continue to carry out a world-wide foreign policy in our interest, and be able to act not only in Asia but if necessary in the Middle East, in Latin America,

in Africa -- wherever explosions may erupt -- if the deepening of the Vietnam quagmire continues?" So to Johnson's policies they counterpose their various tactical alternatives -- the enclave theory, negotiations, the short or long-term bombing pause, etc.

Another factor concerns them. That is the tendency, which we noted in the resolution, toward a growing militarization of American life. The increase in the authority and weight of what they call the military industrial complex in the decisions of the war becomes more and more obvious. Robert Strange McNamara -- and if there ever was a person with an appropriate middle name it's the Secretary of Defense -- was supposed to be the great civilian controller, the man who came in, slapped the generals down, and shaped up the defense department. But in the last six months it has become clear that in the decisions being made on the escalation of bombing, on the character of the targets, and on the proposals for further escalation, it's the generals and their views which are carrying the day with Johnson. So in addition to the fear of the consequences of even a continuing step-by-step gradual escalation there is a fear among the doves of the increased weight of the military caste in the executive councils of American capitalism.

Thus, a growing section of the ruling class opposes an open-ended escalation of the war and opposes the growth of the influence of the military in the government. This is the main axis of the debate: whether or not to continue the step-by-step escalation, or to find a way out.

But there is one other possible variant in ruling class strategy that we must keep in mind. That is a genuine danger of some sudden qualitative escalation possibly including a bombing attack against China. This is not the most likely variant. The opposition to the war is deep both nationally and internationally, and the American army has not expected the surprising military blows dealt them by the Vietnamese workers and peasants. But one of the variants open to the pro-escalation wing of the ruling class under these conditions is plunging forward, taking a qualitative new step which they hope will shock the ruling class as a whole into healing its divisions, and will solidify the working masses behind a war for "national security." At the same time they would hope to partially solve the problem they face in the growing might of the People's Republic of China. The decision in favor of the light anti-ballistic missile defense system and the verbal attacks by Humphrey and others pinpointing China as the source of the danger to "our" national security have been very ominous.

As long as the mass of the organized workers remains outside the current radicalization a venture against China remains one of the so-called "ways out" for the American ruling class. It's our responsibility not to forget this. If the growing radicalization that we see in the student movement and in the Afro-American communities were to penetrate the labor movement the war makers would have to re-evaluate the possibilities of choosing this extreme variant.

In the 1968 elections the Johnson Democrats and a large section of the Republican Party want to sweep the war under the rug. Their line is, "The war cannot be made a political issue. The bipartisanship which we've had since World War II must be maintained." This has been emphasized by a series of spokesmen for this wing of the ruling class. They go further and say, "If there is debate on the war it is essential that the war itself and the problems generated by the war not be connected with the domestic issues that face the American people. Some other issue, crime on the streets preferably, should be the axis of the campaign debates."

Our intention is just the opposite:

(1) We will utilize the election campaign not to sweep the war under the rug but to make the war the overriding question that the American people must think about, decide on and draw all the correct conclusions from. (2) We will explain the organic connection between war and the problems and demands of the workers, Afro-Americans and students of the United States. (3) More than anything else, what we will advocate to the mass movement is that not one struggle, not one demand, not one need be subordinated to this war.

THE AFRO-AMERICAN STRUGGLE

To the black masses the racism of American capitalist society is the key question in the 1968 elections. The Vietnam war is not their war. Their problems did not arise with the war, they rose long before the war. Their greatest desire is not so much peace and freedom but freedom and peace.

They refuse to subordinate any aspect of their struggle to the war. They see the war not as a war of "our" nation but as the war of the nation of their oppressor. The refusal of the black militants to stop struggling has been the biggest single political factor in slowing Johnson's hand in escalating the war. This is the central focus of political opposition at this time in the mass of the American workers. This is true not only in the militant wing of the black struggle. Even Martin Luther King and the forces and elements that he speaks for and represents take this position. Not one demand, not one struggle is to be subordinated to the war in Vietnam.

The struggle has reached such a point that Martin Luther King now makes a proposal that he hopes will undercut the "extremism" in the ghetto. He proposes that the black masses in all the metropolitan centers must in some organized way bring about total mass civil dislocation in the cities. In other words in late 1967 that's the moderate version of the way black Americans should view their struggle in relation to the Vietnam war.

Carl Stokes, who will probably be the new Democratic mayor of Cleveland, has a different approach. We can fight the war and we can turn out all the tons of butter we need, he says. Our answer to all the Stokes' is: That is a lie. You can't do both. The deeper the rulers get into the war the less they will produce and distribute. The fact that the black people do not see this as their war, and that they are coming to believe more and more that the war and social and economic progress are contradictory, is the most explosive problem that the Democratic Party politicians, black and white, face in the coming election. Carl Stokes may now take the firm position that both guns and butter are on the agenda for the coming period. But if there is another explosion in the Hough section of Cleveland, Stokes, the Democratic mayor, will use guns, not butter. That in itself will teach a few lessons.

Along with the uprisings there has been a consistent deepening of the nationalist consciousness of Afro-Americans. The demand for black control of the black community -- for economic, social, cultural and political control over their own lives, their own areas, their own education, the future of their children, etc., -- has become, in one or another concrete form, their central demand.

The response of LBJ to this demand has been an appeal to the insurance companies. We assumed that in the report we would have to list the various steps that the Johnson Administration had taken ostensibly to ameliorate the economic and social needs of the ghetto following the uprisings. But at this point, outside of social legislation that was already in the works, the funds for which have been cut, the only thing Johnson has done is to make a formal appeal to 348 private insurance companies to pledge to invest one billion dollars in the ghetto in the coming period.

The first response to this in financial circles was tongue-in-cheek agreement to consider it. Then the financial pages of the papers quit laughing. All of a sudden, the banks, the savings and loan institutions, and Rockefeller began saying, "I think the man has something." Rockefeller said the state should offer incentives to firms to go into the slums. It should give them temporary tax relief, and if need be this tax relief should be augmented by direct subsidies. A national convention of savings and loan institutions was held and they said, "The proposal is exciting. The federal government should move forward to meet the needs of the Negroes living in these horrible ghettos. These loans and investments must be tightly coupled to an agreement that the federal government (1) guarantee the profit and interest on the loans and investments, (2) the profits of businesses set up by the loans be tax exempt, (3) the numerous regulations of the federal home loan bank and regulation of the savings and loan institutions in this area be lifted."

So there seems to be a growing groundswell of these parasites, behind the leadership of Johnson, to solve their problems in the black ghettos.

We can be sure, the uprisings and the deepening nationalist sentiment have effects on the black GIs, but we don't have access to accurate information on this. The Vietnamese take this very seriously. They stress the impact of the ghetto uprisings on black GIs. Whether this is based on concrete evidence or based on their sensitivity to the attitudes of this layer of the American army, we don't know.

The racists, especially in the George Wallace campaign, will attempt to submerge the war debate by concentrating on the "race question." They will attempt to focus the racist sentiment in American society against the black people in order to (1) carry out a racist offensive and (2) cover up the basic debate over imperialist foreign policy. The struggles of the black militants threaten to do just the opposite. While their struggle began before the war and while the struggles and conditions they face, rather than the Vietnam war, are central for them, the continuation of this struggle regardless of the war puts the ruling class in a deepening contradiction.

If any large section of the American workers adopted this attitude of permanent militant struggle in spite of the "war needs of the nation" it would be impossible for Johnson, or any other leader of American capitalism, to prosecute the war. The ability to maintain needed production, their political authority as a ruling class, the maintenance of acceptable social stability in this country -- all would come into question. It's the example of struggle set by the Afro-Americans that is so important. Especially in light of the fact that in the coming months and years the federal government will have to play a more direct anti-labor, anti-union role, similar to the anti-black posture it has had to take as the struggle of the black community has intensified.

THE AMERICAN ECONOMY AND THE WORKING CLASS

The resolution outlines the basic economic conditions which the workers and the capitalist government face in the coming period. The inflationary bias of monopoly capital, heated up by the Vietnam war, has put growing pressure on the real wages of the American workers. An actual decline, not in money wages but in real wages, began in the middle of 1966. This is a situation the workers have not faced since the mid-fifties. Just prior to the UAW's negotiations with Ford, the senior staff economist of the Council of Economic Advisers, Saul Nelson, went to Detroit to speak to a national gathering of the Association of Business Economists. Johnson's economist told them this:

"In 1962, after the present upturn had started, the profit

share of corporate income averaged 16.5 per cent, whereas in 1966 it exceeded 18.5 per cent. The labor share has correspondingly fallen from 71.3 per cent in 1962 to 69.6 per cent in 1966."

He added that the first half of 1967 "witnessed a virtual restoration of the 1962 pattern, 17 percent profit vs. 71 per cent labor," but this "came too late to affect bargaining postures...."

Climbing prices of the last two years also eroded pay increases under old contracts and "labor inevitably reached for something more....Labor leaders...ignore the wishes of their constituents at their peril and negotiated settlements have been rejected by the rank-and-file with increasing and indeed alarming frequency."

In other words, in addition to the effects of inflation at the end of the boom, the actual percentage of corporate income which the corporations managed to keep had grown relative to labor's share. And as Nelson's comments indicate struggles have intensified to reverse this trend.

The purpose of this talk was clear. It was to prepare the businessmen for the struggles they were going to face, beginning with the Ford strike: the defensive struggles of the American workers, to maintain, regain, or safeguard the real wage gains which they had fought for and won in the late 1950's and early 1960's.

Inflation, in moderation, is the tool most preferred by the ruling class to keep the rate of exploitation as high as possible and real wages as low as possible. The only other two methods they have are (1) maintenance of a large and periodically growing industrial reserve army, a significant legion of the unemployed, or (2) direct state control over or interference with the labor movement. These latter two policies are more politically dangerous in the eyes of the American ruling class.

But the little inflationary trick has its problems too. Interest rates tend to soar -- and are blamed more and more on the Vietnam war; internal bottlenecks in the economy grow; international pressures increase not only on the dollar, but on the entire post-war international monetary structure which has allowed American financial penetration of the other advanced capitalist countries. Thus as inflation starts bringing more difficulties than rewards the ruling class must turn to some combination of the other two policies -- the growth of the industrial reserve army -- that is recession-induced unemployment -- or more and more direct government interference and control of the union movement and opposition to wage increases.

The government in Washington prefers working through the trade union bureaucrats to accomplish their ends. It is politically safest for them, and it disguises their own interference. Rule number one is to prevent strikes as often as possible, through agree-

ment, through pressure, through demogogy. Rule number two is if there's a strike, impose upon the rank and file terms of settlement which are as acceptable as possible to the corporations. But the labor lieutenants, under the economic conditions we described, gradually lose the capacity to successfully carry out this role. As they do so they lose little by little part of their value to the ruling class. That's the bureaucrats' worst nightmare.

Demands for general legislation against labor are being increasingly voiced. A growing layer of congressmen and editors of the daily press are insisting on finding ways to apply anti-trust concepts to industry-wide bargaining, to apply anti-monopoly concepts to union mergers or coalition bargaining in industries, or to establish some sort of compulsory labor courts. This direct government interference, which they prefer to avoid but which they must be prepared to apply if labor's militant response to the current economic pressures deepens, will itself be the biggest builder of labor party sentiment in the ranks of labor.

What the Socialist Workers Party urges is that the workers themselves do what the black Americans are doing. That is say in essence, "To hell with your war, we're not pulling back any of our demands because of the war, we're going to struggle to defend our gains, our wages and our rights against the combined assault of the corporations and the government." It's this position of struggle at home which is the bedrock of the revolutionary socialist attitude during wartime.

There must be no class peace when the ruling class is prosecuting an imperialist war. That was one of the cornerstones of the 2nd International prior to its failure in the face of World War I. It became a cornerstone of the Communist International. The most effective method of struggle against imperialist war is the acceleration of the class struggle at home, and the acceleration of the struggles of oppressed national minorities. In order to carry out a reactionary war, in order to carry out a war against the workers and peasants of other countries, the ruling class must increase the exploitation and oppression of the workers, the Afro-Americans, the youth in their own country. This social interdependence is the basis for our deep-going internationalism.

In order to prosecute and escalate a war against the workers, peasants, the students and the colored masses in another part of the globe, the ruling class must also begin carrying out attacks on the living conditions and rights of the workers, the Afro-Americans and the students in their own country. And these attacks are met by resistance and struggle. This is what we mean when we say inside every reactionary war are the seeds of a civil war.

The Stalinists, the labor bureaucrats, and the social democrats have systematically miseducated the masses on this question. In World War II the Communist Party gave complete support to a general

no-strike pledge and dissolved the Communist Party in the South. It attacked the NAACP for its slogan "Double V for Victory" -- victory over fascism abroad and victory over racism at home. The Stalinists insisted it's not "Double V for Victory," it's "V for Victory" -- victory over fascism abroad. But even with the support of the CP, with the union bureaucracy lined up 100 % behind the war, and with the war relatively popular because of the knowledge of the American workers of what fascism and Nazism meant to labor, opposition and struggle broke through in the March on Washington campaign, it broke through in 1943 with the Harlem explosion and miners struggles, and on a massive scale in 1944 and 1945 with the explosion of the greatest strike wave in the history of American labor.

The tendency of the workers from the very beginning of the Vietnam war has been quite different. It has been to subordinate practically none of their economic struggles because the government is at war. The struggles of the airline mechanics, of the transport workers and the sanitation workers in New York City, the struggles of the teachers and other public employees have all been examples of this.

The struggles of the public workers play an additional role in this situation. They face the government in a two-fold role: one, as their employer, and two, as some supposedly supra-class body above the contending forces in capitalist society. Thus, the anti-working class character of the state becomes more obvious.

The bureaucrats and the misleaders of the mass movement quake at the perspective of growing conflict with the state. This was reflected in Reuther's careful propaganda and agitation during and after the UAW Convention about the need to strike the auto industry one company at a time; to pick the firm that had the least war production and to take care not to strike the Ford plants in which "vital" war production was being carried out. A head-on conflict with the capitalist government threatens their position more than anything.

These strike struggles are not political, not in the sense that people normally use the word. They are struggles over bread-and-butter issues. But they take place in the midst of the war. They take place at a time when the state is under growing pressure to find ways and means of preventing them. The relatively small scale struggles which we have seen up to this time are an important augury for the future. As the government attempts to step in, it will face the periodic dilemma of capitalist rulers. It must choose between intervening inadequately and facing an increasingly intolerable economic and social situation as they try to carry out the war; or intervening sharply, directly, and openly, and take the chance of precipitating a qualitative change over time in the consciousness of the working masses concerning the class character of the American state.

Continued political and social struggles in any sector of the mass movement undercut the idea that you can't strike during a war, you can't carry on mass struggles during a war, you can't strike the government. It's with this in mind that the historical importance of the organized antiwar movement must be seen.

THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT

The most important political consequence of the demonstrations, struggles, and periodic national mass actions of the antiwar movement is the role they play in making it impossible for the misleaders of the working class and of the black community to impose a moratorium on struggle on the grounds of the "war effort." If everyone else is not sacrificing why the hell should we!

The antiwar movement helps breed disrespect for capitalist truth, capitalist leaders, capitalist morality, and capitalist law and order. The questions are raised, whose truth, whose morals, whose law? Johnson, who was elected president by the largest majority ever, was the subject of a California state poll taken several weeks ago. One of the questions was, "Can you name one area in which you feel the president has done a good job?" One good job; that's not much to ask. More than two thirds of the people could not think of a single one. [Since this report was presented to the party convention Johnson himself has pointed to one accomplishment for which he asks credit: He has provided plenty of dissidents. -- JB]

It is important for us to note the connection between the antiwar movement and the other sectors of the mass movement, which are at different stages of development, and have different characteristics. A glance from outside by someone who is not a Marxist would note three seemingly unrelated sectors of American society, in each of which an increase in struggle is occurring. But there is the tendency for lessons and tactics to spread from one sector of the mass movement to the other. There have been many examples of this the last three weeks during the wave of demonstrations on campuses. At the University of Wisconsin the students got a little taste of tear gas, of clubs and of being pulled down the stairs, beaten and jailed. What began as a sit-in on the campus ended with 70 of them admitted to the hospital. But then something else happened. The first day they were sitting in and singing songs. The second day they were heaving bottles and bricks at the cops. The third day the chancellor and the three deans were walking around campus with an armed guard. This doesn't mean a great deal in and of itself. It was just a small lesson. There are a few more students at the University of Wisconsin who, as they read about the steelhaulers' struggles, will see some of the things that happened along the Pennsylvania roads in a different light. As John Wilson of SNCC said to some of the white students in Washington, "Glad to welcome a few more of you to the club."

These are a few more ties that bind, lessons driven home by experiences. The more the methods which are usually used only against the Afro-Americans are used against the students, the more the tactics of the students in some demonstrations will tend to resemble the tactics of the workers or Afro-Americans, and the more mutual respect will be engendered. And the lesson will be taught that the enemy is not in Vietnam, but is a common enemy right here at home.

In this sense the October 21st demonstration at the Pentagon and the impact it has had nationally, and internationally, was another step forward for the antiwar movement. The details, the discussion, and criticisms on this will be taken up under the antiwar report. But we should note the size and combativity of the Pentagon action, even if it was unorganized and to some degree misled, and the breakthrough that it represented in letting the world know about the antiwar sentiment that exists. It was another step beyond April 15th internationally as well as nationally. The entire world knew about it within hours. The mass media, which is used by the ruling class, often has effects never intended. It helps cut down distances, time and barriers between different sectors of the mass movement, and the movements of different lands.

The biggest single error we could make in the coming year would be to get the idea that we are going to somehow withdraw from our participation in and leadership of the complicated struggles of the antiwar movement and substitute our election campaign for it. We do face problems, both within the antiwar movement and general problems of protest activity during an election year. For instance, there will be a tendency to turn from various protest actions to electoral protests as November 1968 approaches. There will be a tendency for the opposition to the war to continue to outrun the organized antiwar movement. There will be a tendency for the internal organizational difficulties of the antiwar movement to continually recur in new forms.

But our attack on American imperialism in the coming year must be a two-sided attack. We must continue inside the movement to deepen the political consciousness of the need for periodic mass protests and involvement of broader layers of the population. And our presidential campaign must propagandize to raise the general anti-capitalist consciousness of a layer of the American people.

In this way we will continue to do our part to deepen disillusionment with the capitalist status quo, the loss of respect for the ruling class and its leaders and the lack of confidence in its general direction and demands. We will use the campaign to the maximum degree to raise consciousness of the general causes of all these things and what should be done to change them. Our campaign openings cannot be viewed in isolation from the continued growth and struggle of the antiwar movement and the effects this will have. And the growth of the antiwar movement and its effects will depend in significant degree to our continued full participation and leadership.

THE 1968 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

A large majority of those who are against the war will wind up supporting or voting for whatever "lesser evil" is offered by one of the ruling class parties. The majority of the American people who are against the war will vote for the lesser-evil in 1968. Our opponents will add to this confusion, but they will also have problems.

The Communist Party goes into this campaign desperately trying to find a way to break their identification with Johnson. Remember who Johnson was in '64? Gus Hall's favorite candidate. They want to see some sort of "independent peace" ticket launched which they can support, against Johnson, and still work in the Democratic Party and elect "peace" Democrats. They want to break from Johnson -- not the Democratic Party and class collaboration.

They have already been dealt a couple of very serious setbacks. One of these has been the early launching of our campaign. Another was the fiasco of the National Conference for New Politics convention in Chicago. That set them back months. We now notice in The Worker a debate over how much energy should go into anti-LBJ convention delegates work, how much should go into finding someone to substitute for the quashed New Politics presidential ticket, and whether or not they should even consider running their own Communist Party presidential slate.

In addition to the CP's gyrations there will be a tendency on the part of a few young radicals and black militants to suggest boycotting the election, to substitute community organizing or other projects that leave the class collaborationists unchallenged on the electoral front. Those are all problems which we will have to deal with concretely.

General confusion will be compounded by the fact that antiwar sentiment in 1968 will still be expressed primarily in a vote for a bourgeois candidate. Not some middle class "independent" candidate, not a socialist candidate, but through one of the bourgeois candidates. But this is only an episode in the larger struggle. It is important to remember that prior to the '64 election the attitude on the war that is now held by hundreds of thousands, was the attitude of only a vanguard. Following the experiences of the '64 election and the escalation that followed it, opposition swelled far beyond that vanguard. We can safely anticipate the same phenomena in the post-'68 period.

The experience of the election and the explosions which follow, will once again throw up a larger layer which will adopt what was the position of a vanguard in 1968. We must keep this in mind in discussing the '68 campaign. The groundwork we lay for reaching and influencing the new layers that will be radicalized by the aftermath of the 1968 elections is more important than the votes we get in 1968.

We know that the mass of the workers as well as the majority of the conscious opponents of the war will not express their opposition through a vote for the Socialist Workers Party in 1968. In fact our vote will be a small one in absolute terms. Perhaps we can better see the kind of opportunity and responsibility we have in this campaign if we compare it briefly to our previous presidential campaigns.

In 1948 the Party ran its first national presidential campaign. We ran it in the midst of the Wallace movement; in the midst of the cold war offensive, the attack on Stalinist dominated unions of the CIO, and the attack on the political vanguard in general.

In 1952 we were in the middle of the McCarthy period, with the United Nations flag flying over the war in Korea and the repression of the McCarthy period at its height.

By 1956 the war was over but the effects of the witchhunt lingered on. Economic boom conditions followed the war and there was only the barest beginnings of the upsurge of the civil rights movement. In 1956 just a little more than 10 years ago, the Montgomery bus boycott took place. It was just the beginning in the South. We were like a voice in the Wilderness, in 1956, as far as reflecting any sector of mass opposition.

By 1960 we could see the beginning of a real change. The Cuban revolution had come to power and the struggle of the black masses, though still centered in the South under liberal leadership had emerged. This was still prior to the explosive rise of black nationalism in the North, the rise of the Muslims and Malcolm X.

By '64 the focus of the struggle had shifted to the urban ghettos North and South. There was a section of the mass movement that was visibly active in struggle against the government even though it was still pre-Watts. But even the more politically advanced workers, students and Afro-Americans had little understanding about the nature and size of the war being prepared for Vietnam. When Johnson ran against Goldwater, the domestic consequences, the international consequences and the scope of the war, were largely unsuspected by the American people.

The situation has changed. The explosions in the black ghettos have shed a new light on the capacity of the masses in the cities to struggle against the government. Johnson's escalations and the struggles of the antiwar movement have bred an entirely new attitude among hundreds of thousands of people as they are beginning to see the consequences of this war. This has begun to sink into the consciousness of millions of Americans. It is these factors which have brought about the qualitative increase in the political consciousness which gives us a unique opening and a unique opportunity.

Already well over a year before the election, before the alternative of "peace" candidates has been resolved, we have over 200 endorsers of the SWP ticket. We have a mailing list of more than 1,500 people who have signed up in the last month asking to remain informed about the campaign. Three days after the October 21 Washington demonstration, we've already gotten 25 responses to the National Guardian ad. Of these seven were endorsers and the inquiries were from 16 different colleges and high schools. The Southern tour by Derrick Morrison and Paul Boutelle, in addition to the size of the audiences, the impact that it made, and the contacts which they obtained, brought us over 20 subscribers to The Militant, 50 new Afro-American endorsers of the SWP 1968 national campaign, and \$250 worth of Merit literature sales. We've distributed 135,000 stickers, 45,000 posters, 50,000 of the Guardian ad leaflet, and 91,000 of the three basic brochures.

Following the Chicago NCNP conference The Militant business office sent out a sample Militant to those who had signed the campaign mailing list. More than 30 subs have already come in. Tomorrow night when our presidential and vice presidential candidates make their acceptance speeches we will hear endorsements, and telegrams and letters in support of the campaign and candidates, from people who are leaders of sections of the antiwar movement and others whom we did not even approach to endorse our 1964 campaign.

Branches have already set up campaign committees and most of the branches have elected their campaign directors.

We have begun working on our ballot status and hope to be on the ballot in more states than ever before, including some states in the Deep South. We hope most of the locals are already planning to nominate and announce local candidates as early as possible, in order to take maximum advantage of the national campaign in the local areas. The Militant will read more and more like a campaign paper, and we hope to increase both its circulation and size during the course of the campaign.

What are the tasks of this campaign?

(1) The number one task is the recruitment, throughout the campaign period, of youth, black and white, to the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialist Alliance. They will come primarily from the student movement. This remains the central task of the Party and the major single measure of the success of the 1968 presidential campaign.

(2) The campaign will intervene in the key question in the world class struggle, that is the fight against the war in Vietnam. We will fight and propagandize to get the American troops out of Vietnam. We will be intervening in the struggle not as outside commentators but as veterans, as the backbone, as the activists and the leaders of the movement against this imperialist war. Our candidates, activists and leaders of the two major sectors of the mass movement, will reflect this in every way.

(3) We will campaign to popularize a program of uncompromising and independent struggle by the mass of Americans for their basic needs. It is a program that points toward a complete break from collaboration with the capitalist rulers, in all forms of struggle, from day-to-day bread and butter issues to electoral action. We will explain over and over than when black people, and workers as a whole, cease to support the Democratic and Republican Parties and organize parties of their own, a gigantic step forward will have been taken in the struggle against capitalist racism, oppression, and war.

We will attempt to concretize our demand for black control of the black community. We'll be the primary fighters against the racist offensive of the Wallace movement and the racists in the two major parties. We'll propagandize especially to the black vanguard for the formation of a mass black political party of the Afro-American people, independent of the capitalist parties.

To labor we will propagandize our class struggle demands which are the necessity of the moment. Demands which reflect the situation the workers face in 1968: 1) the unconditional right to strike; 2) no government interference in collective bargaining in any way through laws, boards, or direct interference; 3) rank and file democracy, the right of the workers themselves to decide on the questions of their contracts and other decisions; 4) establishment of escalator clauses as protection against the inflationary offensive of the war-making government; 5) a shorter work week; 6) full support by the union movement of the struggle of the black community. Within this framework we will propagandize for, explain and seek openings to talk about the need for a labor party based on the trade unions and independent of the capitalist parties.

There will be a colossal confusion around the 1968 presidential campaign. If current trends continue, this confusion will set the stage for the post-1968 explosion that will make the post-1964 explosion look mild. Our campaign is our basic instrumentality in the coming year, 1) for probing and penetrating deeper into all the sectors of the mass movement; 2) for concretizing and propagandizing the program capable of mobilizing labor and its allies in political struggle against the capitalist government; and 3) for taking another big step in increasing the number of cadres of the Marxist combat party capable of leading the revolutionary struggle to the establishment of a workers' government in the United States.