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A FIFTH "IS-NOT"

Mike Kelly, Detroit Branch

July 19, 1975

Barry Sheppard's "Party Tasks and Perspectives Report" (V. 33, #4) lists 4 things the turn proposed by the political resolution "is not." To these should be added a fifth "What the turn is not": Comrade Keil's advice to reverse our priorities (v. 33, #9).

His advice would reduce the political resolution to a lifeless, mechanical formula whose effect would be to isolate the party from the actual dynamic of the unfolding class struggles.

Comrade Keil tells us that ". . . we should make the meaning of the turn even more clear and explicit by stating that in our opinion, trade-union work and propaganda among workers should take higher priority for the Trotskyist movement, as a whole in this country, than work in any other social milieu. This means that we think it is more important for Trotskyist trade union fractions to be built *today* than Trotskyist campus fractions such as the YSA is building. Campus fractions should not be neglected, but should be put in a second place to trade union fractions." (p. 11 & 12, my emphasis) He soon clarifies what this campus fraction work will consist of: Trade union work! "The YSA for itself *might* continue its campus orientation, but could be convinced that the highest joint priority is trade-union work." (p. 12, my emphasis) Further, "In the past, we have viewed the campuses as the main and most fruitful area of propaganda and recruitment for the Trotskyist movement in this country, even though the YSA has taken most of the direct organizational responsibility for this campus work. Now we should reverse this priority." "The convention should make it clear that the turn means a reversal of the student orientation." (p. 12)

In subsequent paragraphs Comrade Keil seeks to show why our strategic orientation demands a reversal of priorities *today*, asserting, "The mass actions in the street today are being carried out by labor, not students. Workers are *at least as receptive* to socialist ideas as any other part of the population. Students are not mobilizing massively and independent of the labor movement." (p. 12 my emphasis)

For the moment let's give the comrade the benefit of the doubt on these latter assumptions. *If* workers were "at least as receptive . . ." would the SWP attempt to convince the YSA that its student/campus orientation should be to act as cheerleaders for the working class in its struggles? That perhaps it "might" not want to continue a campus orientation at all?

Comrade Keil's proposal to turn away from student work and students as such contradicts the clear analysis of the political resolution on this question. Although students and the campuses they attend will become important centers of support for struggles of the working class they will also continue to be important centers of student struggles *per se*.

These struggles will run the gamut from free speech fights to open admissions to anti-cutbacks and anti-tuition-rise struggles. These are legitimate struggles that our movement, but especially the YSA, will want to play a

leadership role in. More than that, we will urge students to seek support *from* the trade unionists and community organizations. The street between students and workers and the oppressed nationalities is not a one-way street.

In the trade unions or Black community organizations our comrades will point out—if it's even needed—that an open admissions fight by students is in their interests as workers or community residents, especially the interests of their children.

As social consciousness develops in the working class it would be hard to imagine that they could not see their own interests involved in an anti-tuition rise or anticutback struggle.

To recognize the legitimacy and power (however limited, though we suspect the comrade would probably underestimate their actual power and importance) of students and their struggles is not to deny the overwhelming central role of the working class in the American Revolution or its impact on students. Students *will* be impressed by a socialist youth organization that supports workers struggles and the revolutionary party leading them. But it is one thing to recognize this and quite another to ask students to turn their backs on their own interests and struggles and effectively dissolve the student movement into the trade union movement.

The political resolution is correct when it says, "This experience drove home the correctness of the estimate of the SWP that systematic political work among students, organized through a revolutionary socialist youth organization, is a *permanent* political responsibility and opportunity." (p. 14, my emphasis) To adopt a workerist orientation, as comrade Keil proposes, would be to miss important opportunities for campus struggles and the many recruits and future cadre to be won to our movement.

Besides being wrong on the strategic relationship of the working class and the students comrade Keil is also wrong conjuncturally. Workers are not now "at least as receptive to socialist ideas" as students. Nor are student struggles at the dead-end he claims.

The period ahead will see workers coming to socialist ideas and joining the Trotskyist movement in ever increasing numbers. To say that this is the case today is to substitute one's wishes for reality. Some workers are coming around now and a few are joining. These are the most politically conscious workers and represent the vanguard of much larger numbers to come. But their numbers do not yet compare with the numbers of students we're recruiting. In the immediate period ahead we should expect our biggest recruitment to continue to come from the student milieu. For how long? There's no way to predict exactly how fast the tempo of the current stage of the radicalization will be and it will undoubtedly vary from branch to branch.

Following Comrade Keil's analysis we would shift resources much faster than the current dynamic of the class struggle and the radicalization of the working class demands. The result would be to miss potential recruits in the numbers the student movement has to offer in the next

period. With recruitment of cadre a central task for our movement it would be disastrous to misjudge the actual tempo of the radicalization and the relationship between the different sectors.

Comrade Keil's chief support for his "dead-end" theory about students is the New York City budget crisis and an alleged lack of response by the masses of students to the massive cutbacks in education. To this he counterposes the municipal workers, especially District Council 37 of AFSCME, and the June 4 demonstration in New York and the earlier April 26th Jobs demo in Washington, D.C.

Perhaps the immensity of New York and its population make it difficult to see beyond the outer "skin" of the Big Apple, or maybe there's less air pollution and greater visibility in the motor city, but we have seen many signs of life in the student movement that augur well for the future period.

Here in our area we saw several of the biggest student actions in years at the University of Michigan and Wayne State University around cutbacks, tuition rises, etc. The *Militant* has also carried quite a bit of coverage of similar struggles from other parts of the country. It's not definitive yet, but the student movement shows signs of breaking out of its lull of the past several years. The struggles of workers will undoubtedly excite students and reinforce the tendency to fight back.

Perhaps the most encouraging sign of combativity amongst students was the May 17th demonstration. Who does the comrade think organized it? We found the best receptivity to supporting the struggle of Boston Blacks against the racist terror amongst students, hence the key role of the Student Coalition Against Racism. Although trade union support was organized in some areas (8 unions here in Detroit where we have comrades) it was students who played the dominant role (outside of the authority of the NAACP) in building the action. As the political resolution states, "Given the large concentrations, social composition, intellectual stimuli, the antiauthoritarian attitude of many youth, and the relative freedom of student life, the majority of students can be highly sensitive to social and political issues." (p. 14) Hasn't this been the case with respect to Boston? The working class has quite a ways to go to reach this level of sensitivity. One of our key tasks *within* the working class in coming months will be to convince workers and their unions to join the desegregation fight in Boston and in their own city. In many unions it will be an uphill, but necessary, fight.

Comrade Keil's document is dated June 27, 1975, a week before the city-wide demo against *all* cutbacks which we participated in heavily and prior to the briefly inspiring sanitation strike. If we were to utilize the comrade's measuring stick on the combativity of the New York workers *now*, on July 19th, we would have to pronounce the workers in a dead-end as well, and especially Gotbaum's Council 37! But such a judgement would be the height of impressionism, neither judgement, on the student movement or on New York workers would have much scientific value or be useful as a prognosis for our future orientation or priorities.

How do we determine priorities? First by our analysis of the period we're in, or as in this case, the period we're going into. We also look at the specific conjuncture of this

period. And we review the state of the party, its cadre and other resources. The sharp reversal of priorities comrade Keil calls for might be in order if we'd been caught napping like Rip Van Winkle and woke up to suddenly find ourselves in the middle of an entirely different period.

This is not the case. The party is *anticipating* the period ahead and the new stage in the radicalization that is just beginning. Such foresight gives us the time to carefully plan out our tasks and priorities. A shift, not a reversal, of priorities is called for. The fundamental direction the shift in priorities is going in flows from our strategic analysis, the exact pace and form the shifts take flows more from the specific conjuncture. Each branch will make somewhat different choices in setting priorities within the context of the general line for the next period. Local considerations will weigh heavily in the tactical decisions involved. For example, in a city where our movement is just getting a foothold and our size is small the branch may decide to set a little higher priority on establishing a strong *campus* base to maximize recruitment and helping to build S.C.A.R. and commit more resources to supporting the YSA's efforts along this line accordingly. A branch in a city with a large YSA local and a strong campus base will probably set different priorities, putting more resources into trade union and Black community work.

This brings up another point, our work in the fight against racism and our work in the communities of the oppressed nationalities. It's obvious that Comrade Keil is interpreting the turn in a very narrow fashion, as simply a turn to workers. For example he says "Of course, our work in helping to build the Student Coalition Against Racism is very important, as Barry Sheppard's report pointed out. But it is not a substitute for such a turn as the plenum projected." (p. 11)

What the comrade misses, or rejects, is that although the most important aspect of the new period is the increased opportunities to do political work in the working class *per se*, that's not all the turn is about. This new stage of the radicalization is radicalizing not only workers, but all of the allies of the working class as well. The turn is toward the new rise of the mass movements of these allies, as well as of the workers themselves. Our S.C.A.R. work and the turn toward rooting ourselves deeper in the Black community which flows from the fight against racism in Boston and other cities is *part* of this turn, a fundamental part of it, not a "left-over" of a "student" period or an auxiliary to our "workers work" in the coming period.

With Comrade Keil we recognize the centrality of the working class and especially its industrial sector, to making the revolution, but unlike Comrade Keil we don't downplay or ignore the importance of the struggles of Blacks, students or other allies of the working class.

Comrade Keil's conception of the revolutionary process would reduce the proletarian orientation to a simple formula any of the workerist tendencies could be happy with: workers are the only revolutionary class; only workers have the power to make a social revolution; ergo that's where our work must be. Too simple and mechanical a formula to guide a revolutionary party in the actual dynamic of the class struggle in its many forms, one that unnecessarily counterposes our student work or Black work to our trade-union work, etc.

DOCUMENTS AS A RECRUITMENT TOOL

by Mike Kelly, Detroit Branch

July 20, 1975

Detroit ordered 40 extra political resolutions and a like number of the Black resolution and distributed them to our periphery with an invitation to attend pre-convention discussion and Oberlin.

We felt that both would make exciting reading for our periphery of contacts and sympathizers and would help to bring them closer to the party. Nowhere else can they find such a comprehensive overview of the current crisis and the new opportunities for the revolutionary party in the new stage of the radicalization just beginning.

Our results to date have been good. Many of the 40 receiving them are sympathizers—some of long standing—who won't necessarily come to the discussions or Oberlin, though some will, but who responded very positively to the invitation and were pleased to receive the bulletins. The simple act of extending the documents and the invitations, as well as the documents themselves, are helping to solidify them as supporters.

More than a dozen contacts of the party have attended one or more sessions of the pre-convention discussion and made favorable comments on them. About ten contacts of the YSA have also attended different sessions. More than half the contacts have been workers and more than half Blacks (with some overlap) which in itself is a small reflection of the new period we're going into.

Although it would be late for other branches to organize distribution and invitations on this scale at this stage of the discussion if they haven't already done so, comrades should look beyond the convention. Both documents are a good recruitment tool and exactly the type of literature we'll want to put in the hands of contacts after the convention.

It would be good to print both of them quickly, quicker, in fact, than we did with the three similar books already out: *Dynamics of World Revolution Today*, *Revolutionary Strategy for the 70's* or *Towards An American Socialist Revolution*. Printing them in the ISR might be the best way initially. It would be good to reach not only our current subscription readership with them but also some of our new readers we'll meet this fall. Late September or early October might be good timing since sales should have recovered from the summer and Oberlin slump. Perhaps we could design it as a supplement like we did Halstead's "Jobs" one, only with a much more modest extra run for branch use. In addition to this the small book form used in the past might be handier for the long run.

Until they appear in print in other formats branches might want to order in extras for the month or so after Oberlin for the new contacts we make as we go back to work or campus.

ON THE PROBLEM OF DEFINING THE WORKING CLASS

by Paul Le Blanc, Pittsburgh Branch

July 21, 1975

David Keil raises a number of important questions in his contribution "What the Party's Turn Should Mean" (Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 33, No. 9), though I think most of the answers he comes up with would lead us in the wrong direction. I'd like to discuss certain aspects of the final section in which he asserts that "A Better Definition of the Working Class Is Needed." In this section he criticizes what he sees as the "wrong theories" of Ernest Mandel which in his opinion have disoriented the Socialist Workers Party in the recent past. Keil feels that the 1975 draft Political Resolution ("The Decline of American Capitalism: Prospects for a Socialist Revolution," Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 33, No. 1) provides a partial correction but that it doesn't go far enough. Building upon what he views as the strengths of the draft resolution, he offers a definition of the working class which places teachers (and, by implication, other occupational groups) on both sides of the class line. This has serious practical implications, as Keil points out: "The dual role of teachers as a social group will have to be taken into consideration in both our campus work and our teacher-fraction work."

I think that Comrade Keil may have inadvertently uncovered a weakness in the draft resolution, although he seems to view this weakness as a strength. Before focusing in on this, however, I think it may be useful to examine the alleged sins of Comrade Mandel and, until recently, of our own party.

MANDEL AND THE SWP ON STUDENTS

Keil writes: "The 1975 draft Political Resolution indicates correctly that students are not workers. This correct view of students differs from the views of Ernest Mandel as expressed in an article in *The Black Dwarf*, July 5, 1968. (This newspaper, distributed by the members of the International Marxist Group, the British organization of the Fourth International, had as its front-page headline, 'Students: The Revolutionary Vanguard.') In this article, Mandel went so far as to state that 'students are workers.'" (p. 13)

Later, Keil asserts: "Following his [Mandel's] view, the student milieu would be proletarian, not petty-bourgeois, because most students become workers. When socialists devote their main propaganda and recruitment to the student movement, as the sections of the Fourth International did in the 1960s, the immerse themselves in a proletarian milieu, not a petty-bourgeois one, according to the logic of Mandel's theory. Hence, instead of trying to recruit from this alien class milieu by *breaking* students from its influences, the Fourth International has *adapted* to the student milieu, believing it to be proletarian.

"Our own party has made errors of orientation in the past due to our failure to reject Mandel's wrong theories,

which comrades have been educated to accept. . . ." (p. 15)

If true, this is all very serious. However, I think Comrade Keil seriously misrepresents the views of Ernest Mandel.

I don't have access to the issue of *The Black Dwarf* that Comrade Keil refers to. But I do have a copy of Tariq Ali's anthology *The New Revolutionaries* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1969) which contains an essay by Mandel entitled "The New Vanguard," which appears to be the same essay referred to. Perhaps it's been edited, because I can't find the bald statement: "Students are workers." What I do find is a description of "the student milieu as a special social stratum, with which students from bourgeois [and other] backgrounds often assimilate, breaking their ties with their family environment without yet being integrated into the social environment of their professions-to-be." (p. 49)

Similarly, in Mandel's presentation to the Socialist Scholars Conference on September 7, 1968, there is the following statement: "Of course students are not yet workers. But it would be as wrong to define them by their social origin as it would be to define them by their social future. They are a social layer in transition. Contemporary universities are a huge melting pot into which flow youth of different social classes, to become for a certain time a new homogeneous social layer. Out of this interim layer there arises on the one hand an important part of the future capitalist class and its main agents among the higher middle classes, and on the other hand a growing proportion of the future working class." (Ernest Mandel and George Novack, *The Revolutionary Potential of the Working Class*, 2nd ed., New York: Pathfinder Press, 1974, p. 210.

The view of students put forward by Mandel—that they are neither petty bourgeois nor proletarian but a special social layer in transition (most of which has a proletarian future)—is the view of students put forth on pages 13 and 14 of the draft Political Resolution.

If the perspective of the draft Political Resolution is correct, then our movement's turn toward the radicalizing students in the 1960s was *not* the immersion in a petty-bourgeois milieu that Keil thinks it was, and there was not the consequent need to concentrate on "*breaking* students from its influences." (One wonders what this "breaking" effort would have looked like—the practice of the Workers League, Progressive Labor Party, *et al?*) If the draft Political Resolution is correct, then Comrade Keil is wrong in his belief that our failure to engage in such "breaking" policies constituted an adaptation by to our movement to the petty bourgeoisie.

In fact, we developed good cadre from this student milieu, including significant numbers whose origins and whose future occupations are working class.

It is precisely at this point that Comrade Keil's criticism becomes most serious. He argues that the draft resolution

“defines the working class in such a way as to include some layers which would more correctly be classified as middle-class.” Implicit in this is the suggestion that the traditional Marxist theory of classes is being revised. Before examining the specifics of Comrade Keil’s important criticism, and the problems created by his proposed definition of the working class (and by a similar ambiguity in the draft resolution), it might be useful to turn our attention to some previous theoretical work on this question.

THE MARXIST THEORY OF CLASSES

The last chapter of the third volume of *Capital* is entitled “The Classes.” After a page and a half, in which Marx is just beginning to warm up, there is a note by Engels (who edited the last two volumes after Marx’s death): “Here the manuscript ends.” There is no systematic, thoroughgoing treatment on the concept of classes by either Marx or Engels. Later Marxists have been forced to base themselves, as George Lukacs once noted, “on the collation of occasional utterances by Marx and Engels and on the independent extrapolation and application of their method.”

Important guidelines have been provided, however, by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*. They note that under capitalism, “society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat.” In his 1888 footnote, Engels explains: “By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage labor. By proletariat, the class of modern wage laborers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live.” Reference is also made in the *Manifesto* to two other classes. On the one hand, there is the petty bourgeoisie (also referred to as “the lower strata of the middle class” and “the lower middle class”) which consists of small tradespeople, shopkeepers, *rentiers*, handicraftsmen, artisans, and peasants. It’s predicted that they will “sink gradually into the proletariat” and that they will “fight against the bourgeoisie, to save their existence as fractions of the middle class.” The other class mentioned in the *Manifesto* is “the ‘dangerous class,’ the social scum, that passively rotting mass thrown off by the lowest layers of old society,” elsewhere referred to by Marx and Engels as the lumpen-proletariat—pimps, prostitutes, pushers, criminals, etc.

To summarize: those who make their living through the sale of their labor-power are workers. Those who make their living through the ownership of big businesses (large-scale operations employing large numbers of workers) are capitalists. Those who make their living through the ownership of their own tools and skills and/or business operations, but who employ few or no workers, are petty bourgeois. (This category wasn’t simply “the middle class” in 1848; the middle class included *all* capitalist layers, big and small, sandwiched between the landed nobility and the proletariat.) Finally, making a living by operating outside of, or in the shadows of, all this was the lumpen-proletariat.

This all seems fairly clear. But elsewhere in Marx’s rich and complex body of work there are references to

“intermediate classes,” to the “mass of the nation . . . standing between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie,” to “owners of capital and land-owners” as constituting two distinct classes, to “the continual increase in numbers of the middle classes, . . . situated midway between the workers on one side and the capitalists and landowners on the other. These middle classes rest with all their weight upon the working class and at the same time increase the social security and power of the upper class.” There is also Marx’s warning that “the class structure does not appear in a pure form. . . . Intermediate and transitional strata obscure the class boundaries even in this case [of highly industrialized England].” (These and similar ambiguities are presented in essays by Tom Bottomore and Stanislaw Ossowski in Bottomore, ed. *Karl Marx*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1973; see pp. 19-27, 79-91.)

One of the outstanding attempts to develop a systematic and comprehensive Marxist discussion of classes is Nikolai Bukharin’s chapter on “The Classes and the Class Struggle” in his 1921 work *Historical Materialism, a System of Sociology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969, pp. 276-311). Bukharin discusses five *types* of classes: 1) *the basic classes of a given social form*—under capitalism, the class of financial, commercial and industrial capitalists, and the class of skilled and unskilled workers; 2) *intermediate classes*—defined as being necessary for the society in which they live, without being a remnant of the old social order, and occupying “a middle position” between the two basic classes; the example Bukharin gives is “the technical mental workers in capitalist society”; 3) *transition classes*—carry-overs from the preceding form of society, “now disintegrating in their present form,” such as artisans and peasants; 4) *mixed class types*—such as an industrial worker who also owns a little farm and hires someone to work on the farm; and 5) *declassé groups*, “i.e., categories of persons outside the outlines of social labor: the lumpen-proletariat, beggars, vagrants, etc.”

Many twentieth-century Marxists utilized such a model as this, particularly in regard to what Bukharin termed “the technical mental workers.” In the midst of the Great Depression, the noted American Marxist Lewis Corey devoted an entire book to *The Crisis of the Middle Class* (New York: Corvici-Friede, 1935, especially see pp. 112-150), in which he viewed the growing layers of white collar and “professional” employees as a “new middle class” (similar to Bukharin’s “intermediate classes”), as opposed to the “old middle class” (similar to Bukharin’s “transition classes”).

Trotsky also followed this approach, as David Keil notes by citing a passage from his 1937 essay “The Communist Manifesto Today.” Trotsky wrote that “the development of capitalism has accelerated in the extreme the growth of legions of technicians, administrators, commercial employees, in short, the so-called ‘new middle class.’ In consequence, the intermediate classes, to whose disappearance the *Manifesto* so categorically refers, comprise even in a country as highly industrialized as Germany about one-half of the population.” (In my opinion, this is the only passage in Trotsky’s brilliant essay which is outdated.)

There was, however, an alternate Marxist approach to this question. In 1892, in his work *The Class Struggle* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1971, pp. 35-42), Karl Kautsky argued that the proletariat was increasing not

only through the growth of industry, but also through a massive proletarianization in "the domain of commerce" and among "the mass of educated people." Paul Lafargue, Marx's son-in-law, elaborated on this idea in 1900. He asserted: "Capitalist production has divorced two functions which were once indissolubly united; on the one side it puts the manual workers, who become more and more servants of the machine, and on the other the intellectual workers, engineers, chemists, managers, etc. But these two categories of workers, however different and contrary they may be in their education and habits, are welded together, to the point that capitalist industry cannot be carried on without manual laborers any more than without intellectual wage workers." He called upon these "intellectual wage workers" to "fulfill their duty to their class" by joining with the manual workers to struggle against the capitalist enemy. (*Socialism and the Intellectuals*, New York: New York Labor News, 1967, p. 370)

The reasoning of Kautsky and Lafargue suggests a line of thought which was taken up by two important American Marxists—Daniel DeLeon and Louis Boudin. DeLeon asserted, in the columns of the Socialist Labor Party's *Weekly People* around the turn of the century, that clerks, bookkeepers, teachers "and all those others who would spurn the title 'manual workers' . . . are wage slaves, just the same as the carpenter or bricklayer." He emphasized that "a proletarian is one who, not owning any machinery of production, must sell himself into wage slavery . . ." (*Socialist Economics in Dialogue*, New York: New York Labor News, 1935, pp. 83-85, 92)

In 1907, Louis Boudin, a theoretician active in the left wing of the Socialist Party of America, produced *The Theoretical System of Karl Marx* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967), a work which Lenin termed "outstanding." Boudin wrote: "A very great proportion of what is termed new middle class, and appears as such in the income statistics, is really a part of the regular proletariat . . . All these salaried persons, no matter what their *salaries* may be, who make up perhaps the bulk, and certainly a great proportion, of the 'new' middle class, are in reality just as much a part of the proletariat as the merest day-laborer." (pp. 205-206)

In short, the Kautsky-Lafargue perspective in the Marxist movement tended to view white collar and "professional" workers as a new layer of the working class. The Bukharin perspective tended to place them outside of the proletariat, treating them as an essentially petty-bourgeois layer. And for many years it was what I've called the Bukharin perspective which dominated the thinking of those considering themselves to be Marxists.

In the 1960s, a number of European Marxists—among whom was Comrade Mandel—began developing a sophisticated reformulation of what I've called the Kautsky-Lafargue perspective, inspired not by these two men but by dramatic developments taking place in capitalist society. I would argue—and Comrade Keil has yet to disprove—that this perspective is no less Marxist, and is far more adequate, than that articulated by Trotsky in 1937. Our party has done well to embrace it.

One of Lenin's favorite sayings was: "Theory, my friend, is grey, but green is the everlasting tree of life." It is difficult for even the most skillful theoreticians to deal fully with the complexities of human society. Despite the more adequate perspective, certain ambiguities remain.

In the draft Political Resolution there is a creative

attempt to deal with these remaining ambiguities. But the theoretical innovation has created new ambiguities. Upon the new ambiguities Comrade Keil bases a theoretical innovation of his own. The implications are dangerous for our practical work.

FOREMEN, COPS AND OTHER UNSAVORY CHARACTERS

The ambiguities in the draft resolution are contained under the sub-section on parts 12-13, entitled the "Middle Class" (the quotation marks appear in the title but not in the text under the title). What is attempted here is well-summarized by Jack Barnes: "We try to differentiate potential friend from potential foe in the middle class. . . . We try to indicate who it is most likely we can win, who we can neutralize, and who will be our foes. We point to the difference between a cop and a computer programmer." "Report on 'The Decline of American Capitalism: Prospects for a Socialist Revolution'," Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 33, No. 4, p. 6)

One of the key points of this section of the draft resolution is a restatement of Mandel's perspective: ". . . sizeable numbers of teachers, technicians, service workers, government employees, etc., are really for the most part skilled, usually salaried, workers. . . . In reality, . . . the distinction between a teacher or lower salaried technician and a woman or man on the assembly line at Chrysler is a distinction within the working class itself . . ." This working class layer is the largest section of the so-called "middle class" (hence the quotation marks).

But then the document goes on to deal with the *real* middle class. (The term *middle class* is clearly meant here as a synonym for petty bourgeoisie.) There is mention of "the modern small masters, the independent truckers being one example." Another grouping is described as "the well-heeled doctors, engineers and lawyers, many of whom are self-employed and whose skills are remunerated by the ruling class at a rate enabling them to live at a standard qualitatively above even the most skilled workers." Both groupings, I think, are clearly non-working class, clearly petty bourgeois, according to *any* traditional Marxist standards.

But then the draft resolution goes on to set up four additional categories: 1) *social parasites*—lawyers, advertising specialists, insurance agents; 2) *those whose function is to increase exploitation*—foremen, time-in-motion experts; 3) *those related to the state's repressive apparatus*—cops, "many social workers" (the point on social workers is not entirely clear); and 4) *those whose function can be useful to the proletariat*—technicians, engineers, statisticians.

The draft resolution sums it up this way: "A distinction must be drawn between those required to maintain the present *relations of production* and those needed to maintain and expand the *forces of production*. The latter are more easily attracted to a revitalized class-struggle workers movement and are needed in the task of winning workers control and planned production."

The virtue of this is that it seems to provide an objective basis for consigning to the petty bourgeoisie certain occupational groups which play a negative role from a proletarian standpoint, but groups which would otherwise have to be considered part of the working class just the

same. On the basis of their social function, the following become petty bourgeois: cops, foremen, time-in-motion experts, those social workers who act like pigs, prison guards, etc.

But we must be very clear on what's happening here. Something new is being added to the definition of *working class*. According to this innovation, Engels supplied only half a definition in 1888 when he defined the proletariat as those who, "having no means of production of their own are reduced to selling their labor power in order to live."

Comrade Keil, basing himself on this passage in the draft resolution, provides us with the new complete definition of the working class—those who "must sell labor power to someone else and . . . perform a kind of task that can be useful to society." (p. 14)

Armed with this new definition, Comrade Keil raises serious questions about teachers: "Teachers play a double role in the society. On the one hand, they pass on knowledge, technique and culture to children—a useful and necessary task from the point of view of the working class. . . . On the other hand, part of a teacher's job is to discipline and indoctrinate the future work force. . . . The double social role played by teachers means that as a whole they are more a petty-bourgeois layer than a part of the working class." (p. 15)

The same can be said for many other white collar workers, from welfare workers to store clerks. Keil argues that the petty-bourgeois nature of teachers explains the reactionary policies of the United Federation of Teachers leadership. If this is true, it has grave implications for other strata of the labor force and for significant sections of the trade union movement.

I think Comrade Keil is wrong on this. At the same time, I think he's ended up being wrong—at least to some extent—by drawing one aspect of the draft resolution out

to its logical conclusion. This suggests a need to modify that aspect of the draft resolution.

TOWARD A SOLUTION

I would argue that there is nothing to be gained from abandoning the definition of proletariat which Engels offered in 1888.

The important question that Comrade Barnes raises—who is likely to be a friend and who is likely to be a foe in the struggle for socialism—is one whose answer involves the *consciousness* of various groups in society. The objective class position of an individual or group (for example, being compelled to sell one's labor power to make a living) is one major factor affecting consciousness. Another factor affecting consciousness (one of many) is the nature of one's work. There are variations in the development of consciousness (of class consciousness, of revolutionary consciousness, etc.) among different strata and different sections of the working class.

Certain sections of the working class have social functions and life-styles tied into their occupations which make them more resistant to radicalization and more locked into maintaining the *status quo*. (I would disagree that teachers should be described this way, but that's a separate question.) Some workers now have jobs which will be neither useful nor necessary after the advent of socialism. All of this simply describes the situation of certain relatively small sections of the working class. It does not establish a basis for consigning them to any other class.

Putting it this way seems less risky than coming up with a new but potentially disorienting definition of the working class.

Is the Gay Liberation Ship Sailing Without Us?

by Michael Maggi, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

July 21, 1975

The Beren-Knoll resolution on gay liberation is obviously motivated by a desire to deepen the politicalization of gays and gay rights struggles, expand the influence of the party, and recruit gay activists to Trotskyism and our party. Unfortunately the gay liberation movement is in a period of general decline and disintegration. Comrades Beren and Knoll are looking at the gay liberation movement through rose colored glasses.

Other comrades have written on the most important questions such as the long term strategic priorities of the movement, the "gay is good" controversy, and the implications to our program raised by the discussion. I would like to contribute some observations on the recent history of the gay liberation movement and its current stage.

The Test of Events

If the memorandum was wrong two years ago and is still wrong today, do Comrades Beren and Knoll think the Thorstad-Green resolution was any better? They thought so at the time, but they avoid saying so now.

This isn't a historical question, but is central to the discussion of the Beren-Knoll resolution. Supporters of the memorandum argue that the memorandum has correctly guided the party's relationship to the gay liberation movement during the past two years and is correct today. The other half of the argument is that the Thorstad-Green resolution was an incorrect assessment of the movement, a wrong orientation, and a diversion from the most important political tasks central to the party's development.

The Beren-Knoll resolution looks back two years to label the memorandum incorrect, but they choose not to assess what would have happened if the Thorstad-Green resolution would have been adopted by the party.

The Beren-Knoll resolution is a development of the method and line of the Thorstad-Green resolution and it would be helpful to the debate going on now if we look back at the last discussion.

I can imagine that there is a little embarrassment involved in looking back; at least there is for me. I debated a supporter of the memorandum in a branch which voted in its majority for the Thorstad-Green resolution. At the last convention I defended the Thorstad-Green resolution and moved that the convention reject the memorandum and approve the Thorstad-Green resolution as an amendment to the political resolution. Comrade Beren was an alternate delegate to the convention, and, if seated would have certainly voted for the motion. But now he is strangely silent on that resolution. What is his opinion now?

The Thorstad-Green Resolution, 1973 and the "Highlights" of the Last Two Years

On pages eight and nine of their resolution, comrades Beren and Knoll list thirty-nine points as the highlights of the last two years. These points provide the proof, in comrades Beren and Knoll's opinion, of the panorama of activity by the gay liberation movement. I propose, for the sake of argument, that we accept the list as accurate—with one small proviso.

It should at least be noted once that some of the activities listed were not political actions, at least in the sense usually meant by our movement. For example, on July 1, 1973, a list of memorial meetings held in cities around the country appears. The meetings were held to commemorate the death of 32 people killed in an arson fire in New Orleans. Attendance is listed for each of the cities, but the location and sponsorship of the gatherings remain unmentioned. The one in Los Angeles, where I was living at the time, was held in the largest gay church in the country—Troy Perry's cockroach sky-pilot operation. A normal Sunday morning service would attract 200-300 people. Were the others religious services? I suspect they were.

I don't intend to examine every point on the list; comrades will read it for themselves. But I would like to call attention to some general features.

Only six organizations or caucuses are listed in the calendar of events. Only one is listed twice, the Gay Academic Union—but *what has it done except hold two conferences in two years?*

There are thirteen conferences or caucuses listed holding meetings of 100 or more, but *not one projected a demonstration of any variety—political, gay pride, or whatever.*

The Gay Pride Week activities are listed each year without any indication whatever of the character of the activities or their sponsorship. They were the largest actions in the last two years—but *what of it?*

There is another way to view the calendar of events presented by comrades Beren and Knoll.

If the Thorstad-Green resolution had passed the convention last year, the list of organizations presented by Beren and Knoll would have been the organizations we would have joined and intervened into. The activities listed were the ones we would have taken partial responsibility for and would have become involved in projecting and leading.

Comrades should reread and consider this list in this light. To me it presents an eloquent defense of the national committee's memorandum.

If the party had adopted Beren and Knoll's perspective two years ago, as they and others urged, the party would have been obligated to dash from one issue to another, one small action to another, one group to another, just as the Beren-Knoll calendar does.

The party would have come out of such a period with less influence and a net loss of comrades due to demoralization.

Is the Movement Going Up or Down?

The party's memorandum on gay liberation states, "Since the 1972 party literary discussion on the gay liberation movement, there has been no significant step towards the formation of a national framework of gay liberation organizations or a national focus of action by the gay liberation groups. In fact, the direction seems to be the opposite at this time, with such a national focus or organization less likely. . . . There is no national action coalition around specific issues of gay oppression which we could support and help build. . . . On a local level there has been somewhat of a dropping off of struggles for the rights of gay people in the past period, but what struggles have occurred have been locally organized [SWPDB, Volume 31, Number 3, page 9]."

Comrade Beren contributed to a polemic entitled, "Where the National Committee Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement Goes Wrong" in July 1973, which scoffs at the assessment in the memorandum and states, "It is misleading to say that there is no national framework of gay liberation organizations. There is, for example, the National Coalition of Gay Organizations (NCGO), founded in February 1972, and its regional affiliates, as well as groups like the Southern California Council of Gay Student Unions, with chapters on nineteen campuses, most of which meet weekly or biweekly. . . . The Kent State Gay Liberation Front has issued a call for a national conference in May 1974 to discuss national perspectives for the movement." [SWPDB, Volume 31, Number 9, p. 12]

The Beren-Knoll resolution doesn't mention this part of the past discussion in order to evaluate these differing assessments to clarify the present discussion.

The NCGO dissolved a few months after our last convention. The Kent State conference to discuss national perspectives met with fewer than 100 people and decided against any national focus or actions and limited itself to support of upcoming Gay Pride Week activities planned in other cities.

There is another conference not mentioned in the previous discussion worth mentioning here.

In the spring of 1973 a national conference was called and organized for a national march on Washington for gay rights. The organizers were "The National Gay Mobilizing Committee for a March on Washington."

The conference was widely publicized in the gay press, both among conservative men's papers such as the *Advocate* and radical lesbian magazines such as the *Lesbian Tide*. In all some sixty organizations endorsed the conference, including all of the largest and most stable. If any conference in the last two years had any chance of projecting and organizing a national political action, this conference was it.

When the conference was held in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, during the Thanksgiving holidays, only 50 people

attended, mostly counter-culturalists who reoriented the conference to calling a minor ultraleft intervention into the American Psychiatric Association spring meeting in Detroit.

The conference was called for the specific purpose of calling a national action, but the response proved that such a perspective was impossible because of the objective situation.

One last comment before moving on: the party did not refuse to consider the possibilities inherent in the gay movement, if such a conference should prove there was real motion and support behind such a proposal. The *Militant* sent a reporter from New York to the conference and comrades from Chicago went to attend. (In their resolution, comrades Beren and Knoll complain about *Militant* coverage. This is one case of a *Militant* article which didn't appear—why report on a fiasco?)

This conference is a good example of how the Thorstad-Green perspective then (and the Beren-Knoll perspective in the future) would have disoriented the movement's appreciation of the state of the movement, distort the party's priorities, and waste the movement's resources.

It was the assessment of the memorandum which gave the party good service in maintaining the party's focus on the central issues of the class struggle.

One further example of the incorrectness of the Thorstad-Green-Beren-Knoll perspective would be worth considering.

"The Gay Rights Action Coalition"

The Beren-Knoll calendar mentions the GRAC rally on April 20, 1974, attracting 350 persons in support of the New York gay rights law.

They don't discuss the group, but I would like to. GRAC was formed by individuals who left the YSA during the fall and winter of 1973-74 who agreed with the Thorstad-Green perspective in the party and a similar resolution submitted to the YSA at its December 1974 convention. As such, they provide a positive example of the incorrectness of the Beren-Knoll resolution.

GRAC started from the assumption that there was no mass struggle by gays because there was no leadership to organize it. Therefore the half-dozen of them set out to fill the void.

Because they insisted on a political focus for the demonstration they collided head-on with the established leadership of the organizations. Although one of them was the secretary for GAA, they quickly became so caught up in a factional power struggle within the gay movement that GAA refused to endorse the April 20 demonstration and by a vote of the membership dissolved the GAA Political Action Subcommittee to block any support for the action.

Yet the activists in GRAC pushed forward. They held a political demonstration of 350. The next month the "more conservative" leadership called and organized an action three times larger around support for the gay rights law and around a general gay pride theme.

GRAC never became a real coalition. It began and remained a small, narrow group on the periphery of the gay liberation movement. The problem was not one of leadership, as they believed, but a stage in the objective situation correctly assessed in the gay liberation memorandum.

The party intervened in the situation, to the very limited extent possible, by assigning a comrade to work in GAA and with GRAC to try and break down the factional relationship

between the two organizations so that a successful, if small, action could be held.

The April 20th demonstration so demoralized the activists that they abandoned the group immediately afterward and left for the west coast—where they imagine the pastures are greener.

What Did the Test of Events Prove?

Beren and Knoll talk about tests of events, but don't look at the record to see if they can actually learn anything. If the record shows anything, it shows the correctness of the memorandum. If anything is obvious, it is that perspective cannot be implemented by strong willed people against the tide of an unfavorable objective situation.

If the party were to adopt the Beren-Knoll perspective we would gain less than we will with our current orientation, and at a far greater price. We would constantly be sending comrades into unfavorable situations, with the wrong perspective, a too rigid line, and an approach in factional struggles with no allies in the beginning and none coming in the process. At the end of a few bitter experiences, like GRAC, we would have less influence in the movement generally and comrades burnt out by the struggle.

The fact is that the current leadership of the gay movement reflects the ranks of the groups. There is no social layer among gays which could intervene in the situation to change the real relationship of forces. The movement is diffuse, reflecting the lack of perspective or focus among gays. The movement is disorganized because it is not attracting political activists. The movement is relatively stagnant because there is no real motion.

What We Can and Will Do

Our support to the gay movement will continue to mainly

be in our propaganda. Most of the important party-building activities we engage in now are propaganda interventions.

Within the context of the national campaigns of the party, and especially of the turn the political resolution projects, we can discuss the specific interventions that can be made in real political struggles as they develop.

There are three specific areas which the party can relate to at present. Actions like some recent small demonstrations around Intro 554, the gay rights bill in New York, offer some openings. The defense case developing around Air Force Sgt. Leonard Matlovich who is facing court martial and discharge is an example of a defense case we support and have propagandized around, such as in the July 4 *Militant* interview. In California, where a gay rights bill was signed into law, a campaign by right-wing forces might develop to repeal the law. We support the law and reported on it in the *Militant*. Depending on what develops, we will want to write about it in the *Militant*, make a campaign statement, and would support any demonstrations which develop.

But all of this is made possible by the correct assessment by the national committee memorandum. Any of the actions undertaken by our movement would have to be within the general priorities of the movement, otherwise they would cease to be party building and would become a diversion from the central campaigns and priorities which will determine the party's future as a mass revolutionary party.

Two years ago I supported the Thorstad-Greed-Beren-Knoll line, but events forced me to re-evaluate my estimate of the gay movement, the party's relationship to it, and the framework which I had used to evaluate both. The events of the last 2 years have confirmed the party's evaluation of the movement. Comrades Beren and Knoll disagree. I think they should reconsider.

FOR MORE TROTSKYIST LITERATURE ON MAOISM

Ed Pettley, Pittsburgh Branch

July 21, 1975

This is just a very brief contribution intended to point out a weakness in our opponents work as it relates to Maoism. It's now more than a quarter of a century since the revolution conquered state power in China, and the Trotskyist movement still has no book to sell in its bookstores that presents a thorough analysis of that revolution and its leadership.

Let me make it clear that I don't think that this problem reflects any weakness on our part in coming to grips with Peking Stalinism. I think we have a very clear and consistent evaluation of this political current, and our ranks are well equipped to confront it. But external propaganda requires different forms of presentation than an internal political clarification and education. It would be very difficult to get a healthy independent radical who has some illusions about Maoism to wade through a whole list of back IPs, ISRs, Militant articles, pamphlets, Education for Socialist bulletins, and convention resolutions to get a rounded picture of the nature of Maoism and the historical role it's played. We need books.

Katie Curtin's book is an important contribution, but it barely scratches the surface. We should have a book or

books on the Chinese revolution that take up in depth at least the following questions: (1) the taking of power, (2) the social transformation, (3) the "Great Leap Forward", (4) the Sino-Soviet split, (5) the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution", (6) a sociological anatomy of the bureaucracy, the question of privilege. I understand that Harold Isaac's book *The Tragedy of the Chinese Revolution* is out of print. We definitely need a Marxist work that covers the period that this book does, that shows how the Chinese revolution was held back for decades by the CCP's class-collaborationism.

As both the Political Resolution and the Organizational Report point out, various Maoist currents are actually growing and presenting an obstacle to our ability to recruit a number of potentially healthy young radicals, especially among the oppressed nationalities. Despite the failure of the Peking bureaucracy to actively build a Maoist International, the very existence of the Chinese workers' state is an impetus to the development of Maoist currents and organizations. We are going to continue to have to fight them, and I think our arsenal needs some bolstering.

Recent Developments in the International Debate on Vietnam

by Fred Feldman, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

July 21, 1975

The international discussion of China and Vietnam continues, posing theoretical and political problems of the greatest importance. With this in mind, it is worthwhile to note some of the recent positions taken by Comrade Pierre Rousset. In addition to being a member of the United Secretariat, Comrade Rousset has often proven to be the vanguard of the "vanguard" in the IMT's revisions of our program, especially in his writings on Vietnam (see the April 1974 *ISR*). The points currently being raised by Rousset indicate how deep the debate is likely to go once the pre-congress discussion gets fully underway.

I. THE MARXIST THEORY OF THE STATE

In an article entitled "Permanent Revolution in Vietnam" in the May 22, 1975 issue of *Inprecor*, Rousset concludes, "We must first salute the victory of the first socialist revolution since Cuba." He writes that, "The consolidation of the new South Vietnamese workers state . . . will surely pose new difficulties and problems." Thus, Rousset holds that South Vietnam is *now* a workers state.

Does he make the same evaluation of Cambodia? Or Laos? This is not clear. Rousset writes: "The Laotian and Cambodian revolutions have followed their own paths. . . . But today they are engaged in the same process."

This IMT representative has taken a big step toward generalizing the theory of the state that was adumbrated in the IMT resolution on China drafted by Comrade Ernest Germain. This resolution (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 22) states: "The obvious facts are that that the class power of the Chinese bourgeoisie was not broken in 1954 but in 1949. . . . The bureaucratically deformed workers state thus arose beginning in 1949" (p. 30). For Germain, the "socialist revolution" (no less!) was "victorious" the moment Mao took political power.

The author of this resolution fails to take note of the 1952 resolution of the International Executive Committee of the FI, also authored by Ernest Germain, which held that China had a "workers and peasants government" but was not yet a workers state in 1952.

At that time, Germain made some perceptive comments that have relevance for Vietnam today, where the bourgeois government and military machine have been smashed but a social revolution has not yet been carried to completion. Arguing that China was not yet a dictatorship of the proletariat, Germain wrote: "The question becomes even clearer if we view the general march of the revolution. The latter has not been halted: it is not on the decline; its major surge is not behind but ahead of us. It is precisely

the general attack against bourgeois property, the future and decisive left turn of the Chinese CP which, by compelling the latter to mobilize the *city proletariat* on a vast scale for the first time, will mark the apogee of the revolution. If we state today that there is a proletarian dictatorship in China how would we characterize this decisive phase in which not only will the bourgeois representatives be truly eliminated from the central government and the old bourgeois state apparatus in the South destroyed, but in which undoubtedly and for the first time the proletariat will in action assert *as a class* its leading role in the revolution?" This report is available in the Education for Socialists bulletin, *The Workers and Farmers Government*, (p. 56).

Resolutions and evaluations made by the Fourth International are certainly subject to re-evaluation. However, this should be done openly and the "errors" in previous positions should be openly stated and evaluated. Instead, Germain chooses to pretend that he is polemicizing only against Hansen, Evans, etc., instead of frankly admitting that he now regards the past positions of the whole world movement (including Germain) on this question to be "revisionist."

Rousset is obscure when it comes to the criteria for determining the establishment of the "workers state" in South Vietnam. He denies that the overturn of capitalist property relations constitutes such a criterion. "The socialization of the economy has not yet been achieved," he admits.

In an article in the May 16 issue of *Rouge* entitled "As Life Changes," Rousset stresses this point: "If it has passed under people's control or under the control of the PRG, the nationalization of the chief means of production has not been announced. The agrarian reform is not at the stage of collectivization of land. But all previous revolutions have seen the socialization of the economic base and of the society take place only gradually, after the revolutionary seizure of power and the formation of a new workers' state."

In his *Inprecor* article, he points to "radical agrarian reform" as evidence that South Vietnam has become a workers state, and to the "process of reunification."

The nearest thing I could find in "Permanent Revolution in Vietnam" to an explanation of his position seemed to be this statement: "In the epoch of imperialism, only the proletariat can really take up the slogans of 'national independence' and 'agrarian reform'; but in so doing, it lays the basis for the foundation of a workers state and commits itself to the socialist growing-over of the revolution." Does this mean that consistent advocacy of

agrarian reform and national independence, of measures in that direction, equals a workers state? Does this mean that any leadership that leads a movement that wins independence and agrarian reform must be "proletarian", in spite of all material evidence to the contrary?

Such statements seem to imply that the outcome of the process of permanent revolution in a given country, ending in the overturn of capitalist property relations, is *foreordained* once a *governmental* overturn has been accomplished. Thus, the change in property relations is not decisive in determining the class nature of the state.

This concept would give evaluations of the state a highly subjective character, subject to change without notice as the evaluator's opinion of a given government or leadership team changed.

This is a sweeping break with the traditions of the Trotskyist movement, violating programmatic norms established by Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed*, *In Defense of Marxism*, and *The Transitional Program*. These concepts were reaffirmed in our discussions of the class nature of the government and state in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, China, Algeria, and Cuba.

The reference by Rousset to the "first socialist revolution since Cuba" evades acknowledging this shift. In 1961 the majority of the International Committee and the International Secretariat agreed that the transformation of property relations in Cuba in the summer and fall of 1960 marked the qualitative change in the class character of the state. Agreement on such a fundamental question speeded the subsequent reunification of the world movement.

Rousset insists that "there will be no bourgeois state and no new revolution between the liberation of Saigon and the reunification of a united and socialist Vietnam." Rousset simply ignores his own statement that the foundations of the bourgeois state—the old property relations—have not yet been abolished. He also ignores, as is his habit whenever it suits his purpose, the clear statements of the Vietnamese leaders that they intend to *try* to maintain a capitalist regime during the period preceding reunification.

Rousset's statement implies that he shares the IMT China resolution's view that the Marxist theory of the workers state is a Stalinist "stages" theory of revolution. The Marxist view was succinctly expressed by Joseph Hansen in his 1949 article, "The Problem of Eastern Europe": "In my opinion, in a country where *the rule of the bourgeoisie as a class has been broken AND the principal sectors of the economy nationalized* we must place the state in the general category of 'workers state' no matter how widely or monstrously it departs from our norms. This change *cannot* occur without a civil war although this civil war may also be a mutilation of the type, differing in important respects from our norms." (Education for Socialists bulletin, *Class, Party and State and the Eastern European Revolution*, pp. 34-5.)

Rousset does not avoid the dangers of a two-stage theory of revolution by eliminating property relations from consideration. On the contrary, he provides himself with a theoretical justification for *apologizing* for Stalinist attempts to carry out a two-stage revolution in the face of socialist opportunities. Instead of demanding that the PRG take action against the remaining capitalists and organize a planned economy, Rousset treats these measures as foregone conclusions, about which the workers need hardly concern themselves.

In order to grant a blank check to the Vietnamese CP,

Rousset simply eliminates all the concrete steps that occur in the real world in the creation of workers states. With a stroke of the pen, he eliminates the "workers and farmers government," a concept with a long history in the Third and Fourth Internationals. This has been used to describe a governmental power independent of the bourgeoisie but resting on capitalist property relations. In certain revolutionary situations (e.g., China, Cuba), such a governmental power proved capable of carrying out a socialist transformation of the economy. In others (e.g., Algeria), it stopped short and capitalist power fully reasserted itself.

The elimination of this concept is an important theoretical shift. The Fourth International's analysis of the steps leading from the establishment of a workers and farmers government to the creation of a workers' state in the cases of China and Cuba, and the failure of such a government in Algeria to accomplish this overturn, were important theoretical conquests of the world Trotskyist movement.

Rousset provides no clear criteria for characterizing workers states. In my opinion, the only criteria which he could use to attempt to justify designating South Vietnam or Cambodia as workers' states form the time of the rebel victory, would be the following:

(1) The concept that the state consists only of "bodies of armed men" and that the smashing of the bourgeoisie's "bodies of armed men" constitutes the establishment of a workers state. This was put forward by Barzman, Mitten, et al., in the 1973 SWP pre-convention discussion, and by a tiny tendency in Los Angeles led by Dennis Vern and Sam Ryan in the Eastern European discussion in the early 50s. Bert Deck proposed a similar analysis in the 1961 Cuba discussion.

Or (2) Rousset can seek a basis for his theory in some variant of the idea, originally developed by Sam Marcy, that Stalinism in power equals a workers state.

That Marcy's theory may have a future among some IMT leaders is indicated by the revision in the IMT China Resolution of the Marxist analysis of the Soviet bureaucracy. According to the IMT, the bureaucracy is not a petty-bourgeois caste (Trotsky described it as "petty bourgeois in composition and spirit") that has driven the workers from power. Rather it is "a faction of the *working class* that has acquired aspirations of a petty-bourgeois nature, i.e., it is a *workers* bureaucracy. . . . The Soviet bureaucracy's link to collective property flows from this" (IIDB, Vol. X, No. 22, p.28) This comes close to the Marcyite theory that postcapitalist property relations survive in the Soviet Union *because* of the bureaucracy and not *in spite of it*, as Trotsky held.

"Caught up in the implacable dialectic" (as Germain likes to say) of the position that Stalinist bureaucrats are "fellow workers" (even if with naughty "aspirations"), a number of supporters of the former "Internationalist Tendency" have gone over to Sam Marcy's Workers World Party. These include Mr. National Coordinator himself, Bill Massey. Marcy long ago gave up the perspective of building a revolutionary Marxist party in the U.S. or anywhere else in favor of functioning as a spastic ultraleft tail on the Stalinist dog.

It is possible, of course, that a combination of the Marcy and Vern-Ryan theories will be arranged.

Either theory means dumping our analysis of Eastern Europe, China, Cuba, and Algeria, and rejecting the category of the "workers and farmers government." These

would only be the first steps, for the theory of the state has historically tended to touch on every aspect of politics. Among other things, the Trotskyist theory of the class nature of the USSR would be called into question.

THE DEMOCRATIC CHARACTER OF THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT

Rousset portrays the new regime in Saigon as a highly democratic one. Without doubt it is a qualitative improvement for common people who lived under Thieu's terror. However, in "Permanent Revolution in Vietnam," Rousset makes the sweeping assertion that "it is clearly a general process of workers control that is now going on in the cities of South Vietnam."

In support of this, he is able to cite the use of students to replace the old police in some areas, and what appears to be the fairly widespread setting-up of "workers committees" in the factories. Rousset hedges his bets by referring to some bureaucratic bad habits the Vietnamese CP picked up from its unfortunate ties to Stalinism. Nonetheless, he seems to be trying to convey the impression that the PRG is fostering workers democracy in the South (with imperfections, of course).

If Rousset's analysis were accurate, it would raise legitimate questions about the characterization of the DRV as a *deformed* workers state where a political revolution will be needed to overthrow the bureaucratic caste and institute workers democracy.

The stories in the press about workers committees and various popular formations are probably roughly accurate. The precise development of the Vietnamese revolution is difficult to follow, since, unlike the Cuban leaders in the early 1960s, the Vietnamese Stalinists do not seem to be encouraging extensive foreign press coverage of events in Vietnam.

However, Rousset does not seem to remember (or even know) that there are several precedents for the creation or utilization of worker's committees, "soviets," and similar bodies by Stalinist parties (even before the recent events in Portugal). He ignores (or is ignorant of) what the historic record tells us about the limits and real character of such bureaucratically-controlled bodies. Rousset's approach fits in with the IMT inclination to idealize and fetishize the words "workers control." The incantation of this magic formula apparently relieves Rousset of any responsibility for concretely examining what role any given instance of "workers control" or "workers committees" is playing in the actual class struggle of real material classes.

In *In Defense of Marxism*, Trotsky wrote the following about the Soviet invasion of western Ukraine in 1939: "In the Parisian organ of the Mensheviks . . . it is reported that 'in the villages—very frequently at the very approach of Soviet troops (i.e., even prior to their entering a given district—L.T.)—peasant committees sprang up everywhere, the elementary organs of revolutionary self-rule. . . .' The military authorities hastened of course to subordinate these committees to the bureaucratic organs established by them in the urban centers. Nevertheless they were compelled to rest upon the peasant committees since without them it was impossible to carry out the agrarian revolution." (pp. 131-132)

In Eastern Europe towards the end of World War II, workers committees sprang up in many areas as the Red Army approached. Rather than simply crushing these

formations, the Stalinists established bureaucratic control over them. They used them to police the workers movement and also as a club against recalcitrant bourgeois forces. These formations played a role, under tight Stalinist supervision, in the struggles with the bourgeoisie before and during the overturn of property relations.

Of course, despite the fact that these formations arose as part of the class struggle and were quite widespread, Trotskyists never talked about a "general process of workers control" in Eastern Europe. It was the Stalinists who pointed to these formations as showpieces, hiding their undemocratic and bureaucratic character.

In China, during the Korean war period (1952-53) when property relations were transformed, Mao was forced to retreat for a time from his general policy of suppressing working class action. The workers were mobilized to support Mao's expropriation measures, expulsion of the bosses, and establishment of a monopoly of foreign trade and planned economy.

It is not possible to establish a new social regime through bureaucratic measures alone. Despite their program and basic nature, Stalinists have had to rely on the masses to some degree whenever they felt compelled to take decisive measures against the capitalists—even when the Red Army was present.

Trotsky wrote on this point also in *In Defense of Marxism*: "My remark that the Kremlin with its bureaucratic methods gave an impulse to the socialist revolution in Poland, is converted by Shachtman into an assertion that in my opinion a 'bureaucratic revolution' of the proletariat is possible. This is not only incorrect but disloyal. My expression was rigidly limited. It is not the question of 'bureaucratic revolution' but only a bureaucratic impulse. To deny this impulse is to deny reality. The popular masses in western Ukraine and Byelo Russia, in any event, felt this impulse, understood its meaning, and used it to accomplish a drastic overturn in property relations. A revolutionary party which failed to notice this impulse in time and refused to utilize it would be fit for nothing but the ash can." (p.130)

Rousset gives no indication that the VCP is encouraging the free formation of tendencies in these workers' committees. He gives no indication that the dissemination of dissenting views by supporters of the revolution is permitted. Nor does he indicate that the workers in these bodies play any role in political decision-making. Finally, he offers no evidence that the Vietnamese CP has changed, or even slightly modified, its basic programmatic hostility to workers democracy. Would their attitude toward Trotskyists in Saigon today be any better than their attitude toward Trotskyists in Saigon in 1945?

It may be more reasonable to assume that these committees are being used to establish an urban base and apparatus for the new regime, to give it organizational control of the Saigon working class, to get production going again in the factories, and to establish a new hierarchy in some newly nationalized factories. This is all part of a very real revolutionary upheaval. But why give the Stalinists free advertising by talking about a "general process of workers control," of which there is not one clear sign?

How should revolutionists take advantage of the revolutionary developments in South Vietnam? Is there an alternative to either gee-whiz journalism in the Rousset style that pretties up the Stalinists or sectarian absten-

tion? Trotsky suggested one, with regard to the Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine, that is deserving of thought in the present situation.

In territories occupied by the Red Army, he wrote, "partisans of the Fourth International must play the most decisive part in expropriating the landlords and capitalists, in dividing the land among the peasants, in creating

Soviets and workers committees, etc. While so doing, they must preserve their political independence, they must fight during elections to the soviets and factory committees for the complete independence of the latter from the bureaucracy, and they must conduct revolutionary propaganda in the spirit of distrust toward the Kremlin and its local agencies." (In Defense of Marxism, p. 20)

A PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE NC DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE BLACK STRUGGLE

By David Kell, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York
Local

July 22, 1975

Introduction

In remarks in the Lower Manhattan pre-convention discussion July 21, Tony Thomas said that my article "For A Change in Our Call For A Black Party" (SWP Discussion Bulletin, 1975, No. 7) has a "contrary line" to the National Committee draft resolution on the Black struggle because my article, in his view, disagrees with the idea that the Black struggle moves toward governmental power.

Sam Manuel, the reporter for the NC resolution, said the same evening that my article "obscures a more fundamental disagreement on fundamental questions" other than the Black party question, such as the question of the combined character of the coming American revolution. He chided me for having a "basically sectarian approach."

If I have misquoted either comrade, I hope I will be corrected. Since there has been no written response so far in the Discussion Bulletin to my article, these two comrades' remarks are the only indication so far of how the discussion will proceed.

Tony Thomas' comments indicate clearly that the Political Committee will not adopt my suggestion that our call for an "independent Black party" be changed to a call for a "Black workers' party"—at least for the time being. For that reason, I am submitting my proposal as a formal amendment to be voted on in the branches, where proposed, and at the convention if delegates supporting it are elected. The text of the amendment is below. It should be proposed before the voting occurs on the NC draft resolution, "The Fight for Black Liberation, the Current Stage and Its Tasks" (DB, No. 2). If the amendment is

defeated, a vote should still be cast for the NC draft resolution.

The two comrades quoted above are mistaken, in my opinion, to say that my article has a counter-line.

In addition, they are mistaken to raise this point at the beginning of the discussion, with the implication that I am hiding some of my real ideas. A discussion emphasizing alleged hidden, secret and unstated ideas can only be a factional one. Lee Smith made a similar point in a recent discussion article.

In my opinion, the differences do not warrant a factional discussion. For this reason, my article was formulated in a fraternal tone. I sent my views in a long letter dated April 15, 1975 to George Breitman, a member of the Political Committee so that he and other PC members could consider my views before they appeared in print.

By raising the question of the combined character of the coming revolution as if it were a point of difference, the comrades shift discussion away from the real issue—the Black party issue. This important difference of opinion needs to be discussed.

The two comrades pointed to the third and fourth paragraphs on page ten of my article as challenging the party's whole conception of the Black struggle. In these paragraphs, I pointed out that we give unconditional support to the Black nationalist movement and other movements even though they are not explicitly working-class, and that we are correct in so doing. We do not say, "This part of the Black nationalist movement is working-class, so we support it, but that part over there is composed of petty-bourgeois Blacks, so we cannot support it," even if

there are some sections of the Black movement which are petty-bourgeois. We support the *whole* struggle because it is objectively anti-capitalist.

In election campaigns, however, a candidacy or slate must be of working-class character in order for us to support it. An election campaign is not simply a struggle for certain demands or a movement of the oppressed; it is also by its nature a governmental alternative. As such it must be of a working-class character in order for us to be able to support it within the socialist principle of independent working-class political action.

The comrades' objection to the two paragraphs of my article seems to be that I did not point out that the Black struggle has a *dual and combined* character; that it is simultaneously a proletarian struggle for workers' demands and a nationalist struggle for bourgeois-democratic demands. In this sense, for Black workers (the vast majority of the Black population), Black nationalism is a form of working-class consciousness.

Furthermore, they would point out correctly, this struggle has a characteristic which movements like the feminist movement, the antiwar movement and defense campaigns do not have: it leads directly to the need for a struggle for governmental and state power.

These correct and necessary points are explained in the section of the NC draft resolution entitled, "Combined Character of the American Revolution," clearly enough that they need not be repeated ritual fashion over and over again by anyone discussing the Black party question. If I had disagreed with these points, I would have challenged them openly. But far from disagreeing with the theory that the coming revolution will be socialist as well as bourgeois-democratic, I based my position that we should call for a Black working-class party on this theory. If there were no bourgeois-democratic tasks, it would be wrong to call for a Black party at all. If there were no socialist tasks, on the other hand, it would be correct to call for the formation of a bourgeois Black party.

As far as I can tell, there is no difference of opinion about a single word of that section of the resolution, "Combined Character of the American Revolution." Don't you agree, Tony Thomas and Sam Manuel?

If we can agree that there is no difference of opinion on this part of the resolution, then we can turn to the real difference of opinion, which concerns our call for a Black party. It is necessary that we discuss it, because it is important. I hope that we can discuss it and resolve the difference without a factional discussion.

As Sam Manuel noted, the Internationalist Tendency in 1973 called into question our Black party position. The I.T. also called into question the theory of the combined character of the revolution. Perhaps this is why the comrades thought I disagreed with the theory of the combined character—because they thought I was echoing the I.T.

The Internationalist Tendency's discussion of the Black party question was very confused and did not result from a concern for socialist principles, the theory of the permanent revolution or the need for independent working-class political action. It resulted from the I.T.'s self-imposed factional task of drawing up a counter-resolution in time for the 1973 convention.

The I.T. counter-resolution speculates that a Black party could "base itself" on the "interests" of the "Black petty-bourgeois." (SWP *DB*, 1973, No. 18, p. 14.) Marxists know, however, that no party, even a petty-bourgeois one, can "base itself" on "petty-bourgeois interests"—at least not under capitalism. Running in a capitalist election, a party (contrary to the I.T.) can only represent the interests of one of two classes: the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. This is because there are only two kinds of state possible: a workers' state and a bourgeois state. A petty-bourgeois state based on small-commodity production is impossible. All this would be alien to the I.T.'s non-Marxist view of things. (It goes without saying that a party such as the CP which sometimes poses a labor alternative in the elections does so on the basis of its own *capitalist* program.)

In the next sentence of its resolution, the I.T. asks how a Black party would "represent the interests of the non-Black masses." The I.T. does not seem to understand that this would not be the job of a working-class Black party, to "represent the interests of the non-Black masses"; its task would be to represent the interests of *Blacks*. This is sufficient! White workers would benefit as well, but without being directly "represented." Here the I.T. shows that it doesn't see the anti-capitalist character and thrust of the Black movement *as such*; something which the party sees clearly.

Further on, the I.T. says it might be correct to support a Black party critically if one appeared. But nowhere in the entire discussion does the I.T. raise the question of the *class base* of the Black party or make its conception of support conditional on the working-class character of such a party.

Thus the I.T.'s position on the call for a Black party reflects the I.T.'s opposition to the SWP's whole view of the Black question, such as the combined character of the revolution, as well as the I.T.'s general flight from Marxism, which is part of the International Majority Tendency's similar unhalting flight. No IMT supporter can discuss the class character of a Black party in a Marxist way without running up against the IMT's hardened centrist position that it is possible to vote for class-collaborationist blocs such as the Union of the Left in France.

So we can return now to the current SWP discussion on the Black party.

Since each political party, without exception, must be of some class character, i.e., based organizationally on some social class and reflecting its needs in some way, anyone who wished to support our present position of calling for "an independent Black party" would have to choose between two distinct positions: (a) that any Black party that emerged would be proletarian in character or (b) that we would support a Black party even if it were petty-bourgeois or (hence) bourgeois. The resolution is not clear as to which of the two separate and distinct arguments it would use.

Our past position, as expressed in the party's resolutions of 1963, 1967, 1969, 1971 and 1973, would lead one to believe that argument (b) reflected our point of view. None of these resolutions (as far as I can tell) stated that a Black party would necessarily be a working-class party.

The 1975 resolution does not say what the class nature of a Black party would be, but states that it would

represent a "class break." Furthermore, comrades such as Tony Thomas maintain that a Black party would definitely be a working-class party. They might say that this has always been our position and that Carl Stokes' 1965 campaign was a working-class campaign in its organizational base.

If this is our political position, then our resolution should say so. Otherwise, comrades might believe that we would support a non-working-class party or a party of undefined class character—if it were a Black party. Perhaps there are some comrades who have always had such a position. If so, it would be necessary to discuss it, from a principled point of view.

If some comrades think that any Black party would necessarily be a working-class party, then they would have to agree that this implies excluding Black capitalists (the tiny top layer of the Black nationality which serves white monopoly capital) from decision-making. Of course, a workers' party must try to win allies and supporters in the petty-bourgeoisie. A Black working-class party, while excluding the Black bourgeoisie, would try to win over the Black petty-bourgeoisie. To do this, it might even make a united front with Black Democratic politicians or Black capitalist forces for certain limited aims.

My article argued that a Black party might be working-class but it might, on the other hand, be bourgeois and that we should therefore clearly call only for a working-

class Black party. Neither Tony Thomas nor Sam Manuel presented any clear arguments in the oral discussion to refute me on this crucial question. Hence the discussion on the real issue has not even begun, in my opinion.

Proposed Amendment

(1) To modify the second paragraph on the top of page 11 of the NC draft resolution on the Black struggle (SWP *DB*, 1975, No. 2) by adding the word "working-class" in two places so as to read as follows: "An advanced form of organization would be an independent Black working-class party which could fight in the electoral arena as well as on all other fronts. Unlike the capitalist political parties, a Black working-class party would not counterpose electoral activity to demonstrations, rallies and pickets; but would use its electoral campaigns to reach broader forces, win them to its perspectives, and help advance the mobilization of the Black community."

(2) To eliminate the fourth paragraph on page 11, which reads as follows: "Given the overwhelming proletarian composition of the Black people, the formation of an independent Black party would be a class break with capitalist politics. It would attract Black unionists and make an impact on the labor movement, giving a big impetus to the formation of a labor party based on the unions."

THE PROLETARIAN ORIENTATION: AND THE CURRENT RADICALIZATION: THE CONTINUITY OF A POLITICAL LINE

By Fred Feldman and Jane Roland, Brooklyn Branch, New York Local

July 24, 1975

The present radicalization, in which the SWP has been participating for more than a dozen years, began with the Black liberation struggle and developed and expanded through the antiwar movement, student movement, women's liberation struggles, and the struggles of Chicanos, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans.

Today we are in the very early stages of a giant step forward in the radicalization. Under the impact of the depression and the capitalist offensive against workers' living standards, the working class as a class is beginning to radicalize. Workers are questioning and challenging the prerogatives of the ruling class.

This means a turn in the organizational functioning and priorities of the party. It is a turn to the working class as a class (especially its most oppressed sectors) in response to a change in the objective situation and mood of the working class. This is not a replacement of one radicalization by another, but the beginning of a qualitative advance in the radicalization. It represents the first small step in the transition from a radicalization—a general challenging and questioning of the status quo by growing numbers of the oppressed—to a prerevolutionary situation in which the question of which class shall rule will begin to be posed.

This turn does not represent a correction or retreat from our past analysis and strategy, but a confirmation that our orientation has been taking us in the right direction. Nor has the turn come as a stunning surprise to the membership. It has produced no crisis or division in the party. On the contrary, it represents the codification and sharpening of a shift in party work that has been occurring on a national and branch level for some time—reflected in antiracism work, the coverage of labor struggles in the press, the assignment of comrades to CLUW, and in the initiation of trade union fractions. The party membership has been prepared for the shift by the whole direction of our work and by the political discussions we have had over the past 12 years.

This is a good time to review our previous resolutions and discussions. Understanding the continuity of our strategy will lead to a better understanding of the turn we are making.

Characteristics of the New Radicalization

Until the very recent past, the radicalization has been a radicalization of the *allies* of the working class, acting as independent forces. It developed outside the framework of the union movement and (with the partial exception of the farmworkers) none of the movements were led by the organized labor movement.

Nonetheless, these struggles had a deep impact on

workers' consciousness. These were not struggles of petty bourgeois layers around demands—just or unjust—of the petty bourgeoisie. On the contrary, demands for preferential hiring, abortion on demand, free tuition, desegregated schools, or an end to U.S. intervention in Vietnam touched on the deepest interests of workers. None of the sectors that launched these struggles is a group permanently separated from the working class. Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and women compose a growing percentage of the class. Students, for the most part, are preparing to enter the class. This radicalization is not a small radicalization, a mere “rustling of the leaves” before the storm. In this, it differs from the 1930s when radicalization affected a relatively narrow layer before the great labor struggles began in 1934. This radicalization has produced the biggest demonstrations in U.S. history. It has involved and influenced more people than any previous radicalization in this century. In that sense it is bigger, broader, and deeper than the radicalization of the '30s or the Debsian radicalization before World War I. Prejudices, laws, shibboleths, the most deeply ingrained norms fostered by the rulers have come under challenge. As the 1971 political resolution, “Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization” (reprinted in *A Revolutionary Strategy for the '70s*, Pathfinder, \$1.45) stated, “There is no layer too oppressed to struggle, no reactionary prejudice and oppression too sacrosanct and deep rooted to be challenged.”

This radicalization occurred in the context of a changed relationship of forces within the left. Revolutionary Marxism is far closer in the number of its cadres and its overall influence to Stalinism and Social Democracy than in the radicalization of the '30s. The occurrence of a large-scale radicalization outside the organized labor movement has given us a priceless chance to further improve this relationship of forces before the working class as such moves onto the scene in force.

We never attempted to forecast the exact moment when the radicalization would begin to affect the working class as a class, but we noted that the class would be greatly strengthened in consciousness, combativity, and self-confidence by the struggles that preceded its radicalization.

The most striking weakness of the radicalization until now has been that, although many workers were drawn into one or another action, and many more were influenced by the mass movements, the working class as such did not participate. The main causes of this were the domination of the trade union movement by an ossified class-collaborationist bureaucracy, and the extension of the postwar economic boom into the late 1960s. This weakness periodically led many radicals to lose heart. Lacking our long term perspective, they concluded that the struggles of

the radicalization, unable to challenge the capitalists for power, were headed for a dead end.

Our 1973 Political Resolution (SWP DB Vol. 31, No. 13) stated, "The central contradiction of the radicalization remains the fact that large sectors of the labor movement have yet to take the road of independent political struggles . . . [this] not only precludes the radicalization becoming a prerevolutionary situation while this contradiction exists, it weighs on the upsurges of the radicalization itself."

In contrast to those who lost hope because of the circuitous route the class struggle was taking, we concluded in 1969 that the radicalization was not temporary but reflected a fundamental shaking up and class polarization in American society. This was a key conclusion of the 1969 political resolution, "The Course of U.S. Imperialism and the Revolutionary Struggle for a Socialist America" (reprinted in *Towards An American Socialist Revolution [TASR]*, Pathfinder, \$1.95). This was the first resolution in which the party made a broad analysis of the radicalization. Earlier resolutions had a conjunctural character.

In 1970, at the first Oberlin educational conference, the party developed this further. In the concluding talk to this gathering, Jack Barnes said: "There will be no reversal of this radicalization before the working masses of this country have had a chance to take power from the American rulers. There will be ebbs and flows in the struggle; there will be class polarizations; there will be partial defeats and partial victories. There will be all sorts of stages, some rapid, others drawn out, as the ruling class uses different methods, up to and including the attempt to use fascism to try to prevent the workers from winning power. But the important thing for us to see is that *this radicalization will not be reversed until we have had our chance*" (TASR).

The roots of the developing social crisis lie in the contradictions of the expansion of American imperialism since World War II. The role of the U.S. as world cop placed heavy burdens in the U.S. economy even while providing vast profits for armaments mongers. With the growth of foreign competition, the use of the dollar as an antirecessionary device in the domestic arena came into conflict with the use of the dollar to maintain Washington's dominance in world trade. The basic contradiction was popularly formulated as "guns or butter."

The 1969 political resolution stated, "The basic dilemma faced by the U.S. rulers today is this: the very measures required to halt the world revolutionary process come into increasing conflict with the maintenance of domestic peace at home." The resolution predicted that the ruling class would find it necessary to attack the living standards of the workers. The workers' reaction to this would begin a new stage in the radicalization.

The ruling class' chances of forestalling a deepening crisis were decreased by the fact that the traditional weapons of war, prosperity, and anticommunism had already failed to prevent deepening mass opposition during the 1960s, while the even more important weapon of racism was itself the target of a mass struggle.

The radicalization of the workers would thus be caused by a combination of the impact of the prior radicalization of its allies and the direct attack of the ruling class on the living standards and organizations of the workers. In the 1963 resolution *Freedom Now* (Pathfinder, \$.25), the party

stressed that this radicalization would proceed through the formation of a class-struggle left wing in the union movement. This was further developed in the 1969 and 1971 political resolutions. "The struggle to transform the unions is a *necessary* part of our strategy for the socialist revolution," stated Jack Barnes in his political report to the 1971 National Committee plenum (reprinted in *A Revolutionary Strategy for the '70s*). A class-struggle left wing in the unions would have to confront organized labor's ties to the Democratic Party as a major stumbling block to any defense of labor's gains. The demand for the formation of a labor party would therefore have to be a key plank in its program.

The fact that the radicalization cannot be reversed short of a fundamental class confrontation does not mean that victory is assured. Such confrontations in the past have often resulted in historic disasters (Germany from 1918-1933 is an example). The ruling class can always find a way out as long as the working class lacks a leadership that is equal to the tasks. That is where we come in.

Our central objective during this radicalization has been the accumulation of cadres through the application of our program to the real issues that arose. A key weapon in this has been the method of the Transitional Program. As the 1969 resolution stated, "The key is to find demands corresponding to the present level of political understanding of the masses and to their objective needs, demands that, in the course of struggle, lead to a higher level of understanding, independent organization, mobilization and conflict with capitalist prerogatives and thus tend to break through the framework of capitalism." Given the expected use of inflation and unemployment as antilabor weapons, the resolution stressed the particular importance of the demand for a sliding scale of hours and wages.

The Proletarian Orientation and Its Application

The Socialist Workers Party's proletarian orientation is founded on the conviction that an American workers' revolution is the realistic perspective of this epoch. That is the SWP's reason for existence. This conviction flows from the SWP's internationalism. It understood that, far from being an exception to the laws of the class struggle, the U.S. was headed for explosive crises because of its world role. The American revolution would be the decisive battle of the world revolution. These conceptions originated in a founding document of the world Trotskyist movement, Trotsky's Criticism of the Draft Program of the Comintern (*Third International After Lenin*, Pathfinder, \$3.45).

The "Theses on the American Revolution," a codification of these basic ideas adopted in 1946, rejected the bourgeois prediction of an "American century" of world domination. It predicted that the post-World-War-Two boom contained the seeds of "another crisis and depression which will make the 1929-32 conditions look prosperous by comparison." The Theses pointed to the proletarianization of new layers of the American population and the tremendous power of the workers' organizations, contrasting this to their political backwardness. Under the blows of a crisis, this backwardness could be overcome in a tremendous forward leap. Given the vast objective power of the workers, the Theses confidently predicted that "with adequate mobilization of their forces and proper direction,

the workers will win." To make possible this "adequate mobilization" and "proper direction," the Theses held, it is necessary to build the Socialist Workers Party into a mass revolutionary party, proletarian in program and composition. The Theses remain an essential statement of our proletarian orientation.

Another aspect of the Theses is a rejection of rigid preconceptions and "stages theories" about the phases that a working class radicalization must go through before reaching revolutionary confrontation. The SWP advocated a labor party as the most probable next step towards working-class political independence. However, the Theses rejected the conception held by some that the formation of a *reformist* labor party like the British Labour Party is an *inevitable* "stage" of the workers development to revolutionary consciousness.

This avoidance of schematic thinking about the class struggle, this openness to new and unforeseen phenomena, combined with programmatic firmness has characterized the Socialist Workers Party. A readiness to examine and adapt to the real forms of the class struggle as they appear in life was vital to the party's ability to intervene in the next wave of radicalization.

The party was hard hit by developments after 1946. With the aid of the Stalinists, capitalist stability was reconsolidated in Europe and the postwar boom was extended. The cold war and McCarthyism, under these economic conditions, had a shattering effect on most of the American left. Although the SWP stood up to reactionary pressures and maintained a solid core of cadres around its program, the party lost heavily in members and influence. New recruits were few and far between. Many who had been Trotskyists lost the revolutionary perspective. Only a minority of those who hailed the Theses in 1946 were still active revolutionists when signs of growing discontent with capitalism appeared in the '60s.

The 1963 convention met in a changing atmosphere. The Cuban revolution had brought an example of socialist revolution to the nation's doorstep. The labor movement remained relatively passive, but the Black population of the South had launched struggles against Jim Crow that spilled over into fights against racist practices in the big cities of the North. The revelations of Stalin's crimes by Khrushchev, the Hungarian revolution, and the Sino-Soviet dispute had helped to shatter the Communist Party's once-dominant position. The formation of the YSA had given Trotskyists a powerful weapon for work among radicalizing youth.

These factors were taken into account in the political resolution adopted by this convention, "Preparing for a New Wave of Radicalization in the United States" (SWP *Discussion Bulletin* [DB], Vol. 24, No. 16). It set the party's tasks:

"Our paramount task is to reach out for people now becoming radicalized. . . . Fulfillment of the political needs of such newly radicalizing people becomes central to our activity as a revolutionary vanguard party. Our main task is to develop a propaganda offensive around the key issues of the day. . . . Our political analysis and proposals for action should be focused on the fight for peace, civil rights, economic security, social welfare, and civil liberties. New militancy developing around these issues will in turn help to promote class struggle policies in the mass movement and demonstrate the need for an independent labor party."

The first stages of the new radicalization were seen as key to fostering the growth of the party and ultimately of class-struggle trends in the unions. This orientation was based on an analysis of the American economy, leading to the conclusion that the postwar boom was showing signs of becoming exhausted.

The first years of the Vietnam war produced one more forward surge for the U.S. economy into the late '60s, enabling the ruling class to forestall a sharp confrontation with labor. However, the war also sparked a mass movement of opposition beginning on the campuses but quickly spilling over into the population at large. Further, the Black struggle continued to deepen with the struggle in Selma and the explosion in Watts, Los Angeles.

The proletarian orientation of the party has found a different tactical application at different times. In 1940, the SWP developed a plan for proletarianization of the party based on the objective conditions of the time, above all the opportunities that existed in the labor movement. A petty-bourgeois opposition which refused to defend the Soviet Union and opposed democratic centralism had split from the party. A wave of patriotism was sweeping the petty-bourgeois radical intelligentsia as war approached. In the expectation (which proved correct) that the war would eventually produce a new round of workers struggles, the party launched a full-scale concentration of its forces in the unions.

In 1965, the party saw the need to restate the proletarian orientation and its meaning, while developing tactics for a conjuncture in which massive challenges to imperialism were arising outside the organized labor movement. This was done in the *Organizational Character of the Socialist Workers Party*, (Education for Socialists, \$.35) adopted at the 1965 convention.

In a series of lectures on *The Structure and Organizational Principles of the Socialist Workers Party* (Education for Socialists, \$.65) given by Farrell Dobbs in 1970, he said, "Everything that is most essential to the changed objective conditions, as we perceive it today, was already, at least in its broad lines, perceptible in 1965. So modifications were made in the 1965 resolution. Conjunctural passages setting forth specific steps toward proletarianization of the party, as they had been delineated in 1940, were omitted from the 1965 recodification of our organizational principles. These passages had been applicable in those earlier circumstances but a modified approach was obviously required in today's objective conditions. Instead of the one-sided emphasis on penetration of the organized labor movement and on reaching the proletariat in the working class neighborhoods, the 1965 recodification calls for efforts to penetrate all sectors of the mass movement: labor organizations within industry; the unemployed; the movements of oppressed nationalities—Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and others—that are becoming radicalized and in which workers, by the way, predominate; college campuses and high schools, where the students are showing more and more of a tendency to turn toward socialist ideas. These were the essential sectors of the mass movement listed in the resolution. But the general concept on which this list was based automatically implies attention to new developments that could not be specifically anticipated in 1965, for example, the women's liberation movement that is unfolding today. The overall aim of the modified codification of this perspective in the resolution

was to reach out to all opponents of the capitalist status quo and seek to bring the militants into our revolutionary party.”

The resolution emphatically reaffirmed the fundamental aspects of our proletarian orientation:

“The working class is the only class in modern society that is progressive and truly revolutionary. Only the working class can lead the proletariat to the realization of this historic mission. To achieve power, the revolutionary party must be deeply rooted among the workers, it must be composed predominantly of workers and enjoy the respect and confidence of the workers.

“Without such a composition it is impossible to build a programmatically firm and disciplined organization which can accomplish these grandiose tasks.

The Combined Character of the American Revolution

The combined character of the American revolution is the major programmatic addition made by our party in the course of the new radicalization. The SWP holds that the American revolution will be a struggle of workers of all nationalities against capitalism combined with the struggle of the oppressed nationalities for the right of self-determination. Both components are necessary if either struggle is to succeed: combined revolution or no revolution.

This theory has deep roots in our party’s program and tradition, and much of its essential *political* content developed before the concept of combined revolution was codified in 1969 and 1970.

It has its origins in the writings of Lenin on the national question, and Trotsky’s writings on the permanent revolution. After World War I, the Third International, under the leadership of Lenin and Trotsky, tried to persuade the American Communist Party to go beyond the traditional view of American radicals that Blacks were simply more oppressed workers and farmers. They urged the pioneer American Communists to take into account the special democratic demands and national aspects of the Black struggle. Throughout the 1930s, Trotsky continued the discussion of the Black struggle with his American followers, stressing its centrality to the American revolution and the role of Blacks as an oppressed people subject to a special system of oppression.

This collaboration with Trotsky resulted in a resolution adopted at the 1939 convention which committed the party to unconditional defense of the right of self-determination. The resolution pointed to the progressive, anticapitalist essence of Black demands for their own state. This resolution is reprinted in *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, Pathfinder, \$1.05.

“Negro Liberation Through Revolutionary Socialism,” (printed in the May-June 1950 *Fourth International*) passed in 1948, developed the party’s analysis in the light of the independent struggles that arose in the 1940s. The resolution placed the independent Black liberation struggle in the center of the revolutionary process in America:

“Next to the emancipation of the working class from capitalism, the liberation of the Negro people from degradation is the paramount problem of American society. These two social problems are integrally united. The only road to freedom for the workers, and to equality

for the Negroes, is through their common struggle for the abolition of capitalism.

“The Negro people in all aspects of their social and cultural life are a part of the American people. At the same time it must be recognized that the Negro struggle is not identical with the proletarian movement toward socialism. It exists as a distinct movement of an oppressed minority within the country, possessing its own historical origins, special characteristics, forms of development and methods of action. The economic, social and cultural degradation of the Negro people below the level of even the most exploited layers of the working class, places them in an exceptional position and impels them to play an exceptional role within the social structure of American capitalism. The Negro question in the United States represents a unique combination of the struggle for democracy by an oppressed minority with the working class struggle for socialism. . . .

“There is now growing up an embryo ‘nation within the nation.’

“But contrary to similar manifestations in Europe and Asia, this feeling of racial and national solidarity among the Negro people thus far aims solely at acquiring enough force and momentum to break down the barriers that exclude Negroes from American society, showing few signs of national separatism.”

In 1963, the rise of a massive civil-rights struggle created a new situation. Nationalist sentiment spread rapidly in the northern big-city ghettos. The Muslims, particularly Malcolm X, won an enthusiastic response to their sharp and perceptive denunciation of racist American society. The beginnings of a thorough going rejection of the capitalist status quo took a nationalist form—a clear deepening of the processes noted in 1948.

Participating in these struggles, the SWP also watched them carefully and drew some conclusions in a document entitled *Freedom Now* adopted at the 1963 convention. This resolution reaffirmed the party’s previous positions on the right of self-determination and recognized the role nationalism was playing in winning Black people to a revolutionary rejection of American capitalism. The resolution went one step beyond the previous party position of supporting independent Black candidates and proposed the formation of an independent Black party.

This resolution also further developed the strategy of an *alliance* between the independent Black struggle and the working class as a whole, directed against capitalism:

“The Negro struggle is the struggle of an oppressed minority for democratic rights, for equality. But because the American capitalist class will not grant equality, it tends to merge with the wider struggle for the abolition of capitalism, for socialism. . . .

“These disparities between the Negroes’ growing activity and radicalization and labor’s relative inactivity and conservatism have . . . produced some questioning . . . in certain nationalist circles about a third aspect of the SWP’s traditional analysis of the Negro struggle, expressed in the following perspective: while the labor and Negro movements march along their own paths, they do march to a common destination, and freedom of the Negroes from oppression and of the workers from exploitation can be achieved only through the victory of their common struggle against capitalism. . . .

“Although Negro independence and radicalization may not produce large-scale common action with organized

labor under present circumstances, it will hasten common action eventually. . . .

“Correctly appraised, the independent course of the Negro movement, and even its essentially nationalist aspects, does not signify a permanent and principled repudiation of a labor-Negro alliance. What militant Negroes object to is any alliance based on subordination or gradualism. . . . What they want is an alliance that will include *Freedom Now* as one of its main demands and in which the Negroes will have an equal voice in setting policy.”

As an inevitable corollary of recognizing the special needs of Black people, the document endorsed demands for preferential treatment to compensate for past discrimination.

Subsequent events brought new evidence of the power and weight of the Black struggle in the American revolution. The rebellions in the ghettos from 1965 to 1968; the spread of Black nationalist and Black Power sentiments in all sectors of the Black community, and especially among students; the rise of political formations like the Black Panther Party; the struggles for Black control of schools and countless other institutions; the institution of Black caucuses in organizations of all types, most importantly the unions; and the growing interest in Black history and culture; all these made it clear that Black people were a real *nationality*. This conclusion was drawn in the 1969 Political Resolution.

Because of the political weight of Black people and their historic role in the development of American capitalism and its class struggles, the achievement of the right of self-determination for Black people (whether or not it results in separation) is central to the American revolution. Therefore, the socialist revolution requires an alliance of the working class as a whole and the Black liberation movement. Thus, the revolution would have a combined character.

The 1969 resolution also placed heavy stress on the *dual character* of the Black struggle itself. The development of capitalism urbanized and proletarianized the Black population, giving them a social and political weight far greater than their percentage of the population. Because of the class composition of the Black community, democratic and transitional demands would be linked from the earliest stages of the struggle and Black workers would emerge as the leaders of Black people. Thus, the Black struggle itself was a working class struggle in the last analysis. Further, Blacks would play (and already were playing) a vanguard role in the radicalization of the class, through their struggles against the double exploitation that they face.

The party's involvement in the Black struggle enabled it to develop a strategy for Black liberation, linking the democratic and transitional demands of Black people to the demands of the class as a whole in a common struggle for socialism. This represented an important addition to the Transitional Program as applied to the United States. This strategy can be found in “A Transitional Program for Black Liberation” adopted in 1969 (*Black Liberation and Socialism*, Pathfinder, \$2.45).

The Black struggle inspired other oppressed peoples—Chicanos, Native Americans, and Puerto Ricans—to struggle for their rights. The party recognized the importance of the national question in regard to all these

minorities. The sweeping and brutal expansion of American imperialism had created a prison-house of *new* nationalities, *created by* the depredations and superexploitation of capitalism. The political reports to the 1969 convention and 1970 national committee plenum (reprinted in *TASR*) took this into account. They more broadly defined the combined revolution as the combination of the struggle of the working class for socialism with that of the oppressed nationalities for self-determination.

This position is not identical to the positions advocated by Lenin, Trotsky, the Comintern, or the SWP in 1939, but its roots are imbedded in these positions. The continuity of our position on the struggles of the oppressed nationalities goes back more than sixty years.

This concept plays a key role in our turn and is inseparable from it. Without our understanding of the combined character of the American revolution, the divisions in the class (which involve important material interests) would exert terrible pressure on our comrades, and could produce bending to the pressure to achieve “unity” at the expense of the most oppressed. Our understanding of the nature of the American revolution aids us in coming to the conclusion that the turn is first and foremost to the most oppressed and their struggles. And unconditional support for these struggles is at the heart of our program for a class-struggle left wing in the labor movement.

The Proletarian Orientation Tendency

In 1963, the orientation toward radicalizing Blacks and students was adopted over the opposition of Healyite groupings in our ranks, led by Robertson and Wohlforth. The reaffirmation of the party's proletarian orientation in 1965 was adopted with little opposition. Similar near-unanimity greeted the party's tactical and strategic approach to the antiwar movement. In 1969, the resolutions, “The Course of U.S. Imperialism and the Revolutionary Struggle for a Socialist America,” and “A Transitional Program for Black Liberation,” embodying the party's fundamental analysis of the roots and perspectives of the new radicalization and the combined character of the revolution, were adopted unanimously.

However, opposition to these perspectives was germinating in a small sector of the party. This opposition became concrete in 1971 with the publication of the counter-political-resolution entitled “For a Proletarian Orientation” by Barbara Gregorich, Bill Massey, John McCann, and Phil Passen (*DB* Vol. 29, No. 2). Later on in the 1971 discussion, they formed the Proletarian Orientation Tendency (POT). This grouping was supported by all the key leaders of the later Internationalist Tendency (Barzman, Quinn, Shaffer, Smith, H. Garza, Levitt, etc.).

For A Proletarian Orientation began with the following statement: “Marx wrote that the working class must free itself from capitalist oppression. The class as a whole will be led by its vanguard, organized in the revolutionary party. The construction of vanguard parties on an international scale is the central task Marxists face in this epoch. Obviously the party which seeks to organize the vanguard of the working class must have a proletarian orientation. The necessity of this orientation has been reaffirmed throughout the history of the socialist movement. A fundamental aspect of a proletarian orientation is

that the party must see the recruitment of workers as a basic task, must enter the organizations of the workers, and must seek to root itself in the working class. The party must be predominantly working class in composition."

This summary restatement of the party's basic program was hardly capable of stirring controversy in the party. It was in their answer to the question, "What do we do next in building such a party?" that POT departed from the party's fundamental analysis. From the correct premise that a mass revolutionary party must be proletarian in composition, the POT mechanically drew the conclusion that the party must immediately undertake massive colonization of industry and reorient its work from what they called the "petty bourgeois" Black, Chicano, antiwar, and women's movements toward trade union work.

These comrades disagreed that building the party in the developing mass movements and fighting for proletarian methods of struggle and demands within the movements was an expression of a proletarian orientation. They argued that the party had become petty-bourgeois in composition and mentality through participation in such struggles—that the dynamic of participation in these movements was leading the party farther and farther from the class.

Their proposal that the party concentrate on industrial colonization was not based on any expectation that the workers would soon radicalize. On the contrary, these comrades held that the party's position that the radicalization would not be reversed short of a fundamental class confrontation was "totally empirical and undialectical."

To their way of thinking, comrades recruited from the campus and the mass movements had to be re-educated and de-petty-bourgeoisified by total immersion in the factories. Then we would be rooted in the plants in case a working class radicalization occurred, and more importantly, we would be steeled for "the difficulties which will probably confront the party in the future." Proletarianization, for the POT, was not a process of building a mass proletarian party in the living mass movement but a matter of changing the hearts and minds of comrades, beginning with the elected party leadership.

Their basic outlook was that the rise of the mass movements outside the factories threatened the party's composition and program with dilution, and therefore the party must sound the alarm and submerge until the coast cleared. Their real slogan was not "*to the working class!*" but "*away from the radicalization!*" They were "economists" in that they substituted an orientation to the factories for an orientation to the living political struggle, and economic demands for the demands raised by these movements.

The POT charged that the party had replaced the perspective of a workers revolution with that of a student revolution. The theoretical roots of the problem, in their view, was the party's acceptance of the important theoretical contributions of Ernest Mandel to the understanding of postwar capitalism.

The authors knew that party documents and literature would not support the claim that the SWP had adopted the "student revolution" thesis, so they warned that the party, "*despite what it may say, no longer has a proletarian orientation*" (our emphasis). They combed party documents for sentences and half-sentences which they tore from context and subjected to misinterpretation and

illogical deduction, in order to reveal the "secret" new program of the party to the unwary.

The debate revealed their profound antagonism to the party and its course. In the Oakland-Berkeley branch discussion, for example, Bill Massey held that the party was "hostile to Blacks and working people;" that is, the SWP had evolved into a racist and anti-working-class organization.

The party rejected the line of the Proletarian Orientation Tendency at the 1971 convention. It reaffirmed the proletarian orientation as embodied in the 1965 resolution. It held that the movements against imperialist war, for the needs of oppressed nationalities, and for the repeal of abortion laws were not "petty-bourgeois", but were expressions of the class struggle unfolding on a world scale, and were in the interest of the working class as a whole. It stressed the importance for a Leninist party of embracing the struggles and the key democratic and transitional demands raised by the oppressed themselves. The proposal for massive industrial colonization was rejected as a proposal for sectarian isolation from the existing mass movements. The party's position that colonization of comrades into any given union situation is a *tactical* question was affirmed.

Further, the party reaffirmed its basic perspective that the radicalization had roots so deep in the political and economic crisis confronting capitalism that it could not be reversed before the working class had a chance at power. Far from leading to a loss of interest in working-class struggles, this perspective led the party to pay increasing attention to work in the organized labor movement. Frank Lovell came to New York after the 1969 convention to coordinate and step up work and *Militant* coverage in this area. Activity in the rail union, AFSCME, and the teachers' unions was steadily increased. Trade union panels at conventions and other national party gatherings reflected a steady increase in comrades' activity in the unions. This flowed from the steady growth of opportunities in the unions, but it also resulted from the fact that our analysis led us to predict that the working class would radicalize before the radicalization ran its course, and to prepare accordingly. The radicalization was no substitute for the working class, but a road to the working class for the SWP.

The Internationalist Tendency

The POT began to fragment at birth. A grouping called the Communist Tendency broke from it before the convention. This group split from the party immediately after the convention. The Communist Tendency expelled its founder, Dave Fender. Today, the remainder of this sect publishes *Truth*, a monthly paper which recently carried the inspiring front-page banner headline, "The Fourth International Will be Rebuilt This Summer!"

The POT disintegrated rapidly after the convention. Some joined the Workers League, others the Spartacist League, and a few even tied up with the National Caucus of Labor Committees. Gregorich, Passen, and McCann walked out of the party in 1972. They formed the Class Struggle League which briefly distinguished itself by calling for the "Fifth International." The Class Struggle League seems to have split several ways recently and may no longer exist.

Those who neither split from the party nor became convinced of the correctness of the party's line formed the now-defunct Internationalist Tendency. This grouping emerged out of a marriage of convenience between the oppositionists and the International Majority Tendency. Mandel now became the "inspired guide" of the IT, after having been the root of all evil to the POT. The promise by the split faction of the IMT that the Internationalist Tendency would ultimately get the American "franchise" inspired Massey et al. to launch an all-out attack on the party's program, principles, and tradition. This was exemplified by their counter-political-resolution for the 1973 convention, "The Building of a Revolutionary Party in Capitalist America" (*DB*, Vol. 31, No. 18).

This resolution declared that the radicalization was over. The signing of the Vietnam accords and the Supreme Court decision on abortion had "undercut decisively the remaining radicalism." As the Internationalist Tendency members in the YSA stated in their political resolution, "The irreversible radicalization of the '60s had for all intents and purposes been reversed."

The Watergate revelations had no connection with the radicalization. Rather, the IT presented Watergate as an effort by the bourgeoisie to celebrate its victory over the radicalization by trying to "reverse the excessive executive ascendancy which Nixon had established." The IT thus bought the bourgeois press' interpretation of Watergate hook, line, and sinker.

It flowed from this analysis that the radicalization of the working class would have no direct connection to the earlier radicalization and would, in fact, be counterposed to it.

The IT document claimed that the SWP "depicts the American revolution arising out of a coalition of independent movements based on separate oppressed sectors of society, including, but not centered around, the working class." This represented a deliberate amalgam between the SWP position and the polyvanguardist position advocated by two comrades, Sudi and Geb, in "Against a Proletarian Orientation" (*DB* Vol. 29, No. 22) in 1971. Their view had been rejected by 99% of the party.

The IT denounced the independent women's movement, attacked the party for its defense of feminism and all-women's organizations. The SWP was accused of the heinous crime of having "flung itself into this movement, body and soul."

They described the radicalization as a "frenzied political upsurge" and a "petty-bourgeois radicalization," and insisted that there would be no basis for independent struggles of Blacks, Chicanos, women, or students during a working-class radicalization because the "relative quiescence of the working class is the basis for the autonomous development of movements in the sectors peripheral to the organized working class." All these "peripheral" struggles would politely pass away from the scene in deference to the trade unions.

Of course, nothing could be further from the truth. By raising the possibility that the capitalists can be beaten once and for all, a working class radicalization will inspire every oppressed layer with the confidence to strike blows against their oppressors. The qualitatively greater social weight that the workers will bring onto the scene will not cause others to lose interest in their own oppression, but to take advantage of the more favorable relationship of

forces.

All the positions of the party on the Black struggle, beginning in 1939, were declared wrong or irrelevant. Contrary to the historic position of the SWP they considered Blacks merely another "sector peripheral to the organized working class." There was nothing progressive about Black nationalism, in fact, it "objectively serves the American ruling class by hindering the process of united working class struggles." No Black nationality existed since there was no longer a Black Belt in the South.

Black oppression was defined vaguely as a "special oppression, in addition to class oppression." But no special measures could be taken to deal with this special oppression since preferential hiring "exacerbates intra-class conflicts." Blacks and other oppressed nationalities were informed that the American revolution would confront no major democratic tasks for the peculiar reason that "since the civil war, the most advanced capitalist layers . . . have wielded power virtually alone."

Instead of supporting actions and slogans appealing to the masses of the oppressed, the resolution called for primary attention to a "radicalized fringe" of ultralefts and sectarians—the "new broad vanguard."

As one might expect from the above positions—especially the Stalinist-sounding attacks on women's liberation and Black nationalism—some sections of the Stalinist movement were found highly praiseworthy. Maoism recruited, we were told, because of "admiration for the Chinese Revolution and the Cultural Revolution, but it is partly also the product of a repulsion for the SWP's opportunism and exclusive student orientation as well as the sectarianism of the professional anti-Pabloite groups." It is hardly shocking, given the logic of the line, that a whole section of the IT (including the former IT Party coordinator) have joined the pro-Maoist Workers World Party of Sam Marcy.

The IT held that the downturn in radical activity after the signing of the Paris Accords represented the total collapse of the SWP's strategy. Thus, the continued near-unanimity of the party in the face of this "catastrophe" proved that the membership was in a "stupor." As Bill Massey put it in a later document, "the cadre of this party are politically incapable of either understanding or putting into practice a revolutionary line."

The only way to save the party, the IT averred, was to turn branch meetings into "permanent discussion". Leadership would have to be voluntary and rotated, thus eliminating both the concept of professionalism in a combat party, and the democratic right of the majority to select a leading team embodying continuity of experience and political line. This attack on the concept of a proletarian combat party capped the general assault on the party program.

The Internationalist Tendency split culminated at their May 1974 national conference, presenting the party with a *fait accompli* that was recognized by the July 4, 1974 decision of the Political Committee to remove IT members from the membership rolls.

The defeat of the POT and the IT—of their melange of economism, sectarianism, and ultraleftism—was a vital part of the preparation of the party for the radicalization of our class. Their economism would have eliminated the party's ability to provide answers to the main problems confronting the working class, including the national

question and women's liberation. Their sectarian abstentionism would have prevented the recruitment of new forces without which the proletarian orientation would be a dead letter.

Barry Sheppard summarized the political meaning of "The Building of a Revolutionary Party In Capitalist America" in his article, "Six Strides Backward" (*DB* Vol. 31, No. 27): "The Internationalist Tendency represents a clear expression of Thermidor against the advances in program and practice the party has made in coming to grips with the new radicalization."

What Motivated the Oppositions

In part, the two tendencies were produced by a strong subjective antagonism for the leadership which overflowed into hostility to a party that would select such a leadership. This resulted in the combinationist and cliquist methods that give this minority such a small but unsavory place in the history of our movement. Nonetheless, important political issues were at stake, even though neither minority won more than 8 percent of the votes.

The first was a schematic and rigid approach to the class struggle, which fed the narrowly economist approach to the radicalization. They viewed the working class as hermetically sealed off from and immune to the influence of struggles that did not originate directly out of the worker-boss conflict in the plants. They saw a radicalization of the proletariat's allies preceding a radicalization of the class as a snare and a diversion for unwary revolutionists. They reacted to the demands for national self-determination, women's liberation, and gay liberation with indifference or even hostility.

Related to this was an inability to comprehend the role which students were playing in the radicalization and the contribution which the YSA was making to building our movement. In his report to the 1969 convention, Jack Barnes said, "The party's basic orientation is not to the student movement, and will not be. . . . But the role of the YSA will become even more important as the class struggle deepens and the party moves forward."

By rooting itself on campuses, the YSA played a major role in developing Trotskyist influence in the mass movements and in changing the relationship of forces to the detriment of the Stalinists and Social Democrats. Above all, the YSA established a vitally important conveyor belt for the creation of new cadres for the revolutionary party.

The oppositionists could not accept the changed social weight of students, which has given them greater importance as an ally of the proletariat than previously. The May 1970 upsurge was an American expression of the international trend for student struggles to set off grave political crises for imperialism. Although it is hardly inevitable that future American social crises will begin this way, this pattern has recurred far too often to be regarded solely as coincidence.

All of the considerations which justified the party's previous orientation toward supporting the YSA and its efforts to strengthen its campus base hold true today. The existence of a strong YSA, with the campus base required for playing a leading role in cutbacks struggles, in support of busing, etc., will make a major contribution to our efforts to appeal to and recruit workers. An artificial colonization policy would have damaged this valuable acquisition of

our movement in 1971, and it would damage it now. Further, the YSA has an important role to play in our fight for the leadership of the allies of the proletariat.

The second cause of the development of this sectarian opposition to our line was impatience in the face of the long delay in the radicalization of the working class. For 28 years, the party could not say as it can today that "the radicalization of our class *as a class* has begun."

As a result, frustrated comrades faced the temptation to look for gimmicks to surmount the obstacles to our revolutionary goals. The industrial colonization scheme and the "radicalized fringe" orientation were only the latest in a long line. A few comrades gradually lost confidence that the party's proletarian orientation would ever come to full fruition. Our continual emphases on the central role of the working class and on the importance of building a class struggle left wing in the unions began to ring hollow to them. This long isolation from the revolutionary class, caused by objective factors over which we had no control, spawned skepticism, a sense of betrayal, and finally bitter hatred for a party which these comrades had joined in the hope of making a working-class revolution. When the working-class radicalization did not happen after a few years, they regarded it as a breach of promise and began to sniff around for "greener pastures" to graze in.

The party as a whole, despite the objective limitations it confronted, held fast to its working-class revolutionary perspective and continued to build the combat party, even as some comrades fell by the wayside.

The Stage of Party-Building

The SWP's strategy has been based on the understanding that the central task confronting a nucleus of a mass revolutionary party is to recruit cadres to its program, and train them in the politics and organizational methods of a combat party. The accumulation of cadres, whether by ones or in batches, is the key to building a mass revolutionary workers party in the United States. Nowhere is such a party more vital. The decisive role of the U.S. in world affairs; the vast economic, political, military, and propaganda instruments available to the bourgeoisie; the unevenness in the radicalization of the working class and its allies; and the varied and deepgoing divisions in the class—all these factors demand a party capable of carrying out its decisions in a disciplined way, with programmatic firmness and tactical flexibility; a party capable of developing and applying a strategy in varied and rapidly changing situations.

Beginning with a few hundred members in 1963, the party refused to fall victim to illusions that its own "initiatives" could produce the missing objective factors—above all, the radicalization of the working class—required for the situation to move in a prerevolutionary direction. It rejected all ultraleft and opportunist shortcuts.

The party also recognized that the recruitment of radicalized youth on the campuses, in women's organizations and struggles of oppressed nationalities, constituted the best opportunity for winning cadres to our program. We rejected the method of those who drew from the correct generalization that the party must be proletarian in composition, the conclusion that its focus of work must always be in the workers organizations. To have done so in the 1960s would have meant *giving up* the perspective of

party-building in favor of trying to preserve a few cadres in the factories. Meanwhile, a vast anticapitalist radicalization would have swept over our heads.

The resolution submitted to the Tenth World Congress of the FI on "The World Political Situation and the Immediate Tasks of the Fourth International" (reprinted in *Dynamics of World Revolution Today*, Pathfinder, \$2.25) summarizes our attitude to this well:

"If cadres can be won directly in the key industries or in the most powerful organizations of the working class, this of course coincides directly with the main line of march, which is to mobilize the proletariat for the conquest of power. However, if recruiting possibilities are, for the moment, difficult in these sectors, but better in others, no principle of Bolshevism bars a temporary shift of attention. In such circumstances, the focus of work should be moved to peripheral industries or peripheral unions. The key is to *link up with those sectors that are in movement* and that offer the best opportunities for recruitment. A

small group should not hesitate at following promising leads among oppressed nationalities, among radicalizing youth, male or female, on jobs, unemployed, or on the campus. An opponent political organization where a current happens to be developing in a revolutionary direction may offer promise of fresh forces. . . . The field of temporary concentration is a tactical matter—the aim is to *recruit, educate, assimilate.*"

The turn we are making in response to the changing situation and consciousness of our class is not a change from this fundamental approach. We remain a nucleus of cadres seeking to build a mass revolutionary party. As yet unable ourselves to substantially affect the objective situation confronting us or to decisively effect the relationship of class forces, our task continues to be the accumulation of cadre. Far from changing our tasks, the first signs of a radicalization of our class represents the beginning of a qualitative improvement of the conditions under which we must carry them out.

The Puerto Rican National Minority in the United States

By Doug Jenness

July 25, 1975

This contribution is an elaboration of the section on Puerto Ricans in the United States in the national committee draft resolution, *The Decline of American Capitalism: Prospects for a Socialist Revolution*. It's incomplete and a bit sketchy but hopefully comrades who have been involved in the Puerto Rican struggle or have been following it closely will comment on these ideas in order to help clarify our positions and prepare the way for a party resolution on this question.

The situation of Puerto Ricans in the United States has its roots in the colonial status Yankee imperialism has maintained over Puerto Rico since it was taken from Spain as war booty in 1898. The U.S. imperialists imposed their own forms of economic and political oppression which, although modified over the years, still retain their basic character.

Ruled first directly by the U.S. military, then by presidential appointees, and only since the 1940s by an elected governor, Puerto Ricans have had little power over the fate of their island.

Today the island legislature's powers are limited to minor matters. Real political power resides in the U.S. House Committee on Insular Affairs and the Senate Committee on Territorial and Insular Affairs, both of which meet in Washington, D.C. The Commonwealth status established in 1952 is an attempt to camouflage the fact that Puerto Rico is a *direct colony* of the U.S. suffering national oppression.

Revolutionists in the U.S. have an important responsibility to demand that the U.S. government end its domination over the island and recognize Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. There is a long tradition of nationalist struggles in Puerto Rico and today sentiment for independence is growing. Revolutionists, both in Puerto Rico and the U.S., reject the Commonwealth status and the proposal for statehood. We support the demand for an independent Puerto Rico.

Although it's possible that Puerto Rico can win formal political independence short of a socialist revolution as have many colonies in the past 30 years, full national liberation cannot be won without a socialist revolution in Puerto Rico. (See "Report on Puerto Rico," by Doug Jenness, *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 31, No. 17, 1973).

Colonial oppression and migration

The U.S. imperialists have extracted super profits from Puerto Rico by exploiting the land, natural resources, and labor. First they established sugar production as the major industry on the island. This process eliminated many small landowners and Puerto Rico became a monoculture dominated by the sugar trusts. Then, following World War II, they launched "Operation Bootstrap" in order to

industrialize the island by luring U.S. business to invest there on a tax free basis.

The textile industry was expanded as manufacturers moved their operations from the U.S. to Puerto Rico in order to find cheaper labor. Then industries like electronics were established, and in the last decade the petrochemical and oil refining industries have become the biggest arena of capital investment.

With the decline in agriculture, particularly the sugar industry, and the rapid industrialization, tens of thousands of families were forced off the land and into the cities in search of jobs.

But in spite of industrialization, unemployment has remained very high, some estimates ranging as high as 30 percent. Hundreds of thousands migrated to the United States looking for jobs and better economic opportunities. This was consciously encouraged by the imperialists who wanted to increase the supply of cheap labor in the U.S.

Although some Puerto Ricans migrated in the early decades of this century, there was no large scale migration until after World War II. Today nearly 2-million Puerto Ricans live in the U.S. compared to less than 60,000 in 1935.

The rhythm of migration has been determined in large part by the economic situation in the U.S. The greatest number have come during periods when unemployment in the U.S. is relatively low and job opportunities greater. The largest number came during the economic boom in the 1950s when there was an annual net average of 41,000. The rate decreased in the 1960s and since 1970 the number of Puerto Ricans coming to the U.S. has even been slightly smaller than the number returning to the island.

Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. represent more than one-third of all the Puerto Rican people and are the third largest oppressed national grouping in the U.S. after Blacks and Chicanos.

Distribution of Puerto Rican population

More than 60 percent of the Puerto Ricans in the U.S. live in New York state, nearly all of those in New York City. Ten percent live just across the Hudson River in Newark, Jersey City, Hoboken, and other New Jersey cities. Twenty percent live in six states—Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California and Florida. Fewer than one percent live in the remaining 42 states and the District of Columbia.

The Puerto Rican population is more dispersed than it was 25 years ago when only 20 percent lived outside of New York City.

About 80 percent live in large central cities, which is far greater than for the U.S. population as a whole. Puerto

Ricans represent 11 percent of the population of New York City, the largest city in the country, and are significant minorities in Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston and Newark.

Puerto Ricans as part of the working class

Puerto Ricans in the United States are in their vast majority part of the working class. Many have come directly from rural areas in Puerto Rico and have become proletarianized here.

There is a thin stratum of small businessmen—grocery store owners and the like (about 10,000 in New York City).

Like Blacks and Chicanos, Puerto Ricans are utilized by the capitalist rulers as a pool of cheap labor. When there is a labor shortage, employers hire workers from this supply, and when production is cut back, these workers are an easily definable grouping that can be fired first. The national characteristics of Puerto Ricans serve to identify them for this status as an especially oppressed part of the working class.

The jobs that Puerto Ricans can get are usually those that are the lowest paying and most menial. The greatest number are employed as service workers and laborers. Many women work in sweatshops in the garment industry.

There are several unions with a substantial number of Puerto Rican members. In New York City these include the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, District Council 37; National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, District 1199; and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. AFSCME and the hospital workers' union in particular have felt some pressure to extend support to Puerto Rican struggles. AFSCME, for example, has assisted the struggle of Puerto Rican, Black, and Chinese parents for better education on Manhattan's Lower East Side. But even in these unions, few Puerto Ricans are in any leading positions.

Many unions act as white job trusts and help bar Puerto Ricans from more skilled and higher paying jobs. Most notorious, of course, are the United Federation of Teachers in New York City and the building trades unions. On the whole, the organized labor movement has not championed the struggle against the special oppression of Puerto Rican workers, and in most instances has actually helped perpetuate that oppression.

Puerto Ricans have had particularly bitter experience with a number of racket-infested New York unions that organized them into company unions bound by "sweet-heart contracts" with the employers.

Thousands of Puerto Rican workers who have gone through this experience or been the victims of white job trusts, have come to distrust unions. This sentiment has been reinforced by the reactionary policies of UFT president Albert Shanker, who has waged a fierce struggle against the democratic right of Puerto Ricans, Blacks, and Chinese to have a say in the administration of the schools in their communities.

In addition to the workers who come to the U.S. from the island, get jobs and settle here, there are nearly 60,000 seasonal workers, mostly employed in agriculture on the East Coast. In 1974 about one-fourth of these farm workers were employed under contracts negotiated between the Puerto Rican government and the growers. Workers under these contracts usually get about the legal minimum wage which is only a pittance. The rest of the migrant laborers

work without contracts and most of them do not even get paid the minimum wage. Conditions for Puerto Rican farmworkers are very poor. They get no overtime pay, no fringe benefits, no promotions, no unemployment benefits, and they have no unions to represent them.

Recently there have been attempts to organize Puerto Rican tobacco workers in Connecticut. This effort is being undertaken by the Farm Workers Association which seeks to replace the Puerto Rican government as bargaining agent and negotiate higher wages. The organizing drive has been set back this year because the growers hired mostly unemployed local workers.

Puerto Rican struggles

Until about ten years ago there had not been many struggles of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. But the miserable conditions capitalist society has forced upon them, along with the example of the Black struggle, have generated many protests.

Puerto Ricans have been involved in strikes, rallies against layoffs, campus struggles, prison revolts and demonstrations against police brutality. They have participated in fights against cutbacks in education and for community control of schools and hospitals in Puerto Rican communities. They have fought against discriminatory employment policies in the construction industry and for preferential hiring and upgrading. They have protested against cutbacks for childcare services and for better treatment of veterans. They have fought for bilingual education and bilingual ballots and voting instructions and for Spanish-language radio and television stations.

These struggles show that Puerto Ricans have been fighting against the special discrimination they face as an oppressed national minority as well as against the exploitation they share with all working people. The Puerto Rican struggles combine democratic demands with transitional demands because the struggles against national oppression and class exploitation are intertwined.

Following is a summary of the most important struggles.

Fight for political representation

Unlike most immigrants to the U.S. Puerto Ricans come as citizens with the right to vote, run for office, and work without special permits. They do not face the same direct threat of deportation as do Dominicans, Haitians, and Mexicans, making it easier, even for first generation Puerto Ricans, to participate openly in the political life of the cities and states where they live.

In spite of this legal status as citizens, there has been a deliberate policy of trying to deny Puerto Ricans their rights and exclude them from political life. The capitalist rulers strongly resist holding bilingual elections, and election districts are gerrymandered to make it difficult for Puerto Ricans to get elected to office. Most communities with Puerto Rican majorities are represented in city councils, school boards, state legislatures, and U.S. Congress by non-Puerto Ricans.

The fight against discriminatory reapportioning and for bilingual elections is part of the democratic struggle of Puerto Ricans to be *included* in the political life of the U.S. and to be *represented* by Puerto Ricans.

The growth of Puerto Rican Democratic Party clubs, which are attempting to replace the older, more esta-

blished party machines in the barrios, reflects this struggle for representation. Community activists who have run up against unsympathetic city councils and state legislatures often figure that they can get a better shake if they build a faction in the Democratic Party and get some Puerto Ricans elected. But hitching onto the Democratic or Republican parties is a dead-end road for the masses of Puerto Ricans.

Against language discrimination

Lack of fluency in English is utilized to discriminate against Puerto Ricans. Even when a job does not require complete proficiency in English, a Puerto Rican applicant with a heavy accent will often be turned away. Civil service examinations are not given in both English and Spanish, making it difficult for Puerto Ricans to get government jobs.

Language discrimination not only makes it difficult to get anything better than the most degrading jobs, but pervades all aspects of social and political life. When a Spanish-speaking Puerto Rican goes to a city welfare office, a hospital, a library, or any other number of public facilities, the chances are small that there will be Spanish-speaking employees on hand to help.

The most pernicious effect of language discrimination is in the schools. Tens of thousands of Puerto Rican children begin school with little or no knowledge of English. Very few teachers know Spanish, so all instruction in arithmetic, geography, science, etc., is conducted in English. The Spanish-speaking students, struggling to learn English, fall behind. Teachers say they are "retarded." Many students give up and drop out. Many of them have not learned either Spanish or English well.

Although some bilingual programs have been established that place Spanish-speaking paraprofessionals and bilingual teachers in the classrooms, they are inadequate. And even these meager programs are continually threatened with cutbacks.

It still remains to be seen whether or not a 1974 Federal District Court order directing the New York City Board of Education to provide *all* Spanish-speaking children with assistance will be implemented. It is supposed to be put into effect by September, 1975.

Language discrimination is also used to restrict Puerto Rican participation in politics, particularly at the polls. However, struggles by Puerto Ricans and Chicanos have resulted in several recent court decisions as well as a special section of the proposed new Voting Rights Bill barring language discrimination in voting. Struggles will still be necessary to enforce these concessions.

Equality in employment

Discrimination against Puerto Ricans in employment is responsible for lower incomes, poorer living conditions, and higher unemployment than for the population as a whole.

In 1971, the median income for Puerto Rican families was 58 percent of that for white families. The current depression, which hits oppressed minorities especially hard, has undoubtedly widened this gap.

Unemployment is at least twice as high for Puerto Ricans as it is for the population as a whole, and is even higher among youth of working age.

Like other oppressed minorities and women, Puerto Ricans are the "last hired and first fired." In order to overcome discrimination in hiring, Puerto Ricans have joined with Black and Chinese workers in New York City in protests demanding preferential treatment. They have particularly focused on the discriminatory hiring policies of the construction industry and the racist, white job-trustism of the building trades unions.

Like many Blacks and women, some Puerto Ricans were hired in the past few years as the result of "affirmative action" programs. Now with massive layoffs, Puerto Ricans, along with other doubly oppressed workers, are the first to receive pink slips. Consequently, the number being laid off is disproportionately high. In order to combat this totally discriminatory policy, seniority provisions cannot be allowed to stand in the way of demanding that where layoffs take place, the same percentage of Puerto Ricans be retained after the layoffs as were working before.

Equality in education

One of the most prominent struggles involving Puerto Ricans in the U.S. has been the struggle against inferior and unequal education. Statistics clearly show what every Puerto Rican parent knows: educational opportunities for Puerto Rican students are not as good as they are for whites.

In 1970 the average Puerto Rican aged 25 and over had completed only elementary school and less than 25 percent had completed high school. Even among Puerto Ricans born in the U.S. aged 20 to 24, only about 6 out of 10 had completed high school compared to 8 out of 10 for the population as a whole and the figure is lower in New York City where the largest number of Puerto Ricans live.

To combat this inequality, Puerto Rican parents have raised three central demands: more funds to improve schools in the Puerto Rican communities, more bilingual programs to help students learn basic subjects in their own language, and parent control over curricula, hiring, and allocation of funds for the schools in the Puerto Rican communities.

The struggle of Puerto Ricans for equality in educational opportunities has been the most intense in New York City's school District One where Puerto Rican parents have joined with Black and Chinese parents in a struggle for improving the schools in their community.

In 1972, parents who favored Puerto Rican, Black and Chinese control over the district's schools won control of the community school board. One of their first moves was to appoint Luis Fuentes, a veteran of the 1968 Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggles, as superintendent. They also established more bilingual programs, Black and Puerto Rican cultural programs and other measures beneficial to the students.

Since then the Shankerites have reestablished a majority on the board and reversed many of the gains won by the parents.

Despite its ups and downs this struggle has been a model because of the way it has drawn together a broad array of forces in a direct action struggle, independent of government-financed antipoverty programs and capitalist parties.

The struggle of Puerto Ricans for equal education is also an aspect of the struggle against school desegregation in Boston. Puerto Rican parents there are fighting to defend

and expand bilingual programs for Puerto Rican students. This is not contradictory to the struggle of Blacks to desegregate the schools but is part of the struggle for equality in education.

Against police brutality

Since the 1966 revolt against police brutality in Chicago's Northwest Side, there have been protests and revolts against police harassment and killings in nearly every city where there are large Puerto Rican communities, from Newark to Boston.

While protecting and profiting from rent-gouging landlords, organized crime and drug pushers, the cops harass, shake down, beat up and murder Puerto Ricans. Even the mildest expressions of Puerto Rican unity arouse them to a frenzy.

And like Blacks, Puerto Ricans are more victimized by crime in general than whites.

Student struggles

As the number of Puerto Ricans in high school and college increased in the past decade relative to what it had been before, Puerto Rican students became involved in many campus struggles, especially in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Inspired by struggles of Black students particularly, Puerto Rican students organized protests demanding lower tuition, more financial assistance and Puerto Rican studies programs.

The most successful fight was a combined effort of Black and Puerto Rican students for open admissions in New York City's publicly financed colleges, the CUNY system. In the spring of 1969 hundreds of students organized a series of demonstrations, rallies and sit-ins at City College of New York. They were fighting for Black and Puerto Rican studies and an admissions policy that would guarantee that the proportion of students from oppressed minorities in future entering classes would reflect the composition of the city's high schools. Among the other demands was that Spanish be a required subject for all education majors.

Despite fierce police attacks against the students, significant concessions were won that in the past five years have transformed the composition of the CUNY schools. Between 1967 and the fall of 1972, the number of Puerto Rican college students increased from 3,400 to 13,200. However, the open admissions policy is seriously threatened now by proposals of the city administration to impose tuition cuts and reduce the staffs of the CUNY schools.

Puerto Rican women

Puerto Rican women are especially discriminated against. Unemployment is higher, wages lower, and working conditions poorer. They are major victims of forced sterilizations, expensive abortions, and cutbacks in child care facilities. In many struggles like District One and the child care fights, women are the principal organizers and activists. Although many of these women do not consider themselves "women's liberationists" there is a growing influence of feminist ideas among Puerto Ricans.

Radicalization and nationalism

These struggles reflect the growing political radicalization of Puerto Ricans, particularly the youth. This radicalization is marked by increasing nationalist consciousness. The adoption of radical methods of struggle and radical ways at looking at society has been accompanied by growing self-respect, pride and national identity. This has led Puerto Rican youth to go back and unearth the true facts about their own history and culture which the educational system and the bourgeois media have virtually obliterated.

Puerto Rican nationalism expresses growing political consciousness and confidence. Rather than stand in the way of advancing class struggle, Puerto Rican nationalism has, in fact, helped accelerate the growth of class consciousness. This is reflected in the growing interest in socialist ideas by hundreds of nationalist-minded Puerto Rican youth.

Character of the Puerto Rican movement

There is no long history of Puerto Rican struggles or organizations in the U.S. nor are there any authoritative national political organizations that Puerto Ricans look to for leadership.

The most prominent organizations are the Puerto Rican Parade committees in cities with large Puerto Rican populations. These are usually ongoing committees which organize annual parades and festivals to express Puerto Rican unity. They are dominated by Puerto Rican Democratic politicians, lawyers, businessmen, etc. In New York City the parade draws several hundred thousand people each year. These are primarily cultural rather than political events, except in New York when they become booster rallies for Democratic Congressman Herman Badillo's mayoralty bids, as happened in 1973.

The Puerto Rican Legal and Education Defense Fund takes on legal cases against discrimination of Puerto Ricans including voting restrictions, education, etc. It is similar to the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, in that it is oriented to legal actions rather than rallies, demonstrations and other forms of direct action.

Then there are many local organizations and coalitions formed by people in neighborhoods, housing projects, and campuses, to fight around specific issues, like the *Por Los Niños* coalition in District One.

Many leaders and activists that helped organize protests and demonstrations in the 1960s were bought off by government-financed poverty agencies and corporate foundations. Student leaders active in the struggle for Puerto Rican studies were drawn into research programs, administration of Puerto Rican studies programs, etc. in order to cool their militancy.

Although large numbers of Puerto Ricans aren't registered to vote, the number is increasing. The Democratic Party is attempting to tie these new voters into supporting its candidates and have recognized the importance of using Puerto Rican politicians to do this. For example, in New York City, Congressman Herman Badillo is a useful symbol for the capitalists to show that Puerto Ricans can make it in U.S. politics. He had the backing of the *New York Times* when he ran for mayor in 1973. There is also a small number of city and state elected Puerto Rican officials.

Puerto Rican Socialist Party

The PSP is the U.S. section of the largest radical party in Puerto Rico, which until 1971 was called the Movement for Puerto Rican Independence (MPI). It has been operating in the U.S., first as the MPI then as the PSP, since the early 1960s, but has substantially stepped up its activities since 1971. It has several hundred members in the U.S., mostly in New York City.

Politically the PSP has been influenced primarily by the colonial revolution, particularly the Cuban revolution, and the heritage of the nationalist movement in Puerto Rico. Its basic positions are closest to those of the Cuban Communist Party and it has generally followed the turns of the Cuban CP for more than a decade.

The policies and program of the PSP in the United States is basically determined in Puerto Rico and the political axis of its activities is organizing support for political struggles in Puerto Rico. The PSP in the U.S. is oriented primarily toward helping to lead the struggle for independence and socialism in Puerto Rico rather than toward the coming American socialist revolution. It sees its role as one of organizing Puerto Ricans in the U.S. behind this goal and winning supporters and help from other social forces in the U.S. It doesn't aspire to be the revolutionary socialist party of the U.S. revolution.

To its credit, the PSP more than any other organization in the U.S. has waged an extensive propaganda campaign against U.S. colonial oppression of Puerto Rico. It was the prime initiator and organizer of the massive Oct. 27, 1974, rally in Madison Square Garden in support of Puerto Rican independence.

However, in respect to the struggles of Puerto Ricans in the U.S., the PSP has had relatively little influence and when it tries to play a role it usually takes an ultraleft and sectarian approach as it has in the District One struggle. One of its main activities is selling the party's daily newspaper, *Claridad*, published in Puerto Rico. Once a week a bilingual supplement is published in New York City.

Because of its relationship to the Cuban CP, the Communist Party USA has had relatively close working relations with the PSP and influences it.

However, the PSP is very heterogeneous and includes different currents and many different levels of understanding. Unlike the CP it has opposed supporting capitalist candidates, including Badillo.

The approach of the SWP is to try to unite with the PSP in common actions and to find as many ways as possible to talk to its members about our politics and win them to Trotskyism. This has often proved difficult because of its generally sectarian attitude towards united actions, especially with us.

Maoists

There are several Puerto Rican Maoist sects, mostly based in New York City, which together can draw a few hundred people to public meetings.

The largest is the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization which emerged from the Young Lords Party in the early 1970s. Most of its leaders came out of the student struggles five or six years ago and some of them are instructors and administrators of Puerto Rican studies departments. Its members are primarily students and it

has been active in some recent campus protests.

Unlike the PSP, the PRRWO is primarily oriented to political activities and struggles in the U.S. rather than Puerto Rico. It was involved in the discussions with other Maoist organizations a couple of years ago about the possibility of regrouping and establishing a "new communist party."

Its rabid sectarianism and factionalism was shown by its central role in organizing the attempted violent disruption of the NSCAR conference in Boston in February. Its factionalism toward the PSP led it to harshly criticize the Oct. 27 rally last year and to refuse to help build it.

Other less significant Maoist organizations include *El Comité*, which has had members active in the District One struggle, and *Resistencia*.

Communist Party

The Communist Party has few Puerto Rican members. Its main influence in the Puerto Rican movement comes from its relationship with the PSP. However, its principal strategy at this point is different from the PSP's in that it is to promote "progressive" Puerto Rican Democrats like Badillo and to channel Puerto Rican activists in this direction.

Social democrats

The Social Democrats USA are not so much participants in the Puerto Rican movement as they are direct opponents of it. Whether it's the Shankerite leadership of the UFT or the all-white leadership of the ILGWU, they oppose the struggles of Puerto Ricans against discrimination and inequality.

The Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee is more ambivalent on crucial questions like the District One struggle. While some leaders have been critical of the struggle for community control, others like AFSCME leader Victor Gotbaum have publicly supported and provided union assistance to the *Por Los Niños* election campaigns

Terrorists

In addition, there have been several terrorist Puerto Rican groups over the last several years that have carried out actions both in Puerto Rico and the United States. The only group that seems to be active in the U.S. now is the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña (FALN—Puerto Rican Armed Forces of National Liberation), which reportedly took credit for the widely publicized bombings that occurred on the eve of the massive October 27 Madison Square Garden Rally. Since then the FALN has taken credit for several other bombings.

The FALN is a mysterious group. Nothing is known about its origins, leaders, or specific ideology. It has no public or legal expression. As a result of these facts, and the seemingly irrational character of many FALN actions, there has been widespread and persistent speculation that the FALN might be largely inspired by agents provocateur. No clarification has been forthcoming from the FALN.

There has been no visible support for the FALN among other Puerto Rican organizations.

The myth of the melting pot

The social democrats and most liberals promote the idea that Puerto Ricans are assimilating into American society. They argue that Puerto Ricans are presently on the road to becoming simply another "ethnic" group with residual features of the culture and language brought from their homeland. Sociologists and statisticians are called upon to show that the distinct identity which separates out Puerto Ricans for special oppression is withering away.

The factor overlooked by these apologists for the capitalist system, who wish the "Puerto Rican problem" would melt away, is the racism of American society. And the fact that no non-white oppressed minority whose composition is overwhelmingly proletarian has yet been assimilated into racist capitalist America makes it unlikely that Puerto Ricans will. Even if all 2nd, 3rd, and 4th generation Puerto Ricans adopt English as their principal or exclusive language and accept many cultural characteristics that are different than those on the island, the majority will still be non-white and subject to the deep-rooted racism in this country—racism that is necessary to American capitalism and will not be eradicated without its overturn.

As long as Puerto Ricans are victims of racism they will be confined to the lowest rungs of the economic and social ladder. They will remain pariahs with little likelihood of becoming assimilated.

Are Puerto Ricans in the U.S. a new nationality?

While most radicals in the Puerto Rican movement reject the likelihood of assimilation, there is a debate on the part of some organizations over the question of whether or not the Puerto Rican minority is a new nationality forged on U.S. soil.

The principal protagonists are the PSP, which argues that Puerto Ricans are one nation divided geographically, and the Maoists, who generally hold that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are a new nationality, separate and distinct from Puerto Ricans on the island.

Although this question doesn't affect the SWP's immediate tasks in respect to our participation in the Puerto Rican struggles, it is being widely discussed, confronting our comrades with the need for clear answers.

Let's start with Puerto Ricans on the island. The Puerto Rican people living in Puerto Rico are a distinct nation forged under 400 years of Spanish oppression. They have a common language, territory, culture, history and oppression. They are distinct from all other nations and nationalities: Spanish, Dominicans, Haitians, Norwegians, Americans, etc. Puerto Ricans are an oppressed nation that has not yet won political independence and established its own state. However the struggle for this goal has been an important feature of Puerto Rican politics since the early 1800s.

When Puerto Ricans first came to the U.S. they were clearly a recognized part of the Puerto Rican nation, living as an oppressed minority in a country other than their homeland, i.e. an oppressed *national minority*.

However, the question is raised: if it is unlikely that Puerto Ricans in the United States will assimilate as many other national minorities did, will they evolve into a new nationality distinct from Puerto Ricans and distinct from Americans, or have they already done so as the

Maoists claim.

The logic of stating that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are a new and distinct oppressed nationality is that we support its right to self-determination, including the right to establish a separate state, i.e., a state separate from the U.S. and from Puerto Rico. This is the position, for example, the SWP holds in respect to Blacks and Chicanos. To review this question in respect to Chicanos I suggest reading, "The Forging of an Oppressed Nationality," by Antonio Camejo, *SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 13 (June, 1971).

My opinion is that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. have *not* yet evolved into a new oppressed nationality, but *may* in the future.

The situation with Puerto Ricans in the U.S. is still in a state of flux. Most Puerto Ricans are relative newcomers and there is still considerable migration back and forth between the island and the U.S. Most Puerto Ricans still have close relatives in Puerto Rico and maintain close contact including many trips back and forth. It is not excluded that there could still be very massive migrations back to Puerto Rico. This depends on economic developments and the class struggle in both Puerto Rico and the U.S.

At the time of the 1970 census only about 40 percent of the Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. were born here and their average age level was a little more than 9 years. Most second generation Puerto Ricans have not entered the labor force nor do they head households. For example, only 7 percent of the heads of households over the age of 16 were born in the U.S. And there are still very few third generation Puerto Ricans in the U.S.

There is also considerable unevenness within the United States. For example there is a higher proportion of second generation Puerto Ricans in New York City than in most other cities where the Puerto Rican populations tend to be newer.

Furthermore, there is no indication that the masses of Puerto Ricans view themselves as a people radically different from Puerto Ricans on the island. There has been no emergence of even minor separatist tendencies as in the Black movement, except of course those calling for independence for Puerto Rico. There have scarcely been any expressions of independent political organization, even independent candidates. There has been no significant move by Puerto Ricans in the U.S. to call themselves something different than "Puerto Ricans" in order to distinguish themselves from the islanders. The characterization *Neo-Ricans* (New Ricans) is used by a few people but there is no evidence that it is used by the Puerto Rican masses.

However, to say that U.S.-Puerto Ricans are not yet a distinct nationality is not to say that there are *no* differences between them and Puerto Ricans on the island. In fact there are many differences and they appear to be deepening.

Puerto Ricans who grow up as a minority in the barrios of the country surrounded by a hostile environment suffer different experiences than Puerto Ricans growing up and living on an island where virtually everyone is Puerto Rican. Traditional Puerto Rican values and institutions like the family are breaking down. Different tastes in food, music, and dress are developing. English begins to replace Spanish as the dominant language.

And as has already been described Puerto Ricans are more and more entering into the political and economic life of the U.S. and are attempting to find ways to fight the concrete forms of oppression and exploitation they face here. Their predominant concern at this time is not the struggle for Puerto Rican independence or the problems of inflation and unemployment in Puerto Rico but the discrimination and inequality here in housing, jobs, education, etc. Their struggles are part of the overall struggle of the working class in the United States which will lead to the overturn of capitalism.

The degree of Puerto Rican participation in U.S. politics is considerably more than for most other oppressed

national minorities including Dominicans, Haitians, Guatemalans, etc. Partly this is due to the fact that Puerto Ricans have U.S. citizenship and partly to the fact that they've been here slightly longer.

Puerto Ricans in the U.S. at this time are a national minority with its own origins, its own peculiarities, and its own evolution. Comrades who are more familiar than I am with the specific changes that are taking place can add considerably to our knowledge of how Puerto Ricans see themselves today, what differences exist between Puerto Ricans in the U.S. and on the island, and what the trends appear to be.

DISCUSSION ON THE UNIONS, THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY, AND THE CIVIL-RIGHTS STRUGGLE

by Tom Kerry and Andy Rose

July 26, 1975

[When I set out to answer Comrade Milton Alvin's attack on the party leadership I originally intended to take up all six of the points he raised. By the time I had worked my way through his first point alone (critical support to Communist party candidates), I found I had already written quite a lengthy document. For reasons of health, I did not feel physically able to write replies to the remaining five points in similar fashion. I did, however, wish to comment in some way on several important questions in the discussion. To do so, I proposed to tape an interview-format discussion with another comrade, which could then be transcribed and edited for the bulletin. That is the manner in which the following contribution was prepared.

—Tom Kerry]

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We append an article on "Negro Workers and the CIO" by Tom Kerry ("C. Thomas") from the May-June 1950 issue of *Fourth International*, which we feel is pertinent to the present discussion.

The Real Record of the CIO

AR: Comrade Milt Alvin, in his challenge to the party's position on affirmative action, holds up the early CIO as a model for the unity of Black and white workers. This unity, he says, was "achieved in the 1930s through a program that benefited both" (*SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 33, No. 8, page 3, emphasis in original). It "had nothing to do with more privileged workers protecting the jobs of the most oppressed or anything of that kind"—the approach that Alvin labels "divisive."

He acknowledges that "the organization of the CIO did not solve all the problems that Black workers faced in the plants at one fell swoop," but it is clear that he advocates following the example of the CIO on the general approach to unifying the working class.

Some comrades have responded by asserting that the CIO unions—at least some of them, some of the time—did in fact champion the special interests of Blacks. (See contribution by Lee Artz in bulletin No. 10.)

I suspect that the CIO's real record in relation to the Black struggle is much more uneven than either of these two contributions would suggest. What attitude did the CIO unions really take toward Black workers? Did they do anything to help break down hiring discrimination, Jim Crow practices, or other racist abuses? Within the unions themselves, did Blacks really get equal treatment, equal access to leadership positions, etc.? And finally, what happened to the "Black-white unity" of the CIO, and is

that kind of unity adequate to combat the oppression of Blacks today?

TK: It would be well to recall that the CIO was founded by the leaders of eight AFL unions who sought to organize the workers in the mass production industries—that is, to organize under the industrial rather than the craft union form. This group of AFL officials took the lead because they could see the mass upsurge toward industrial organization that was brewing, and they were afraid that if they did not place themselves at the head of this movement, it would be led by radicals and socialists. So they broke with the American Federation of Labor and in 1935 established the Committee for Industrial Organization, which in 1938 became the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

These leaders of the eight AFL unions on this particular question were much more progressive than the Gompers type of bureaucrats who ran the AFL. Nevertheless they carried with them into the CIO the prevailing attitudes on the race question.

In order to organize the mass production industries, it was essential that they take into membership *all* the workers in the particular industry. It was impossible for them to exclude Blacks or any other section of the work force and still succeed in organizing these workers in what was then the most antiunion section of American industry. To be sure, this alone was a step forward from the openly Jim Crow practices of the AFL craft unions, which by and large excluded Blacks entirely or else segregated them into separate, second-class locals. But it was only out of necessity that the CIO leaders opened the doors of the unions to Blacks. This was about the extent of the "progressive" record of the CIO on this question.

My recollection is that the CIO unions adapted themselves to the hiring practices of the employer right from the beginning. They made no special effort to challenge the racist discrimination that prevailed in hiring, promotion, and wages. So, while Black workers won better wages as a result of being in the union, they were still, relative to whites, relegated to the hardest, dirtiest, worst-paying positions.

Some of the unions that went through actual struggles in which Blacks participated with whites on the picket line and in the sit-down strikes took a more progressive attitude, by virtue of the solidarity established in the strikes. But nowhere, nowhere do I recall that the barriers were dropped to allow Blacks to occupy top positions of leadership in the CIO. Black organizers, yes; Black local officials, yes; but Blacks in the top echelons where decisions were actually made, practically never.

Even in one of the most progressive, the United Auto

Workers, it was not until the 1960s that a Black union member was designated on the executive board, and then only as an appointee of Reuther. The attitude expressed by Reuther was that he was opposed to what he called "racism in reverse." He was for the "merit system." He opposed electing Blacks because they were Blacks. Only after a long period of internal dissension, only after the civil rights movement had developed momentum and militancy, did Reuther give token recognition to the struggle of Blacks for equal treatment and appoint Blacks to the top leadership of the union.

The Great Betrayal

The Blacks looked to the CIO not only as a union organization, but as a social movement. They put great confidence, great hope, in the prospects for eliminating discrimination because of skin color through the CIO—especially the early, militant CIO. *And they were betrayed, cruelly betrayed.* Because the question was not simply one of trade-union organization.

The question of race discrimination in American society is essentially a *political* question. And the Democratic party—which was based upon a coalition of the Dixiecrat South, the big city machines, and the labor bureaucracy—was the *bulwark* of the Jim Crow system. The union leaders subordinated the political independence of the workers to the maintenance of this coalition. So long as they did so, it was impossible for them to carry through a consistent struggle against the Jim Crow system or against race discrimination. That is the fact, and the record will prove it.

A big protest movement against race discrimination began in 1940-41, the March on Washington Movement led by A. Philip Randolph. With the preparation for the Second World War, and the outbreak of the war, industry began hiring again on a large scale—but hiring only whites, as before. Even where labor shortages developed, as they did in many war industries, the ban against Black workers in any but the most menial positions was still enforced. Mass protest meetings were held—organized and led by Blacks—to demand an end to this exclusion of Black workers.

The position of the bureaucracy in the CIO, and of the Communist party, was that the Blacks should subordinate their struggle for equality to the winning of the war. And that meant subordinating the struggle for equality to maintaining the Roosevelt coalition, which depended to a great extent upon the Southern Dixiecrats. The Stalinists and the CIO bureaucracy *opposed* the March on Washington Movement as being directed against Roosevelt—and it was! It was a *political* movement, demanding equality not only in industry but in the armed forces.

As a result of this mass movement of Blacks—although Randolph called off the march on Washington—Roosevelt was compelled to issue an order formally banning discrimination in the defense industries, and to establish the Fair Employment Practices Commission. It was the first time that the government on a national scale found itself obliged to recognize that discrimination was a problem and give at least token support to the movement against racial discrimination. And it was no thanks to the CIO, either.

The CIO's record is a very dismal one, even so far as

establishing unionism in the South. Several times, with a great fanfare, they announced so-called "Operation Dixie," which purported to be the great push to unionize the open-shop South. It never really got off the ground—precisely because any such movement even to establish trade unions, the most elementary form of working-class organization, required a *political* struggle against the Democratic party, which was the bulwark of Jim Crow in the South. The CIO failed to break with the Democratic party and they failed to challenge Jim Crow. And so even today the South constitutes a bastion of antiunion, open shop industry in this country. It was not only the Black workers who suffered, it was also the white workers who paid dearly for this subordination of the interests of the working class to the coalition with the Dixiecrats.

A Personal Experience

In this connection, I would like to record here my own personal experience as a member of the National Maritime Union, which, under Stalinist leadership, prided itself as being in the forefront of the struggle against racist discrimination in industry, in government, and in all aspects of public life. I joined the National Maritime Union in 1947, after leaving the Seafarers International Union. And in 1949 I recall shipping out on a tanker, the *S.S. Tulahoma*. I'll never forget it.

It was true that there was no race discrimination on the ship; Blacks could sail in every department. They even had one Black in the top leadership of the NMU, a Stalinist named Ferdinand Smith. The ship was bound for Galveston or Port Arthur, Texas, I can't recall which. On the way down the crew got along very well, with no visible sign of any hostility or prejudice.

But when we got down to this shipyard, I was horrified. The first thing, the *first thing* they did when the ship tied up, was that the shipyard workers, who were also organized in the CIO, hoisted aboard the deck of this NMU ship *two drinking fountains*: one for Blacks and one for whites! And this was in a "progressive" union, in 1949, thirteen years after the big CIO wave in which the seamen on the East Coast organized the NMU.

But that was just my first shock. The shipyard was on an island and to go ashore we had to take a ferry boat across to the mainland. It was an old, broken down ferry that carried trucks and cars from the mainland back and forth with supplies. But lo and behold, there were signs as you walked onto the ferry, marking the right side for whites only, and the left side, Blacks only. It was a Jim Crow ferry!

I was very embarrassed. In fact, I didn't know what to do. I went over to the Black side as a sort of a demonstration. But my Black shipmates began to shy away—I guess they were afraid of some kind of an incident occurring. And that's not the worst of it.

When we got ashore, we went to the union hall to report these outrages. We discovered that the NMU hall was on the second floor of a corner building, and underneath the hall there was a gin mill. We thought, well, we'll go into the gin mill and have a beer before we go up and see the port agent. We walked in and there was a loudspeaker hooked up to the NMU hall above, announcing the job calls. Sailors could sit there and have a beer and listen to the job calls. If a job came up that suited them, they would

go up to the hall and bid for the job.

But the gin mill was a lily-white gin mill! Whites only! Black members of the NMU could not go in there. In other words, obvious discrimination within the union itself, to put a loudspeaker in a saloon, underneath the union hall, from which the Black members of the union were excluded.

What the hell's the use of complaining to the port agent, I figured, he's part of the whole goddamn system. Instead we went back to the ship. That was the first and last time I went ashore there. On the return voyage we held a meeting and drew up a resolution directed at Curran [president of the NMU] demanding immediate action by the union against these manifestations of Jim Crow.

But we also found on the way back that the friendly atmosphere that had prevailed among the integrated crew on the way down had been completely poisoned and destroyed, just by contact with the filth of this Jim Crow system.

The Civil Rights Movement and the Unions

No, the CIO did not "solve all the problems that Black workers faced in the plants at one fell swoop," not at two fell swoops, not at all. The unions betrayed the aspirations of the Black workers, and after the war Blacks began to lose these illusions in the CIO as a movement expressing their social needs. In their struggle to achieve equality *they were forced to go it alone.*

The big civil rights movement that developed in the South after the Supreme Court decision on school desegregation in 1954 was exclusively Black. It began with a boycott of the buses in Montgomery, Alabama, because the Jim Crow system required that Blacks sit in the back of the bus, dividing the bus into a segregated camp. The Montgomery bus boycott movement, from which the Martin Luther King leadership sprang, was a *Black* movement. And from there the Blacks developed their own organizations: the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SNCC, and other organizations, which were soon joined by other Black organizations in the North.

It was the militant actions—sit-ins, freedom rides, demonstrations in the streets—by these newly formed Black organizations and by the masses of Blacks in the South that finally toppled the Jim Crow system. It was not the CIO. That is the actual record.

It seems paradoxical. It wasn't the unions, it was the *radicalized student youth* who openly allied themselves with the Blacks. They flocked to the South to join in the sit-ins and demonstrations, finding in the Black civil rights movement the focal point for their revolutionary energy. The unions played a passive, if not a negative, role. It was the Blacks who did the job alone—alone except for the youth, who joined with them in the fight to topple the Jim Crow system.

That struggle resulted in 1964 in the enactment of the Civil Rights Act with its Title VII barring job discrimination. And it is precisely the acceptance, the toleration, of racist discrimination all along the line by the CIO as well as the AFL that has now come back to haunt them in the very heated controversy over affirmative action versus the Meany-type seniority rule. Those are the facts of life as I recognize them, and not the myth that the CIO played a leading role in any struggle against racism.

The Revolutionary Party

AR: Comrade Alvin pushes this model for "Black-white unity" far beyond the trade-union arena. He specifically takes issue with the draft political resolution's call for "revolutionary unity based on support for the most oppressed." Alvin says, "Prospects for revolution will be dim indeed if our party is guided by one-sided formulas such as this" (*SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 33, No. 8, page 3).

He adds: "All workers are oppressed under capitalism. For the revolutionary party to concentrate only on the most oppressed can only result in ignoring others who are less oppressed. This is a self-defeating perspective. We must defend and identify with *all* oppressed. That is the only road to unity and eventually to victory."

This seems to me to challenge the most fundamental concepts of what kind of party we are trying to build, who it will be based on, and how unity of the working class will be achieved. What do you think about the points he raises?

TK: Comrade Alvin professes to defend the Trotskyist tradition, orientation, and program, but right from the start he turns everything on its head. Every sentence of the paragraph you cite is wrong, dead wrong.

We don't say that all workers are *oppressed* under capitalism, we say that all wage-workers are *exploited* under capitalism. That is the Marxist concept of the labor theory of value. The surplus value created by the workers is appropriated by the private owners of the means of production. And therefore workers, who receive wages equivalent to only a fraction of the total value they create, are exploited.

All workers are exploited, that's true. But to contend—looking at the real world, not the world of fantasy—that there is no distinction; that "all workers are oppressed;" that the white male worker, the high seniority worker, the skilled worker, the privileged worker is "oppressed" and therefore is entitled to the same consideration from the revolutionary party as the Black worker, the woman worker, the youth, is to make a caricature of Marxism. It's not only my opinion, it's the opinion of all the great Marxist teachers.

Lenin wrote extensively on this question in his polemic with the Second International. The culture medium for opportunism, Lenin said, lies in the *aristocracy of labor*. The privileges and power of the reformist labor bureaucracy were derived from the crumbs that the imperialist powers were able to grant the privileged, skilled workers at home as a result of their domination and oppression of the colonial masses. And it was on this social basis, he said, that the Second International became a reformist, an antirevolutionary international.

In the faction struggles within Russia, furthermore, Lenin observed that it was the Mensheviks who predominated among the skilled workers, the privileged workers, the *high seniority workers*, if you please! While the Bolsheviks found their base among the less privileged workers and the youth.

Trotsky Vs. Alvin

Comrade Alvin urges us to return to the transitional program, and I have done so. I find that it proclaims just

the opposite approach from that espoused by Comrade Alvin. In the Pathfinder Press book, *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, on page 110, Trotsky states: "Opportunist organizations by their very nature concentrate their chief attention on the top layers of the working class and therefore ignore both the youth and the woman worker." I would interpose here that in the United States we should include the Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Chinese, and Native American worker as well.

Trotsky continues: "The decay of capitalism, however, deals its heaviest blows to the woman as the wage earner and as a housewife. The sections of the Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class, consequently among the women workers. Here they will find inexhaustible stores of devotion, selflessness, and readiness to sacrifice."

Among the most exploited layers of the working class! That is precisely where Trotsky held that the revolutionary party should seek support.

Again, on page 96, in the section headed "Soviets," Trotsky writes that "the deepening of the social crisis will increase not only the sufferings of the masses but also their impatience, persistence and pressure. Ever new layers of the oppressed will raise their heads and come forward with their demands. Millions of toil-worn 'little men,' to whom the reformist leaders never gave a thought, will begin to pound insistently on the doors of workers' organizations. The unemployed will join the movement. The agricultural workers, the ruined and semi-ruined farmers, the oppressed of the cities, the women workers, housewives, proletarianized layers of the intelligentsia—all of these will seek unity and leadership." Trotsky emphasizes, you see, the need to look beyond the trade unions, which include at most 20 or 25 percent of the working class, to the class as a whole, which includes the vast oppressed and unorganized masses.

Again, on pages 79-80, in the section on "Factory committees": "The prime significance of the committee [referring to the factory committee] lies in the fact that it becomes the militant staff for such working-class layers as the trade union is usually incapable of moving to action. *It is precisely from these more oppressed layers that the most self-sacrificing battalions of the revolution will come.*" (My emphasis.)

I don't think there can be any question about where Trotsky stood on this question. The revolutionary party, as distinct from the opportunist, reformist party, must indeed base itself upon the *most oppressed layers* of the working class.

Cochranism and neo-Cochranism

Comrades Linda Jenness, Frank Lovell, and Baxter Smith in their contribution (*SWP Discussion Bulletin* Vol. 33, No. 10) quoted from Jim Cannon's speech during the fight against the Cochranites. It was a very instructive experience for those who went through it. We were confronted with a liquidationist faction in the party, which claimed that it represented the true proletarian wing of the party. There was some little logic behind their claim because they did have many of the trade unionists in the auto plants and other sections of the union movement.

It became necessary for us to subject this grouping to a Marxist analysis, which Cannon proceeded to do in his speech "Trade Unionists and Revolutionists." And what

was the conclusion we arrived at? It was that Cochranism was a reflection in the ranks of the Socialist Workers party of the development of a privileged layer, a conservatized layer, of union members and secondary leaders. They had been militant in the early days of the CIO; they had been revolutionists when they joined the Socialist Workers party. But they had amassed seniority and acquired positions of privilege within the union by virtue of their long years of seniority, and had become conservatized, along with that whole layer who fought in the early days to establish the CIO.

It is necessary and useful now, I believe, to characterize the tendency represented by Comrades Milt Alvin and Debby Leonard. By employing the same criteria used by Jim Cannon in 1953, I would have to say that we are confronted with views that can only be characterized as *neo-Cochranism*.

The party is in the midst of making a crucial turn toward what we believe are new opportunities as the radicalization of the working class begins. And it is a life-and-death question: *to whom is the party turning?* The adoption of the line represented by the Leonard-Alvin axis would be death to the party as a revolutionary organization. It would mean a turn toward the most privileged section, the aristocracy of labor, the union bureaucrats.

I say that line is neo-Cochranism because it is an adaptation to the backwardness, the prejudices, the fears, and the conservatism of the bureaucrats and the privileged white workers. That's what their line represents, and I don't think it will go over, not in our party. I am convinced their view will be decisively repudiated by the convention.

Our Transitional Demands

AR: Comrade Alvin appears to give special weight to the "Jobs for All" slogan as the one that can unify the working class. He likes it because it is "not divisive." He says the best way to get jobs is through the shorter work-week with no cut in pay, but he also makes it clear that he would favor accepting a pay cut to keep everyone on the job.

On page 14 of his first contribution (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 33, No. 6), he states, "The idea of all workers remaining on the job, *regardless of how the pay aspect is resolved*, actually protects the jobs of women and minorities to a greater extent than preferential layoffs." (Emphasis added.) On the same page he cites the example of the New York Telephone Company, which imposed a four-day week on telephone operators. Alvin writes: "We must assume that in all these cases there was a reduction in pay in proportion to the reduced hours. However, even in such cases a better overall situation developed than any kind of layoff could produce."

What do you think of this approach on slogans? Should our propaganda, and our comrades in the unions, advocate shortening the hours of work *with* a pay cut in cases where the same pay cannot be won? When this proposal came up in AFSCME in New York we opposed it.

TK: To begin with, let me say something on the question of slogans. A generalized slogan such as "Jobs for All" is like an empty vessel—it can be filled with any content. Of

course it is “not divisive”—standing alone, I don’t know of *anybody* who is against jobs for all! From George Meany to President Ford, everybody says they are for jobs for all.

A generalized slogan remains an abstraction—unless and until is concretized in specific demands. And to counterpose a generalized slogan such as jobs for all to a *specific demand* that arises out of the struggle against discrimination in employment, if it is not done out of complete ignorance, can only be characterized as demagoguery.

The slogan “Jobs for All” as such does not appear in our transitional program. The transitional program has the following to say on this question, under the section on “The sliding scale of wages and the sliding scale of hours” (page 76). Trotsky writes that “two basic economic afflictions, in which is summarized the increasing absurdity of the capitalist system, that is, *unemployment* and *high prices*, demand generalized slogans and methods of struggle.” In the next paragraph he concludes by saying, “The Fourth International demands *employment* and *decent living conditions* for all.” (All emphasis in original.)

That is the *generalized slogan* in the transitional program. It becomes concretized by the actual transitional demands, the sliding scale of wages and hours. These two demands have been popularized in the American labor movement as the demands for an escalator clause in the union contract and for the thirty-hour workweek at forty hours’ pay.

‘Share the Misery’

When we use the slogan of a sliding scale of hours, we always tie it to *no reduction in take-home pay*. To concede, as Comrade Alvin does, that the lesser evil would be a reduction in hours with a reduction in pay, means to condone shifting the responsibility for the capitalist crisis and unemployment onto the backs of the working class. It’s a variation of the “share the work” plan that was very popular among rightist demagogues and capitalist politicians during the Great Depression. We always characterized it as the “share the misery” or “share the poverty” plan.

Now here is what Trotsky said. Trotsky, you know, sometimes exploded with revolutionary indignation at the proposition that the workers should be held responsible for capitalist crises. Let me quote from the pamphlet *Leon Trotsky on the Trade Unions*. Beginning on page 62 is a transcription of a discussion, held in 1938 at Trotsky’s home in Mexico City, with a CIO official from the United States, whose name was withheld.

The CIO official told Trotsky: “Our union’s policies are aimed at preventing complete unemployment. We have got the work spread out among all the members of the union with no reduction in the hourly rate of pay.”

Trotsky asked: “And what percentage of their former total wages do your workers now get?”

CIO official: “About 40 per cent.”

Trotsky: “Why that’s monstrous! You’ve won a sliding scale of working hours, with no change in the hourly rate of pay? But that only means that the full burden of unemployment falls with all its weight on the workers themselves. You free the bourgeoisie from the need of spending its resources on the unemployed by having each worker sacrifice three-fifths of his total wages.”

CIO official: “There’s a grain of truth in that. But what can be done?”

Trotsky: “Not a grain, but the whole truth! American capitalism is sick with a chronic and incurable disease. Can you console your workers with the hope that the present crisis will have a transitory character and that a new era of prosperity will open in the near future?”

The only way, you see, that you can consistently advocate a cut in hours with a corresponding reduction in pay is to be convinced yourself—or try and convince the workers—that this crisis does have a transitory character, and hold with Ford that we’ve reached the bottom now and we’re on the way up. We’re entering a new extended period of prosperity.

Or else you open up the perspective of continuing to reduce the standard of living on the basis of sharing the poverty as the crisis deepens. How can you assure the workers that this is the bottom? That this concession will be the last concession they will be called upon to make? No, as the crisis deepens, you will be called upon to make another concession, and tomorrow another. The principle is wrong. The principle of shifting responsibility onto the backs of the workers can lead only to disorganizing and destroying the effectiveness of the union organization.

I can appreciate that workers feel a sense of duty and obligation and are prepared to make sacrifices for their fellow workers, to share a reduced standard of living—but this is no solution to the problem! It is no solution and it is contrary to the whole concept of our transitional program, that is, to invest the working class with the consciousness that the system itself is responsible for creating unemployment and mass deprivation in the midst of potential plenty.

No, I think that the manifestation of outrage by Trotsky is a manifestation of the attitude that revolutionary Marxists should take toward any such proposal.

Seniority and Affirmative-Action

The same holds true for the advocates, supporters, and champions of union seniority as against affirmative action. What it comes down to is calling upon the Black workers and women workers to wait, telling them that this depression is only transitory and all they have to do is wait until prosperity comes along and there is full employment. Then everybody will have a job and there won’t be this controversy over affirmative action, over the right of Black workers and women workers to equality in the competition for jobs.

I was struck by the speech by Herbert Hill [labor director of the NAACP] that was printed in the *Militant* (July 18, 1975). He made precisely this point: “The argument that white men have a prior right to a job and that Black people must wait until there is full employment before they too can work,” Hill said, “is the essence of the racist mentality.”

The reformists, the Meanys, the Shankers say, yes, we’re against discrimination and unemployment either for sex or skin color. But we must uphold the holy principle of union seniority—this system under which so-called complete equality prevails. Yes, complete equality . . . where some are more equal than others! That is the essence of the present system that the union upholds to safeguard the interests of the most highly privileged and highly paid

against the youth, the women, the Blacks:

Those who are against defending affirmative-action gains now are completely inconsistent when they say they are for preferential hiring—when hiring resumes sometime in the indefinite future. You cannot consistently be for preferential hiring if you are in favor of maintaining the last-hired-first-fired rule that prevails today.

The Capitalist Courts

AR: One additional point is raised by Comrade Debby Leonard in her contribution (*SWP Discussion Bulletin*, Vol. 33, No. 10). She takes issue with any support to lawsuits to protect the jobs of women and minority workers. She quotes the resolution we supported in the Coalition of Labor Union Women to “oppose in every way possible any reduction through layoffs in the proportionate number of women and minority workers hired under affirmative action programs. . . .” Then she asks:

“Does this include enlisting the aid of the bourgeois courts against a union? Articles in the *Militant* and discussion with the national trade union director have indicated that in fact we do not rule out support to such suits against unions. It is only a step from appealing to the bourgeois courts to supporting bourgeois politicians who have taken a ‘good stand’ on this issue. Crossing class lines is a principled question; sowing illusions about bourgeois courts as friends of workers to be enlisted against the workers’ movement is treacherous.”

If Leonard is correct it would have far-reaching implications. After all, we have not only supported suits to win affirmative-action plans but also suits to throw out the results of rigged union elections and force new elections, as in the cases of Arnold Miller in the Mineworkers and Ed Sadlowski in the Steelworkers.

TK: Well, I’m not at all impressed by the “radical” rhetoric of Comrade Leonard, that if you accept the verdict of a court in the affirmative-action cases it inevitably leads to supporting bourgeois politicians. This supposed syllogistic method of argument—bourgeois court equals bourgeois politician equals opportunism equal revisionism equals betrayal—is not convincing because it has nothing to do with reality.

This whole struggle around affirmative action developed because the union bureaucracy perpetuated a system based on discrimination against Blacks and women. What recourse did they have within the union structure? To revolutionary Marxists, that is, to the Socialist Workers party, uncompromising opposition to job discrimination against Blacks and women is also a *class principle*—or doesn’t Comrade Leonard consider it so?

I don’t think Comrade Leonard is familiar with most of the unions in this country and the way they’re run. She seems to assume that there is at least a modicum of democracy. Maybe it’s true for her union, but if so it would be the exception and not the rule.

Does she think for one moment that the Black steelworkers in Birmingham, Alabama, for example, had any recourse through the channels of the Steelworkers union to right their grievances? No! As a last resort they were compelled to go outside the structure of their union to appeal to the courts, you see, to the legal institutions of the bourgeoisie . . . there are no others! We do not have socialist courts under capitalism.

Courts and Civil Rights

How, for that matter, does Comrade Leonard think many of the victories over segregation were formally codified? By the bourgeois courts, if you please! And the bourgeois courts on these questions do not necessarily play a reactionary role. These are matters of *bourgeois democratic rights*.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, in its Title VII, provides that there shall be no discrimination in employment because of race, color, creed, or nationality. This is an elementary democratic right, ostensibly guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. It is a law that is wholly progressive, and we demand that it be *enforced by the bourgeoisie*, just as we demand that they enforce the law against school desegregation in Boston with the bourgeois courts, the bourgeois police, and bourgeois federal troops!

We have no use for the Supreme Court, you see, recognizing it as an institution of the bourgeoisie. And it usually plays a very reactionary role. That doesn’t mean that under the influence of mass pressure they may not be compelled to recognize that there has been a violation of these elementary bourgeois democratic rights. And wherever we can take advantage of this contradiction—it’s their contradiction, not ours—we should by all means do so.

As Trotsky pointed out, in our epoch significant reforms are a byproduct of the revolutionary struggle. And the struggle against all manifestations of racist discrimination is in its very essence a revolutionary struggle.

One would think by the polemics of Comrade Alvin and Comrade Leonard that the Socialist Workers party had initiated these affirmative-action suits. We didn’t; we weren’t in a position to. They were initiated by individual workers and groups of workers, and the organization primarily responsible for promoting these suits is the NAACP. But that doesn’t give us the right to abstain. Once the courts have acted and established legal rulings that are in line with the interests of the working class—to insist that we reject them because they come from a bourgeois court, that’s covering a reactionary position with a militant cloak, in my opinion.

Courts and the Union

Now, as you indicated, it’s not only on this question that workers have gone to court. The murderous bureaucracy in the Mineworkers union didn’t stop short of assassination of people trying to exercise their democratic right to run for union office. That’s the situation that prevailed.

This leader of the opposition movement in the Steelworkers, Sadlowski, was prepared to go to the courts because the bureaucrats rigged an election. He challenged them in the courts and his challenge was upheld. When there was an honest election, he won. Now, do you want to lecture Sadlowski that since he stooped to enlist the aid of a bourgeois court, he is therefore doomed forever to support capitalist politicians? That’s nonsense, you see, that’s pure, unadulterated nonsense!

Comrade Leonard talks about suits “against the unions.” *She identifies the union with the bureaucracy.* The bureaucrats themselves do that, of course. They interpret every action taken against their gangster methods, their suppression of internal union democracy—they interpret that as an attack upon the union. Not at all.

The unions as they exist today are ruled by a gang of bureaucratic thugs, who collaborated with the employers in maintaining and perpetuating Jim Crow practices. And Comrade Leonard would say to Black workers who challenge that discrimination, if you go to court, you are thereby guilty of crimes against the working class. You are guilty of crossing class lines. You are guilty of a betrayal of the interests of the working class. Well, they'd spit in your eye if you told them that.

No, we do not identify the unions with the bureaucracy. But we must further ask: What is the base upon which this union bureaucracy rests? How does it happen that a Meany bureaucracy reigns unchallenged, or virtually unchallenged, for so many years? It is because American capitalism has been fat and has been able to grant concessions to a minority, to a thin layer, to a labor aristocracy, if you please.

And when we write about these affirmative-action struggles, and why they meet such resistance, it's not exactly true to put the responsibility entirely upon the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy does not float in mid-air—it is based on a significant, a thin but significant, layer of the American workers. We must explain that the Shanker bureaucracy in the teachers unions, for example, rests upon maintaining privileges for a select minority, for a select group that supports his machine. That's why the bureaucrats are fighting so vehemently to maintain this system. Their power and their privileges depend upon it.

Affirmative action has opened up a crack in this bureaucratic dike, 'you see, and they are afraid that the waters will come rushing through. They are afraid that the precedent established by the Blacks and the women will be followed by the youth and by others who will begin to challenge this gang of labor fakers and the privileges of this layer of labor aristocrats.

You know, at the time of the fight with Cochran, Cannon said we've had sixteen years of prosperity, sixteen years of concessions, sixteen years in which a privileged layer has been sifted out of the mass, sixteen years in which an aristocracy of labor has developed inside the CIO. That was twenty-two years ago.

What has happened in the intervening twenty-two years? Have the unions become more militant? Have they reversed this process? No, they've become more Meany-ized. More and more they reflect the influence of the employers. More and more the bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO *as a whole* has become a petty-bourgeois layer in the working class movement. More and more they (not the Blacks! not the women!) rely upon the capitalist state and support that state.

On this question of how we fight, I agree with Malcolm X—*by any means necessary!* On this question of affirmative action, of discrimination against Blacks and women, I say we fight *by any means necessary*—and if that be betrayal, then let Leonard and Alvin make the most of it.

Negro Workers and the CIO

By C. THOMAS

In the years before the formation of the CIO, when craft unions dominated the American labor movement, not only the employers but the bulk of organized labor itself was militantly Jim Crow. White workers sought deliberately to keep Negroes out of jobs. The trade unions constituted a hostile barrier to the employment of Negro labor in the organized sectors of industry and trade. Where obvious self-interest dictated the necessity of organizing Negro workers, they were usually shunted off into second-class Jim Crow locals.

Under the circumstances, the Marxist contentions that the future of Negroes lay with the labor movement and that the only road for workers, white and black, was solidarity in the struggle against their mutual capitalist enemy, appeared like lunacy to the majority of Negroes.

The CIO brought a great change. Today about a million and a quarter Negroes are established in the labor movement with approximately half a million in the CIO. Compared to the pre-CIO days the present situation represents a great advance. But it is necessary to recognize that only the first steps forward have been taken. Negroes still suffer heavy discrimination in industry and in the unions.

A wartime study, published in 1944, disclosed that some 30 national unions, AFL, Railroad Brotherhood and independent, either excluded Negroes through constitutional provision and ritual or accorded them only segregated auxiliary status. Exclusionist provisions by unions affiliated to the AFL violate its national constitution. Yet, numerous attempts to invoke disciplinary action have been sidetracked by the AFL hierarchy with the hypocritical assurance that the problem can best be solved by "education." This beneficent approach to its Jim Crow affiliates is in sharp contrast to the AFL leaders' ruthless expulsion in 1936 of unions comprising the Committee for Industrial Organization for "violating" the AFL constitution because they sought to unite all workers in a given factory or industry in a single organization.

The Indispensable Cornerstone

The unions which launched the CIO had to deal, from the beginning, in a forthright manner with the Negro question. Fortunately, the most powerful of the group, the United Mine Workers, International Ladies Garment Workers and Amalgamated Clothing Workers, had gained insight and experience through intensive organizing campaigns in the early '30s. Thousands of Negro workers had been recruited without discrimination and comprised a substantial section of their membership. The inclusion of all workers regardless of race, color or creed, was immediately recognized as the indispensable cornerstone of any lasting union structure in the basic mass production industries. This was especially true in steel and auto, two of the main citadels of corporate resistance to unionization.

The United Steel Workers and United Automobile Workers are the largest and most influential in the CIO. Each contains a large proportion of Negro members. Their attitude on the race question exerts great influence on the policy of the CIO and its affiliates. While no comprehensive survey of the entire CIO can be given within a brief article, it is possible to give a fairly accurate indication of the situation of Negroes in the CIO and to draw certain conclusions from the experience of its major unions.

How Negroes Got into Unions

How the Negroes got into industry and the unions is essential to an understanding of where they are today. Prior to World War I the rapidly expanding steel centers of the North relied on immigrants from Europe for an ever-increasing supply of cheap labor. Negro labor was concentrated in the South, particularly in the Birmingham region. The war shut off immigration and subsequent restrictive legislation dried up that source of supply.

The steel industry then turned to the South for its cheap labor supply, recruiting thousands of Negroes for its northern mills. In the two decades from World War I to the launching of the CIO, Negro labor in basic steel more than tripled. In the 30's between forty and fifty thousand Negroes were employed in basic steel production. This was a factor to be reckoned with in the calculations of the CIO leaders. It would have been impossible to organize basic steel without tacit support from the Negro labor force.

Very few Negroes were employed in the automobile industry prior to World War I. The 1910 census figures show only 569 Negroes in a total labor force of 105,759 automobile workers. An acute labor shortage during the war attracted thousands of southerners, white and colored, to the automobile industry center in Detroit. This mushrooming industry continued to absorb Negro labor so that by the middle 30's between twenty and thirty thousand Negroes were employed in auto plants.

An additional factor that made the race question a key issue in the organization of auto was the Ford Motor Company's potent bid for the sympathy and support of Detroit's Negro community. Ford made a practice of hiring Negroes to the extent of 10% of his labor force. These jobs were distributed primarily through Negro ministers who in turn were expected to bolster the ferocious anti-union policy of the Ford Motor Company and deliver the Negro vote to Harry Bennett, head of the notorious Ford Service Department. Although Ford rarely departed from the accepted racial occupation pattern of confining Negroes to the dirtiest, heaviest and most dangerous jobs, the fact that he hired so many colored workers established his reputation as a "friend" of the Negro. He tried to use this reputation to the very last to prevent organization but failed. By the time the UAW leadership tackled Ford,

it had already demonstrated in action its adherence to the CIO policy of non-discrimination and thereby gained the active support of prominent Negro spokesmen who played an important role in critical stages of the 1941 strike which brought Ford into the UAW fold.

Basic Racial Patterns Unchanged

Although the CIO has organized Negro workers without discrimination, it has done little to alter the racial occupation patterns imposed by capitalist operation. Unionization found the Negroes concentrated in the heaviest, dirtiest, most dangerous and poorest paying jobs. By and large, that is where they remain. This is true of steel, auto, mining, textile, tobacco, etc. The Negro is unskilled, semi-skilled, common laborer, while the white is mechanic, machine-tender, skilled maintenance and white-collar worker.

The persistence of this inequality must in large measure be laid at the door of the CIO leadership. Negroes were able to penetrate industry in large number only during periods of acute labor shortage. It is in such periods that the greatest advances can be made. The CIO organized the Negro worker without discrimination but neglected to take advantage of the wartime opportunity for eradicating the discriminatory employment practices of the bosses. The wartime policy of national unity, equality of sacrifice and the no-strike pledge left employers free to exercise discriminatory practices in the field of hiring, transfer and promotion.

Most union agreements in the mass production industries contain departmental or occupational seniority clauses. Plant seniority clauses are very rare. While department seniority protects the Negro worker in case of layoffs within the department, it makes no provision for upgrading or promotion to more desirable or higher paying jobs in other departments. This tends to freeze Negro workers in the least desirable departments.

The wartime labor shortage provided CIO leaders with their greatest opportunity to lead Negro workers out of this blind alley. Despite the acute shortage many employers refused to hire Negroes, others persisted in maintaining the traditional racial occupation pattern of industry while a few made token moves infringing on this pattern by upgrading Negroes to hitherto all-white departments. To the credit of many national and local CIO leaders it must be said that in the latter case they moved with vigor to quell any Jim Crow strikes or demonstrations designed to exclude Negro workers. Usually a threat of drastic disciplinary action was enough to send the "rebels" back to work.

Negroes Took the Initiative

Where the employer took the initiative or could be induced to hire or upgrade Negroes into all-white departments the CIO threw the support of the union, if necessary, to make it stick. But such cases were rare. In the over-all struggle for equal opportunity of employment the Negroes themselves took the initiative through the

March-On-Washington Movement. This promising movement proposed to substitute mass action for ineffective pleas, petitions and pious wishes. With active support from the CIO it would have been invincible. But the CIO leaders remained aloof. They were unalterably committed to a policy of collaboration with the Roosevelt administration and would do nothing to embarrass their "friend" in Washington.

However, the mere threat of a nation-wide march on Washington sufficed to compel Roosevelt to issue the executive order establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee. Inadequate as it was, the FEPC represented the greatest concession wrested from the government in the struggle for Negro rights during the war. It demonstrated the superiority of militant methods of struggle over the moral preachments, appeals to patriotism, legislative lobbying and "education" practiced by the liberals and labor leaders.

Bolstered by the FEPC, the Negroes made some notable advances during the war. The number of Negroes employed in industry increased. Jobs hitherto reserved to whites were opened up to Negro workers. These gains were most marked in the section of industry organized by the CIO. But the number of Negroes who succeeded in breaching the Jim Crow occupation pattern was too small to make any appreciable alteration in the basic pattern. Today the racial occupation pattern remains essentially what it was before the war.

Meanwhile, the presence of Negro members in significant numbers, their active participation in union affairs plus the exigencies of internal union politics has made them an important factor in the key unions of the CIO. In most steel locals, for example, Negroes function as officials, executive board members, stewards, committeemen, etc. The same is true in auto and other CIO unions with substantial Negro membership. It is above the local level, however, where the top brass is further removed from direct contact with the ranks, that Jim Crow rears its ugly head.

The "Jim Crow in Reverse" Argument

While a Negro is usually appointed in each district of the steel union, it is the practice to assign him a special department where his duties do not bring him into direct contact with the employer as a representative of the national organization. In the UAW repeated demands have been made for Negro representation on the International Executive Board. The Board is composed of regional directors and executive officers who represent the national organization in negotiations and disputes with the corporations.

The demand for Negro representation has been met by Reuther and his close associates with the charge that this constitutes "Jim Crow in reverse." The specious argument is made that advancement to top union positions must be made solely on the basis of "ability." This is poppycock. There are Negro leaders in the UAW as able as any now occupying top positions in the union. Underlying the

"Jim Crow in reverse" argument is an unwarranted concession to white chauvinism.

This concession to prejudice stems from the pattern adopted by the United Mine Workers Union in organizing the coal miners of the deep South. In setting up mixed locals in which Negroes constituted a majority, it was arranged for the president to be a white and the vice-president a Negro. The president was the official who represented the men in meetings with the employers. By this system, corporation executives were spared an affront to their Jim Crow prejudices.

When the UMW organized steel the same system was adopted for the mixed locals of the South and extended into the North—with harmful consequences. Prejudiced white workers are quick to sense the attitude of the leaders. Supervisory personnel are emboldened to practice discrimination in a hundred insidious and devious ways. Rising unemployment sharpens the competition for jobs. Exacerbated friction can lead to dangerous explosions. The complacent attitude of International Presidents like Reuther and Murray who feel they have discharged their obligation by giving lip service to the struggle for Negro equality and by using a few Negroes as window-dressing to display their "good will" acts as a spur to chauvinism. At this juncture, Negro representation on leading bodies of CIO unions—and not for show-case purposes—is the minimum required to demonstrate the seriousness of union leaders in the struggle against industrial Jim Crow.

In the Taft-Hartley Era

Labor is now living in the Taft-Hartley era. The business unionism of Gompers and Green and the mossbacks of the AFL Executive Council is a relic of the past. Every major struggle involves the unions in conflict with the government which functions as the executive agency of the capitalist ruling class. Politics has become a life and death matter for the unions. And the Negro question is, above all, a political question. If the union leaders were unaware of it before, the so-called Republican-Dixiecrat coalition has forcibly reminded them of the fact.

The CIO campaign to organize the South ran smack into the Negro question in all its political and social ramifications. Lacking a correct policy on this crucial problem, the drive has bogged down. The Southern drive was undertaken with a view toward breaking the political monopoly of the Dixiecrats by exerting the pressure of organized labor on the Democratic Party. The Southern Negro is extremely sympathetic toward the CIO. But he is disfranchised, along with a large proportion of white workers, and in addition is subjected to an atmosphere of intimidation and terror. A policy based on an appeal to support "good" Democrats against "bad" Democrats cannot arouse much hope or enthusiasm. For in the South, even the "best" of the liberal Democrats, as witness the campaign pronouncements of a Claude Pepper, are Jim Crow practitioners.

The Republican-Dixiecrat coalition is a political fusion of northern capital and southern demagoguery. Northern

capital bolsters Southern reaction. Southern reaction upholds Taft-Hartleyism. As long as labor adheres to the fraudulent two-party system, monopoly capital can't lose. To organize the South while supporting the Democratic Party is a more formidable task than Hercules faced in cleaning the Augean stables. And Philip Murray is no Hercules!

Education, Organization, Leadership

The CIO top brass is fond of emphasizing that Jim Crow will be conquered through education, organization and leadership. That is true in the abstract. But the heart of the question is, what sort of education, what type of organization and what kind of leadership?

In steel, the Murray machine initiated an educational campaign through the establishment of a Civil Rights Committee. The committee calls various conferences to promote . . . Truman's civil rights program. The emphasis at these conferences is on legislative lobbying, letter writing and CIO-PAC types of political action. The sum total of Murray's educational program consists in covering up and whitewashing the Truman administration's failure to deliver on its election promises and drumming up support for the election of Trumanite Democrats next fall. This sort of "education" is worse than useless.

Effective education in the struggle against Jim Crow must lay bare the real function of racial discrimination, must expose its capitalist *class* character and the role it plays in dividing and weakening the working class in its struggles for emancipation from exploitation and wage slavery.

Effective organization must be based on the recognition of the class division in capitalist society; the knowledge that Democrats and Republicans alike represent the interests of the ruling capitalist class, and the necessity for an independent working class party to carry forward the struggle of exploited labor, black and white.

Effective leadership can be provided only by those who recognize the revolutionary implications of the struggle for Negro equality and are prepared to lead such a struggle to the very end.

The entrance of Negroes into industry during the first World War coincided with the beginning of the decline of capitalism as a world system. Encompassing a brief span of 30 odd years this period has been marked by major convulsions: wars, depression, colonial revolts and socialist revolutions. It required a major split in the American labor movement and the tumultuous rise of the CIO before Negroes gained admission to the unions on a near-equal basis. The same period witnessed a gigantic growth of union membership to some 16,000,000 strong. These tremendous historical events are a harbinger of what is to come.

Taft-Hartleyism and Jim Crow are twins. Decaying capitalism, which exudes the poison of racial discrimination from every pore, is bent on using its political monopoly to destroy the labor movement. Necessity will drive the American working class onto the political arena to

engage the enemy in mortal combat. They will learn the truth enunciated by Marx: Labor with a white skin cannot emancipate itself where labor with a black skin is branded. Working class solidarity, fertilized in the womb

of the CIO, will see its fruition in the conquest of political power and the establishment of a workers and farmers government. The death knell of Jim Crow will have sounded!