

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
July 26, 1971

TO ALL BRANCH ORGANIZERS

Dear Comrades,

There will be a trade union panel discussion at the convention. The details have not been totally worked out, but there will be adequate time and facilities for the panel.

We hope to hear reports by comrades from all sections of the country who have been active in the union movement, and we are anxious to organize the discussion so that those who have been most active in this area of our work will have adequate time to explain what they have been able to do and why they did it.

We have comrades in many different types of unions as you know from the reports last year at the Oberlin socialist activists conference. We have teacher comrades in the teachers' union, public employees in AFSCME, social workers in AFSCME and SSEU, etc. We also have comrades in transportation -- railroad, marine, trucking -- active in their unions to a greater or lesser degree depending on each specific situation. In basic industry we have comrades in steel (USWA), auto (UAW), electric (UE and IUE), etc.

Hardly a single major strike is called but that The Militant is able to carry first hand reports by participants. We have postal workers and printers and building tradesmen. In the building trades our comrades are active in several unions -- painters, carpenters, plumbers, electricians (IBEW).

Not all these unions afford the same opportunities or possibilities for work. But in most of them we have carried on useful propaganda work, made contacts and a few recruits. We have succeeded in some instances in winning official endorsement of antiwar activities and organizing rather broad support for demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. We hope to be able to do the same thing in regards to the abortion law repeal march on Washington. In some unions we have participated in women's caucuses and committees.

We have noted some important changes during the past three years, and especially the past year. There has been a big composition change in the work force. It is younger and less disciplined -- a fact that both employers and union bureaucrats have been forced to take note of, adjust to, and try to cope with in some manner.

Another important change has been caused by the current economic and social crisis. The cost of living continues to rise. Unemployment is growing, becoming a more serious problem. This combination of inflation and unemployment has put the union movement in a bind, and none of the official spokesmen have any answer.

(Randy Furst recently discovered this in an interview for The Militant.) They are all very much aware of the problem and the dangers, but the best (and the most) they do is hope the employing class will come up with the answers. Meany's recent statement that if he were in Nixon's position he would apply wage-price controls to the economy and the growing pressure in Solidarity House to "keep out foreign cars" are typical examples of bureaucratic fumbling.

We have to date noted little more than angry, dissatisfied talk among the ranks of the organized workers. There is more militancy and a continuation of the tendency that appeared earlier (5 years ago) to reject poor contract settlements, and to continue strike actions after such settlements are sealed and delivered. (The latest example being the telephone workers in New York, before that the Teamsters.)

These are the conditions that make it possible for us to get a better hearing for our ideas, to explain some of the economic problems besetting capitalist society, advance some of our transitional demands, introduce our literature (especially The Militant), and bring shopmates and fellow workers to some of our forums and classes.

This all comes under the general heading of "propaganda work," far removed from what is thought by some to be "trade union" work. But at this stage it is very important for the future of the trade union movement that we know what the present response is to our basic programmatic concepts and to our current campaigns.

We have been most successful in relating the economic problems of the workers to the antiwar movement. But in our propaganda we have also begun to take up some of the basic problems of the union movement and of the working class as a whole. For example, we have tried to extend the popular demand for an escalator clause in every union contract. We have sought, in some instances, to work out a suitable slogan for our concept of the sliding scale of hours. In many industries where bankruptcies are becoming common such as aircraft (Lockheed) and railroad (Penn Central) we have raised the demand to nationalize these industries under workers' control. This demand needs explaining and can start a discussion in the shop or on the road that will in the future become a major policy question in the union over what demands the organization ought to advance -- in this case, advanced to the government not the industry or particular employer involved.

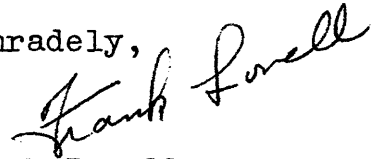
We cannot expect that there will be many extensive reports at the trade union panel about the possibilities or limitations of our propaganda work. However, in some industries we have been active in organizing broad movements, either in conjunction with our antiwar work or some strike actions or (in at least one instance) restructuring the organization, and we will all be interested in these reports. In these cases it is expected that more time will be needed by the reporters, but in all instances comrades wishing to participate in this panel discussion should prepare remarks in advance. If you have extensive reports, they

should be submitted in writing and summarized briefly for the benefit of those attending the panel. This will maximize a broad participation which will give us the best feel about the different concrete situations we face.

Those comrades who have been selling The Militant at state employment centers or who have experience with local unemployed groups should be prepared to report briefly at this panel about the mood of the unemployed and efforts to start unemployed organizations.

Copies of this letter are being sent to others, active in unions, but branch organizers should forward as soon as possible a list of all comrades who plan to attend and participate in this panel discussion.

Comradely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Frank Lovell". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Frank Lovell

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TO SUPPORTERS OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE AND POLITICAL
COMMITTEE DRAFT POLITICAL RESOLUTIONS

Dear Comrades,

The resolutions before the party for convention decision define three counterposed political positions. These three positions are represented by the Proletarian Orientation Tendency, the Communist Tendency and the National Committee and Political Committee draft political resolutions.

The three National Committee and Political Committee draft political resolutions -- Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization, Towards a Mass Feminist Movement, and The Struggle for Chicano Liberation -- should be voted on in block at the branch meeting where the vote is taken on resolutions and convention delegates elected. It is suggested that a branch leader who is a supporter of these three resolutions introduce a single motion to approve the general line of Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization, Towards a Mass Feminist Movement, and The Struggle for Chicano Liberation, taken as a whole. Only those who vote for this motion will then meet in caucus to elect the delegates representing those who support the general line of these resolutions.

The National Committee draft resolution, Israel and the Arab Revolution, should be voted on separately. We propose that a comrade's vote on this resolution not be a factor in defining whether or not she or he is a member of the caucus of supporters of the three National Committee and Political Committee draft political resolutions.

Comradely,

Barry Sheppard

Barry Sheppard