

PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY STATEMENT TO THE WAM CONVENTION, APRIL 28, 1973

Brothers and Sisters,

We are gathered here today to carry forward the fight for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay with a big pay increase.

The Workers Action Movement, barely a year old, has already succeeded in making 30/40 a live issue among millions of our fellow workers. WAM has picked up the banner of the fight for a shorter work-week and begun to take the first steps in organizing a movement to re-build, re-unify and re-invigorate the entire labor movement in the U.S. and Canada. And we have discovered a thousand times over that workers respond to the WAM program and want to fight for it.

Already more than a dozen unions have adopted 30/40 (or 32/40 or 28/30) as either their number one bargaining demand or as one of their major demands. 30/40 referendum campaigns are under way in Boston, Detroit, San Francisco and New York. On April 17 over 7,000 voters in Berkeley, Calif. voted for 30/40--more than 15%--despite the fact our forces were small in number (about 30), the campaign was brief and it faced an all-out propaganda onslaught from not only the bosses but from their henchmen in government and politics, both liberal and conservative.

Official union 30/40 committees already exist in a number of unions and WAM members are working with others to establish them elsewhere. In the IAW, WAM members have been instrumental in organizing an International 30/40 committee, with representatives from locals in Canada and the U.S. These and other events prove workers are ready, willing and able to fight back against their exploiters, to fight to improve our lives.

In order to fight for 30/40, WAM'ers have had to take on other issues. At the Ford plant in Cleveland, a key step in building a WAM caucus and the official Local 420 committee was the fight waged by WAM'ers against murderous, unsafe conditions and against racist company practices.

Although WAM is primarily a 30/40 organization, it is not wrong--in fact it is correct--for WAM members and WAM chapters to join with workers to fight for all reforms that workers are prepared to fight for. Workers are not oppressed simply around the matter of wages and hours. WAM'ers do not live in a vacuum. In their best days--during the organization of the CIO--unions constantly participated in all struggles that affected their members. CIO organizing committees fought for veterans' pensions, reversals and evictions and, in fact, acted against the bosses all along the line.

In joining the wide-ranging battle of the workers, WAM'ers have begun to show our brothers and sisters how the fight for 30/40 is connected to their particular immediate battle. For example, while fighting unsafe conditions, WAM'ers point out how working two hours less a day will reduce accidents caused by fatigue. Moreover, every minute less spent in the plant reduces the chances of being maimed and killed by unsafe equipment.

More than that, we have begun to demonstrate that 30/40 with a big pay boost is the kind of idea that can mobilize masses of workers to re-build the unions, to take them out of the hands of the bosses' agents who run them today, and which can give re-birth to the idea of labor solidarity. 30/40 also brings us into sharp confrontation with the bosses' Nixon-gov't wage freeze, which is 100% in contradiction to 30/40. In order to win, we will have to fight the government.

30/40 increasingly pushes workers to face and defeat racism, male supremacy and anti-communism within the working class. We cannot win 30/40 or anything else, really, as long as words like "nigger, spic, gook or pink" are on our lips. White workers may think they're better off than black workers, but every act of racism they commit, or allow to go unchecked, just fastens the chain that much tighter around themselves.

Women workers, and the non-working wives and mothers of workers, make up half the adult population. Trying to fight the bosses while treating women as "inferior"--in fact, while not actively seeking to involve men and women in the struggles as equals--is like fighting with one hand tied

behind our backs.

As long as anti-communism is a dominant theme in the working class the bosses have succeeded in cutting the heart out of the working-class movement. No significant gains have ever been made by workers without communists participating in their movement.

In sum, WAM members must recognize that although the WAM organization is zeroed in on winning 30/40, WAM'ers and friends of WAM slowly but surely must be won away from the ruling class' triple threat of racism, male supremacy and anti-communism.

WE NEED SOCIALISM -- WE NEED A REVOLUTION

Many WAM members know as long as the bosses rule this country, no matter what we win they can take it away from us. You win a pay raise from the boss and the government he controls orders its pay board to cut that increase to 5.5% (and meanwhile holds up the raise for a year or so). Just holding up the raise forces the workers to give an interest-free loan to the bosses. And when--and if--we finally get the back pay, the money is worth a whole lot less because prices have skyrocketed so much.

30/40 simply by itself cannot solve that. 30/40 as a unifying demand, however, can build a movement strong enough to bust the wage freeze, to make the bosses give in a little. We communists fight for the shorter work-week under capitalism because this struggle brings gains to the working class that are harder for the bosses to take back in another form; because this demand cuts across all divisions in the working class--men and women, old and young, industrial and craft unions, black, Latin, Asian and white, union and non-union, employed and unemployed--and therefore creates the greatest unity throughout the working class internationally, a unity that becomes one of the most necessary tools with which the working class can make the greatest gain of all: the establishment of socialism. Communists believe that in the course of such a gigantic struggle, workers learn more about the nature of the system, and therefore how to overthrow it.

A shorter work-day can take a bigger chunk of profits out of the bosses' pockets and put this dough into the workers' pockets. Is the boss content to let this happen? Hell no! That is why, historically, they have fought all-out against the workers' demand for a shorter work-day. The bosses understand that shorter hours and a pay boost cut deeply into their profits.

If workers were to force bosses to grant a 6-hour day, what would the bosses do? Undoubtedly, they would try to force workers to produce more, work harder and faster, cut wages, etc., with even greater fervor than in the past. But in fighting for--and winning--such a major victory, the working class would be unifying itself to a degree never achieved previously. It would also be learning more of the nature of the capitalist beast, which, when pushed into such a corner as the fight for shorter hours would produce, would drop much of its fig-leaf of "democracy" and "equality" and stand more naked before the world as the oppressive SYSTEM that it is.

The working class would also be learning more about the system because communists would be in the leadership of such a movement. For the past 100 years, the Left, Marxists--communists--have always led the movement for the shorter work-week. And communists would be pointing out the reason why the bosses fight this great working-class gain so hard, how the workers are cheated out of our true worth, not being paid the true value of what we produce. This leads to the inevitable conclusion that to do away with the injustices under capitalism--which flow from the robbing of most of the value produced by the workers--we must do away with this robbery ALTOGETHER. This means doing away with the robbers and their SYSTEM of robbery, with bosses and capitalism. This means revolution. Workers can learn the necessity for revolution in fighting for the key demand of the shorter-work-week.

But, again, would the bosses stand idly by while the workers

reached this conclusion, and just allow their system to go under without a fight. Well, look what they do when workers merely ask for higher wages or an end to the wage freeze which limits or cuts their wages. They get injunctions, cops, the National Guard and even army troops to stop us; jail workers and union officials; try to break the unions; blacklist militants from ever getting a job; frame people into long prison terms. So what would they do if we want to take away their whole system? Kill millions, as they have done in Vietnam and everywhere else that workers started out by trying to kick out the bosses.

How do they do this. By employing their state power, their governmental apparatus. That's what the injunctions, laws, jail terms, etc., add up to now. And that's why they have armies--to enforce their profits and profit system through the barrel of a gun.

The bosses are always planning new ways to take back what we have won through our struggles. They step up their racist and anti-working class propaganda to split us. They push anti-communism to try to deprive the working-class movement of many of its best fighters. They move to buy off our leaders. They launch wars of aggression around the world, searching both for more profits and for the creation of "patriotic" spirit to get us to stop fighting them and start fighting our fellow workers in other countries. Today they are launching a massive anti-Japanese-worker campaign, telling us that Japanese workers are responsible for our troubles. BULL.

The U.S. bosses are responsible for the troubles of U.S. workers. Canadian bosses are responsible for the troubles of Canadian workers. The bosses everywhere are responsible for the troubles of workers everywhere. The labor movement, world-wide, involves two totally antagonistic and irreconcilable forces--the international working class and the international capitalist class. From this titanic battle, only one class can emerge victorious--our class--the international working class. This victory is certain because it is our class which truly holds the power of life and death in its hands--only right now most of us don't realize it.

Workers have the power, when organized, to turn production on or off, and, with it, turn on or off the flow of profits amassed by the parasites who live off our labor. The capitalist class cannot exist without the working class hard at work for them. When we strike they go crazy. If they were ever to "strike," we'd never miss them. We'd be a thousand times better off.

But, of course, they will not just go on "strike," and disappear from our lives. We will have to get rid of them--and our class has the weapon to do just that. It is our fundamental weapon, the science of Marxism-Leninism, the science of dialectical materialism, the science of communist revolution. This science is the working class' world outlook. There is not one aspect of life it does not touch; there is not one problem which it cannot ultimately solve, even though, presently, this may not seem so.

Therefore, as part of this world outlook, workers at the convention must broaden their own horizons, must struggle to see that their problems are not just their own, but are--in fact--part and parcel of millions and millions of other workers and friends sharing the same problems. It is these problems, taken together, which make us members of the same class.

We need socialism. Our class needs it, and will have it. Without understanding that we are part of the working class--standing in total opposition to the capitalist class--we can never achieve socialism, never overthrow our exploiters and finally solve our problems through a prolonged battle to consolidate our class's power--the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Of course, even winning power does not guarantee that the working class will be able to hold on to it. It can be taken away, as it has been in the Soviet Union and China. All victories and defeats for the working class are determined by the extent to which a working-class outlook is more or less deeply ingrained in the workers.

This recognition by participants in the WAM convention--of ourselves as members of the working class--should be an important ingredient in every workshop. If we view questions from a class standpoint, we will be able to make far better plans to fight for, and win, 30/40 and all the other things we need.

For example, if the welfare workshop restricts its scope to problems relating to welfare workers alone, without examining politically how these problems relate to the working class as a whole, then the workshop would be successful only in a very narrow sense. It is important to raise, therefore, what we think is the general strategy of each union, how it relates to other unions, both nationally and internationally.

A discussion of the course which the ruling class is taking to defeat the working class in its struggle for significant reforms, such as 30/40, is important because it will help clarify that our enemy is not just some vague phantom out there somewhere, but is, in fact, an entire class, thinking and planning how to defeat us and enslave us even more than we are enslaved today.

We must also understand divisions in the enemy camp in order to map out correct plans to win 30/40. For example, within the labor movement itself, there is a developing split between the Kennedy forces on the one hand and the old-guard Nixon-Meany forces on the other. Kennedy's forays into the Farmworkers' organizing drive, into the miners' battle to oust the Boyle machine, and now into the fight against the Curran heirs in the Maritime union and possibly behind the Selden forces maneuvering against the Shanker crew in the Teachers union--all these are just some of the more current developments in the liberals' drive to capture the leadership of the U.S. labor movement. They not only affect the unions in Canada but have their counterparts there, too.

More and more the current labor leaders will be lining up on either side, trying to contain, divert and defeat the workers' drive for 30/40. As the 30/40 offensive builds, it is certain that some of the forces around the Kennedys will move to take over the leadership of that movement--to co-opt it and control it directly.

These few examples should indicate the scope of the problems that we believe must be considered by the workshops. Even more than that, those WAM'ers who see the need for socialism should consider the steps necessary to win it. 30/40 is not socialism--it is not the solution to all our problems. It will not eliminate the bosses. WAM is not a socialist organization. It contains within it many who believe in socialism and many who do not.

But communists say it is not enough to fight for reforms under capitalism. In fighting for these reforms, especially such gigantic ones as 30/40, we unite ourselves and become so solidified--nationally and internationally--that we have the chance of challenging the bosses' STATE POWER, the power that they use to crush all opposition and save their system. In this process, more workers become communists and help to organize the working class to challenge and destroy that power and erect a new power--WORKERS' POWER--in which workers control all production, all the value added by their labors, decide how all surpluses shall be organized and distributed to the best advantage of the working class. And we--the working class--hold the governmental or state power that ENFORCES this control over the means of production.

The fight for 30/40 becomes not only a gain that gives workers the chance for more jobs, more leisure time to spend with their families, the chance for safer working conditions under less tired circumstances. It is also a gain that comes through a struggle that UNITES all workers as never before; strips even barer the pretenses of capitalism to "democracy"; sharpens the class struggle; and builds the workers' "general staff"--the communists. Capitalism is revealed for what it is--a dictatorship of the bosses' class, and, thereby, under the leadership of communists and their ideas, the working class learns how--and develops the inexorable dedication--to overthrow the bosses once and for all, under the dictatorship of the working class.

PLP STATEMENT - 555555

The fight for 30/40 internationally can help lead to the fight for workers' power, for socialism and an end to the most oppressive and exploitative system the world has ever known.

In order to weld the working class into the fighting force strong enough to destroy the bosses, we need a PARTY dedicated to that task. We are trying to build our party--the Progressive Labor Party--into just that kind of an organization.

We call upon WAM members who agree with our party's program to join the PLP. This in no way contradicts, or interferes with, the building of WAM. On the contrary, it will strengthen WAM immeasurably. PLP members have been instrumental in building WAM. One of PLP's major strategic concepts is the development of an international organization to spearhead the fight for 30/40. Such an organization is necessary today in Canada and the U.S.

But, if one sees the need for more than 30/40--and, at the same time, how the fight for 30/40 can lead to far more--if, in fact, one sees the need for a socialist revolution, you should join a party dedicated to that goal, and at the same time build the 30/40 movement through WAM.

Socialism will not come simply by repeating the word over and over in closed meetings. It will be won by our participation in the daily struggles of the working people. We in the PLP see it as our task to both develop these struggles and, at the same time, convince those with whom we are fighting hand in hand, to go beyond the reform struggles and on to revolution.

Our party, demonstrating in life how racism, anti-communism and the whole range of anti-working class ideas are killing our class, and demonstrating in life how communist ideas can provide the basis for fighting our way out of the bind we're in, will grow and build that movement.

To all those at the WAM convention who agree with, or are interested in, our party's program, we suggest the following steps:

- (1) Join a PLP study group.
- (2) Buy a subscription to our newspaper, Challenge-Desafio, and/or our magazine Progressive Labor.
- (3) Sell a subscription to a friend and join us in the mass sale of the paper.
- (4) Give a regular sustaining contribution to the PLP.
- (5) Join with the PLP in any or all of its activities.

Whether or not you agree with our program, to all those at the WAM convention, we say:

BUILD THE WORKERS ACTION MOVEMENT!

FIGHT FOR 30 FOR 40 WITH A BIG PAY BOOST!

I would like to Subscribe to:

Progressive Labor  ..... \$2.50 per year

Challenge-Desafio  ..... \$3.00 per year

Enclosed Please Find Contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ To Help The Circulation of The P.L.P. Publications.

I would like more information about the Progressive Labor Party. Phone \_\_\_\_\_

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