

On Building The Party of the U.S. Working Class and the Struggle Against Dogmatism and Reformism.

**Speeches by Bob Avakian,
Member of the Central Committee of the
Revolutionary Union**

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The following are two speeches given by Bob Avakian, member of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Union, as part of a nationwide tour by the RU during the summer of 1974. The purpose of this tour was to raise among the broadest number of workers and revolutionary forces generally the central and immediate importance of building the party of the working class; to draw a clear line of demarcation between the stand, viewpoint and method of the working class and opportunist lines that oppose the outlook and interests of the working class while speaking in its name; and to conduct discussion and struggle with workers and other individuals and groups around major questions of ideological and political line connected with the task of building the party of the working class and the revolutionary workers movement.

We are reprinting these two speeches, one in New York City on August 9, and one in Newark, N.J. on August 10, in order to contribute to discussion and struggle around the programme for the party and to further the process of uniting all who can be united around the correct line to form the party of the working class.

Speech on August 9, 1974 New York City

INTRODUCTION

The imperialists are weak and the people's forces are strong. The roots of the people here tonight lie in the 60s and early 70s when a tidal wave of struggle washed over America. We come here from the Black liberation movement, from the student and antiwar movement, and the surge of rank and file discontent that rose to break the shackles of 10 years of "labor peace."

As we have deepened our politics through these struggles, we have won many fights and victories. We have learned that whatever we have gained has been through great struggle and sacrifice—today and in the past. We have learned that we must go from the defensive struggle to revolutionary struggle. As long as the imperialists are in power, all of our victories will be only partial and temporary. We must overthrow this whole imperialist system and

impose the rule of the working class. We must master revolutionary theory, the theory of Marxism-Leninism Mao Tse Tung Thought, to guide us not as a dogma but as a science which has its roots in the real world, which we apply to concrete conditions to point the way forward.

To master that science cannot be the province of an individual or of a small group of people in a library. We need a genuine communist party, rooted in the struggles of the people, to be the general staff and headquarters of the working class, which leads and builds the powerful unity of our class, forged in the struggle against all oppression. That's what we are here to talk about tonight. So, I'd like to introduce Bob Avakian for the National Central Committee of the Revolutionary Union.

We want to thank everyone for coming tonight, and we think that the fact that there is a very good turnout tonight, and that throughout the country where we've been traveling people have been coming out to meetings like this, for discussions and for struggle, is a very healthy sign. We think it indicates that people throughout the country, coming from different directions and arriving at the same place, arriving at an understanding that in fact this is the time to move the revolutionary movement in this country to a new stage. This is the time to take up the question of how to form a new vanguard party of the working class to lead the struggle in this country.

than through revolution. And revolution in the world today means one thing in the final analysis. It means the overthrow of the bourgeoisie by the proletariat and its allies, the smashing of their armed forces and their state machinery of oppression, the army, the police, the courts, the bureaucracies and all the rest of it. And having crushed that, establishing the rule of the proletariat and its allies and keeping arms in hand and using force to suppress and prevent those forces who want to bring back that system of exploitation. So we need a party because we need revolution. This is why we're here tonight to talk about a party.

Because we don't want the situation to go on any longer where kids are put on the street shooting junk in their veins before their future even begins, where people work 30 and 40 years for the future of their kids who, if they make it through the rotten schools and can avoid the jails, they're dragged off with a gun to their head, put in a uniform and told to go shoot somebody who's involved in the same struggle they're involved in. We don't want any more oppression of nations. We don't want any more discrimination against women. We don't want any more exploitation or oppression. The answer to it is revolution—proletarian revolution. And in order to achieve it, we need a party—a party of the working class, a party based on the theory of the working class. A party that can bring to the struggles of the class and all the masses of people fighting against the same enemy the ideas and the outlook

that are characteristic of that class—Marxism-Leninism.

But what we want to say is that the party is not an end in itself, not something we can create and then our work is done. But the creation of the party simply ushers in a new stage in the development of the revolutionary movement. Because the party is not an end, it is a means, an instrument through which the proletariat is able to lead the revolutionary movement, to unite all who can be united against the present main enemy at each stage and to advance it to the stage of socialism and to contribute to the development of world communism. It's an instrument which brings to the struggle of the masses and particularly the working class a consciousness of its historical role and enables the working class to play that historical role in transforming the world, and transforming itself and its consciousness as well as all of humanity in the process.

Now the need for the party of the working class to lead revolution, especially in this age of imperialism, is a lesson not simply written down in a book, but that lesson written down in a book summarizes lessons throughout

We are coming to this meeting tonight under conditions that are growing more favorable all the time. One bum's out, the rest are on the run and the ruling class is in a lot of trouble. This is the condition that is not only true in this country but worldwide. The enemies that we're up against, particularly the 2 main enemies, the 2 superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—are increasingly facing a united front developing among a broad number of forces throughout the world, not only the working class and oppressed nations of the 3rd World, but even some reactionary and bourgeois governments in the 3rd world, and, beyond them, even certain lesser capitalist and imperialist powers.

So the situation as we come here tonight is a very favorable situation. But at the same time it's one that poses a very great potential danger. And the danger is exactly due to the fact that the contradictions in imperialism are intensifying, due to the fact that throughout the world the struggle is growing, that in the world today one of the major things

shaping the international situation is the rivalry among the imperialists and particularly the contention between the 2 superpowers—due to all this the danger of world war is growing much greater all the time. We don't need to be alarmist about this, but we do need to understand the danger of it.

At the same time in this country and in every country, the class struggle and the general struggle of the oppressed masses against the ruling class is growing sharper. And, again while we shouldn't be alarmist, but while this increases the development toward revolution, it also does increase the development toward fascism. So this is the kind of situation that we're faced with. It's one that provides us with an opportunity to take great advantage of the difficulty of our enemy—of the fact that they are in a lot of struggle with each other. The thieves are falling out here and internationally and increasingly cutting each other's throats. It is a situation where we can, in fact, move forward in great strides so long as we unify our own ranks in the correct way and go out to work among the masses in order to unite them broadly against the main enemy on a world scale and against the main enemy within this country, the imperialist ruling class.

So what we want to stress in the beginning is that we need a party, not in the abstract and not because 3,000 people or however many it is in this country who consider themselves communists don't want to be lonely, but because we need revolution. Because the problems that we face and the suffering of the people which is growing all the time, cannot be eliminated any other way.

history that have been paid for in blood. Lessons of thousands of years of struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor, and particularly for more than 100 years in this modern era, the struggle of the wage-earning working class against the capitalist exploiters. So we know from this history, summed up by the great leaders of the working class, that we must have a party to lead the revolution. And, as I said, not just any kind of party but the vanguard party of the working class, a Marxist-Leninist party. And in this country because our working class is one working class, a multinational working class, we need a

multinational communist party to lead it.

So, from the beginning we have to distinguish the kind of party we're talking about from other kinds of parties that are being talked about today. And in particular we have to distinguish it from the calls that are being issued for such things as "mass, democratic, socialist parties," which will help somehow to bring about, according to those who put the idea forward, a "mass, democratic socialist movement" and eventually "democratic socialism" in this country. Now this idea is being posed directly in opposition to what we really have to create. That is a Marxist-Leninist vanguard, a party based on the science of the working class, summed up through the class struggle and the struggle of the oppressed for thousands of years.

But what kind of party would this so-called "socialist" party be? One that would include everybody that says they're for socialism. Hell, Doug Fraser, vice president of the UAW, says he's for socialism. But every time the workers in Detroit or anywhere else in the auto industry go out in struggle, he's the first one to move to crush that struggle. For example, last year in Detroit, he was among the leading forces that organized a goon squad of 1000 people to go down with brickbats to force wildcatting workers back to work. Do we want a party that includes traitors and enemies like that just because they say they're socialists? Anybody can call themselves anything. And in this day and age, when the struggle of the masses is developing, and when the influence of socialist ideas, and particularly even of Marxism-Leninism is growing, many people come forward and call themselves socialists, or call themselves Marxist-Leninists. And in the short run we can't stop them, anymore than we can stop these people from getting on TV and saying that if you use Ultra-Brite you'll be sexy. The only way we can deal with it is by helping the masses of people learn through their own experience and summing up for them according to Marxism-Leninism what will genuinely advance the struggle against our enemy, imperialism, and what will genuinely lead to the rule of the working class, which is the only way which socialism can be created, con-

structed and developed toward world communism.

If we have a "mass, democratic, socialist party," how are we going to do any real work? How are we going to act like a real vanguard. If you and I don't agree and we all do our own thing, how are we going to carry out any work among the masses and organize them in a disciplined way? And if we don't organize them in a disciplined way and we don't carry out one common line, how are we going to deal with a highly organized and vicious enemy. And more than that, how are we going to come to a correct understanding of what in fact will advance the struggle and should be built on and what in fact holds it back and has to be corrected and eliminated.

So the kind of party we're talking about is a disciplined party, a party that is democratic, yes. But as long as there are classes in society, everything has a class content. And this is also true of democracy. What we want is proletarian democracy in our party, as opposed to bourgeois democracy. No bourgeois democracy—we're all familiar with how it works. People are not educated as to what the real questions are. Their real interests are never brought to them. And all they're told is, without any of this process of political development occurring, is "Here are 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 people you can chose from. You want hanging? You want to die by poison? Or would you rather go by the guillotine?" This is bourgeois democracy.

What we need is proletarian democracy, which rests not so much on the formal structure though that's important too, but which rests in the final analysis upon unity around the correct line, and which understands that in order to achieve that unity around the correct line there has to be struggle around every major issue within that party and at a certain point that struggle has to be summed up by the leadership of the party, policies have to be developed, and that's where the centralist aspect comes in. Because we need democracy and we need centralism. And the centralist aspect especially comes in when we all have to unite to carry out the policies, so we can test them in practice and also, even more important in the final analysis, so we can advance the real struggle and learn in the course of it.

And at the appropriate time we sum that up. If the policy is wrong it's corrected. When it's correct, we build on it and go forward.

So this is the kind of party we need to create. Now we're coming to a stage, as I said, at this point—I think it's indicated by this meeting and other things—when lots of people, literally thousands of people, are talking about a party, and lots of people are talking about Marxism-Leninism. These are a number of forces that have grown up in the last few years, whether it's 2, 3, 5, 6 or 8 years or what have you, who have opposed themselves to the revisionist betrayal of the Communist Party USA, that base themselves on an attempt to apply Marxism-Leninism as it has been developed through Mao Tse Tung to the concrete situation in this country and have taken up the banner of defending Marxism-Leninism against the revisionists, Trotskyites and other renegades who are trying to drag it through the mud. Among all these forces now there is very broad agreement that what is called for now is the building of the party. All agree and all always have agreed that objectively there is always the need for a party, that at any given time, the struggle always advances further, becomes more conscious, broader and more clearly directed against the main enemy, if it has a party to guide and direct it.

And, as I said, all agree that party building is now the central task confronting the new communist movement. And all say that it must be done as seen as possible. But there are disagreements about what as soon as possible means. There are disagreements about how to go about building that party. And in particular, there are disagreements that are much more fundamental than the way I'm going to formulate it. But to begin, there are disagreements about whether or not party building has always been the central task. And, basically, for the last 5 or 6 years as the different forces have grown up, there have been 2 lines, although the incorrect line has expressed itself in a number of different tendencies. Naturally, when you say there's 2 lines there's one correct line and one incorrect line. The incorrect line has been held by various opportunist forces, both those

who pose as "ultra-left" and those who are openly, increasingly reformist and rightist. Whether you're talking about the CL, the BWC and the PRRWO on the so-called "left" or the OL on the right, all of them are in agreement on one thing—that party building has always been the central task. And, as best as we can tell, the reasoning or the argument goes like this: that whenever you don't have a party, you need to create the party, and more than that (because everyone would agree with that), whenever you don't have the party, then the building of that party becomes the central task at all times until that party is created.

And this is where the disagreement comes in. But, as I said, the disagreement runs a lot deeper than simply the formulation in which I've outlined it. Because if we simply disagreed about how to formulate something, that wouldn't be so serious and it would be easy to resolve. Formulations are only important insofar as they reflect the real world and direct us in changing that world in a revolutionary direction. If people who said that since there is no party, party building is the central task only meant that all along, until we've created the party, we should devote every effort to creating it, to bring it into being as soon as possible, as soon as the conditions could be created, to build a real vanguard and not a paper party or a house of cards that would disappear at the first puff of smoke, then we could agree with them. Then it would be easy to resolve differences over formulations that have been held in the past.

However, this is not all that's meant by people who say that party building was the central task. Something different is meant, particularly by the dogmatists, the "ultra-leftists" and the "left" opportunists. We don't know exactly what OL means any more when they say that party building is the central task; because we don't know what kind of party they're talking about building. As far as we can tell, the most it would be would be the shallow image of the revisionist party at best. But among those people who line up on the "left," that is who come on as "more proletarian than thou," and "super-revolutionary," what they mean is that

until there's a party, there's nothing but propaganda to the advanced workers and organizing study circles to study theory, that this is the main task, until the party's been created. And that during this entire period, theory is principal over practice because we haven't got our stuff together.

Well, first of all we have to look at how they define what they mean by advanced workers. You see, these things have a self-fulfilling definition. An advanced worker is apparently anybody who can decipher the so-called propaganda they put out. When they put out a leaflet to the actual working people, including those engaged in real class struggle, if people can't understand what they're talking about, then these people naturally are not advanced. And, again, it's a self-fulfilling prophecy, because you pass out a leaflet and you always find a few people, maybe a couple of pigs, a couple of other weird people, and maybe a couple of serious people who'll say "Yeah, right on." And the rest of them can go to hell, because they're obviously not advanced anyway.

I'd like to give an example of what is meant by this. For example, we have a leaflet here, "Celebration One Day, Class Struggle Every Day," put out by the PRRWO at the Puerto Rican Day Parade this year. Now the leaflet begins and analyzes some of the concrete conditions facing the Puerto Rican people and the masses of people in this country and Puerto Rico. It's fairly accurate. And it makes an effort to expose what the parade's about. And so far, although the style is rather stilted, no one can seriously disagree with that. But then it moves on to begin analyzing the world situation. Besides the fact that its analysis is incorrect and it has the contradictions of a world scale jumbled up, and even omits the contradiction between the working class and the capitalist class as one of the major contradictions on a world scale, besides that it very quickly moves (this is being passed out we know to people at the parade) it begins telling people about what V.I. Lenin said about imperialism. And then it moves on to pose the question about what is the responsibility of revolutionaries inside the U.S. and then answers itself with a quote from Stalin

about the need to unite the struggles of people here with the struggles of people in the colonies. Then it goes on with complicated and almost undecipherable language about what's wrong with the "divided nation theory" and so forth and so on.

Now, are all the ideas in this leaflet incorrect? Some of them are, particularly in the analysis of contradictions on a world scale. But, in the main, the problem is not that abstractly the concepts are incorrect. The problem is that the whole leaflet stinks of what Mao Tse Tung described as stereotyped party writing. That is that it does not express and break things down in the lively language of the masses. It's extremely one-sided in its presentation—only the question of theory, only the question of building the party is what we must do. The Puerto Rican people are suffering in Puerto Rico and here, as the leaflet correctly identifies, and the only solution offered is to study theory and build the party.

Now, this kind of approach is opposed to the correct approach of linking from the beginning the question of building the party with the question of building the mass movement, and creating the conditions for building the party through linking theory with practice, learning from the practical struggle by applying Marxism-Leninism to it to sum it up. Because, over the past years, if we look at where we're all coming from, we all developed out of situations where in fact there had been no vanguard party. This is a situation we all have to face and deal with—the absence of this party, the betrayal by the CPUSA, and the failure and the degeneration into counter-revolution of the initial organizations which attempted to pose a revolutionary alternative to the CPUSA, like the Provisional Organizing Committee to Reconstitute a Communist Party USA Marxist-Leninist (I don't know how many people heard of that, but that probably speaks to its significance) or the Progressive Labor Party, which more of you have probably heard of. Despite the fact that the CP went into the camp of counter-revolution and those initial organizations which attempted to pose an alternative followed it into the same camp, tremendous mass movements have developed over the past 10 to 15

to 20 years, especially in the middle and late 60s. The Civil Rights movement erupted into the Black Liberation movement and shook the country at its foundations and produced many revolutionary-minded people and inspired struggle among people of other nationalities, who were already struggling and who learned from and took direct inspiration from the struggle of Black people. And the same was true among youth and students and sections of the workers. At the same time, beginning with thousands and spreading to millions, the anti-war movement developed. The youth and student struggle developed on the campuses and off. Struggles against repression grew, in and out of the prisons. Rank and file workers movements have grown and increasingly taken matters into their own hands and pushed aside the traitors within their own ranks in the top divisions of the union leadership. Women's movements have developed. And generally speaking there have been millions of people who, in one form or another, have come into struggle against the imperialist system. And it was out of this concrete development, and not simply out of people sitting somewhere and studying, that the overwhelming majority of people who are here tonight, I'm sure, and of people who consider themselves revolutionaries and communists throughout the country have come forward.

And it was out of their concrete experiences in not simply one but a number of struggles, that people began to understand the need for theory. That people began to see that there was something more at stake than simply a particular struggle or struggles they were involved in, than simply a particular nationality or sector of society or industry or what have you that they were involved in—that there was something more fundamental, and that the problems couldn't be solved without getting to the root of it.

And in the midst of this, a tremendous development worldwide occurred, which I'm sure had tremendous influence on all the people here in this room. And that was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, or, as it's called sometimes for short, the Cultural Revolution. Because many people who

came forward and wanted to make revolution or saw that something basic was wrong and that drastic changes were needed, many of these people had turned away originally from socialism and communism, not only because of the propaganda of the bourgeoisie in this country but also because of what they could see, if not thoroughly scientifically understand, had happened in the first socialist country, the Soviet Union.

And in this kind of situation, the Cultural Revolution in China had a tremendous liberating influence and positive direction for all, or a great number I should say, of the revolutionary minded people in this country.

The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution represented a movement on the part of millions of Chinese people, spreading to tens and hundreds of millions, to rise up in their masses and prevent the same thing from happening to their country that had happened before to the Soviet Union, to prevent people like Khrushchev in China from taking the country back down the road to capitalism and betraying the revolution in that country and in the world. And the guiding leadership, the guiding ideology or thought that came forward, and was clearly the direction for the masses of people in that struggle, was the thought of Mao Tse Tung, who upheld, defended and developed and creatively applied Marxism-Leninism not only as it applied to that particular struggle in China but also to the world situation and particularly the struggle against revisionism, against cutting the very heart and soul out of the revolutionary theory of Marxism-Leninism, which, again, is the summed up experience, paid for in blood, of the masses of oppressed and exploited people historically in the world.

Just as the Russian revolution and the leadership of Lenin spread Marxism-Leninism and the influence of socialism throughout the world, gave inspiration to revolutionaries, assisted directly and indirectly the formation of new communist parties, so the Cultural Revolution in China did the same thing on a world scale, if not leading immediately to the formation of new parties, leading to the formation of new communist organizations recognizing the need for

and working toward the creation of a party. Because what the socialist revolution in Russia proved was that the working class could not only overthrow the capitalist class but could consolidate its rule, exercise its dictatorship and move forward in constructing socialism while aiding the world revolution. This was a very difficult process that was led first by Lenin and then by Stalin. But what the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China proved was that not only could the working class do all that, but in the face of the continuing class struggle and the attempt of the revisionists, the bourgeoisie within the socialist state, to restore capitalism, the working class could keep power in its hands, that socialism didn't have to degenerate or be betrayed and dragged back to capitalism, but that the revolution could go forward. And this concretely—and not simply because Mao Tse Tung wrote things, just as it wasn't simply before that that Lenin wrote things—is what spread Marxism-Leninism and the Thought of Mao Tse Tung.

Most of you here, students of Marxism, know that until the revolution in Russia, Lenin was not considered the great authority of Marxism. Kautsky was. And Lenin often had to quote Kautsky, pointing out often that Kautsky had degenerated but in his early theory he was a Marxist. But it was the concrete fact that in practice, Lenin's line and leadership (and of course the party that he represented and not him as an individual or "genius," but more than any other individual his line and leadership) produced the kind of struggle that could succeed in moving forward the revolution, that is to guide that struggle through all the twists and turns, the necessary tactical maneuvers and compromises, but always directing it toward the goal and maintaining firm principle.

And the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China and the spreading of Mao Tse Tung Thought has done the same thing. And it's spread like a tremendous storm and fire in this country and throughout the world, and aided the development of new communist organizations, even though there wasn't an organized Communist International to give direct organizational assistance to the formation of new parties. Even though the international communist

movement was in general disarray, and most of the parties which had been communist followed the Soviet Union into the camp of revisionism, nevertheless the influence of the Cultural Revolution did give rise to communist organizations, and it encouraged more people to take up the study of theory to try to guide their actions concretely by it. But these people came out of practical struggle.

So far as we know, no one in those struggles began as a communist. So far as we know, no one was born a communist. And so far as we know they went through a certain amount of practical experience before they began to take up the study of the theory of Marxism-Leninism. But at a certain point there was, in an important sense, a qualitative change. Groups like the RU and other groups that are around today (and some which aren't) came together around the question of taking up the study of theory and at least getting a beginning understanding about how that theory could be applied to the United States. I should correct that—some people took the stand that it wasn't necessary to apply it concretely to the United States, such as the so-called "Communist" League. But despite that, everybody talked about relating it to the situation in the U.S. And on this basis, people developed what might be called a beginning or minimum program—a statement of principles or basis of unity or whatever they called it at the time.

The RU's basis was published in our first theoretical documents, *Red Papers 1* and *2*. And in our organization at that time we spent a great deal of effort and made it central and principal to consolidate around that beginning basic unity on program. And, having done so, we recognized, learning from the experience of the Russian revolution, Chinese revolution and other proletarian revolutions, that the next step was implementing that program and that theory around which we had united in the practical struggles; that the communist movement in this country was not linked, especially, with the working class; that while different forces had arisen out of various mass movements, in general the workers movement was developing separately from the communist movement; and that it was the

most important task for the communists to begin actually sinking some roots and developing a base in the working class, to go to the working class as well as other sectors of the people but to concentrate in the working class, and to begin the process of applying our basic, our beginning understanding of theory to the struggle of the working class and other sectors of the oppressed people. So the process would be practice to theory and then back again to practice. And this is why we and others formulated at this time, and the RU in particular took the lead in formulating it, that while party building was important and while building a broad united front was important, the central task was to begin the process of developing the working class movement as a revolutionary movement. In other words, the question of developing the struggle, consciousness and revolutionary unity of the working class and the development of its leadership in the united front.

Now, we always recognized and stated that, of course, the development of a fully conscious and revolutionary working class movement could not occur without a party. And the consolidation of working class leadership in a broad united front could not occur without a party. But the *principle* was that we had to begin the *process* of building those things, of linking communists concretely with the mass movement. And that, in the process of doing that, we would have the best basis for finding and training revolutionaries, for combining propaganda and theory with the practical day-to-day movement, through the course of it educating people as communists—which has been done in the hundreds and all over in the thousands—and for conducting ideological struggle between different forces to forge the basis of unity which could enable us to form a new party.

During this period, after these initial programs or principles of unity were formulated, we strongly disagreed with those who said that theory was principal. We said instead that the practical task of linking that theory with the concrete day-to-day struggle was principal. Now, as we know, everything is dialectical of course. And I think that at this point the RU has attempted to sum up its work and the work of others and

carry out this task. And we've recognized that in the process of struggling against the incorrect line of divorcing theory from practice, represented by such groups as the Communist League consistently for 6 years, and by other groups such as BWC and PRRWO more recently, in the process of struggling against this, the RU and some other forces had a tendency not to put enough emphasis on the task of building towards a party. Not that we didn't say it was important; not that we didn't conduct propaganda; make theoretical statements; do more struggle, in fact, than all these phony "party-builders" against incorrect and counter-revolutionary lines in the movement, such as PL, the Trotskyites, the revisionists and the rest; not that we didn't develop what we feel still is the correct formulation and basic strategy in this country for revolution—the united front against imperialism led by the proletariat; but that we didn't put enough emphasis, despite the emphasis we did put, on this task. And, certainly, we have to say that, in recognizing as we have that the question of the party is now on the agenda, we were somewhat slow at that recognition.

Now, this is due to two factors. One, the general factor that the understanding subjectively of the communists always lags to one degree or another behind the development of objective reality. This is always the case and will always be the case, but the duty of communists is not to accept that but to try to minimize that and to try to bring as closely and as quickly as is possible their subjective understanding in line with the development of objective conditions. Second of all, as I said, this was because we had put the emphasis correctly on developing the practical mass movement and applying Marxism-Leninism to it and conducting ideological struggle and propaganda in that context. And that when, on the basis of ourselves and many others doing that, the conditions in fact were coming into being that made it possible and absolutely necessary to create the party, again we were a little slow in recognizing them.

But at this time we feel that many communist forces in small groups, different individuals and local collectives,

as well as major organizations such as the RU and others, have carried out this task, have rediscovered roots in the working class which the Communist Party ripped out and tore away, have begun the process, and only begun it, of linking communism concretely with the mass movement. For this reason, the question of party building has now become the central task. Exactly for this reason, it is once again the case for a brief period that in an overall sense, theory has become principal over practice. Not in the one-sided sense that we should stop our practice. Not in the one-sided sense that we shouldn't learn in fact how to dig deeper roots among the masses, struggle in a better way and a more conscious way to understand this. But for overall in this period, theory has once again become principal.

But we mean it in a completely different way from those who say that it has always been principal. Because all they're talking about is studying the classics divorced from practice. While it's important to study the classics, the classics have to be linked with practice at all times, even at times when theory has become principal for a while over practice. Because we know, as Mao Tse Tung teaches us, that in the overall sense, practice is principal and that it is out of social practice, not narrowly but broadly and historically, that all correct ideas and theories arise and are formulated.

So at the present time, when we say that theory has become principal, we mean that concretely, that the application of theory to summing up the past period of practice that has been guided by the beginning lines and understanding which guided people in conducting that practice. And those that have no practice, such as the Communist League, in the actual struggle of the masses, have, of course, no basis for summing up any practice. And we know, of course, that in conducting this practice that lots of mistakes have been made. So far as we know, if you carry out a line in practice and are actually engaged in the complicated struggle of classes in the real world, there is no way to avoid making many mistakes. The only way we know to avoid making mistakes is to divorce yourself, isolate yourself and stand aloof from the actual

class struggle of the masses. In which case, you only make one mistake—your whole line is a mistake.

Now, let's get to something very basic and that is the relationship between theory and practice. And that also, of course, relates to the relationship between the vanguard and the masses. What is the correct relationship between the vanguard party and the masses? Or, to put it another way, what is the vanguard party?

It's very interesting to note that such groups as the BWC, who now say that party building has always been the central task, in their pamphlet, "The Black Liberation Struggle, The Black Workers Congress, The Proletarian Revolution," they define, or I should say re-define for us, what a vanguard party of the proletariat is. Essentially, beginning on page 35 or their pamphlet, what they do is to summarize 6 points that Stalin lists enumerating what the vanguard party of the proletariat is, in *Foundations of Leninism*, the chapter on the party. And what's most significant is the way the BWC deals with the first point, which is Stalin's general description of what the party is. That is that the party is the advanced detachment of the class.

Now Stalin, writing in *Foundations of Leninism*, devotes equal weight to both aspects of this. That is, he spends a couple of pages analyzing what is meant by the fact that the party has to be advanced, that is doesn't tail behind the masses; that it sees farther than other members of the class, than the average workers; that it draws to it the more advanced members of the class; that it puts forward a more advanced understanding and provides conscious leadership and direction to the struggle. Now, this is how Stalin deals with the first aspect.

On the other hand, and this is what's completely missing from the BWC summary of Stalin's first point, he also spends a page and a half analyzing the other aspect—that the party not only has to be advanced but it has to be a *detachment*. And he goes into great length to analyze why the party cannot be divorced from the masses; how the party cannot in fact be a true vanguard if it is not bound up "with all its fibers," he says, with the class. If the class and the broad masses do not recognize its

leadership and do not look to it as a vanguard, there is no way it can be a real vanguard. All this is omitted by the BWC in its rundown of supposedly what the party is. And this is no accident, because it is attempting along with other forces, to build a party which is not bound up with any of its fibers, let alone all of its fibers, to the class and the masses.

Now let's carry on further in this pamphlet again on page 37. We're told about "those people" (and we believe that we're being referred to) who talk about the "theory" of "building a mass movement." This theory is ridiculed. And the BWC tries to provide a characterization, or we should say a caricature, of what this so-called theory they define is. "We are told," they say, "Go here, now there. The woman's movement arises and we are told to go there. The veterans' movement arises and we are told to go there. The unemployed movement arises and we are told to join that one too. The students move in a certain direction and we communists are told to follow them. Workers go on strike in a given plant and we are told "Rush to the workers. Hold some meetings with them." And on and on it goes. And then, a little later on the next page, it says, that of course we have to do these things but the first thing we have to do and the first thing we have to get together is our own thing, the party. In other words, really we can't do any of these things until we have the party.

I would like to ask the question: if workers are on strike, what's wrong with going to the workers and holding a meeting with them? Isn't this exactly what Lenin did and the Bolsheviks did (or even before they were the Bolsheviks)? This is what Lenin did, and the group around him, even before they were a party, even before the party was immediately on the agenda. Yes, in fact, this is exactly what they did. If you read, for example the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, which all of these dogmatists love to read but never like to understand, you will see in fact that Lenin, in an early stage of the development of the Russian movement, when the communist forces were like we described the communist forces in this country earlier—largely divorced from the practical struggle of the

workers—when they had, as that book says, "scant connections" with the practical movement of the working class, at such a time when they were conducting propaganda almost exclusively and organized simply in study circles with only a few workers,—at such a time Lenin came forward and said that the main thing that had to be done was to move from propaganda to agitation. That the main thing that had to be done was to begin to break down the division and separation between the practical workers movement on the one hand, which was developing spontaneously, and the communist movement and forces on the other.

For example, in the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, (this may be a different edition than some people may have, but it's the first chapter) it says that "Lenin proposed to pass from the propaganda of Marxism among the few politically advanced workers who gathered in the propaganda circles, to political agitation among the broad masses of the working class on the issues of the day." And, a little later, it says something in the same vein: that when Lenin put this forward in the St. Petersburg League for Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, which Lenin formed in 1895, and which started mass agitation and led mass strikes, this, it is said, marks a new stage in the development of that movement—the transition to mass agitation among the workers and the union of Marxism with the working class movement itself.

Now, as a practical example of this, Lenin wrote a number of leaflets to different workers. One of them which is most famous is found in his 2nd volume. It's called "To the men and women of the Thronton mills," who were some weavers who were on strike. And Lenin wrote this leaflet. And some day (though I shouldn't blow it and give it away) we're going to reprint this leaflet from Lenin. And we're going to change a few phrases to "Americanize" them, and we're going to change a few names of cities to make them relate to here, and we're going to change a little bit of the style. And we're going to put this leaflet out and watch all the dogmatists jump on it and condemn it as economism. Because in fact in this

leaflet, there's not a mention of the word "socialism" or "Marxism." And, in fact, Lenin even goes so far—get this—he lists 6 concrete demands that the workers should fight for. Imagine that. Telling the workers what they already know. And he says at the end, after listing these 6 demands, "We must force them here too, to cut down their greed. In defending these demands, comrades, we are not rebelling at all. We are merely demanding that we be given what all the workers of other factories now enjoy by law."

Is this the same Lenin that wrote *What Is to Be Done?* As far as we know, it is.

Now, how can this be explained? It can only be explained because Lenin was dialectical and understood the relation between theory and practice and understood that not every leaflet had to preach to the working class in stereotyped party writing about Marxism-Leninism and build the party and so on and so on and so on. Now in an overall sense Lenin thought from the very beginning that the struggle should not be narrow and limited to the day to day economic struggle but that broader political ideas, that the long range goals first of overthrowing the tsar in Russia, then of fighting for socialism had to be presented, and that in an overall sense Marxism-Leninism had to be combined with the struggle, brought to the working class in that sense, and that workers had to be trained as Marxist-Leninists on that basis.

But, you see, the problem is that there's a little bit of what has to be described as *What Is To Be Done*—it's in our movement. Not that *What Is To Be Done* isn't an extremely important work (it is extremely important to read and study and understand it). But some people act, at least on the question of how to build the working class struggle, as if *What Is To Be Done* is the only thing that Lenin ever wrote. And similarly, people who simply want to read *What Is To Be Done*, and don't want to read articles, for example as are found in Lenin's volume 2, "Draft Programme and Explanation of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party"—people who don't want to do that are in fact also attempting to prevent the workers from getting an all-sided view and the people in the revolutionary movement from get-

ting an all-sided view of Lenin's writings and in general of Marxism-Leninism.

Now let's continue a little bit to get an understanding of what the Leninist view was and is of the relationship between theory and practice and on the question of how the communists, even before they have a party, have to relate to the day-to-day struggle of the masses.

Lenin wrote "Draft Programme of the Russian Social Democratic Party" at a time 3 years before this party had been created. And he put forward what the communists in Russia were already doing and what the party, once it's formed, must do in a higher and more concentrated way. And what did Lenin say? He talked about broad political questions. He talked about the need to bring theory to the working class and an understanding of the long range goals of the struggle. But he also said, "The Party's task is not to concoct some fashionable means of helping the workers, but to join up with the workers' movement, to bring light into it, to assist the workers in the struggle they themselves have already begun to wage." Now that, of course, means bringing theory and consciousness to the struggle. But, in case there's any doubt about in what context Lenin said this had to be done, excuse me for reading some more. He talks about the fact that the workers' rank and file movement, the strike movement in particular, was developing. And he says, "This transition of the workers to the steadfast struggle for their vital needs, the fight for concessions, for improved living conditions, wages and working hours, now begun all over Russia, means that the Russian workers are now making tremendous progress; and that is why the attention of the Russian Social Democratic Party and all class conscious workers should be concentrated mainly on this struggle, on its promotion." (You can see this on page 114 of Lenin's 2nd volume.)

He proceeds to run down specific ways in which the communists should relate to the struggle, giving even an indication of how to give tactical guidance to the struggle, what forms of struggle to take up when, how to fight, when to fight and all the rest of it. And, again, it should be pointed out that all this was being done by the communists,

and Lenin was urging that this be done and fighting for this to be done, ever before there was a party and ever before the forming of the party was the immediate question on the agenda.

And this is exactly what we've been saying has to be done and now that it has been done we now have the basis to form the party—not simply because the RU did it, but because many people did it. This includes many forces, and this is most disappointing, who today are apparently repudiating all that they have done. It includes many forces who, objectively, it would have to be said, made many important contributions to the development of the mass struggle—helped others to learn, advanced the struggle, helped weaken the enemy, gave courage and inspiration to the people. This includes these forces who are now renouncing all that and saying that all along we should only have been studying theory. These forces, as well as others, made contributions—even if now they want to repudiate it.

There are some fundamental principles involved here. That is—how do we view the question of the role of the masses in relationship to the role of the party? Now, Mao Tse Tung has written that the masses of people make history. We were having discussion, or I should say struggle, with a group called the August 29th Movement (out in the Bay Area this was)—which according to the BWC is the most important communist organization in the western states—which will be news to most of the communist forces and the masses out there. But, nevertheless, these people, when we brought forward to them that "The masses make history," which, as you know, is a quote from Mao Tse Tung, one of them leapt up and said "There it is right there. There's the whole basis of the RU's opportunism. 'The masses make history.' There it is. You forgot the conscious element."

Now, of course, we know and we believe that Mao Tse Tung knew that the conscious element was very important. The same Mao Tse Tung who wrote that "The masses make history" also wrote that without a revolutionary theory and without a revolutionary party there couldn't be a revolution, because he understood the relationship between the two, just as Lenin who wrote *What Is*

To Be Done, wrote the things that I just quoted. And the relationship is that theory must at all times be linked with practice. Or, as Lenin said in one of his first writings, as early as 1894, "Theory only is important because it provides answers to the problems and questions which are posing themselves in the practical struggle." This is why theory is important.

And does that mean that we reduce theory to simply a particular idea arising out of a particular struggle at a particular time? No. It means that yes, theory is the summed up practice of the working class and the masses throughout history. But it's only useful, it only serves the struggle of the masses if it's concretely applied to it. And, if it's divorced from it, it becomes useless. It becomes dogma. It becomes like a religion rather than a living science, to guide the practical struggle of the masses. And we think, in fact, that the Albanians have brought forward a very good slogan to describe this unity between the two. They say "The masses build socialism. The party makes them conscious." But, in order to make them conscious, the party has to first learn from the masses of people. A party doesn't learn Marxism-Leninism from the people in the sense of the past, summed-up experience because that doesn't arise spontaneously in the working class. But, it does learn about the actual struggle that is going on in the real world, and therefore it learns the basis of how to concretely apply Marxism-Leninism to the struggle that's going on in the real world.

And we'll give you an example from our own organization. Under the influence of bourgeois nationalists and other forces, we were putting forward an incorrect slogan at least to one degree or another and putting out generally in the working class movement and acting upon the idea of "Black workers take the lead." And in many different ways, we recognized in the course of trying to apply the slogan and what it implied, that we were in fact not aiding the revolutionary development and unity of the working class, not aiding the development of the unity of the working class as a whole and Black people and other oppressed nationalities, but sabotaging and holding

back the development of that unity and that revolutionary movement.

For example, in one plant, where we were putting forward the idea that what we need here is a Black shop steward, because some workers wanted to run as shop steward, some important questions were being raised in the election, it was arising out of the struggle of the workers. And one of the Black workers came around and said "What's important is that we have somebody good to represent us, to fight against discrimination in the plant and to fight around all the questions that workers here face. It's not the question of what nationality somebody is that's important, but what stand they take and what they fight for that's important." But we would not have learned that if we had not been involved practically in that struggle, if we had not, after being jammed, a number of times, started listening to the masses and some of the criticisms they were raising.

You see, what's left out of the idea that we study and study and study and somehow we'll know everything and then we can take it out to the masses, is the whole idea of learning from the masses. I want to give you an example of how this works out concretely.

Everybody knows that the Russian revolution produced the Soviet Union. And that the soviets were the actual form through which the proletariat exercised its state power in Russia. Now, where did the idea for the soviets come from? From Lenin, from Marx, from Engels, from Stalin? No, none of them, and of course not from Trotsky either. But where did they come from? In fact, the soviets were a form of organization which was thrown up by the workers of one area spontaneously! Oh my god! And what was the task of communists in relationship to that? In fact, at first Lenin opposed the soviets. Why? Because the Mensheviks quickly got a big influence in them. But very quickly after that, Lenin studied and recognized that in the development of this mass form of proletarian organization of workers, peasants and soldiers, lay, in fact, the future, the embryonic form through which the working class could win and exercise state power in Russia. Now this is a very important thing to understand. Because Lenin wasn't afraid

to learn from the masses. And real communists are never afraid to learn from the masses. And, again, if you read the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, you'll see that Stalin makes a point of saying that before the development of the Soviets in Russia it was generally believed that the form through which the working class would exercise its dictatorship over the overthrown capitalists would be a parliamentary republic. And Stalin poses a question. He says, this is what was written by Marx and Engels summing up the experience of the Paris Commune. There it was in the book. And he says, what would have happened if Lenin had been afraid to apply the spirit of Marxism, the method of Marxism and instead had been bound by the letter of Marxism? Obviously, there would have been *no* Soviet revolution or it would have been delayed greatly.

And the same thing arises around the question of was it possible to build socialism in one country. Generally, Marx and Engels said no. And Stalin points out again in the *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union* that this was generally held to be a law by all Marxists, including Lenin, before 1915. And, again, we know that socialism was created in one country, the Soviet Union, despite what the Trotskyites say. And Stalin poses the question again, what would have happened if Lenin, because it was written by Marx and Engels, had been bound by the letter of Marxism and had not applied the spirit of Marxism. And, in that struggle, Lenin, in fact, was forced to say to the Mensheviks who were arguing, "How can we have socialism in such an economically backward and undeveloped country?" Lenin finally came forth and said to them, "Will you please tell me, Menshevik, where in your books does it say that we cannot make revolution?"

And this is the spirit of Marxism, of learning from experience and applying theory to it in a living way, not in a dogmatic way. And this is what we need to guide the development and the creation at the earliest possible time of a party in this country.

I want to move on beyond the question simply of what kind of party we're talking about and what is the rela-

tionship between theory and practice to the question of the programme for the party. Because the key thing about any party at any given time is that it has a real programme. And by programme we mean something very specific—not just a statement of "we want these things" nor simply a statement of what our basic theory or our basic long-range objectives are. But also an analysis of what are the key questions right now today facing the masses of people. What are the things confronting the masses of people. What are the key struggles that have to be developed and how do we go about developing them and linking them up and bringing to them the understanding of the need to unite in the struggle to overthrow imperialism and build socialism.

Because it's not enough for us to say when people are being shot down in the streets that "we'll do something about it later. We're studying theory now." It's not enough for us to say, when people are being thrown out of their jobs and are on the unemployment line, when housing and social services are crumbling, "we'll get to that later, we're studying theory now." And it's not enough for us to say when wars of aggression are being committed and we have a duty internationally to the oppressed peoples and the working class to support and unite with their struggle, "We'll get to that later. Right now, we're just concerned about reading from the 38th to the 39th volume."

We have to have a concrete programme to move the struggle forward. Obviously, in this country not only today but historically, and also in other countries, one of the crucial questions in almost every capitalist and imperialist country and in all the colonial countries, of course, is the national question. And, in this country in particular, historically from the beginning of capitalism or capitalist development, the question of the struggle of the masses of Black people, first to emancipate themselves from slavery, then as sharecroppers and today mainly as wage workers, has always been crucially linked to the overall struggles that have advanced society at whatever stage it was, and today it is especially crucially linked to the question of the struggle for socialism.

And, again, just as on the question

that party building has always been the central task, we find the so-called "left" forces, BWC and the rest, and in reality the CL, united with openly rightist forces such as the October League. All of them say, no matter what particular differences they may raise, that the key to the struggle for Black liberation today lies in the Black-Belt south. This is the old plantation area, where during slavery and after, until the period beginning with the first world war and accelerating after World War II, the masses of Black people were concentrated in agricultural production, making up the majority in a large territory). And again we see the "left" and right united on their general statement that this is the key and that somehow liberating the black belt, Black people deciding whether or not to secede in the black belt is the key to the Black liberation struggle. But they're also united in another facet, which, of course, is the basis for a unity around this particular position.

And what they're united around is that they make no concrete analysis of concrete conditions. This is a fundamental unity that all of them have.

Now, we find, for example recently a pamphlet published by the Black Workers Congress, "The Struggle Against Revisionism and Opportunism, Against the Communist League and the Revolutionary Union." And we find a lengthy exchange, particularly between the BWC and CL, over the national question and the struggle of Black people. And the argument, running thru pages, essentially comes down to this: which one of these 2 groups most religiously clings to formulations which are outdated. This is the essence of the argument. And it's back and forth between formulations and statements which once applied essentially and fundamentally 40 years ago, but, especially since World War II, no longer apply. And in all these pages in which the BWC polemicizes against the CL on the question of the national question, more than 10 pages, we find absolutely not one aspect of concrete analysis of the actual conditions of Black people, what the actual basis of struggle is, what the main forms of oppression are, or how this generally relates to the struggle for socialism. The most we get in this whole section is after the position of the

Communist International, formulated in 1928 and in particular in 1930 is summarized, it is said that the 3 main demands for the Black or the Negro Liberation struggle as it was called at that time, were 1) the agrarian revolution, that is the confiscation of the land held by the white landlords and the distribution of it among the peasants, the sharecroppers in particular; 2) the merging together of Black people as a majority into a governmental unit in the Black Belt; and 3) the first 2 being the basis for this, the exercise of the right to political secession. These were the 3 demands which in 1930 were put forth by the Communist Party in this country and the international communist movement as the 3 main demands to be raised for the Black liberation struggle, centering around the agrarian question—"40 acres and a mule," which of course was never granted. Frankly we can't see how, because that was never granted, that it should be the main slogan and main demand now in whatever form it's put forth, or that the agrarian revolution lies at the heart of the Black liberation struggle today, when less than 5% of Black people are engaged in agricultural production.

But, after listing these demands, here's what we are told, "This was then the content of the right of self determination and the demands necessary to make this right a concrete, realizable demand. The last 3 slogans reflected the social reality at that time, 1930 in the black belt, when the Black population was overwhelmingly peasant. (And we might also add that it was overwhelmingly concentrated in the deep South—RU.) But BWC goes on to say, "Today we'll have to work out our considered slogans corresponding to the reality of today." And that's the closest we get—a promise that some day we'll work out the concrete analysis of concrete conditions!

Now, frankly, we can't blame the BWC too much for not getting too concrete. Because the fact is that reality doesn't conform to the formulations which were once correct but which no longer apply and to which they are attempting to cling with all their might. And in the document which BWC now publishes as its own, which was originally written by a few deserters from the RU, (who have

formed a group which I believe is called the ex-Marxist-Leninists), in this document, which is reprinted in our Red Papers 6, we are told "We maintain that what the Comintern said 40 years ago still holds true today. This landed property in the hands of the white American exploiters constitutes the most important material basis of the entire system of national oppression and serfdom of Negroes in the Black Belt. These sharecroppers, contract labor, chain gangs—and we add seasonal agricultural wage workers—are the main forms of present Negro slavery in the Black Belt." In other words sharecroppers, contract labor, chain gangs—these along with agricultural seasonal labor—are the main forms of oppression and slavery of Black people in the South today, and it's not possible to break the links of oppression without taking these questions up.

Along with this, we are told that Negro or Black farmworkers or farmers make up a "sizable percentage" of the southern work force. Now we don't know what "sizable" means. If by "sizable" they mean you can measure it, then yes, it's "sizable." In fact it's 1.5%. Now, according to anybody's definition, that's not very "sizable." Now, given that this is the *only* concrete analysis of concrete conditions that the BWC has attempted to make on the national question, we're not surprised that after such a disastrous venture into the real world, they turned tail and ran.

The duty of communists at any given time is to make a concrete analysis of concrete conditions. This, as Lenin says, is the living soul of Marxism. And, it's opposed as Mao says, to treating Marxism-Leninism as a religious dogma, you know—chanting "Lenin said in *What Is To Be Done*; Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. Amen."

Now, does that mean we don't need revolutionary theory. No, it doesn't mean that at all. But it means that *that* is not revolutionary theory. And we advise people who fall into this to learn from Mao Tse Tung, who had something to contribute to revolutionary theory, who says "We should proceed from the actual conditions inside and outside the country, the province, county or district and derive from them, as our guide to

action, laws which are inherent in them and not imaginary. That is we should find the internal relations of the events occurring around us. And in order to do that we must rely not on subjective imagination, not on momentary enthusiasm, not on lifeless books but on facts that exist objectively. We must incorporate the material in detail, and guided by the general principles of Marxism-Leninism, draw correct conclusions from it."

So you've got to begin with an objective analysis of objective conditions or a concrete analysis of concrete conditions. And not to do so, no matter how many times you call other people Hegelian, idealist or whatever, marks you in fact as an idealist, as people who have no understanding of what revolutionary theory really is—that it is derived from practice and in turn must be brought back to practice.

And we see this line that the Black Belt is the key to the struggle, held by the BWC, the OL and others, as totally divorced from and failing to analyze actual concrete conditions and forms of real oppression and slavery which, in fact, do oppress the masses of Black people as well as other oppressed nationalities in this country—not as peasants, sharecroppers or what have you in the South or in the North but mainly as wage workers, forced into the lowest conditions of the working class, forced into oppressed communities where they are also super-exploited and super-profits are also indirectly made out of them, and on top of this a whole system of cultural oppression and police and state terror to back it up. These in fact are the real concrete conditions which people face and which they are struggling against. And in order to develop this as a revolutionary movement and link it with the struggle for socialism, we have to begin with the actual conditions of the actual struggle and begin to direct it forward toward socialism.

In fact the BWC line and those which join with it represent 2 things: 1) a retreat from the actual practice in struggle as well as a retreat from any attempt to actually develop revolutionary theory dealing with the concrete conditions, and the retreat to outdated formulations, which makes BWC feel comforta-

ble because, after all, "The Comintern said so." 2) It is, in fact, a cover for separatism. We believe that given the historical development of Black people in this country as a nation after the Civil War and the reversal of Reconstruction, and despite the fact that people have been dispersed from that position and exist now throughout the U.S. (even though their historic homeland is in the Black Belt South) nevertheless the right of self-determination has to be upheld. Why? Because the question of people who have been dispersed mainly through economic compulsion but also to some degree through direct physical compulsion and military force, the question of their right to have a self governing territory must be upheld if we're going to unify the working class, if we're going to establish socialism on the basis of a voluntary unity of peoples and not a forced one.

So we believe the right of self-determination must be upheld. As we've said, in all likelihood, the most probably area for a separate state to be set up in if it were to occur, in other words for the right of self-determination to be exercised in the form of setting up a separate state, would be in the black belt territory. Though nobody's exactly defined whatever that is, the general territory of the Deep South. But, as we said, at this time, while upholding the right of self determination, to insist that this right is absolute, as the BWC says, that therefore, in other words, it is above everything else, including the class struggle, because if it's "absolute" that's what it means,—this in fact is falling into and tailing after bourgeois nationalism. And this is exactly what BWC says on page 19 of this pamphlet, "The Black Liberation Struggle, The Black Workers Congress and Proletarian Revolution." "The right of the Afro-American people to self-determination is absolute," not dependent upon the general interests of the proletariat. They say it's an absolute.

Further, under the concrete conditions of today, while upholding the right to self determination, to say as BWC and others do (in this document I quoted from earlier), that the liberation of the Black Belt is the key to the Black liberation struggle, that the Comintern resolutions in all their details still apply,

which includes that one of the main demands to be raised is "Yankee troops out of the Black Belt,"—to try today to apply that and say that it applies in every detail is clinging to unreality and advocating separatism. Because when people do not exist in the main in one territory, and when they have roots and are struggling where they are, to advocate that they return to the Black Belt—all you are saying is that the key question is to control the Black Belt and to exercise the right to political secession. To advocate that they do that is to play into and tail behind bourgeois nationalism.

To uphold the right is one thing— even under conditions where, as we analyze, we can't see now nor can we foresee how it would be a progressive step for an actual separate state to be set up. That is one thing to make that analysis. And it's another thing, at the same time to uphold the right to self-determination.

But to advocate a return to the South is to in fact play into bourgeois nationalism and separatism. Now, as everybody here probably knows or has heard at one time, the BWC, the PRRWO and the RU had close relationships and an alliance, a liaison that was built up and struggled for over the period of more than a year, beginning in the summer of 1972 and disintegrating when the BWC and PRRWO broke it off in the fall of 1973. Now, at that time, the questions which divided us were not the question of central task or the question of whether the black belt was the key to the struggle for Black liberation, or that the Black nation exists just in the South and that Black people are a nationality minority on the outside, a position which is now held by BWC and, for all we know, PRRWO. But at that time there were 2 questions which divided us: 1) is the slogan "Black workers take the lead" a correct slogan, for the revolutionary movement in general and for the Black liberation struggle in particular. And the RU argued no, because in the Black liberation struggle we felt it promoted sectarianism toward non-working class strata who had to be united with. Even though, we stated and we stressed, as all communists recognize, that it is absolutely necessary to fight for proletarian leadership and to

develop the working masses of Black people as the main force in the Black liberation struggle, still that is not won by declaring it but by winning it in practice and by building it in practice. And in the general working class movement to declare that one section of the working class, one nationality, has to lead is to pit different sections against each other. Then you get people jumping forward and saying "What about Chicano workers, or Puerto Ricans or whites" and all the rest of it. Our objective is not to divide the working class by nationality. That's the objective of the bourgeoisie and it works at it every day. Our objective is to fight against that division and to raise the slogans that unite the working class in struggle, with all its allies and in particular with the liberation struggles of the oppressed nationalities. Raise slogans like those which were raised by the RU and which rallied several thousand workers around the country on May Day this year, slogans like "Workers Unite to Lead the Struggle Against All Oppression." And within that to raise especially the question of national oppression. This, we believe, is the correct approach.

The second question that divided us was the question of revolutionary nationalism. Is revolutionary nationalism the same thing as communism? Is there an equal sign between them? When you say that a Black Marxist-Leninist must be a revolutionary nationalist, do you mean that ideologically they're the same thing. We said no. It wasn't just what we said; we learned from the Chinese who said the same thing in their 1963 polemic against the Soviet revisionists, "The world outlook of the working class is internationalism and not nationalism. But in the practical struggle, the proletarian party unites with revolutionary nationalism and opposes reactionary nationalism."

We've been told that in a public meeting a couple of days ago, that at least the PRRWO (and that it probably goes for the BWC as well, although we haven't seen it in this pamphlet here) now recognize that they were in error on those questions. That, in fact, they did tail behind bourgeois nationalism and even fell into Bundism, that is the idea of separate organizations within the working class or the working class party

according to different nationalities. And, we were told, on the other hand, that this was because the RU brought forward the slogan of saying that "All nationalism is nationalism." That's true, we did bring that forward. But, first of all, we brought it forward in opposition to the idea that revolutionary nationalism and communism are the same thing ideologically. And, second of all, we always explained and struggled for the line that the nationalism and especially the political struggle of an oppressed nation can, has, should and must play a very progressive role. Where, of course, there can be no such thing as progressive nationalism of the oppressor nation.

These were the differences that divided us, and now we're told that at least PRRWO, and very probably also BWC, recognize that they were in error and in fact falling into bourgeois nationalism and Bundism. Now, if this is the case, we think this self-criticism should be reflected in the document that recently came out from the BWC and should be reflected in a written statement by the PRRWO. Not because it's a case of one group scoring points on another, but because, as Lenin said, "The attitude of a party toward its mistakes is one of the touchstones of whether or not that party is serious." It has to probe deeply into its own mistakes, not only examine what they were, but to discover the roots of them. And on that basis to educate its own ranks and the class and the masses of people not only to what those errors were, but as to the source of them. If it does this, it's a serious party, and deserves to be called a vanguard. If it doesn't, it is not. We think that this self-criticism is good and positive but we don't think it goes deep enough. And, in fact, if it did go to the roots of it, the position of clinging to outdated analyses which were once correct but which no longer apply, would also have to be repudiated.

Now, we've been talking a lot about the so-called "ultra-left" or dogmatist tendency. But, on the whole, right opportunism is the main danger in our movement, and not "ultra-leftism." Everybody's got different ideas about who the "left" and right opportunists are, but that's one of the things we have to clarify. Now, why do we have to

clarify it; what's the importance of the struggle that's going on now? Because many people say, "Why is there all this struggle now in the communist movement? Why is everybody calling everybody else a 'left' opportunist, a right opportunist, a revisionist and so on and so forth. And how can all this be sorted out, and why is it going on? And why isn't it necessary to bury all this and to achieve some unity? Aren't we interested in uniting the ranks of the communists? Aren't we concerned about unity against the enemy. And it is exactly because this is what we're concerned about that we have to struggle sharply around erroneous lines in order to try to forge a common understanding and a common agreement around a correct line.

This touches on the question of what is sectarianism. We all agree that sectarianism is putting the interests of a small group above the interests of the masses of people, in whatever form it takes. And, at this point, at a decisive stage of the communist movement and the mass movement, when people have learned that they cannot continue to struggle separately but have to find the basis for unity, when the masses of people are looking for a direction forward to unite them in struggle against the enemy, even if they don't thoroughly or scientifically understand who the enemy is or what the problem is, it is absolutely necessary to carry on the struggle. And not behind closed doors, but out in the open so that everybody in the communist movement and all those who consider themselves revolutionaries can not only understand what group A says about group B or C or D or E, but that everybody can get involved in the struggle and can take part in the decisive process of determining what in fact is the correct line. What in fact is, which is what a correct line is, the objective reality we're up against, our understanding of that reality and how we go about changing it in a progressive direction. So it would be the essence of sectarianism at this time not to struggle openly—in full view so that everyone can take part—for a correct line. It would mean that we were putting the interests of a small, relatively isolated (because in that case it would be isolated) group of communists above the in-

terests of the masses. So, it's exactly because we want to unite not just the thousands who consider themselves communists, but the millions of oppressed and exploited people in this country and unite them with the hundreds of millions throughout the world in struggle against the common enemy, that we must have sharp ideological struggle.

But, in order for this struggle not to be sectarian, a couple of things have to be there. One, people have to put their lines out clearly and struggle for them. Not resort to rumor-mongering, not resort to slander and the rest of it, not resort to things which detract from the question of what is the line but in fact focus on the question, the key question of what is the ideological and political line.

And the second thing is that these lines have to be related to the practical struggles going on, have to be related, in fact, to how they affect the struggle of the masses of oppressed, which, of course, is hard for people to do who are not relating to the struggle of the masses. But, nevertheless, it must be done.

Let's look at some of the different lines and how they come down in practice around certain key questions. The October League puts forward an openly reformist and bourgeois line on every question. So we want to move on now to talk about the October League and the right danger. Again on the national question the OL's line is the same, the black belt is the key, except that they openly carry it to it's reformist, bourgeois-democratic logical conclusion, that is reduce it entirely to a bourgeois-democratic question, which this line in general does by ripping it away from its real proletarian thrust. They do this by promoting it simply as a question of democratic rights, tailing behind bourgeois forces such as Hosea Williams in Atlanta, Jesse Jackson in Chicago, what have you in the Black liberation movement. For those of you who have not seen it we would urge, because these question are crucial, that you read this article in the May, 1974 issue of *The Call*, which is the political paper of the OL, in which they run an article on Jane Pittman, a movie which was shown by CBS, sponsored by

Xerox, and which will be shown again this fall—and if people haven't seen it we suggest they check it out. And in this movie, to summarize it briefly, what it supposedly presents, although it's not actually the story of a real person of course, is the composite life of Black women living in the South for 110 years, exemplified by this mythical character Jane Pittman, living there from the period before the end of slavery till the early civil rights period in the early 1960's. And this film, and this presents Black women in particular and Black people in general in the South, presents absolutely no mass struggle. You would never know there were slave revolts, you would never know that 200,000 Black people fought in the Civil War, 35,000 dying on the front lines in the most decisive battles, you would never know the crucial role that Black workers played along with other workers in the development of the CIO and the organization of the industrial working class into unions and other key struggles. There are only two examples of struggle in the whole film. The first one, when after the slave are set free they go to a cabin and are attacked late at night by night riding KKK elements. The first woman to stand up and fight back is clubbed to death and so are all the others except Jane and a little boy and maybe one or two others who play dead and escape. The other example of struggle is a hundred years later when a boy named Jimmy grows up becomes a man, joins the civil rights movement and is killed. (You might say there is a third example—when Jane's son returns with some education and preaches self-knowledge for Black people. He's shot down—and the pitiful picture presented of him, refusing to resist, tells the disgusting purpose of the whole film.)

After 110 years of never engaging in any kind of struggle, this woman goes down and drinks out of the whites only fountain in the town and then dies shortly thereafter. Now, it's not surprising, this is the view that the bourgeoisie presents. The OL does two things, which mark it as aiding the bourgeoisie in fact. One—it says that this film shows that the plantation system remained intact during all of this period, which in fact according to any beginning analysis is not correct. The

plantation system was broken up beginning after WW II.

And they have joined with the bourgeoisie in attempting to deny the crucial role of Black workers particularly in industry today. Secondly, and more decisively, they come forward and call this film which is a slander on the history of Black women and Black people in general, and the whole struggle that went on, and they call it "one of the most progressive films to be shown on television in a long time." And they urge people to see it, which we agree, and they say it shows what in fact it shows the opposite of. According to them it shows how the struggle goes on, when in fact it's whole purpose is to show that there never was any significant struggle.

Now, again it's not surprising that the bourgeoisie puts this forward. And they put it forward cleverly. We have Cicely Tyson, who starred in "Sounder" who is also in this film, and it's tear jerking and it's moving, and it's the bourgeoisie's most clever attempt to rip the guts out of the Black people's struggle and to reduce it to a question of the most pitiful, passive people with the quiet dignity of the slave. And it's not surprising that the bourgeoisie and the slave owning class in one form or another put forward this view. But when a group that calls itself a communist group comes forward and praises it, then this can only indicate that they have fallen into bourgeois ideology along with tailing behind bourgeois leaders.

Let's talk about a few more example about how these things come down in practice. Recently as you know in San Francisco the ruling class took up a thing known as "Operation Zebra." And basic to this was that they claimed there was a Black group going around shooting down white people indiscriminately. And finally, with alot of pressure coming from the people they were forced to come up with a so-called composite description of one killer in particular. And the description they came up with is one that is typical—a Black male, medium height, medium build, age about 30 with a mustache. Now of course this was exactly for the purpose for which they used it, they instigated an operation dragnet, a terror campaign, rounding up of all Black men of that

age, searching them, shaking them down, putting guns to their heads—and all the rest. And they even tried to go the South African route, that is they wanted, after having searched someone, to issue them a card saying that this person has been checked out and is not the Zebra killer. Now, every time a Black person had to go out on the street they had to carry this card. Now, a lot of resistance naturally mounted against this.

Postal workers, bus drivers, dock workers and the rest, 500 people united in struggle against operation Zebra. And where were those groups that are forever presenting themselves as the great upholders of the Black liberation struggle, where were they to be found? Where were the forces of the BWC? Where were the forces of the Aug. 29th Movement? They were nowhere. Except slinking around on the sidelines. They did nothing to build the demonstration or to participate in it. And that's not accidental but flows exactly from the fact that the actual struggle that goes on in the world does not conform to their idealistic notions and that in fact the struggle of the people doesn't wait for them to study more theory but goes on every day. And we see the same kind of thing throughout the worker's movement and we see on the one hand forces such as CL condemning the working class as counter-revolutionary, other people saying that we can't really build the working class struggle until we have a party and study more theory because it's all spontaneity—in opposition to what Lenin said as I talked about earlier. And on the other side we have the October League coming forward at every point to promote trade union officials, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy as the leaders of the working class struggle, to promote the idea of total reliance and uncritical support for people who are running for trade union office who at best only partly reflect the demands in the interests of the workers like Arnold Miller of the miners union. We all can see the "left" and right lines coming at it from opposite sides but always denying support for the actual struggle of the masses. We can see the same thing on the international scale where for example CL attacks the Chinese Communist Party—not by name openly of

course—but attacks it as aiding the counter-revolution because the People's Republic of China seeks to unite broadly with different forces including certain reactionary governments in the world against the main enemy, the two superpowers. We see the CL doing that on the one side. On the other side we see the OL saying that because China carries on certain agreements and certain compromises with Iran for example, therefore the Iranian people should not struggle to overthrow the reactionary government of Iran or at least we in the United States should not and can not support their struggle without being "ultra-left" and sectarian.

We see the same thing around the question of Nixon, where certain people such as BWC say, don't touch that question, it's totally reformist. And interestingly enough we have the OL & the CL united around an openly reformist line. The CL says, "Nixon must resign, let's have new elections to determine who shall run the government." As if that's ever a question in bourgeois elections. On the other hand we have the October League which comes forward and says that "yes, we'll unite with Kennedy against Nixon because" (as we were told by one leading member from the New England area) "if we don't support the bourgeoisie's right to run for election, how can we defend the workers rights?" We would like to ask these people, have they ever heard of the dictatorship of the proletariat? Of course, if the bourgeoisie are actually trying to eliminate elections and strip away the right to vote even though we know that voting doesn't decide anything, we would defend that right. But our objective is not to defend the rights of the bourgeoisie—in fact, if you're worried about it, October League, the bourgeoisie is quite capable of defending its own rights, it does so all the time. What we want to do is smash its rights, eliminate its right to oppress and exploit and set up a dictatorship over it.

On the other hand, those who sit on the sidelines as some people did when we raised the slogan "Throw the Bum Out, Organize to Fight," don't know and can't know that the masses of people who were angry at what Nixon was doing, and who saw what he represented,

have learned—through the course of Communists linking up with this fight and exposing the whole system and not one politician as the enemy—they've learned more about the nature of the system and become more conscious about the objectives of the struggle, that it's not just one bum but it's a whole class of bums and a whole system that produces these politicians.

And this really is a crucial question on which I'd like to conclude, which takes us back to the first question—what kind of party are we forming and for what purpose? Because it's always the case that wherever people in this society are kicked around, oppressed and exploited they're gonna fight back. The question open to us is not, shall there be struggle or no struggle? The ruling class doesn't allow us that choice. The question is not, will there be sacrifice and bloodshed? Will many of our comrades and many of the masses of people fall in that struggle? That is not open to us because people are being killed all the time and the ruling class doesn't wait for us to fight back in order to kill us in a hundred different forms.

The question that's before us is not whether we struggle or don't struggle but will Communists join together with the struggle of the masses, bring the correct line to it, bring the militancy and the scientific understanding of the working class to it, learn from it, apply Marxism-Leninism to summing it up and on that basis lead the masses forward to unite them in the struggle for liberation and socialism. This is the purpose for which we want to unite with people and struggle to achieve unity around the correct line and form the new Party. This is the task that stands before us—revolution. Now I conclude on this. Lenin once said: A revolution is a festival of the oppressed. Now of course, our festivals are not like the festivals of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie is a decadent parasitic class and whatever they celebrate is decadent and parasitic. But when the proletariat celebrates it's a question of celebrating its struggle, when the masses of people rise up it is a festival. And this is true not only of the revolution in its totality but of every major battle in which the people fight and which contributes to revolution.

We were lucky enough to see some

home-made films of when the Farah strikers walked out of that plant, standing up in the face of the owner of the plant, Willie Farah, who told them, when they first went out on strike: You people—and you know what he meant by 'you people'—you "boozed up Latin kids," as he called them, you will never succeed in your strike because without me, you're nothing. Not only was he talking about the Chicano and Mexicanos but about the 85% who were women. And we could see in these films that people were beginning to break the links in the chain of oppression and beginning to exercise that festival. People came out and embraced each other, they danced in the street as they came out. As each successive wave of workers broke free from the plant they were greeted with clenched fists.

And the question that arises for Communists is: Are we gonna join with that, give it conscious leadership, unite it with all the struggles throughout the world and take it forward to revolution, or attack it in one form or other—from the "left" by opposing revolution to that concrete struggle and theory to that concrete practice of struggle—or from the right—by trying to drag it back and promote bourgeois leadership? Are we gonna pour cold water on that struggle and when people begin to break the chains of oppression are we gonna bring out our welding torch and reforge those links or are we as Communists in the struggle to unite around the correct program and form our new Party and on that basis go forward to lead the masses of people, to join with them? To give them the conscious leadership they need so that in the future and we don't know when it will be but it can't be too far off, the future generations of the working class will set up a museum and a school where they'll put all the things that we're now familiar with and suffer under all the oppression & exploitation and all the rest of it. They'll put it in a museum and they'll take the young generation growing up and they'll say to them: this is all we suffered under in the past and because we had the correct leadership of our Party, we've overthrown what produced that suffering. And this is all that we are struggling for today never to have to suffer under again.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION (From PRRWO): There's one thing we want to deal with straight off. We think there's a lot of other things that were raised but we're not going to deal with them; this is the principal thing that needs to be dealt with. After the Communist Party had totally degenerated, what was the principal aspect in that period in the contradiction between theory and practice. And how was it that that contradiction manifested itself—we should avoid falling into mechanical materialism. We believe that when there was no communist party the central task was to build the communist party. That we did have to study the theory of Marxism-Leninism, which is the summation of the practice of the international working class put in its most scientific form and laid out. Which sums up the general laws that govern history. One of those general laws is that the working class to truly liberate itself has to have its organization: the communist party. Up to now we're cool, nobody has any contradictions about that. But there is contradiction about that—a very fundamental contradiction. Because there was many references made to BWC and the PRRWO not seeing the application of theory to the concrete struggle. What is the struggle against opportunism if that's not a concrete class struggle? What is the struggle for clarity of a Marxist-Leninist line if that's not a concrete class struggle? We feel that concrete class struggle cannot just be manifested, although definitely it is manifested and we do not belittle the role of the spontaneous movement, the spontaneous movement of the working class is definitely something. Marx said many times that if the working class did not struggle for bread and butter issues that it was not worthy to struggle for the further issues, for the higher issues, for

the dictatorship of the proletariat. That was laid out many times. But the question is not that, the question is that there had been a communist party in this country, that had elements of bankruptcy within it. Stalin said many times that it was never a Bolshevik party. But nevertheless he also said that it would be a mistake, and this was before the time of its degeneration, it would be a mistake to say that from its inception all the work it had done was totally bankrupt work, because we recognize the fact that there was a fierce class struggle, we recognize the fact that there were Bolsheviks that were in that party. That because of its degeneration, many of them were purged from that party. Many of them left that party. Where did they go? They left that party but they did not leave the struggle. They knew, the Bolsheviks of that time knew, that a new party had to be built. Now saying that we have to get our feet wet, we have to go through a whole period, right, a whole new era the way it is whipped up—that there's a certain era where the movement in this country had to get its feet wet, had to have some kind of experience and stuff like that, that it had to learn for itself, all by itself, disregarding the role of M-L, regardless of the fact that there are conscious elements, that there were conscious elements in the society, there were the advanced, people who in the course of their dedication did turn themselves and did strive to turn themselves to understanding the workings of the system. And who in the course of that dedication to the organization and the education of the proletariat struggled and struggled and because of that they are the advanced elements of society. Those advanced elements in society did exist at that time. They're always small, but they have to be rallied. And the way

they're rallied is by putting out the M-L line and struggling against opportunism. Because we do believe that truth develops in the struggle against falsehood. And studying this opportunism and beginning to call together these advanced elements to build the party is the central task and was the central task. Now a lot of times what's been referred to is that means that we're making no connection between theory and practice, that there's totally no connection. Well we don't say that. 'Cause we say there's some kind of practice going down when we're talking about building a party. That concrete practice is studying, that's one very important aspect of it. That concrete practice is... training yourself in the organization and education of the proletariat. And as the advanced elements are brought together, 'cause if we check out the history of revolutions everywhere, check out the Russian revolution, the Chinese revolution, what was the central task that faced them people?—The Iskra organizations. Of course the Iskra organizations did not declare themselves to be the party. But what was the function of the Iskra organization? What was the function of the Iskra? Those leaflets that were written by Lenin, that agitational propaganda, we got to remember they had built an organization of the advanced with the expressed purpose of reconstituting a party that had been totally bankrupt. And that was the central task of the Iskra organization. And it did involve itself in agitation but it primarily dealt with the question of training in Marxism-Leninism, the struggle against opportunism and the consolidation of the advanced forces for the building of the new party. What we want to say is that this formulation of the RU that there was once one period when there is no party, that the central task was not to build the party, that the central task was to get your feet wet, to get into practice, that creates a contradiction. The principal aspect of that contradiction is opportunism, but more than that it is revisionism because it is revising what was the concrete practice and history of the struggles of the advanced elements in the society to build the party. We feel that that is a distortion of what does go down. It does not mean that we see no connection between

theory and practice, 'cause you have to—the fact that we're not armchair revolutionaries, you have to—cop to that. We do not see that there is a total divorce, that there is a big gap between theory and practice. And that the RU's formulation revises the fundamental practice of the international communist movement which is summed up in Marxism-Leninism.

ANSWER: Okay, I'll just respond briefly because there's so many people. I think that what I read earlier is in contradiction to what you said. Especially with Lenin. In fact, Lenin and Stalin said there was a stage of mass agitation and involving ourselves in the mass struggle. I think what you ran down is proof of what I've been talking about. Because when you talked about class struggle, the only form you talked about was struggle within the communist movement. The way to build a party is by building a party. That's essentially what you said. We're going to build a party by studying theory. Yeah, we're going to have practice linked up with our studying theory, our practice is our study of theory. We can go on arguing over and over again about central task, but I think the key question is why is it now possible to form the party. And I think it is now possible, and it wasn't possible a few years ago, exactly because people have been out, have learned something and the basis of our programme has been created.

QUESTION: I have just two questions. You stressed in opposition to PRRWO and the Congress that the party has to built as a detachment of the class, the advanced detachment, which is correct. And it is true that PRRWO and the Congress don't understand that. And the examples you've given in your literature and you gave today that you are building the party as a detachment of the class are the successes of Outlaw, the postal organization which led the struggles of postal workers over work schedules and today you brought out a demonstration of 500 people,

cadre, workers, students, so on against Operation Zebra. Now, the question is as follows: In Russia in 1896, in that book that you quoted from it's stated that the St. Petersburg group led a struggle of 30,000 workers against the Tsar. That's two years before the formal establishment of the party and about eight years before the actual establishment of the party. On May 4th, 1919, those who were to found the Chinese Communist Party led the May 4th movement of several hundred thousand workers, peasants and students. And Mao because of that work was elected the head of 22 affiliated unions just a couple of months after the party was formed. Same thing applies to Albania, a massive anti-fascist movement before the party was formed and the same thing applied to England where the party led a shop stewards movement that consisted of hundreds of thousands of workers demonstrating against the government. In short, when they called themselves the vanguard it was because they were the vanguard, they led the masses of workers. Who from the RU can now make that claim that they now consist of the vanguard, that they are part of that vanguard? Who has led a political struggle, not just struggle for wages in a given shop against a single employer, not the struggle of a tiny handful against a bad law? Who has united the Black and white en masse? Who can call themselves the vanguard? And who is the self-proclaimed vanguard? That's the first question—how can you call yourself the vanguard in light of that history?

The second question concerns your criticism of PRRWO where you quoted from Volume 2. You quoted a leaflet, I think it's called "To the Workers at Thornton Mills," which was a leaflet that Lenin wrote to facilitate the economic struggle, which of course communists must do. And you said that you were bringing this out to show PRRWO that they shouldn't be one-sided, that communists who are building the party must engage in mass struggle. Now, there's another leaflet in that Volume 2, which you one-sidedly forgot to mention. It's called "To the Tsar's Government" and it's a political leaflet, political agitation. And it was through such kinds of agitation that the masses were won to follow the

leadership of the St. Petersburg League, and therefore that strike of 30,000 took place. Where has the RU as you put it in a lively way and in the workers lively language—in the defunct Workers Committee to Throw the Bum Out, where have they successfully rallied masses to the political struggle against the government? I'm asking you on what grounds you call yourself the vanguard or to say that you are in the position to consolidate the vanguard?

ANSWER: I think you are making the opposite error from the people from PRRWO. First let's clear up one thing . . . if there's or was anybody here or any organization that was already the vanguard then we wouldn't have to be talking about forming the party. It's a question not of organization, it's a question of line, a question of struggle for what is the correct line and how to concretize that into a programme.

Now we think it is very important to learn from the history of the communist movement, and to apply the lessons of it. And even to see the similar phases that perhaps movements went through. But the most important thing is to sum up the development that we ourselves are going through according to these principles. And what we're saying is that the development of the party and revolution in other countries, while there may be similarities—and certainly the lessons and generally the principles are the same—the exact process will never be the same. When the Chinese Communist Party was formed it was formed with 12 delegates representing 70 members. We'll probably have a few more than that, but it won't have as many as the CPC has today—28 million. But that's not the crucial question, how many we have.

The crucial question isn't is there any particular group which already leads the masses. Because the leadership, particularly in this society out of which we're coming, has to be won in the course of struggle. The key point is can we come together, struggle, develop a correct line and concretize that into a programme that can tell us how to unite all of the Marxist-Leninist forces or all those that can be united around that programme to actually begin leading the

mass movement in a more concentrated and correct way, and to unite. Because a lot of people have come forward, a lot of people have come out of the movement who consider themselves Marxist-Leninists, and if we don't move forward and concretize that politically into a programme and organizationally into a party we're going to be set back, we're going to be splintered apart. Bourgeois leadership and bourgeois influence in the various movements of the people is going to grow. Our ability to sum up the general experience of the revolutionary movement will be much more limited if we are isolated in separate groups than if we draw together all those who can be united around a correct programme to go forward to do it. See that's the key question we're relating to, not who now can declare themselves the vanguard, that's not our purpose.

The purpose is to decide in fact through struggle and through summing up the experience we've been through what is the correct programme and how to unite the forces. What will determine the vanguard, as opposed to 2, 3, 5, or 15 groups that may arise or already are there that call themselves the party is that that organization has in fact a programme which tells what are the key questions confronting the masses, how to apply Marxism-Leninism to solving those, developing struggle, and moving it forward, and on that basis they actually win the leadership of the masses through the course of struggle. Because that's what's going to have to happen. The vanguard, the party, even long after it's formed and even to a degree after it achieves together with the masses the overthrow of the bourgeoisie is still going to have to win the allegiance of the masses.

As I said, the CPC has 28 million members, and that's a few more than we'll have when we form our party. But nevertheless that's a very small percentage compared to the 800 million people in China. Every day it's a question for that party of applying its programme to winning the following of the masses of people and if it doesn't do that correctly, if it deviates from the mass line, if it doesn't learn from the masses and sum that up according to Marxism-Leninism it will cease to be the vanguard of the

proletariat and degenerate into a bourgeois party.

So this is what we're talking about— it's not the RU declaring itself the vanguard, it's not one group saying we're going to build the party, but it's different ML forces, individuals and groups coming together to struggle over what's the correct line, concretize that into a battle plan, a programme, and into a general staff, the party. If we don't we're not just going to be able to plug along, we're going to be seriously set back.

QUESTION (PRRWO): To begin with, Bob Avakian mentioned the St. Petersburg League of Struggle and it seemed that he equated the RU with the St. Petersburg League of Struggle. In referring to the history of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, Lenin, Stalin wrote, the Central Committee in the Soviet Union clearly laid out that the St. Petersburg League of Struggle was a rudiment of the revolutionary party of that period. Meaning that it was the reflection of a party, it was not a fully developed party in that period. After Lenin got exiled, the leadership of the SPLS became communist. When Lenin came back he had to learn from the SPLS and in that process begin to build the Marxist party. And Lenin in that period clearly laid out that the first duty of Marxist-Leninists, in that period it was just Marxists, the first duty of the social democrats, rather, was to build a Marxist party, and it was not to build the revolutionary unity and consciousness of the working class. We would also like to quote some other people. Engels in his work called *Correspondence*, put forward the first great step of importance for every country newly entering into the movement is always the constitution of the workers into an independent political party, no matter how long it takes so long as it is a distinct workers party. But the RU says that there was the end of a period. That end of a period is very similar to an economist theory in *What Is To Be Done?* along that theory of stages. Very similar. For the RU couldn't find the crossroads. Now the RU had the former task, and the PRRWO and the BWC also had the former task which we repudiated as bowing to

spontaneity. The RU put forward that they had the central task of building the revolutionary unity, consciousness and organization of the working class. But, in the history of the CPSU toward the end in the part called "Conclusions," Lenin says, "The unity of the proletariat in the epoch of social revolution can be achieved only by the extreme revolutionary party of Marxism and only by relentless struggle against all other parties." And if you don't want to refer to that, if you don't want to relate to that you can relate to something else. In *Red Papers 1, 2, 3*, on the question of United Front against Imperialism, you put forth very clearly that you could unite or could neutralize . . . It says "the Communist party must be based on the most oppressed sector of the working class and built among the most advanced sections of the proletariat as a whole. In this way, the minority of labor aristocrats who do actually benefit from imperialism by acquiring enough to own stock or little investing can be neutralized and possibly won over."

We also talk about labor aristocrats by the way. And this is what Stalin talks about in reference to labor aristocrats. "This strata of bourgeoisified workers or the labor aristocracy says Lenin who are quite philistine in their mode of life in the size of their earnings and their entire outlook is the principal problem of the second international in our day, the principal social, not military, prop of the bourgeoisie. For they are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the working class movement, the labor lieutenants and the capitalist class real channels of reformism and chauvinism. It is they principally who constitute the source of factionalism and disintegration, the source of disorganization and disruption of the party from within. Therefore, ruthless struggle against such elements and expulsion from the party is a prerequisite for the successful struggle against imperialism." That's Stalin talking about the question of the labor aristocracy. If you could refer to both principles it would be good. I just want to make one note on that. I hope you don't think that we apply Stalin on the labor aristocracy dogmatically, the same way you talk about the national question.

ANSWER: I'll say that we can't apply anything dogmatically. We have to apply it in a living way. I think that the crucial question about the labor aristocracy (unless you're talking simply about George Meany, Woodcock), but if you're including in that skilled workers like plumbers, electricians, carpenters, and what have you, the crucial question is that the party cannot be based on those sections of the working class. If it is, it's bound to be a reformist party, because that is the social base for reformism and accommodation to the system. But there's a difference between what's the social base of what the party has to be which is the basic proletariat and particularly the industrial proletariat, on the assembly lines and so on. That's what has to be the main social base of the party, although the party draws its forces from other classes, whoever can and does take up the stand of the working class and fights in its interest can join the party and should. That's the social basis for the party, the industrial working class.

But at the same time, the party, if it's going to lead the working class to revolution has to in fact unite with and win over as many sections of other people as it can. Including skilled workers, including sections of the petty bourgeoisie, or do you believe that you can unite with sections of the petty bourgeoisie and not with the skilled workers? I think that would be a totally mechanical and incorrect concept. In China, for example, certainly they didn't base the party in the national bourgeoisie . . . The party represented the working class, not even the petty bourgeoisie in its ideology. But, at the same time, the party in China, even during the stage of socialism Mao says in "Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People," even in that stage they tried to win over or neutralize the national bourgeoisie as much as possible. The other thing you raised was about the first duty and so on . . . it does say that in the end of CPSU and it refers to Lenin's writings on who the friends of the people are and how they fight the social democrats. And let's look at Lenin's point in that article. It comes right before the part I read about how theory can't be said to be primary over practice. But even before that he

says in describing the actions of the Narodniks (in other words, kind of the do-gooder anarchists) who wanted to go out and build a revolution on the peasantry and ignore the fact that capitalism was developing in Russia, he said that the working class could not and must not join some kind of loose democratic party with all these petty bourgeois elements—the Narodniks and the rest. But instead their first duty was to form their own party. Now of course, in that context, Lenin was absolutely right, and in general Lenin was stressing (and Stalin points this out in the document which you read from), that the party of the proletariat must be brought into being as soon as possible. But the crucial question is that even before these organizations were formed, (you mentioned for example that Iskra was formed, or somebody earlier did, and you mentioned the League of Struggle), even before the question of the party was immediately on the agenda, even before they could in fact approach the question of forming the party, they had to do what had not yet been done. And that was they had to connect the Marxists up with the working class. And this is a crucial process that had to go on in this country too because otherwise what are we here for? Otherwise we can quote back and forth all night long, but if we're not here to build a party that can lead the working class and the oppressed nationalities out of the situation that they are in, or if we think we can do that simply by studying theory without in fact having gone to the working class, and begun the process of linking up with the struggle as Lenin stressed, then in fact we're just going to be bankrupt and our party's going to be a paper party.

QUESTION (From the OL): You state in *RP6* and in previous forums like this, you consider narrow nationalism as opposed to white racism to be the main danger within the communist movement. How can you say this, especially in the face of the fact that white racism has been the main danger in the communist movement in the past, in the

form of liquidation of the national question by the CPUSA when it turned revisionist, and of the racist attacks by the Progressive Labor Party against the Black Panther Party and other progressive Black nationalists of the time. Since that has been the main danger in the past and also since you failed to uphold national unity of the Black people by opposing a Black united front of the Black people, (especially when people such as Hosea Williams are in fact opposing fascist attacks in Atlanta and opposing imperialism thereby). How can you hold this position when in the national interest of the Black people a Black united front is called for.

How can you say that this united front is not possible when in fact Mao Tse Tung, in the interests of the Chinese people, upheld a united front even with such as Chiang Kai-shek when it was in the interests of the Chinese people? How can you not uphold even such a thing in the interests of the Black people? In the light of these two things, since you consider narrow nationalism the main danger, and the fact that you do not uphold the national unity of Black people, but instead talk of a nation of a new type, don't you think you are slipping back into the racist type of rhetoric that the Progressive Labor Party used to hold to when it never upheld anything as progressive unless it was "proletarian" enough for them?

ANSWER(BA): I'm sorry, I didn't hear the last part of what you said, could you repeat that?

QUESTION: I said, don't you think that these policies you're putting forward especially with regard to the national question pertaining to the Afro-American people in the United States are reminiscent of the way the PLP used to attack all progressive movements among the Black people which did not stem from the proletariat as they understood it?

ANSWER: Well that one's easy—no. As far as your thing about Hosea Williams,

you see our whole point was that the OL consistently tries to promote Hosea Williams as a leader of that struggle. When Hosea came forward with the line that we should fill the jails, the masses of people responded with the line of let's fill the streets; the people were tired of filling the jails. Now, the second thing is you raised Chiang Kai-shek. Now you see you are getting totally muddled and confused and I guess you're trying to invent now an intermediate—not only a new democratic stage—but you pose the situation where at least for the Black nation, if not for the country as a whole, there's not only the present ruling class to deal with, but some foreign invaders. Because when Mao Tse Tung led the Chinese workers and peasants in uniting with Chiang Kai-shek, it was done on the basis that not only was the immediate stage of the revolution not socialism, but was new democratic, but on top of it, that they couldn't even move immediately forward to overthrow all the landlords and big capitalists but first they had to get rid of the Japanese. So maybe you could explain who are the foreign invaders in order to deal with your formulation.

The other question that you raised, that's the question of narrow nationalism or white chauvinism being the main danger in the communist movement. I think that what we have to look at, for example, what Stalin said in 1934, specifically on this question of which is the main danger, and he said, it is not possible to decide in the abstract which is the main danger. It is not possible to have a recipe. Both of them, of course, have to be opposed. The question of which is the main danger, he said, is whichever has not been struggled against enough and therefore it has been allowed to grow into the main danger. Now we make an analysis of this kind, in general, overall both within the communist movement and among the masses, the question of white chauvinism or racism as you call it, overall it is going to be the main danger, because we live in a class society and further we live in a society divided into oppressor and oppressed nations and nationalities. In general, white chauvinism is going to be the main danger, just as in general practice is principal over theory and just as in

general revisionism is more of a danger than dogmatism. But, we are dialectical and we know that things can change ... sometimes dogmatism can be more dangerous than revisionism and theory, as we are discussing now, can at certain times be principal over practice. We say that today among the masses of people obviously white chauvinism, or racism as you call it, is the main danger. And it is more dangerous because it represents the unity or the tendency to unite with the ruling class of the oppressor nation, whereas the tendency to unite with the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation does not represent as great a danger because in fact, as Lenin said, the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nation, even that has progressive democratic aspects which we have to support. Whereas obviously the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressor nation cannot have any progressive aspects.

However, what is true among the masses and what is true in a general overall sense is not necessarily true in the communist movement at any given time. And if we look at the development of our movement honestly and scientifically, and not try and do what you did—which is find on what basis of subjectivity can you unite against the advanced forces—then we can see, we can see that in fact all of us here, whether Black, Chicano, Asian, Puerto Rican, white or what have you, have been tremendously influenced by the development of the revolutionary national movements in this country which developed in the mid to late 60s and which produced a lot of revolutionary fervor and revolutionary ideas. And those struggles reached a high tide in the late 60s, but at the same time since then there has been a temporary ebb in that mass upsurge, and the masses of people and many revolutionary forces have come forward out of that and looked for a way forward.

Exactly because that influence has been so great during the time, as we all agree on tonight, that there has been no party, there's been no single Marxist-Leninist working class leadership, there's been no highly developed working class movement or not deep communist base in the working class, some of those incorrect ideas which were also

a part of that struggle for all of those reasons that have been brought forward had tremendous influence not only among the Black people, the Puerto Ricans, but among the general movement. And because these have not been recognized, as PRRWO says, they themselves have made the error of equating revolutionary nationalism with communism. This was done generally in the revolutionary movement, even among whites, and therefore they tailed after bourgeois nationalism.

Now, we've said and emphasized that at no time can we afford not to struggle as sharply as possible against white chauvinism. We've said that in *RP6* and we've always emphasized it and always struggled against it, both within the organization and at the level of particular political line, as for example the struggle against PL. But at the same time, while that struggle has to be intensified as we say, what has to be carried out has to be the correct line, we have to recognize that what has been the main danger for the reasons that I outlined, has been narrow nationalism. And we think that the developments towards people taking up Marxism-Leninism, seriously studying and trying to apply it to the Black liberation struggle and elsewhere means in fact that the bourgeois nationalist tendency even within the communist movement is increasingly being struggled against and this should be built on.

QUESTION (OL): Yeah, what I wanted to say was this thing around reformism or whatever that you all struggled about the OL that we follow Jesse Jackson or Hosea Williams ... Now I'm not saying that the people I just mentioned are not opportunist at times, but I'm saying that Jesse Jackson called a demonstration in Chicago and more than 2,000 people came out. Now, I'm saying that he's got quite a bit of power. Now the RU could not call out that many people, nor could the OL. And so what I'm saying is that our strategy for a Black united front is to unite with whoever you can on whatever issues you can, to your advantage. Now they might be opportunists, but to unite with Hosea Williams to lead

people on a march, on a demonstration to get rid of Chief Inman who is a fascist, that is not opportunist and so that is why we could work with Hosea on that. Hosea has more people, he has more leadership than we do. And in order to expose his opportunism you cannot stand over on the side and say hey Black people don't listen to Jesse Jackson don't listen to Hosea Williams because he's an opportunist—because they're not going to dig that, especially coming from somebody white. What you got to do is you got to work with the people—unite with and expose it to the people when you see it. But they are not opportunist when they are serving the people then it's not reformist to work with them, it's common sense.

ANSWER: I just want to say that it often is the case that you have to unite with people who are under the influence of opportunists and that may force you at times to have to be in the same coalition, the same struggle with people who are opportunist, but then your objective has got to be expose them and not to promote them as leaders. And that's the dividing line because this is what you've been doing.

FROM OL:—Nobody promoted the, nobody in the OL ...

AVAKIAN: Well, anybody who reads *The Call*, anybody who reads that article you wrote on the demonstration in which Jesse Jackson, Leonard Woodcock, and other forces representing Kennedy essentially, called in Chicago and saw that you raised no criticism whatsoever of it, can see clearly that you are promoting and putting forward those people as leaders.

FROM OL:—And anybody who attends any national struggle of Black people can see RU always on ... okay what I'm saying is anytime you see a national struggle going on like the one in Atlanta, where there was a Black person murdered, well RU was there, but they were not marching with the people, they

were standing on the side ... and to me I feel that if you spent as much time struggling with your racist chauvinist errors as you did trying to come down on people, you know, then you all might be a halfway decent organization.

CHAIR: We think that you're full of shit ... and I'm going to give you one example of the OL's practice. We are going to answer this. In N.Y.C. recently, Thomas Shea, a policeman, murdered Clifford Glover, a young Black boy, and at a demonstration around a police hearing on Thomas Shea, OL appeared under the slogan "Throw Shea Off the Force"—with one of your open members carrying a sign which had a Black policeman holding a child, and she had drawn in to the poster, which is a commercial poster promoting the police force, the Black policeman saying "Throw Shea Off the Force," and the Black child saying, "Now." Now we say that what that does it totally turn around any class forces, says you're going to have a pure police force, promote some kind of so-called Black policeman as a hero of the Black community, etc. Now we think that that is a real example of the OL's role in a national struggle ... We do not tail after the most backward elements.

QUESTION (From BWC): I just want to say one thing, that is that all opportunists distort the facts and for proof of that, and the way to learn how to distinguish the sham Marxists from the genuine is to study Marxism-Leninism. Our pamphlet is out, you have misquoted us and distorted the facts. Now, number 2, you say that BWC and PRRWO weren't totally opportunist, but are leaning toward that camp. Now we'll agree with you on that fact only because we repudiated that (the line they formerly held in agreement with the RU) and we still hold the same line that you run about party-building. Now I want to get to one fact. You kept saying today that the dogmatists quote M-L and you stood up there tonight and you quote M-L, but

when we quote it we're incorrect but when you quote it you're correct. Now I want to get down to the thing about the united front because you pushed that a lot in your paper, trying to attack OL, and we want to talk about your united front. In *AP* 1, 2 & 3 you stated that it is not necessary to have a communist party in order to have a united front. Now that is definitely against M-L, that the united front is a proletarian strategy for socialist revolution and is led by the communist party. Now when you say that you can have a united front without a communist party you are also laying bare that you can have a united front with all strata which also includes the party of all the people which also OL was pushing, which shows you have unity between the left and the right.

And I want to say another thing since I know you're going to be hopping over the next issue about how you all won a victory over Nixon, you say in your June issue that there is a serious split between the ruling class. There isn't no serious split, there's a tactical difference, they both have on the agenda the oppression of the masses of people at home and abroad.

And then I'm going to ask you a question on the party. Now in the June issue and the May issue of *Revolution* you state that now the concrete conditions are ripe, that before the masses and communists had to sum up, the communists had to get into the mass movement and sum that up ... My question is what is Marxism-Leninism Mao Tse Tung thought? My other question is you also said that now the concrete conditions are right, that now we have come to the task and that it is practical and possible. Now we also know that if you would check out with the people in China, the CPC, the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, the CP Albania, that it has always been the case that the central task has been to rebuild the party. And now you said that that is not the task until the young communist movement has summed up all their experiences. The masses have been in struggle irregardless of the communists, there were advanced people, there were workers in the CP that left the CP. Where are they? Now what I take from that is that what you're saying is that RU has to sum up their practice. You try

to push on OL and CL to cover up your right opportunism, which is the main danger in the communist movement today.

ANSWER: I'll just say a couple of things briefly. You're not dogmatists because you quote Marxism-Leninism, you're dogmatists because you don't apply it. That's what makes a dogmatist, not the question of quoting or not quoting.

Another thing is, that on the question of united front, you said something to which we agree and which you just illustrated. All opportunists misrepresent the facts. Because, what we said in *RP2*, for example, and that is what I think you were referring to, is that while the consolidation of the united front has to have a party to lead it, we don't have to wait for the formation of the communist party to begin the process of building a united front. Those are two different things. And that it was in the context of beginning that process that we would establish the basis for the party. Now as far as who has to sum up what, the clear facts are that it is not only the RU, but it is the thousands of people who consider themselves communists who have in fact, even if today they want to repudiate it, tried to apply Marxism-Leninism. Because that summed up history—that Marxism-Leninism—is not good if you just stroke it as Mao says, it's only good if you apply it and in the process learn more about the concrete reality that you're dealing with. And that's what has to go on, and it's on that basis that people have developed as communists, groups have come together with a beginning line understanding, and it's because there has been practice that what the communists do now does influence mass struggle. That provides the raw material for summing up according to M-L and developing the correct programme. That's what's got to be done and the party is going to be built on that basis whether you like it or not.

QUESTION (PRRWO?): I'd like to raise my question in terms of the national

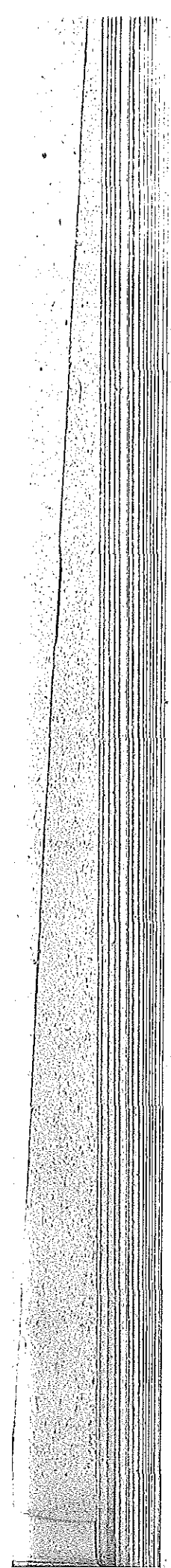
question. The RU puts out that it supports the right of self-determination of Black people, the Black nation, but it does not support, it does not agree with separation. You can't support self-determination but disagree with separation, because when Lenin and Stalin and those other brothers laid out their thing on the national question, they said, (I'm quoting from *Foundations of Leninism*, pg. . . . well, it don't matter),

"... the weight of emphasis in the international education of the workers in the oppressor country must necessarily consist in the advocating and upholding freedom of secession of oppressed countries. Without this there can be no internationalism. It is our right and duty to treat... any social democrat of an oppressing nation who fails to conduct such propaganda as an imperialist and a scoundrel. This is an absolute demand even if the chance for secession is impossible and infeasible before the introduction of socialism be only one in a thousand..."

Well, all I'm going to say is you all talk about self-determination but you don't talk about territory. You come up with this whole new theory of nation of a new type, I mean you never heard no Marxist-Leninist in the whole world talk about nation without a territory, so what you're resorting to is American exceptionalism, distorting Marxism-Leninism, to suit what you the RU wants to say. Now, in terms of the Black nation, there are five criteria and they do exist. The territory, the economic life, language, culture, history, all that stuff exists, right? And the Black nation is in the black belt south, right? Well, you know, right the Black nation is in the black belt south, and you distort the national question when you say now it's a proletarian question, but even if there's only 5% or less of the population in a certain territory, being the peasantry, the national question would still in essence be a peasant question, even if people become working class or whatever class they go into, so what you do is you distort things, right, you come up with this wild cockeyed theory that ain't never been heard of before, and in essence you raise the question to liquidate it. That's all I've got to say.

ANSWER: I guess we'll end by saying that we don't think that at the present time, if you're talking about real self-determination for the Afro-American people, you're talking about forming a nation in the Black belt now which is made up of 2/3 white and 1/3 Afro-American, you're talking about setting up an Afro-American nation. If you're talking about a separate economic life in the Black belt as opposed to the rest of the country, well then the criteria definitely do not apply. However, if you're talking about reconstituting people there and setting up a separate state, then we say yes, the right to do that exists. And we do distinguish exactly between upholding the right and advocating the return of people to the

South or advocating separation or what have you, and we can be perfectly consistent about upholding the right of self-determination and say that under the conditions that we can see right now, we can see that separation would be a step backward and politically oppose it. And Lenin stressed that many times, and that is perfectly consistent democratically as long as we don't insist on force, as long as we oppose the use of force, to settle the question, we are perfectly correct in arguing politically and it's our duty to argue politically with the masses of people about what in fact represents their real interests. And we will always continue to do that, that's not a new theory, that's consistent Marxism-Leninism.



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Speech on August 10, 1974 Newark, N.J.

In traveling around the country and talking at larger meetings and also having the chance to talk to people in smaller meetings, it's become very obvious that the revolutionary movement in this country has come to a very decisive point, to a very sharp turn in the road. We're up against a situation which is at the same time very favorable and very dangerous. The owners of GM, Rockefeller and the rest of those who exploit and oppress many of us in this country and in many ways oppress and exploit people throughout the world even more viciously and intensely—their system here and the entire imperialist system is in a great deal of crisis, a great deal of turmoil. There's a great deal of upheaval going on throughout the world. And all of this is overall very good.

You know our ruling class emerged out of World War II as very powerful, as the major colonial and neo-colonial power in the world, taking over from the battered imperialist powers of Europe control of Asia, Africa and Latin America. Great destruction and suffering was brought to those countries in the war. Our ruling class, on the other hand, was able to sit out a good deal of the war, was able to sit on top and watch the others fight and then was able to take over many of the colonial and neo-colonial areas of the world as well as to penetrate the economy and take over political control of even large parts of Europe and Japan. And in this situation, with the gun in one hand and the dollar in the other, it stood before the people of the world like an arrogant bully and dared anybody to do anything about it. And that's what happened. People rose up all over the world to do something about it, to fight back.

I was reading, and this is important because it will give an indication of

where we're coming from (you know it's always important to have a historical context, both long term and more immediate, which brings us here), I remember reading a handbook of the Marine Corp. You know the Marine Corp. They're supposedly the Bad troops that the imperialists have got. Those are the ones that, when nobody else will do it, they'll go in and do it. I remember reading a manual from the Marine Corp from the Korean war. When I was a kid I was always told that we went to Korea to defend democracy and we did a good job and we won. But later I read this manual from 1951 and describing the first 3 months, or I'm not sure if it's the first 3 months, but a 3-month period in the battle of the Korean war, this Marine Corp manual, which of course wasn't read by too many people, summed up what had happened after the Chinese volunteers had come in to fight beside the Korean people. And what it cited as the major victory of the Marine Corp during that 3-month period was that they were able to make an orderly retreat onto a ship one time.

Now that gives you an idea of the kind of defeat they suffered in Korea—not only the Marines but the general forces of aggression that the US sent into Korea. And this was the beginning of the decline of US imperialism, of the system that we live under, of the ruling class that we live under. It was already beginning to tumble from the top position that it had been able to grab coming from WW II. And this has set the general context that our own struggle and the worldwide struggle has gone on in over the past 20 years. Of course during most of it, most of us weren't conscious of this, but this was unfolding. And with the war in Vietnam and Indochina over the past 10-15 years and the much greater defeat that our ruling

class suffered there, and the inspiration that that struggle gave to small nations and countries and peoples throughout the world and to millions of people here, the decline of US imperialism and its role in the world has been greatly accelerated.

And within our own country during this same period we've seen tremendous mass movements arise. We've seen in the early 50s the beginnings of the Civil Rights movement developing. Spreading out from the Montgomery boycott of the mid-50s out of the south to the north and becoming in the mid- and late 60s a tremendous revolutionary storm which shook the very foundations of the rotten and reactionary system we live under. Which gave inspiration to millions of people throughout this country and which brought the whole fundamental question of the system that we live under very much directly onto the minds of the people. Which inspired an increased and intense struggle on the part of Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Asians and other people who are also oppressed as nationalities, as peoples within this country. And also to many youth and students and sectors of the working class of all nationalities.

At the same time in response to the growing exposure to US aggression and its more obviously ugly features in Indochina and Vietnam in particular, first thousands and then millions of people went into struggle. And again people learned a great deal about the totally rotten, reactionary and backward nature of the system we live under in the course of struggling against that war. And through the course of that period we saw rank and file movements developing in the working class, particularly as the contradictions of the system got sharper. The basic underlying problems of capitalism, that the working class is forced to produce under conditions of exploitation, in socialized conditions using very advanced means of production (that is, machinery and so on) and produces a great deal more than it can every buy back with the wages that the capitalists have to enforce on us in order to make their profit. These underlying conditions and all the things which had grown up around and above them, such as inflation, tremendous military budgets, in-

vestments overseas and all the rest of it, became an increasingly difficult problem for the rulers of this country to balance and to handle.

As the conditions of the people deteriorated, and there was sharper attack on the living standards of the working class, rank and file movements developed, which have been increasingly marked by the fact the workers have recognized that they're up against not only the companies, but, besides the police and the courts and bureaucracies, they're headed up against another head on a 2-headed monster—not only the companies, but the top officials of the unions themselves.

At the same time we've seen the development of womens' movements, struggles against oppression, in prisons, struggles like Attica, struggles against repression and more.

And I'm sure the great majority of people who are here tonight have come forward through all these struggles, have come to see that something is basically wrong with the whole system (which many of us sensed but have come to understand more fully), and have come to recognize that it's not simply one section of the people or one nationality that's oppressed, but that generally the masses of people in this country are exploited and oppressed, in different ways and to different degrees. But they're all catching on to the system, and a way has to be found so that these millions of people can unite in common struggle against a common enemy to overthrow this system of exploitation and oppression and to struggle to build socialism, which will eliminate the basis of all oppression and exploitation, the rule of the bourgeoisie. Because we could talk all night and not even cover a small part of the exploitation, oppression and degradation that comes down on people under this system.

Now in the Bay area, for example—we were out there a month ago. We were talking to a woman. Her name is Mrs. Shepard. She's the mother of a 14-year old Black boy who was shot down and killed by police last November. In response to this she began to work with a committee. She sued the city, but more than this she began to work with a committee. What she was thinking

about was simply the question, an important question to be sure, but a more limited question of getting the police who murdered her kid to be indicted and tried and convicted for murder. But in the course of it she's come to see the question much more broadly than that.

While we were talking to her she had on a big button, with a picture of her son on it. She said, "Tyrone Guyton, that's my son. I know I can never bring him back, but we're putting these buttons out to people, and we're raising this case because there's many many more people whose kids have been shot down. And there's many, many more people it will happen to until we put a stop to it."

And we talked about it more. We noted the fact that if you go back even a few years, even just the last 5 or 10 years, and you put on a button for every child and every adult, particularly if you're talking about Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican or other national minority communities, if you put out a button for every person who's been shot down and murdered by these pigs, you'd have to have a warehouse to take up all the buttons. And in the time that we're going to be fighting around this case—many forces in the Bay Area have come together to do that—we were talking about the fact that more people are going to do that—we were talking about the fact that more people are going to be shot down. And we talked about the fundamental question about why is that and what were we going to do about that and how do we eliminate this situation so that it doesn't keep happening, over and over again.

And so that even while we're fighting around one case, whether it's that one there or what happened with this pig Shea in Queens (Thomas Shea, policeman who killed 10-year old Clifford Glover in Queens—ed. note) or what have you, that even in the time we're fighting around it more people are shot down. That while the government comes out and makes a big lot of talk about eliminating more drugs, every week and every day, more kids who can sense that they have no future under this system, though they don't fully understand why, are shooting junk into their veins. Because the schools that they're going to are more like jails than

schools and they have no future there, and they can sense it. Even if they're able to stay out of the jails themselves.

We've been looking and we've been talking to many people. On the unemployment lines and other places, people who worked 30 or 40 years, who put their nose to the grindstone, who broke their backs every day, whose hands are covered over with 2 or 3 layers of callouses, physical defects and ailments, the wracking of their bodies, and why? Long ago, many of these people told us, they realized that it wasn't for themselves they were working any longer, that as long as things went on the way they were—and many of them hadn't yet come to see the revolutionary alternative—things weren't going to change much for them. But they were working for their children, they were breaking their backs so that maybe their kids would be able to have something that they were never able to have, maybe be able to get an education or get a little bit of skill and get a little better job.

And we look and we see—what is the future of the youth. We look and we see what is happening around. That even if they make it through school and don't get hung up on drugs, they go to Vietnam or someplace else. They're dragged off by the same people who are exploiting their fathers and mothers here. They're sent off to fight other people fighting against the same imperialist system, the same oppression and exploitation all across the world. And if they manage to escape death there, many of them come back hung up on junk.

We could go on and on and on. But the point is that this has gone on too long. The point is that it's time that we put an end to it once and for all. The point is that we get to the source and the root of the problem and rip it out at its roots. So what we're saying is that we need revolution. That's the most basic and fundamental thing that we start with. And we're not talking about forming a party for any other party for any other reason but that we recognize that in order to move forward, in order that we don't have to live like dogs, in order that our kids really can have a better future and their kids in turn after them, in order that our labor and our

work and our sweat can be for something productive for the majority of society according to a plan which society develops in the interests of the masses of people, in order for all that to happen and in order for us to assist our brothers and sisters throughout the world in that same struggle, we have to have revolution here. And we have to unite with revolutionary struggles around the world because they are fighting the same imperialist system, and a handful of rulers and a handful of countries that are holding back progress and liberation for people all over the world.

So this is how we approach the question that we need a party. And many of us have come to recognize that in the history of the world there have been a great number of struggles. People have always risen up in this and every country throughout the world. A great deal of blood has been shed. And many lessons have been learned and paid for in the blood of thousands and millions of oppressed people throughout the world.

In the era today, what we're dealing with is the capitalist system, the system of the appropriation of private property from the labor of thousands and millions here and throughout the world, particularly when this capitalist system has developed into a worldwide system, an imperialist system that sets up its operations and exploitation throughout the world. It is a system in which a small number of capitalists conflict with each other throughout the world for increasing domination, constantly striving to expand, in which they've already divided the world among themselves and are constantly going to battle to re-divide it, in which on a world scale there are literally tens of millions of people working collectively in factories and mines, in large scale factories as well as in small factories and mines and in agriculture to produce all the goods and everything that makes society turn and operate. With all those conditions in this era, to talk about revolution means in the final analysis that the working class has to overthrow all the reactionary classes, the imperialists and all those who stand with them, and together with its allies has to smash their police, their army and the rest of their apparatus of oppression, crush to

bits this ruling class and through force of arms prevent them from ever again restoring the system of exploitation and oppression and moving forward on a world scale together to a whole new stage of history—communism.

So the party that we're talking about has to reflect that understanding. It has to be based on the summed up, historical struggle of the oppressed and exploited people throughout thousands of years of society, which for thousands of years in one form or another has been divided into classes; and in which today on a world scale we find two basic class camps battling it out—the working class and the capitalist class. At the same time we see throughout the colonial world the masses of peasants and other oppressed people uniting with the working class against these capitalist-imperialists. This is the basic struggle that's going on on a world scale.

And in every country, the party that we have to talk about forming is the party of the working class. It is the class that at this stage of history is the only thoroughly revolutionary class. It's the only class in society whose interests are completely and totally opposed to all forms of oppression and exploitation, and whose form of organization of society is the only one that can advance it to a new stage. Because of the conditions under which the working class lives and the conditions particularly under which thousands of millions of workers cooperate collectively to produce and distribute everything, all the material requirements of life—these conditions, this collectivity, this cooperative effort of labor is what lays the basis for the collectivization and the cooperative effort of labor is what lays the basis for the collectivization and the cooperative planning and development of the economy and the collective and cooperative accumulation of surplus over and above what we need to live and the collective and cooperative allocation of that to the various things that we need to develop society and move it forward.

We need a party based on the working class, based on the ideas characteristic not of the working class at any particular time or of all of its members at any given time, but characteristic of

that class as a class, representing its historical mission in fighting against all oppression, in uniting all struggles against a common enemy and moving on to a new stage. This is what the party has to be based on.

And in this country when we're talking about the working class, we're talking about workers of all nationalities, or a multinational working class. And therefore we have to be talking about forming a multinational party.

Now many people these days are talking about a party. Many people are talking about Marxism-Leninism. Many people are talking about revolution. And this is increasingly so in the last few months and in the last year or more. And on the whole this is very encouraging because it means that people have learned through their own experience that other ideas, though for a while perhaps they could help move things forward, and other programmes, other than a programme based on the interests of the working class and the masses of people, may be able for a while to move things forward, but in the final analysis they can't provide the total solution and they can't point the direction as far as we have to go—to socialist revolution and to contributing to developing communism on a world scale. So on the whole this is a very positive thing.

Of course at the same time, whenever anything gains in influence and strength, gains support within the struggle of the people, we find that certain people who have opposed it before and in fact still oppose it, come forward and take up its banner in order to still continue to oppose it. And we find that people who in fact in the past maybe actually did stand for Marxism-Leninism, have somewhere along the way gone off the track, lost faith in it, lost faith in the masses of people, and while still clinging to their reputation and saying that they stand for M-L have in fact given it up and are opposing it in the name of raising it.

And all this is why we see very sharp struggle going on today, within the revolutionary movement, including within the communist movement, including those communist forces who are now struggling over the question of forming a new Party. Because a great deal has been learned within the revolutionary

movement and a great deal has been learned among the masses of people. A great deal of experience has been gained. A lot of advances have been made. We're not where we were 10 years ago. Collectively together, if we put our experience together, we've learned a lot. We've made many mistakes. We've also made a great deal of progress. And all of this is important to understand and to build on. But at this decisive stage especially there's a very sharp struggle going on within the society as a whole and within the communist and revolutionary movement itself.

How do we sum up the past experience marked by all those past events and struggles that I mentioned before? Because the masses of people have learned through their own experience, and some of it bitter experience, that while they can struggle and shake the system—for example, the Black liberation struggle, while it could deliver tremendous blows against the system and inspire struggle throughout the society, that in and of itself it could not bring down the system and bring liberation for the Black people or for the masses of oppressed and exploited people in this country as a whole. And this has been learned by many people, and there's a sharp struggle going on as to how you sum this up.

On the one hand the ruling class, the bourgeoisie, is coming forward and not surprisingly, in fact, predictably, they're bringing forward a defeatist analysis and summation of this. What they're saying to the masses of Black people and to the millions of other people who have drawn inspiration from the Black liberation struggle is that the whole thing was a waste of time. All that struggle of the 50s and 60s meant nothing. It didn't accomplish anything—all it did was get people shot down, all you did was burn your own homes and really what do you have to show for it.

And this has a ring of truth to a number of people, because the same fundamental problems are still there. Because the system is still there and in fact things are getting worse because the system is increasingly in crisis and coming down with sharper attacks on people. People can see this whether it's in housing and education, police shooting down people or what have you. And the ruling class is coming forward in a

hundred different ways to put forward this defeatist line, putting forward the line of "Look, if you want to do anything, the thing is to work within the system." "Accept it as it is and get the best out of it. Even come forward and hustle us, we don't mind!" 'Super fly' and all the rest of it. As long as you don't develop mass movement and revolutionary struggle, we'll go along with that. But if you do try to develop any revolutionary struggle you see what happens, you'll get crushed and you'll only be worse off for it when it's all through."

The working class and those forces, the communist forces that are seeking to represent the class, and the revolutionary struggles of the masses of oppressed people, are putting forth another analysis, the correct analysis, which says that a tremendous amount was accomplished, that we can see this by the very fact that the ruling class is coming around trying to convince people that nothing was accomplished. Because in fact if nothing was accomplished they wouldn't be worrying about it! They wouldn't be trying to tell people that they didn't accomplish anything. They'd just let things go on. But the fact that they're going around so desperately trying to buy people off on the cultural front, movies, songs, poverty programs and all the rest of it, this shows the fact that they were panicked by the struggle of the masses of Black people and other oppressed people in this country.

And what we have to learn is that a tremendous amount was accomplished; that what was shown was that we could stand up to the system and fight back. Whether we were Black, or white, or what have you. And that we could get united. They used to always say we couldn't get united, no matter who we were, but we can get united—all this struggle shows that we can come to recognize our enemy more clearly. We can begin to see who our allies are in this country and other parts of the world. But on the other hand, what was achieved in the past wasn't enough (not that it wasn't anything and should all be thrown out) but it wasn't enough. And what the masses of people are saying, although they haven't summed it up—they don't have yet the theory to scien-

tifically sum it up—but what they're basically saying to the revolutionary forces is show us how we can develop the unity as broadly as possible, because it's going to take broad unity in order to deal with this system.

You see, people are cynical, but the cynicism is not one based on so-called apathy, as the ruling class wants us to think. People are cynical exactly because they've learned more about the system, exactly because they've seen in sharper terms exactly how vicious it is and what we're up against. And they recognize that what we've done in the past cannot be repeated and won't solve the problems. What they're saying is "Show us the way forward. Give us the kind of programme, the kind of guidance that will help us to unite with the people we know we have to unite with, even if we don't particularly like them right now. We still know we have to unite with them. And in the course of uniting in struggle we'll learn to like each other. In the struggle and the fight against a common enemy we'll develop a strong bond. Stronger than any division that our enemy has been able to put in our ranks. But show us how that can be done. Show us. Don't tell us the same old stuff that you told us before because that doesn't take us far enough. and exactly because we have struggled in the past, the system takes us more seriously and is going to come down harder. So show us the way to unite, build, in fact, on what was accomplished, but take it to a higher level."

And the same thing has been learned within the communist movement itself. That over the 5 or 6 years different groups have developed at different times out of different movements. Mostly they've developed out of 2 places—the white youth and student movement and the Black liberation struggle and other revolutionary national struggles. And on the basis of this many people have taken up the banner of Marxism-Leninism, recognizing that the working class is the key force, and have gone to sink roots in the working class and to take the theory and begin to apply it and link it with the practical struggle of the workers.

This is still very young. It's very fragile. But we can see the fruits and the results of this. And we can see that

where this has been done the consciousness of the working class is developing and the struggle is beginning, only beginning, to develop beyond the elementary and more narrow, though important, day-to-day struggle for economic needs, and it's beginning to take on a political character.

This can be seen for example in the struggles of workers in boycotting the importation of goods from Rhodesia and South Africa. It can be seen in May Day rallies and demonstrations held around the country this year, which pulled together and united several thousand workers. That's not several million. That's not 20 million yet, but nevertheless it represents something important in advance of what has been able to be done in recent times.

And in other key ways we can see what is happening. We can recognize that the most decisive thing that is developing in fact is the sparks of political consciousness that are being generated in various struggles, including and especially in the working class.

And our enemy also recognizes the crucial importance whenever the working class begins to develop its class consciousness, begins to see things in a broader political way. For example—I'd like to give you this one example—it's something that happened a couple of months ago, in Birmingham, Alabama, where a number of different forces from the Black community, rank and file workers groups, community groups, communist groups got together and initiated a demonstration against the Southern Power Company, for 2 basic reasons—one that they were raising their rate hike and two, they were importing coal from South Africa. And at the last moment a thousand miners, Black and white, walked off their jobs and joined the picket line in front of the Southern Power Company.

And it's very interesting what happened, because one of the reporters from a local TV station came down there and he went up to one of the white miners and he said, "What are you here for? Are you here about your working conditions?"

And the guy said, "Yes, we're here about our working conditions, but we're also here to fight and protest against this slavery in South Africa." This re-

porter, he'd been watching too much Archie Bunker or something, and he scratched his head and he said, "I don't think I heard that right. Would you tell me, aren't you here about your working conditions?"

And the guy said, "Yes, I told you, we're here about our working conditions, but we're also here because we're concerned about the slavery in South Africa." And the reporter asked him a 3rd time, "But aren't you concerned about your working conditions?"

And he repeated the answer again, "Of course we're concerned about our working conditions. But we're also concerned about protesting the slavery in South Africa."

It was very significant what happened, and we should all learn from this. After that this reporter went over and did this little 15 second run-down on the demonstration and what he said into his microphone and what went out over the news was: "These miners are here because they're concerned about their working conditions." Now what he was understanding wasn't just a question of him. If he hadn't done it the TV station owner would have done it, because the people that own the TV stations are the same class that own and rule the country.

The point was that even more important than the immediate and particular act, the picket line and the particular and immediate demands that were being raised, more important was the question of the political consciousness that was beginning to develop, partly through the work of communists.

And our enemy recognized that and what they wanted to do when they saw that spark of political consciousness was to pour water on it immediately and to stamp it out before it could spread to other people.

They didn't want people who didn't come to the demonstration to see that people were fighting around this, particularly to see in this case that there were white miners there fighting around the question of slavery in South Africa.

They didn't want white people to know that, and they didn't want Black people to know it. And we should learn from that. We should learn that whenever this happens, while the ruling class is trying to pour water on these

sparks, we should be there fanning them into a flame and spreading them into a broader and a higher level of struggle. And this question: How do we react, how do communists and revolutionaries act in response to the struggles of the people that often break out without our "permission," how do we act when the masses rise up and begin to grasp some ideas? And this is the basic dividing line: do we run in there and try to pour cold water on it and douse any consciousness and narrow the struggle and limit it, or do we fan the flames, broaden the struggle and broaden and raise people's consciousness in the process, and point the goal toward revolution?

The kind of party we're talking about forming has to be the kind of party that does the latter thing. It can't be a party that's built by sitting on the sidelines in isolation from the struggles of the people, as certain groups, such as the so-called Communist League, the PRRWO, the BWC and the rest want to do these days, and preach at the people and say "We got the theory, we got the science. Relate to us, and until you do, well you're too backward anyway." We can't do that, nor can we run into the struggle and try to drag it off to the right or narrow it down, as certain other groups, such as the group called the October League, want to do.

This same question has arisen in every revolutionary movement. In 1927 in China, for example, masses of peasants rose up, and they did all kinds of impolite things. They overthrew the landlords and put dunce caps on their heads and paraded them around in the villages. They slapped them in the face and brought them down in front of the masses of peasantry in all the villages. As Mao Tse Tung wrote about it, they took matters into their own dirty hands and dared to raise up their heads. And not only did this make the landlords unhappy, but even certain people, in the Communist Party of China had an incorrect attitude. They called the people riff raff and they said they're going too far.

Some of you have probably heard this famous quote from Mao Tse Tung, "A revolution is not a dinner party, nor doing embroidery, nor writing an essay. It cannot be so refined. A revolution is an act of violence, an insurrection by which

one class overthrows another."

Now why did he have to write that essay? Because, as he said, all revolutionaries, all communists in China at that time were faced with the situation of the rising of the masses of oppressed people, in this case millions of peasants in particular. And they had essentially 3 choices: one, they could stand at the side and criticize; second, they could get in the way and hold it back, or third, they could join with it and lead it forward.

Now, obviously the first two choices amount to the same thing. Only the final choice is the real thing that communists have to do. Because the masses are always going to fight back. And the question for the masses of people in this country is not whether they're going to have to struggle or not—because we have to struggle to survive. We have to struggle to raise our heads and keep them above the muck that they're constantly trying to shove us into. The question is how soon is this struggle going to get a conscious leadership, a vanguard party with a correct line and a correct programme that directs us in linking up with all these struggles and pointing the direction forward.

For example, I and some other members of our organization have been fortunate enough to visit the Peoples Republic of China. One of the things that many of us saw there is a museum where they have a display showing the many peasant rebellions throughout the thousands of years of Chinese society. And you go through and you see the peasant leaders. You see the statues of them. You see the crude implements that they used, the spears and other weapons they used. You see the written documents showing the landlords' control over them. You see the leader of one of the rebellions there and then you ask, Well, what happened to the leader of this rebellion? And then the answer you get back is, well, he became a new landlord.

And in a way it's the same problem we've seen developing in our movement. Because there hasn't been a party, as there wasn't at that time in China which could give correct guidance and could maintain a correct line and which through criticism and self-criticism, and through being directly linked and ir

volved in the struggles of the masses of people, could keep itself revolutionary and could take direction and criticism by the masses to remain revolutionary.

We've seen in the course of the struggle many people go astray, get bought off or become opportunists and sell out the struggle, which in some cases they initiated and led in the first place. And this was also the case in China, and what they summed up was that what was most decisive in Chinese history was when a modern working class developed in China, and on that basis a Marxist-Leninist party could be formed, which could then represent the advanced thinking, the ideas characteristic of the proletariat, of the working class as a class in its historic mission of transforming the world.

So we're talking about the same thing here, that we need a party which has to have a correct line, which has to be based on the working class in its ideology, Marxism-Leninism, and which has to be able to unite in its formation all those who can be united among those who consider themselves communists, around a correct programme.

Now what do we mean by a correct programme? We mean a number of things. We mean that the programme has to state the basic objectives of the revolution. That is, that our fight is for socialism, for the rule of the working class following the armed overthrow of the capitalist class and its state machinery of repression—the police, army and so on. That our struggle is guided by Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse Tung Thought. That in fact we have to build a broad united front of all those classes and forces that can be united against a common imperialist enemy. And that that united front has to be led by the working class and its party. It has to include all that. And it has to include the fact that our final objective is to contribute to developing communism on a world scale.

But, in a sense beyond that and more important than that, it has to indicate what are the key question facing the masses of people around the country. One of the questions is clearly police repression and the murdering of many people in the country, particularly Black, Chicano and other oppressed nationalities. There are other key ques-

tions facing the masses of people at this time, unemployment, and other questions which this programme not only has to focus on and identify but give direction as to how to begin taking up these struggles and how to begin mobilizing and uniting millions of people around these struggles and through the course of it exposing the imperialist system as the cause, as the enemy, and lead people forward toward a revolutionary goal.

Now obviously in this country one of the crucial questions of a struggle for progress and for revolution is and has always been what's called the national question. And we particularly want to talk about the struggle of Black people for liberation. Because from the very beginning of this society the development of capitalism, and its further development into monopoly capitalism or imperialism, has always been directly linked and to a large degree based on the super exploitation of the labor of the masses of Black people in this country. First as slaves, then after Reconstruction and the Civil War as sharecroppers, still held on the plantation system basically as serfs under the rule of the planter landlords and the finance chiefs, the bankers and the big industrialists behind them in the North especially. And today, no longer on the plantation system either as outright slaves or as virtual slaves in the form of serfdom, but in the lowest conditions of the working class—suffering at twice the rate of unemployment, suffering super-exploitation not only in the job but in the community. Because it has been calculated, even by the bourgeoisie in this country, that to be Black (and this also goes to a large degree for Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and other oppressed nationalities) to be Black is to pay what they call an invisible tax of \$1000.

That is, even if your paycheck is the same as, say, a white worker working in the same job as you, who also is struggling and also is scrambling just to keep his or her head above water, nevertheless your paycheck if you're Black amounts to \$1000 less a year. Even if on it it says the same figures. And the reason for that is that you pay higher prices for food, for rent, higher interest rates if you can get a loan, in

many cases directly and even indirectly higher taxes. And this is not accidental. And it's not because some people have bad ideas in the abstract or are prejudiced. It's because there's profits to be made from it. Because it isn't a little small shopkeeper or a pawnshop owner or a little local grocer who makes this money, even if they are there, most of it they have to turn over to the bankers and big businessmen behind them. And there's a lot of profits—superprofits—to be made in doing this. Just as there's always been superprofits made in this country from the super-exploitation in various forms of the masses of Black people.

It's important for us to have a materialist understanding of this and all questions if we're going to be able to overcome the divisions which are put into our ranks on the basis of this superexploitation and oppression. Take cases that are happening right around here now. They illustrate the importance of having a scientific understanding. And we're not saying that we or anybody has a thorough understanding of all these questions, but we feel that it's important to base ourselves on the Marxist method of investigating what are the actual objective conditions and in particular at any given time to examine the relationship that people have to production, which underlie and give rise to the various forms of political, social, cultural and economic oppression that they suffer.

For example, we look around now and we see at the Stella Wright housing project and other places a tremendous problem of housing that's falling down. And the question is why? Why won't the city or the government do anything about it, except when they're forced to as they have been forced to? Why do they say, "To hell with it, let the people rot?" Is it simply because they, or others or white people in general have bad ideas? Well, a lot of people do have bad ideas, of all nationalities, but that's not the root cause of the problem.

The root cause of the problem, as best we understand it, is that during the period of the Civil War, and the 2nd World War, the most profitable means of growing cotton, tobacco, peanuts, sugar and what have you in the south, the means of making superprofits for the

people who controlled the economy was the plantation system, based on essentially feudal, not even capitalist forms of exploitation, particularly in sharecropping and other tenant farming.

This was the most profitable means of doing it, so that Black people were not allowed off the plantations, were forced through terror to be chained there. You remember "Buck and the Preacher" and the rest of it—they even let a little bit of it slip through now that it's "past history," but, of course, they never want the masses of people to correctly interpret this history and apply it to today's struggle. Terror and the KKK, the police, the army, whatever it took to rob Black people of ownership of the land and to force them back on to the plantations as virtual slaves—this is what the ruling class used. Because it was a means of making superprofits and not because somebody or other had some bad ideas in the abstract. Because profit, and more profit and maximizing profit is not only something that capitalists like to do, it's something they have to do. It's what their whole system is based upon, and if they fall behind in doing it they'll be shoved aside and gobbled up by another capitalist who is doing it more ruthlessly.

Between 1865 and 1915, 15 million immigrants came to this country from Europe. They were driven here—from Ireland, with the massive famine and starvation, with the poverty throughout west and east and southern Europe. Farmers were driven off their land in those countries and, unable to find jobs there, and having to leave even sometimes their own families and come here. They came to the industry of the North. But at the same time the masses of Black people were not allowed to move into the industry of the North because it was more profitable to concentrate them on the plantations in the South. It wasn't their fault for sure and it wasn't the immigrants' fault. It was the way the system operates. And of course in doing that it further helped itself by maintaining and developing divisions between those people and forcing them to compete for jobs.

But beginning in WW II, when there were no longer masses of immigrants to be drawn to this country, although there still were some coming. (Wherever these

imperialist go and wreck somebody else's country, they force people to come here, whether it's Mexico, or the Arab countries or what have you or even as far away as Korea or Taiwan.) But because there weren't the millions of immigrants to be drawn here, and because the war was going on the required masses of workers in the factories, for the first time, masses of Black people were able to get into industry and into jobs. This began with WW II, but became massive during and after WWII.

As this happened, particularly during the war, a lot of buildings were put up to house the people, not very well, but at least to house them when they came to work in the war industries and in other industries.

But as capitalism develops, it never develops evenly. It never develops according to a plan. It can never rationally decide how much housing should be built, how much steel, how much cement, how much plastics, and establish a balance between the needs of the people for housing, education and so on, and the needs to develop the raw materials that go into those things and the rest of it. Instead, it develops something here for a lot of profit and when that stops being profitable, the capitalists pull their money out of steel and put it into pornography. In this country they even have industries to feed off the problems that capitalism creates. It creates a drug problem, with hundreds of thousands of people and maybe millions hung up on drugs, and then an industry develops to produce methadone and other things to keep them further strung out. And that becomes profitable and then they don't want to cure people. And this is the name of the game and the order of the system.

And so they built this housing, but then the economy continued to develop unevenly, industry began to stagnate as the contradiction of capitalism grew sharper after the war. They found that more profits would be made by closing plants in the North and moving them South, or moving them overseas. Thousands of people were thrown out of jobs—particularly masses of Black people, but whites too and all nationalities. And then the ruling class' at-

titude was, very predictable and consistent with their whole system, "what the hell do we care about the housing, we don't need you here anymore, we don't want you here anymore, you can stay here and rot or you can get the hell out, we don't care."

So there's a reason why they built the housing in the first place, it had to do with making profits. And there's also a reason they decided to let it go to hell with all the other social services. And that also has to do with profit and is why they don't want to divert any funds for the social needs of the people. There's not enough profit to be made in it. There's more profit to be made exploiting people in South Korea.

So there have been tremendous changes, and today, we see that the masses of Black people who were formed into a nation after the Civil War and Reconstruction when they were forced back on to the plantations system, where they made up a large majority and suffered under an economic exploitation different from the rest of the country, we see that that nation, in large numbers, has been dispersed throughout the country. And at this time it's main form of exploitation is not as peasants on the land but as workers in industry and in urban areas in the North and South. And that the main struggle is against that super-exploitation, and at the same time against discrimination, police violence and terror, repression of culture and history, and general degradation that affects all classes of Black people, although it certainly affects them differently and to different degrees.

And what we see is required is to unite the masses of Black people together with people of other oppressed nationalities and the whole working class in the struggle against all these forms of oppression, and to link that with the general struggle for socialism. At the same time, we uphold equality between nations and nationalities, because the socialist state we have to build is not one that can be built on one group forcing another group, but only people uniting for their common interest in building socialism, which is the only way that any of us is going to get liberated. Because of that we believe that the question of the right to self-

determination, that is, the right to political secession, the right even to form a separate state, has to be upheld for the masses of Black people—on the basis of their having historically formed a nation, on the basis of the fact that there's no way they could achieve equality or freely exercise their will to determine what their relationship will be to the rest of the society under this system.

We don't advocate that Black people all go to the south, we don't think that breaking up the plantation system of controlling the plantation area is the key blow that the Black liberation struggle has to strike for the liberation of Black people, or towards the overthrow of the system and the building of socialism, but nevertheless we recognize that in order to build socialism, Black people have to be able to decide freely and on the basis of voluntarily and consciously building socialism that they want to stay and be part of the same state as others, and this cannot be forced on them.

This is why we believe that the working class as a whole has to be educated in the general right of self-determination, even though we don't see under these conditions why millions returning to the south and setting up a separate state would be a step forward. Nevertheless, the right has to be upheld in order to achieve equality between nations and in order in fact to move forward, unleash the creativity and enthusiasm of the masses of people for socialism on the basis of equality.

But immediately facing us and much more decisive than that question, is a question which I'm sure all of us here are concerned about. All of us recognize it as a key question. And that is how are we going to unite the working people and the oppressed and exploited people in this country, particularly how are we going to unite the Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican workers on the one hand with the white workers on the other. We know this is not going to be easy because the division and the super-exploitation of the oppressed nationalities is a touchstone, is a key part of the maintaining of this system on the part of our ruling class, and they're going to use every means to prevent the unity of the working class from developing.

We've had some experience that we'd like to share, and we'd like to hear and we'd like to learn from others on this question as well. Because in developing a programme and in forging this key unity, it's a question of all of us learning from each other and summing up experience, drawing on what's positive and correcting mistakes in it and setbacks.

But to touch on something which we do feel is positive and some lessons that we've learned in the course of it, I want to talk a little bit about operation Zebra, that some of you may have heard of. As probably most of you know, a couple of months ago in the Bay Area, the police started this manhunt, this roundup of Black people on the basis that supposedly there was this group called the Zebra group, a Black group which was going around indiscriminately killing white people and shooting them down in the street.

Finally, under pressure from the people in the community, they were forced to come up with a composite description of one of the killers in particular (you know, like on TV). And this was their description: the killer that they were looking for was supposedly a Black male, about age 30, medium height, medium build, with a mustache. Now, obviously, this could have been tens of thousands of Black people, Black males, in the area. And exactly what happened is that they began to hunt down Black men, drag them out of their cars, shake them down, put guns to their head, all the rest of it—up against the wall, hands on the car, all the rest happened to thousands of Black men generally fitting that description in the Bay Area.

The Mayor and the pigs even wanted to go the same route as the white supremacist government in South Africa. That is, they wanted Black people, after they had been checked out, to have a little card that said that so and so's been checked out and he's not the Zebra killer. And then they were supposed to have to carry this card around with them whenever they went out on the street, and if they were stopped they had to produce the card or else they had to go through this whole shakedown again.

In response to this, naturally people resisted. There were demonstrations.

And the RU took the lead in what turned out to be the largest of those demonstrations, uniting with a number of other groups. Uniting with people from the Black community, the Black liberation struggle, the Latin community, Asian community, and a number of workers of all nationalities, as well as students and others. People came off the job—bus drivers, postal workers, dock workers, and so on. Now in the course of this we further discovered something which deepened our understanding of how these things go on and how the struggle does down. Because, for example, one white worker we were working with, who had been involved in a lot of struggle, his initial response was that he didn't want to join the demonstration. And when we asked why, he said, "Well, how else are they going to catch this killer?" And we argued with him some more and he said, "Well, look, it's got to be safe for people to go out on the street." So we pointed out to him, "We agree with you that it should be safe to go out on the street. But what you're saying is that it should only be safe for white people to go out on the street. Because it's not safe now for Black people to go out in the street." And then he had to think about that and we had a lot more struggle. And because he was involved in struggle, he was won over. He was united with because we understood it wasn't him that put that idea there, it was the ruling class. And it was the ruling class that was deliberately pitting people against each other and utilizing its reactionary ideas as a basis for doing that, as part of doing that.

Now it's very interesting the attitude that certain groups took on the other hand toward this demonstration. Because one of the things that happened was that the mayor of the city, his name is Alioto, he was running for governor at the time. And he just happened to be at the building when these 500 people were out there demonstrating very militantly. And by mistake he wandered out of the building, just as the demonstration was about to break up, and a number of people who could get to him got in some shots at him with their picket signs. And those who couldn't, spit on him as he got into his car and sped away.

Now many of these groups which claim to be the great upholders of the Black liberation struggle, such as the BWC, forces who are always attacking everybody else as national chauvinists with "You don't support the national struggle of Black people" and so on, they were there off to the side, but they played absolutely no active role in fighting Operation Zebra, because it didn't fit into their idea that the key question was to liberate the Black Belt. So therefore, they played no role.

On the other hand, another group which has a very similar position, the so-called Communist League, they not only didn't take part but they attacked the demonstration. And the way they attacked it was very revealing. They came out with a leaflet the next day which said the demonstration only helped bring on fascism and that "spitting on Alioto only helped his sagging political career." And they condemned the people who did that and they praised "workers who didn't come to the demonstration"—though, of course, many workers did come.

So you see there's something basic involved here. Lots of people can call themselves communists, and can quote all kinds of quotes from Marx and Engels and Lenin and Stalin and Mao Tse Tung. And we think it's very important to study their writings because they sum up, as I said, lessons that have been paid for in blood. But when it comes down to the real crunch, the question is what stand do the people take, what does their line, what does their outlook and their programme lead them to do in the actual struggle of the masses of people. Again, do they join in that struggle and lead it forward and raise people's consciousness, or do they in one form or another try to pour cold water on it and limit and attack the struggle.

Now, again, we'd like to share some experience around the same question. I was talking earlier about Mrs. Shepard and her son Tyrone Guyton who was murdered by police near Oakland, Calif. Now in May Day, 1974, last year the RU united with other forces and we raised the slogan "Workers unite to lead the struggle against all oppression." We didn't go to only one nationality because we thought it was crucial to

bring to the whole working class the understanding that it has to take up and lead the fight against all oppression—the same understanding we were bringing to people when we raised the Zebra question. We went to workers of all nationalities, while also working in the oppressed nationality communities to mobilize people. And we raised the slogan to begin to develop in the working class its understanding that it wasn't its fight just in the plants, it isn't just around a particular strike or economic question though those are important, but that its fight is the broad political struggle uniting all that can be united in firm struggle against the imperialist enemy.

And, again, in the Bay Area, where the demonstration was the largest, though there were important and large ones other places, nearly 1000 people marched behind this banner. Hundreds of workers—white, Black, Chicano and Asian—marched in this demonstration and raised the slogan "Stop Police Murder of Black People," "Justice for Tyrone Guyton," "Stop Aggression in the Middle East," "Equality for Women," "Stop the No-Strike Deal"—these and other key questions which are facing the working class and which have to be a part of the programme that we're talking about developing.

And it was very interesting what happened because Mrs. Shepard and her family came out for that demonstration and at the beginning they were a little hesitant. Frankly speaking, they'd never been at a demonstration with so many white people before. And they were a little nervous and they said so quite openly. And also they noted that a lot of people were chanting slogans in Spanish. A lot of Chicanos were there. And as the demonstration went on it was a beautiful thing because a lot of people got into this. They were militantly chanting, the march was spreading for blocks down the street. And by the end of the march, Mrs. Shepard and her family and a lot of people close to them in the committee were going up to Chicano workers and saying "How do you say that in Spanish?" And they were chanting slogans in Spanish. This was truly a beautiful thing to see—the unity developing when the broad political perspective was raised and when the

consciousness of the working class began to be raised that we have to take up the struggle against all oppression. That we're all catching hell from this system and wherever people rise up to fight back against it, that's our struggle. We have to unite with it and support it, because that's the only way we're all going to get emancipated.

We can see again that this isn't simply a question of race or bad ideas, but it's a question of the material oppression of people. And that this system constantly seeks to divide people along lines of different nationalities.

For example, throughout the country, but especially in the southwest, there's a very sharp conflict going on now between Chicanos and Mexicanos—particularly those Mexican people who our government declares to be "illegal," and whom it is now seeking to deport. So you find in LA and all around the barrios in California and the southwest Chicanos and Mexicanos being turned against each other. And why? Because the system is in crisis, unemployment is growing and the ruling class is pushing the line, and some people unfortunately even in the leadership of the Farmworkers Union, are going along with the line, that the problem of workers in this country is all the "illegal" workers here. And the same thing comes up here with Dominicans, Haitians and others. "All these illegal workers are taking your jobs." As though somehow unemployment isn't an integral part of the capitalist system and we could somehow export back to other countries. And this is a very sharp struggle and a very sharp question and in fact, in El Paso, for example, in the southwest, you can go into plants where hardly anybody speaks English, where everybody speaks Spanish and the Chicanos, that is the people born in this country, and the Mexicanos don't talk to each other, because the contradictions are so sharp.

The problem is not that they don't speak the same language, or don't have much of the same culture. The problem is that the world we live in is divided into different nations and different countries and that the imperialists of this country go and wreck the economy of Mexico, don't allow the masses of people there to control their destiny and

control the economy of that country, and they force people to come here and they force workers here to fight like that. The people are of the same race. You can look at them and not be able to distinguish them racially, but they do come from different nations, from different countries. And the ruling class is able to use this to turn them against each other.

And, again, the role of communists has got to be to come forward and forge the base of unity, to bring forward the broad political understanding that it's the imperialist system that's causing all the problems. It's the imperialist system that we're up against and we have to fight it on every front. There's no way we can eliminate unemployment under this system. We have to fight against it, but we have to develop that into a fight to eventually overthrow the system.

Now I want to talk about what we feel is the main danger and the main obstacle to communists playing this role and to the development of a party which can act as a vanguard in this way.

This is what we refer to as the right opportunists, or the reformists, reformist tendencies within the communists movement itself. Now like all different lines and tendencies within the movement, each of them as an organized form. There are groups and individuals or organizations which come forward and push these lines forward, fight for them and represent them more clearly than others do. All of them exist within the movement as a whole. We have to all take up the struggle around them, but at the same time, while they exist in the movement as a whole and in all organizations, there are certain particular organizations which represent them most clearly, and have raised to the level of their line.

And in particular we can see this represented by that group called the October League which sells that paper *The Call* which was being sold out front here. And the general line of this organization is that wherever people are struggling, around whatever question, they are one of those who rush forward to pour cold water on it and particularly to say to people, "Wait. Hold it. Have you found a trade union official to take leadership here? Have you found a bourgeois force in the Black liberation

movement to give it its stamp of approval and take leadership? Is there a bourgeois politician in the house who'll come forward to take over?" Now this is the kind of things we're talking about because when people begin to break the chains of oppression, begin to head on the road that's going to lead them to revolution, and there's somebody standing in the way putting up a detour sign that leads people back to capitalism, and back to the idea that they can reform and accept the system and rely upon the very people who are causing the problem and crushing and exploiting us in the first place, then we have to point out what these people are all about and expose it. These people are always spreading defeatism, always telling the masses of people, "You can't do anything by yourself. You can't take matters into your own hands. You aren't capable of doing that. You have to find some savior, in one form or another."

We saw this, for example, again on the West Coast. Recently there was a strike out there in a plant—a paper mill called Dasco. There's a description and summation of this in our paper, the August issue of *Revolution*, the paper of the Revolutionary Union. This is kind of an unusual plant, because it's a plant of about 250 workers and roughly 10% of them consider themselves communists. And most of them are part of different organized groups. And in the course of this strike all kinds of different lines came out from different groups.

And what was most interesting was that some people who posed as super-revolutionaries and some people who were more openly reformist, such as the October League, all got together around one point: "The workers here can't do shit!" That's basically what they got together on. Excuse my language, but that's basically what it came down to. And it took many different forms. For example, when the trade union officials, the head of the Teamsters local, would not support the struggle, the October League preached, "Well that's it. Let's go back to work. We can't do anything."

And they even went so far as to say, when the police came down to stop the picketing, that it was impossible to mobilize people to resist and fight the police. We know better. We've seen positive examples where that's been done in the Post Office here, and other

places, where masses of people can be rallied to do that. They said that wasn't possible. And furthermore they even went so far as to say "After all, we shouldn't fight the scabs. Scabs are only workers who can't afford to strike." Now this is the kind of defeatism and openly reactionary line that came out from people who call themselves communists.

And they were united with a group that was mainly based among Chicanos, which calls itself the August Twenty-Ninth Movement (ATM), taking the name from the date of a big struggle of the Chicano people of LA against the Vietnam War and their oppression as Chicanos several years ago. This group came forward and said the same thing, but they said it in a little different package. What they said was that many of the workers here are Chicano and Mexicano and if we put up militant struggle the police will come down hardest on them so you guys are racist if you call for any kind of sharp struggle. And furthermore a lot of the people are out of Mexico, and they'll get deported if they struggle. Now all of this was just a cover, because we know that many people from the Farmworkers, despite what the Farmworkers leadership says, many of the people in the Farmworkers are from Mexico and are open to being deported. And they have played a very militant and very important role in the struggle and raising political consciousness. And we know that in the Farah strike, which began in the Southwest, 400 Mexican people, people from Mexico who crossed the border every day, who couldn't get food stamps and some of the other things some of the other strikers were able to get, and who were open to being deported—they walked out, 400 of them, and joined that strike and played an important role. And all this from the ATM was a cover for saying we can't struggle, the people are too backward, and furthermore, in the case of this group, the ATM, "The most important thing is to study theory anyway."

So whether it came from being "more proletarian than thou" or "more opposed to racism than thou" or whatever, or whether it came openly in the form of reformism, they all united to hold back the struggle of the workers.

And we see this group the OL doing

the same thing on other fronts. For example, most of you probably know the miners in West Virginia, Kentucky and other places have a long history of militant struggle. And particularly in the last 10 years and more, they've engaged in so many wildcats I don't know if anybody continues to count them. Every week just about some mine or other is shut down by a wildcat strike. I'll give you an example of some of the militancy and unity, at least on the trade union level, that's beginning to develop among the workers there.

Now first of all, when miners go down in the mines there's no running water and to go down into a mine without water is unthinkable. So when they go down they take a bucket of water with them and the miners have developed something which the companies know about but the miners still do it and are able to effectively do it. In order to avoid anybody getting arrested, fined or what have you for advocating these wildcats—since it's illegal to have a wildcat—what happens is that some people who are respected and known as leaders, if in their opinion the general sentiment is one for a wildcat, they take their water bucket before they go into the mine and turn it upside down and pour the water out. And that means they're not going down in the mines and that nobody should go down and there's a wildcat. Now within the last couple of years, one of these workers who is well respected was talking to a few other people in front of the face of the mine before they went down in, before the shift changed. And while he was turned away, somebody accidentally kicked some dirt into his water bucket. And without thinking about it, when he turned back around he took his water bucket and he poured it out.

And everybody walked off the job.

This is true.

For three days the union officials and the company officials came down and negotiated, but nobody knew what the issues were. Finally they found out what happened and the mines went back to work. But that gives you an idea of the level of militancy and the kind of unity that's developed, even if it's only on a trade union level at this point—although it's beginning to develop in a broader political way.

Now in the face of this the miners

were up against not only the companies but a very corrupt and openly and increasingly exposed union leadership, which used to be headed by a guy Tony Boyle. Now in 1969 somebody named Yablonski ran against him, they lost, they were murdered. After that, there was a lot of struggle among the miners. The election was thrown out and Tony Boyle has since then been indicted and convicted for conspiring to murder Yablonski and members of his family. And in late 1972, there was another election held finally after a couple of years of stalling. In the new elections a reform slate headed by Arnold Miller, who ran for president of the union, was put forward, by certain rank and file forces who stood for a number of reforms which were progressive.

And again there were basically different attitudes that came out on the part of communists on what attitude do you take toward this. Some people said "Don't support Miller. It doesn't make any difference. Nothing he's offering is real anyway, so forget it." We disagreed with that. On the other hand, certain people such as the October League said, "You have to support Miller 100%. You can't criticize him. Because if you criticize him to the workers, and point out his shortcomings and what he represents, any limitations in what he represents, you're not really supporting him.

Our stand was opposed to both of those. We said we should support him, we should push him, we should mobilize the rank and file to force him to implement the reforms and the progressive things that he ran out. But we should also help the workers understand they can't rely upon him, they can't trust him, not even to lead them in the day-to-day economic struggle or to solve the day-to-day economic problems, and certainly not to develop the broader political struggle and understanding.

But, as they say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating, because Miller was elected. And after being elected he has, through pressure from the rank and file, implemented certain reforms and certain programs which have been beneficial to the miners in helping to make it more favorable for their struggle to develop. But at the same time he's constantly tried to stamp out any rank and file

movement—"You needed that before when the bad guys were in. Now I'm in so you don't need it." And more than that, a couple of months ago, the miners went out on strike (in February, 1974) around the question that the governor of the state of West Virginia was limiting their gasoline. 27,000 of them went on a wildcat strike. And in that situation Miller, after doing nothing at first, very quickly sent his right hand man down to a meeting of 500 rank and file miners, and he told them, "Well, you've made your point, now go home. Go back to work." And they booed him off the stage because many of these miners had a more advanced understanding than the so-called communist October League. And they knew they couldn't put their trust in and rely totally on Miller.

But what would have been the effect if that line had held any significant influence on the miners, if they had been convinced of it by the OL members—who weren't there, but if they'd been there pushing it daily trying to persuade people—and what if they won people over to relying upon Miller and supporting him 100%. Fortunately, none of that happened. But if it had then, when he'd done this, instead of struggling back, instead of taking up broader questions—like the right of the people as whole to have gasoline and this whole energy thing as the maneuvers of the monopoly capitalists to get themselves out of a crisis at our expense—instead of all that happening the workers probably would have gotten demoralized and probably would have gone back to work, swearing at Miller, but not developing their struggle and consciousness.

What we as communists support 100% is the working class and the oppressed people struggling for liberation. That's the only thing we can support 100%. It's like we have to use this comparison. Suppose some people are trying to get across a difficult river with a lot of rapids and it's very winding and pretty fast, and there's a raft over there and they say, "Hey can we make it across the river with that raft?" And you know that that boat, that raft has got some holes in it. That maybe they can take it a certain ways to where they can get a better boat, but maybe by being aware of it they can use it up to a point. But you don't say so. Because you got

to follow the October League line, "When I support a boat I gotta support it 100%." And then the workers, they get out in the middle of the river and they start going down because there's holes in that boat, and with their last gurgling words they yell, "Goddammit, why didn't you tell us this boat had holes in it?" "Well, I didn't want to be ultra-left. I didn't want to be sectarian. When I support a boat I support it 100%—I'm in the October League, after all!"

See you gotta be careful when you talk about what you're gonna support and not support 100%. We gotta support whatever advances the working class struggle and we gotta point out and criticize and expose what holds it back, cause it's only the struggle of the working class united with all the oppressed people for liberation, for socialism and eventually for communism, that we can support 100%.

I'd like to talk about one or two final things. One particular thing on the workers' struggle then one or two other questions.

One of the most key struggles going on in the working class and also of the struggle of the Chicano people in this country, has been the Farah strike, which began in 1972 and ended after 22 months in early 1974. Now when this strike began the RU—and as far as we know other communist forces—didn't know anything about it. In fact, a few of our members in the Bay Area read about it. And they recognized that something significant must be going on because there are very few strikes in El Paso. It's a town that's tightly controlled by the owner of this plant, Willie Farah, and a few other business people. There's a lot of vicious policie repression in this area. And not only was it important because there was a strike going on that was unusual, but also these comrades read in the paper that 800 workers had been arrested at night and dragged out of their homes for violating an injunction during the strike.

But the comrades went down and they talked with the strikers and they began to see the importance of it and they brought back to our organization and in turn we took to other organizations the importance of building support for this strike, throughout the country and more than just building support for

it, to learn from it. To draw inspiration from it, what the people were doing and on that basis to initiate and help to develop and spread struggle in other places.

Because from the beginning something much more was involved than the immediate question of whether the union they were fighting for was going to be recognized and whether they were gonna win a contract. When that strike started, Willie Farah, the owner of the plant, went before the workers in that plant who were 98% Chicano or Mexicano, and 85% women and he said, "You people,"—and you know what he meant when he said that—"you people will never succeed in this strike, you will starve first." And what he was saying was that "you dumb greasers, and you dumb broads, you will never be able to defeat me because I'm everything to you. Without me you are nothing. You're scum. And you better realize that, you 'boozed up Latin kids'," as he called them at one point.

And if for no other reason, that line that Willie Farah put out, that arrogant stance had to be smashed and that strike had to be successful for no other reason than that. And if for no other reason than that, from the beginning it had much more important implications than simply the question of organizing a union, though that was extremely important. And through the course of the 22 months, the workers made tremendous sacrifices there. Many lost their homes, many families had to split up and go and live with other people. People lost cars and they made a lot of sacrifices and they hung on for 22 months and they didn't starve and in fact as one of them jokingly said, "You see, we have to have diet pills we're eating so well."

That's because they stuck together, won support from other workers there and throughout the country—literally thousands of workers in one form or another, on picket lines, and boycotts, sending donations, dollar bills or what have you, rallied behind that strike, learned from it, and developed struggle where they were. And because the Chicano people rallied strongly behind that strike and other nationalities too and students and broad sections of the people. Thousands of them were involved.

Now it's very important to note not

only what different lines of people bring to the struggle. These groups such as the October League, and these other groups, ATM, August Twenty-Ninth Movement I mentioned, none of them did any significant work. They did a little bit but not very significant work around this strike, even though it went on for 22 months. But in the end they all had something to say about how to sum it up. It ended after 22 months with the union being recognized, and Willie Farah had to eat his words. And that was extremely significant. And this group ATM came forth and said, "Well it was a tactical victory, but it was a strategic defeat because the right of Chicanos in the southwest to politically secede and set up a separate state was not made the main question in the strike, and therefore it was a strategic defeat.

On the other hand the October League came forth and said it was a victory, but who did they give credit to? The trade union officials, the National Organization for Women which did a little work in support of it, and similar forces. OL totally ignored the rank and file movement of workers and Chicanos and other people, though they talked about it in words, they totally ignored its decisive role. And they talked about how the "organized labor movement," with the "left forces" playing a key role, had brought about this victory.

Now we know who this organized labor movement, the "left forces," were—that's the October League, in case you didn't know it. But we know about these organized labor officials, the leaders of the organized labor movement. They came down to the picket lines, every once in a while and made a token show and they'd come down, and under pressure from workers there would say, "We have to win this Fay-ro strike." They couldn't even pronounce it. That shows you how involved they were with it. And they knew how to pronounce it, they were just so unconcerned they didn't even bother to pronounce it correctly.

They did almost nothing. We didn't attack them openly, but we never relied upon them—and by "we" I don't mean just the RU, but also the other forces involved, that built the real support. And it's very interesting to see how in contrast to the October League, one of the

advanced workers, a woman who was involved in that strike, summed it up, when speaking to a May Day rally in the Bay Area this year. She said, well, it was nice that the Bishop of El Paso supported the strike—you see, he blessed it at a certain stage—that was nice. It was nice that the union officials gave support. But what was most decisive, she said, was the support that came from you people, you rank and file—you see, when she said "you people," she meant something very different from Willie Farah. "You rank and file working people of all nationalities, all around the country, this was the most important thing that helped us win our strike," she stressed.

And she went beyond that to say something very significant. She said that many times they would be discouraged, during these 22 months, and many a time they'd want to give up but then support would come in and they'd hear about a demonstration in another city and they'd say "How can we give up? We gotta keep fighting because now we can win." And as she went on she said that just before the contract was signed, after over a year and a half of striking, many of the people, including the most active people began to get discouraged and began to think maybe they couldn't win. And when that happened they thought, not just about how they were getting support from other places and maybe they could hold out, but they said to themselves, "How can we let down all those people around the country who are looking to us, who are supporting us and are learning from us and prepared to see through to help win victory. How can we let them down? We can't, we have to keep on fighting!" This is how she summed up the key lessons of the struggle, in direct opposition to such groups as the October League.

We see the same thing developing on the question of the women's movement, and particularly what stand you take towards the so-called Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Now we have taken a stand against it—looking at the history of how this amendment developed, how the ruling class has always been behind it, and pushed it, how the communist forces have always opposed it, and looking at in fact what were the concrete conditions of today we took the stand very firmly that it had to be op-

posed. Because in fact it didn't mean real equality for the masses of women but was a direct attack, part of the general attack coming down on people, particularly in the form of laying the basis to take away protective legislation for women where they'd been able to win it—in California, in particular, and in other states. Protective laws which the working class, and the masses of women fought for and paid for again in blood. And again the proof of the pudding is when you eat it because we were told by such groups such as the October League, and others "don't worry, where these laws are now applied to women's protection they will be extended to apply to men and where that doesn't happen we'll struggle to make sure it happens."

Well, we've seen what in California, which has the most protective laws of any state whatsoever, happened. Already before the ERA has been passed, totally, as a federal amendment, it has been passed in California. And using it as a precedent the state government set up something called the "Industrial Welfare Commission." And this Industrial Welfare Commission was given specifically the job of interpreting protective laws in light of the ERA.

And what they've done is chip away one protective law after another using the ERA as a direct precedent, the so-called Equal Rights Amendment. Women in California used to be able to get maternity leave. Now they can't because, as you know, men can't be pregnant, so that's discriminating against women. Therefore they can't get unemployment when they're pregnant for the same reason. Lounges, and things that were provided for women workers, which should have been fought to extend to men, as well as breaks every few hours, these have been wiped out. Eight hour day restrictions which should be fought for for the whole working class have been wiped out, now it's ten hours.

So what do we get from the October League and their "friends" in the *Guardian* newspaper? Well, we get a very twisted interpretation. The IWC, the Industrial Welfare Commission in California is going against the intent of the ERA! You see, somehow this classless body, the Congress, which doesn't

represent any class in this society, passed this law, and then this nasty group over here, the Industrial Welfare Commission, didn't interpret it in the interests of the people—which this classless body over here meant it to be.

Now what kind of class analysis is that? And then the October League says well what we should do is build a strong offensive movement to pass the ERA and a strong defensive movement to defend protective legislation. Well that makes as much sense as saying we should build a strong defense against our own offense. 'Cause if you're going to build up something which is going to be used to take away something that you're defending, what's the point of building it up in the first place? And it's not a question of bourgeois agencies like the IWC misinterpreting the intent of the ERA but applying the intent of the ERA because this is what its been meant to do in the first place.

And in fact we know that the women's groups, the professional and business groups that brought forward the ERA had a debate—and historically they have had a debate in their own ranks and recently had a debate—"Should we add an amendment on to this thing or a rider on to this thing that says that in fact, wherever these laws exist and are applied to women they must by law, and by the intent of this amendment, be extended to men?" Now, if the ERA had such a thing then we feel we could probably support it. But the women's groups behind it decided—and this is very important—not to put that in there because they recognized, through debates and it was said explicitly, "If we put that in there the Congress will not support it." So this shows you from the beginning that they were prepared to and in fact were giving away, selling these laws down the drain.

But because the October League wanted to build up and tail behind groups such as the National Organization for Women because they want to build their version of the united front, without fighting for the leading role of the working class, and its communist ideology, they tail behind support of this amendment anyway.

Now I could go on and on but let me give one last example and then let me conclude on the kind of thing we're

talking about. That's something that's very relevant, all of you perhaps saw or heard about that little tear-jerking circus we got yesterday in so and so's farewell address. "My mother is a saint," and all that the rest of it. All this disgusting display to try to convince us that the man shouldn't be tried and sent off to jail. You know who I'm talking about—Nixon. Now, when all this Watergate stuff started coming out again, different approaches were taken. Some forces such as the BWC and others said "Don't touch that. Don't get involved with that struggle around Nixon because if you do you'll just be building up illusions among the people that one politician is better than another and the system can be reformed with different politicians and so on."

On the other hand, we said no. We raised the slogan "Throw the Bum Out, Organize to Fight." And through the course of that, through literature, through talking to people, through organizing demonstrations, what we brought forward is that we don't give a damn how Nixon goes. And we know that Nixon is not the problem, he's just one bum among many and he's part of a system that always brings bums like that to the surface, but nevertheless we want him out. Why do we want him out? Because for you, ruling class, it's going to make trouble. And that's exactly what we want to do, we want you to be in more difficulty, fight harder among yourselves because that makes it easier and more favorable for us to struggle, and eventually to get rid of all you bums. This is the kind of line we brought forward, and tried to educate people in the course of demonstrations.

Now there was a danger that, in fact, people would be drawn to the idea that one politician can be better than another, that Kennedy's better than Nixon because all he does is drown people in the river and doesn't do all these other things. Or what have you. The question is do you fight against that, or do you play in to it?

There's a big debate that goes on in China, for example, that is kind of interesting, and has what may seem like a strange formulation to us, but nevertheless is a real question, and that is, "What do you do with a drowning dog? Do you help it out of the water, or do

you kick it?" And of course the answer is, you kick it, and you keep on kicking it till it's drowned and that's what we're dealing with, a bunch of dogs in a system that's a dog-eat-dog system. And when they're fighting among themselves, when the system is going down, do we reach out a hand and help them out or do we kick 'em and keep on kicking and organize millions of people until they're drowned and until we have liberation. We know we have to do the second thing. The October League comes forth and says "Well listen, people in Congress want to impeach Nixon. We gotta make 'em do it, you see. They're paralyzed because some people don't want to do it, so we gotta have a lot of pressure out here so they'll be unparalyzed, and do what they should do and stop stalling and be good congressmen." We were even told in Boston, by a leading member of the October League—and our comrades had to get out their pens and say "Would you please repeat that?"—he said, "Yes, we'll unite with Kennedy against Nixon, because," get this, "if we don't defend the rights of the bourgeoisie to run for election, how can we defend the rights of the workers to run for elections?"

Now, of course, if the ruling class were actually trying to take away elections even though they're a sham, they are still a democratic right and we would fight to defend the workers' right to vote on that basis. But in case you're worried about it, October League and others, let us reassure you, the bourgeoisie is quite capable of, will, does and always has defended its own interests, against the masses of people. You don't have to worry about that. What we want to do is *take away* the rights of the bourgeoisie! Have you ever heard of the dictatorship of the proletariat? That means we smash the bourgeoisie and take away their right to oppress, their right to exploit.

It's like the American Civil Liberties Union, they used to say, "If we don't defend fascists, how can we defend communists?" Very simply, communists stand for the masses of people and fascists stand for fascism, for the ruling class, that's how. Because we make a class analysis and bring that forth to people to educate them, and don't think they're too stupid or backward to un-

derstand that. This again is the basic dividing line. When the people begin to struggle, are we going to have a party, with a programme, with an understanding of what the key questions before the masses are, and with an outlook that tells us how to unite with and lead that struggle, enable the people to understand that they can take matters into their own hands, that they don't need these fakers, these saviors coming down from the heavens, or what have you—if they can unite in their own ranks then the future of the world belongs to the working class—or do we tell them the opposite? Do we pour cold water on it, when they begin to break a link of the chain of oppression, do we run in with a welding torch and reform it back on them? Cause that's what's really dividing us from the opportunists whether they do it from one side or the other, that what's at stake.

I'll end by going back to the Farah strike. We keep talking about this because it's a very moving thing. We were fortunate enough to see a homemade film, taken by one of the Farah strikers when they first walked out—and I really shouldn't say walked out because it was really much more than that. And you know Lenin, who led the Russian revolution, and who gave leadership and guidance to the working class internationally, once said that, "A revolution is a festival of the oppressed." You know, *our* festivals, the festivals of the working class and the oppressed, are different than those of our enemies, the exploiters, the bourgeoisie, because they're a decadent class, a parasitic class, and whenever they celebrate anything it's decadent and parasitic. When we celebrate we celebrate in struggle, in developing unity in fighting against them and eventually overthrowing them. And not only is revolution as a whole a festival of the oppressed but every significant active rebellion which leads to and helps to develop the revolutionary struggle is a festival of the oppressed and anybody who's been involved in any major strug-

gle knows that. And we see time and time again this happening.

Well, in these homemade films, you couldn't hear anything but you could see, you could feel, you could see people not walking out of that plant, but running out, throwing their hats in the air, embracing each other, dancing around, and as each new wave came out they were greeted by shouting, clapping and clenched fists by the people who'd already walked out. And you could even see tears coming down cheeks of many people there. Tears of joy at the real festival they were having, in beginning to fight back against oppression.

And what we're saying is that we need a new party, with a correct line, a correct outlook, basing itself on that kind of struggle of the masses, bringing to it an understanding. Not one which runs in when that begins to happen and says, "Wait a minute, what do the trade union officials say? Hold it, did Willie Farah give his permission? What about the city council, do they think it's alright to picket here?" But one that comes in and says, "Damn all that, we'll push those trade union officials and make them support us if we can, and if they can't we'll push them out of the way. And later for those bourgeois politicians and the rest of them 'cause they're the ones causing the problem and keeping the problem going in the first place." And that's the kind of party we need. One that unites with the people in struggle, learns from it, brings to those struggles the science, the summation of the past struggles of the oppressed and particularly of the working class, Marxism-Leninism, and by concretely and in a living way applying that raises people's consciousness to grasp the historic task of the working class, helps the working class to unite its own ranks and to unite with all of its allies and to carry forth its struggle completely forward to emancipation and a whole new stage of history in the world—communism.

Questions and Answers

QUESTION: The question I have is in 1969 in *Red Papers 2*, the RU put forth the generally correct position, which was, and I quote, "The proletariat cannot be the leader in the united front today; nor proceed to take state power unless its white section is aroused to political consciousness, unites with the more advanced Black proletariat in common struggle and unless a communist party is built primarily from the united proletariat." Now that leads me to believe that either one of two things is true: Either the RU believes that a qualitatively different situation exists than in 1969; and there's been significant strides made in Black-white unity on a political level in the United States, a fact which is contradicted by the objective situation such as Kawaida Towers and Canarsie and many other events that have happened across the country. They're saying that we've reached a qualitatively new level in the development of political unity among the working class, political unity among Black and white workers. Or else they're saying that they're changing their position and their former position is not longer true. So the question I have is, which is it?

ANSWER: That document was written when the RU was less than a year old. I think that we feel that we've learned a lot of things. One of the main things we've learned is that it is an extremely difficult task to overcome, as I've said, the divisions which the ruling class has maintained. We have seen a lot of development, a lot of struggle. But we certainly would have to say honestly and objectively that the unity of workers, particularly the unity of Black and white workers and workers of oppressed nationalities is still not highly developed, just as the general class consciousness

of the working class in this country is not highly developed. The general understanding of the masses of working people of any nationality in this country of what their role as a class is, of what their position in society is, of their mission in revolution, in building socialism and contributing to world communism, all this is still at a very low level relative to what it has to be in order for the revolutionary process to advance and be successful.

But I think what we've learned in the past five years through our own experience is that where communist work is done this can be advanced, that progress can be made, despite certain ups and downs in it, and what we're seeing now and recognizing more clearly is that that task of uniting the working class is better carried out if you have a unified communist leadership representing the working class than if you have different groups working separately. They may try to work for the same objectives but they are not capable as broadly as necessary of summing up their experience and learning from the whole process they're involved in.

So if you want an answer in terms of one or the other of your two things, I think it's more in the direction of the second thing. It's more in the direction of the fact that we've recognized through practice and through the practice of the whole communist movement as well as the struggle of the masses, that in fact in order to develop that unity further and take it in a revolutionary direction we've got to have a vanguard leadership which can in fact unite the advanced representatives of the class and on that basis send them out into the class and the struggles of the masses to build that unity and that it can't happen in any other way.

But it's not simply a question of us

having learned in general or in the abstract, it's also a question of what's going on in the real world. We never, of course, meant to say or did say—and if you read that article and don't just quote one part of it, you'll see what we did and didn't say—that without a communist party you can't fully develop the unity of the working class and can't fully develop the broad united front of all forces against a common enemy. So we have always recognized clearly that a communist party had to be created as soon as possible, and we said so at that time in 1969 and at other times.

I think at that time we were more immature, we didn't understand as fully as now the fact that the party has to play a decisive and key role in building that unity. We understood that, but not as clearly and sharply. You can't expect to have a lot of class unity when the class doesn't even have a vanguard.

So our experience has taught us even more clearly the need to form that vanguard and to unite the advanced representatives of the class into a party as soon as possible. And if we look concretely at the situation, we've seen a lot of communist forces come forward, we've seen a lot of people do work in the working class and try to develop that work, and we're seeing that people are now at the stage where either we're going to be able to unite with people who are out there honestly trying to do that, concretize that politically into a programme, and organizationally into a party, or in fact not only the unity of the communist movement, but the development of the unity of the class and the general revolutionary forces is going to be set back.

And this is why we must continue to learn from experience, summing up mistakes—or formulations which were generally correct, which that one was but were not entirely or fully correct, didn't reflect as much experience and knowledge as we and other have gained over the last five years. We have to learn as we go along, we have to correct mistakes, we have to build on the generally correct things which we put forward, and have been applied, and go forward. This is exactly what we're calling for at this time, not just for the RU but for all people who consider themselves revolutionaries, who see the need for revolu-

tion, recognize that it means the working class at the core of that revolution, and that there is a need for the forces standing for a genuine working class party to come together to struggle over how to sum up the experience we've all been involved in. And on that basis to concretize that programme, and concretize and unite the advanced representatives of the class into a party in order to be able to further the process of overcoming the divisions by nationality, fighting against national oppression and rallying the class as a whole to the struggle against all oppression.

Let me just say one other thing. I want to emphasize, we go out and we talk a lot of times, and people sort of say, "Tell us why you think there needs to be a party?" And this we think can come from two places. It can come from an honest place, that people, you know, want to be convinced or don't see the need but want to honestly discuss it, maybe they're not convinced that the conditions exist for creating and unifying a multinational party and want to struggle over that, and that's what we want to do with people. On the other hand, we have to say quite frankly that there are some people who have developed a certain stake in not seeing a unified party of the working class. Who'd rather fool around in little ponds and be big fish rather than uniting all the forces and going out into the great ocean of class struggle that's going on out there.

'Cause what we've seen happening is that during the late and mid 60's there was a high tide of struggle, and that struggle brought to its fore, to its front, to its height, many people who learned about revolution and began to consider themselves Marxist-Leninists. But there's been a certain ebb in that struggle among the masses, it isn't as broad as it was at one time. And whenever you get an ebb, you get certain eddies, that swirl around and then become stagnant off to the side. You know what happens when you get stagnant eddies, you get mosquitoes and other things like that ... and we're now approaching, we can see all around us the development of a new high tide. But in order for that to go forward and not be pushed backward, it's got to have something at the head of it, a white-cap

on that wave, a leadership of that high tide, a party to lead it.

And those people who've got a stake in being mosquitoes in stagnant ponds, should come forward and explain to us why the hell can't we have a party? Why the hell can't we unite the Marxist-Leninist forces into one organization, in order to lead the masses of people, because if we want to have revolution and if we're concerned about not being mosquitoes, but with leading the masses, then we can see the need for it.

Now we can see that there would be a lot of honest questions, but from those people who got stuck in stagnant eddies, we have to say this very clearly, after you tell us that we can't have a party, then we want to take you on a tour—especially those of you that are stuck a little bit. We want to take you around to some of these places where the people have to live, where they have to work. Want to take you around to where people are being shot down in the street and the kind of suffering that's going to go on. And then we want you to tell us again why the hell can't we have a party to lead the struggle to eliminate this as fast as possible.

QUESTION: Agreeing with the line, definitely, of uniting all the Marxist-Leninist organizations together, to actually build the party, there are two lines that have come forth in the movement. One is to build a congress in which one section or one organization declares itself the party, and another line that says that all genuine Marxist-Leninists should come together casting aside all sectarian differences and discussing the various differences in political lines in order to build the party. Would you go into the nature of how you plan to unite the Marxist-Leninists and how you feel about these two lines that are among the left.

ANSWER: One thing I think we have to correct, in part, of what you said is that we don't see that the key thing in terms of building the party is necessarily or in

fact is uniting various different existing organizations, although we certainly will struggle to try to do that ... and struggle with the objective of seeking unity and not simply scoring points or carrying on bourgeois debates.

But we do think that the key thing is that there are lots of people who are not at this time in major organized communist forces or organizations. They may be in small groups or collectives, or may be in only one part of the country. There may be individuals even who have maybe been in a group, and it's fallen apart but they've continued to try to do communist work. Our experience in summing up what we know, and this has been verified by going around the country, is that there are literally thousands of such people. And we see this as the main body of people that has to be united with and struggled with to achieve unity around a correct line and program. And we think that has to happen through a series of discussions focusing in on the key questions of programme and conducting struggle in order to try to unify around a programme.

Now at the same time there are various organizations that exist. We want to make clear what our principle on this is. We are not talking about forming the party with just anybody. Right off the bat we're not talking about forming the party with the already existing CPUSA because they're traitors to the working class and they've sold them out for twenty years or more, for twenty years they've attempted to hold back and sabotage the development of the revolutionary movement. Nor are we talking about uniting with certain people who call themselves Trotskyites, who identify with a whole trend in history beginning with Leon Trotsky, a renegade from the Russian Revolution who ended up collaborating with the Nazis against the Soviet Union.

So we're not talking about uniting with counter-revolutionaries. And to that list we have to add this group the so-called Communist League, which for six years has put out a consolidated counter-revolutionary line, has been in one form or another more or less openly (although never by name) attacking the Chinese Communist Party as traitors to the world revolutionary struggle, when in fact the CPC has been a tremendous

inspiration and a leading force in assisting revolution throughout the world and inspiring people including millions or at least thousands in this country. We're not talking about uniting with a group such as CL which says that the basic industrial working class in this country, at least those organized into unions like auto and steel, and so on, are bribed and bought off and are a social base not for revolution in this country, but for fascism. That's a counter-revolutionary line and we will never unite with such a force which holds such a line to form anything.

Now this points to the key question underlying the way we see building the Party. The key question is not organizational negotiations or mergers. The key question—and this touches on what is sectarian and what is not sectarian—the key question is the question of line and programme. Because it doesn't do any good if we just all get a bunch of forces together that say they're communists, but if we don't have any firm unity around principle, around line, around programme, around how we're going to struggle—such a party will be a house of cards that will disappear with the first puff of smoke or first strong gust of wind. What we need is a party with a firm foundation, a correct line and a correct program. And as far as other organizations and groups that are out there, it's not a question as far as we're concerned whether the RU will unite with them but can they be united with and will they be united around a correct Marxist-Leninist programme.

That's the key question. As it is the key question for all forces. Because we want to touch on something about sectarianism. People throw around this word sectarian and they say if this group struggles with that group that's automatically sectarian. And we think that's very wrong because this is a time when there has to be very sharp but principled and decisive struggle between different forces. Why? In order for one group to prove it's better than another in some abstract way? No. Because these different lines and tendencies exist, as I said, in all organizations. They exist throughout the movement. But, in certain cases they've been crystalized into a political line and statement of policy of a particular organization. And so the struggle has got to be out there in order to determine what is the correct road forward and what in fact will lead

backward. And it's not simply a matter to be discussed behind closed doors, or privately between a few organized groups. It's something that has to be opened up to all those people in the revolutionary movement who want to be and should be a part of the new vanguard communist party. They've got to take part in that struggle and be a decisive force in determining what is the correct line and programme.

You see, sectarianism is when you put the interests of a small group above the interests of the broad masses of people. That's what it is. It can take a lot of different forms, but that's what it is. Now we think at this time it would be the height of sectarianism not to have open struggle as long as it is sharp, as long as it is principled, as long as it concentrates on the question of political lines and how they apply in practice, and doesn't resort to rumor mongering, slandering of individuals and dragging things away from the clear and decisive political questions that face us and the masses of people.

There's got to be that kind of principled and sharp struggle. And that not to have it would be the height of sectarianism. To bury differences to get behind closed doors and negotiate to form a party, or conducting struggle in private would be saying that we should put the interests of the small number of people who are presently in organized communist groups above the interest of the general communist movement and the masses as a whole. The most important thing is that our political understanding and our basic outlook, represent the working class and our political line and programme tell us what's the decisive way forward at this time toward revolution. Because the line of an organization and the carrying out of that line in practice by a vanguard or a communist organization or party has an influence multiplied many times the actual number of people in that organization. People in such an organization are conscious revolutionaries, they're full time, they work at it night and day, that's what their life is dedicated to. And they do it in a disciplined way all united around the line. If the line is correct it can have a tremendous liberating influence, as the masses of people themselves take it up and then

transform it into a force of their own struggle against the system. If the line is incorrect it has a tremendously destructive effect because people are also carrying it out and fighting for it and it creates confusion, splits and divisions among the masses and further aids the bourgeoisie in holding us down.

So it's exactly because we want to unite the broadest millions of people in the struggle against imperialism that we have to carry on the sharpest struggle now among the communist forces so that when we do form the party the correct line is there as much as we can get it and the correct direction and programme is there. So that when our members, our whole party, when all of us go out and carry out the line in the struggle, it's a correct line which has a tremendously positive influence and not a negative one, and where we make mistakes it can help us to correct them quickly and move forward. So therefore in answer to your question I would say the key thing we see is not organizational but ideological and political. The key thing is not negotiations or backdoor discussion between groups, though there should be discussion and struggle between groups in private meetings as well as publicly. But the key thing is for all those forces who recognize the need for revolution and a party to get involved in open and principled struggle over line and direction and what in fact is a correct programme to guide the mass struggle forward. So that's the way we will approach discussions with groups, large or small, or with individuals, over the question of how to form the party.

QUESTION: I'm from the October League, and I want to respond to some of the things that Bob said. We think that the opportunity to form the new communist party is clearly very good now and we think that conditions are very ripe. But we think there are a few things that stand in our way. One of those things is what we talked about in our paper, *The Call*. It's sectarianism. I think you gave a pretty good definition of

sectarianism ... that is putting the interests of a small group ahead of the interests of the masses. And I think one of the obstacles to building this new communist party is getting rid of this disease. And one of the main perpetrators of this disease has been the RU ... that is they put their interests above the interests of the mass struggle. They take part in the mass struggle independent of what ties they have in the struggle, what the desires of the masses are or what the masses are fighting for, and they criticize leaders that have opportunist tendencies, maybe even are opportunist but who have the respect of the masses, without putting in the time and effort to win the respect of the masses, to make Marxism-Leninism and a Marxist-Leninist organization a material force in the mass movement.

One example is Atlanta where Hosea Williams, who isn't a communist, who isn't a revolutionary, is objectively playing a better role than RU, who's standing apart from the struggle of masses of Black people against fascist police attacks and leading the struggle. Now he's leading the struggle not 'cause he's a revolutionary but because he's opposed to fascist attacks on the Black communities and that can be united with and that's objectively progressive. And it's this practice with the mass movement that has made the struggle for unity amongst communists of different nationalities a very difficult task because they've seen the RU go around and attack the mass movement of Blacks, Chicanos, Asians, and this has resulted in great divisions within the communist movement, where most national minority organizations won't have anything to do with the RU.

What's holding us back is white chauvinism. In another speech you made the statement that the main problem in the communist movement is narrow nationalism, but I think that if you examine your practice, not just with regard to the communist movement, but with the mass movement, you'll see that the main problem is national chauvinism, and it takes the form in terms of organizational relations of sectarianism.

I'd like you to respond to that, and I have one other question. One other statement. You mentioned the Dasco strike. The OL made a lot of errors in

the Dasco strike. We weren't firm in giving leadership to it, our comrades were inexperienced. But we were a hell of a lot better than the RU who stood staunchly in opposition to the workers. After your father issued the injunction, the RU went completely against the mass line and tried to keep the workers out when the time was to retreat... they'd suffered a defeat and it was necessary to regroup forces. It is very easy to call for an advance, but sometimes it is very difficult to recognize weaknesses in struggle and to make a retreat. And the RU again, even in difficult times, put their interests ahead of the masses.

ANSWER: I think I'll start with the last thing you said. You said that after my father, who is a judge out in California, issued the injunction, ... you see the decisive question became not who issued the injunction, but who decided to fight it. The RU decided to fight it and you decided to go along with it and that's the thing ... and there are three things that can be learned out of that, or really four.

One is something about the RU and how it relates to the workers. It doesn't tail behind them but in fact unites with the advanced section that wanted to fight.

Second, something about the OL and about how it drags at the tail and preaches defeatism.

Third, we also learn something about the state, 'cause the police, the army, the courts and the rest are the arms of the ruling class, it doesn't matter who's in there, who's the judge or whatever, they act against the interests of the workers. I happen to know that judge. Not a bad guy if you talk to him privately. Let's people off on no bail and all that kind of stuff. It doesn't make any difference. The point is he's there as an instrument, a part of the state and he acts in the interests of the capitalist class against the working class even if he's got relatives who are representing the working class and fighting for them. And that's something we have to learn.

And the fourth thing we have to learn, it's just what I was talking about. The level of ideological struggle that the OL

carries on. You see, the lowest kind of cheap shot that's got nothing to do with questions of political line or what have you. But we're not going to be discouraged by that, you go ahead and play in the sandbox—we're going ahead to make revolution.

Now I want to respond to a few things you said down the line. We criticize certain leaders. Yes, that's true we do. Hosea Williams, well you say he's playing a progressive role. Let's examine that a little bit more. You should know what kind of role he's really played because you've been running around behind him for a year and a half now. Every time there's a struggle of Black people in that area, particularly where Black workers go on strike and they raise demands against discrimination, against conditions in the plant, Hosea Williams with the aid of the media comes down and all of a sudden he's the leader of the strike. And consistently what he puts forward is that the key demand here is that this company invest or put its money in such and such Black bank, which is nothing about what the workers raised and represents only bourgeois interests. Now I mean it doesn't make any difference to me or to the RU whether the company invests in a Black bank or a white bank, if they're going to invest in banks it might as well be Black, who cares? But the point is this—that those weren't the interests nor demands of the workers in that struggle. And Hosea Williams only came in to divert the struggle, and of course he had the media, he had the police to cooperate, so he gets quietly carried off while the other people get beaten, and he had the OL within the communist movement to promote this so-called leadership.

Look what happened with the Atlanta thing. Exactly the same thing happened. Hosea Williams put forward the line in that struggle, "Let's Fill the Jails." This is the 23rd person—I think 21 or 20 of them have been Black—that has been shot down in Atlanta in the last 18 months and the people were righteously angry. The new mayor, who you uncritically supported at the time, Mayor Jackson, who's cut out of the same cloth as Hosea Williams, was incapable and in fact unwilling to do anything significant about it. And people were

learning that they couldn't rely on him. People were taking to the streets, and Hosea Williams' line was "Let's fill the jails" and the people said, "Bullshit! Let's fill the streets." You see, those were two different lines and Hosea Williams was trying to drag things back and people were tired of passively being beaten over the head and dragged off to jail and they wanted to hit back.

And Hosea Williams, you know, yes he has some following, some sections of the people haven't seen entirely through him ... why is that? It's because of the influence of bourgeois ideology. It's because the bourgeoisie is constantly preaching to the working class, and doubly so to the Black people, Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities, "You can't do anything on your own, you're nothing, you can't get united. You got to have somebody that has our ear. You got to have somebody that we'll talk to ... you got to have somebody that can sit down and have coffee with us. That's the only way you can get problems solved." This is bourgeois ideology which is pumped at the masses of people over and over again.

And what you've chosen to do is unite with that and promote people like Hosea Williams as leaders. Sure, you can't always jump out regardless of conditions and criticize, but in the course of struggle as misleaders are being exposed, the role of the vanguards is to raise people's understanding not only to what he's doing or she's doing but why they're doing it, who they represent. But your role has been consistently to fail.

The RU was in that struggle, the RU as you should know is new in Atlanta, we've only been there a couple of months, our forces aren't large ... where our forces have been larger, including here in N.J., including other cities, the Bay Area, other places, we've played a very active and sometimes leading role in the struggle against police repression, as I mentioned already, and if you are objective and truthful you would know that and state that as the truth. But in Atlanta our forces are young, they are small, they did as much as they could. They actively played a role in what was called The Atlanta Anti-Repression Coalition, which included a number of other forces including the OL.

In the course of this struggle, Hosea Williams wanted to put on this big show, he wanted to get the body of this dead guy, put it on a cart, and pull it all through the streets and make essentially a farce out of the situation. And there was a big struggle with the mother about whether she wanted to give up the body or not. The Anti-Repression Coalition with the RU agreeing with this, felt it was a sham and shouldn't be done, but nevertheless decided not to publicly condemn it and not to try to convince the mother not to do it, or what have you. But the mother finally decided that she didn't want to do it, and so Hosea Williams got up there and denounced the government and also the Atlanta Anti-Repression Coalition for pressuring the mother not to give him the body to do this. And the OL ran around behind him, repeating the slander even though it was a member of the same coalition. Which goes to show you that your being able to snuggle up to people like Hosea Williams was more important than working in a progressive and anti-imperialist coalition which was attempting to and in fact did lead demonstrations of the masses of people in the area. The RU was not the leading force in that coalition ... but nevertheless we worked within it and we did as much work as we could. Other forces did so also. You see this is a crucial question; it comes out of nowhere more clearly than on the Black liberation question, what kind of ideology you promote. For example, I mentioned it last night, you were there, but I'm going to mention it again for those people who weren't. In the May issue of your paper you have the most incredible article—well really I guess that after reading your paper month after month it isn't really so incredible. But for people who call themselves communists it is truly incredible. Here's the paper, the May 1974 *Call*, and there's an article in here called "A Century of Black Struggle, the Story of Jane Pittman." Now many of you may have seen this program, it was on TV, within the last six months, or definitely within the last year. It was called the Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, which was taken from a novel of the same name.

Now in fact Jane Pittman is not a real autobiography, but it's the bourgeois

author's view of a composite of a number of Black women who supposedly existed and lived for 110 years. In other words it's the history of Black women in essence, and Black people generally, in the south beginning before slavery and going to the early 1960s in the period of the civil rights movement. And from watching this film, you would never know that there were any slave revolts when in fact there were hundreds of them. You would never know that 200,000 Black soldiers fought in the Civil War and that in fact 35,000 of them died in the front ranks of the most decisive battles. You would never know the crucial role that Black workers played along with other workers in organizing the CIO and the struggle of industrial unionization in this country and other key working class struggles. There are only two examples of struggle in this whole 110 year period.

One where the Yankee troops come in and free the slaves and Jane as a small child goes off with a group of them and they stay overnight in a cabin and are attacked by a group of night-riding KKK elements. And the first person, a Black woman, who stands up to fight back is clubbed to death and so are a number of other Black people and only Jane and a few others who play dead, escape. That's the first example of struggle.

The other one is in the late fifties and early sixties and that period when a boy from the area where Jane lives named Jimmy grows up and turns into a man, joins the civil rights movement and is killed. And after 110 years of never engaging in any struggle, this woman Jane Pittman, finally at 110 years old finally goes down to the town and drinks out of the white only water fountain and then shortly after that she dies. Now these are the two examples of struggle in this film.

You might say there is a third example—when Jane's son returns with some education and preaches self-knowledge for Black people. He's shot down—and the pitiful picture presented of him, refusing to resist, tells the disgusting purpose of the whole film.

And what's been done here, and a lot of people liked it, a lot of the workers, a lot of Black workers liked this film, because it is very cleverly done. A lot of

people were taken to it, it had Cecily Tyson starring in it, who starred in *Souder* and the same image was put forward, the same kind of thing. She wasn't presented as foot-shuffling and head-scratching. She was presented with a lot of "dignity."

But like everything in class society, dignity too has class meaning and class content. And the dignity that was being presented was the quiet dignity of slaves accepting their condition in one form or another. It was the dignity that fits the bourgeoisie and the slave-owners view of how the slaves and the exploited ought to accept their lot. And it was done very cleverly, and it was tear-jerking and it was moving, and for this reason it did fool some people.

Now what is the job of communists in this kind of situation? We don't run in there and say all kinds of crazy things, Cecily Tyson ought to be shot, or what have you. But we patiently explain to people and sharply and militantly with the scientific view of class analysis that we have, we help people to understand what they were trying to put over with that film. That they were trying to tug at people's hearts to try to prevent people from learning the real lessons of struggle of Black people, not only preventing Black people from learning it, but preventing everyone from learning it... and from applying those lessons to today. And what they were trying to present the Black people as was essentially a passive, really a pitiful people who never fought back, when in fact they're an heroic people who always fought back and gave inspiration and strength to the struggle at every point. And that's the job of communists, especially when the ruling class is most clever and most insidious when it does this.

So what does the OL do? Well, this is the way the article starts. "No one may have heard of Jane Pittman a year ago, but she is now famous." Remember, Jane Pittman is not really a person, it's CBS's view or Xerox's view, it's the ruling class's view of what Black women and Black people generally are supposed to be like; but according to the OL, "the Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman presented by CBS on January 21st was one of the most progressive and talked about shows to come along in many years." "The Autobiography of

Miss Jane Pittman was an excellent document of 100 years of struggle of the mass movement for racial equality from the viewpoint of a participant."

Now I say this is truly incredible that an organization that could call itself communist could join with the bourgeoisie in this slander of the masses of Black people and Black women in particular. But it fits right in with your whole line of constantly tailing behind bourgeois leaders. . . . Yes, sometimes you have to unite with them—that is work in the same coalition with them—when they have the following of the masses, but you can't make a principle out of that. The Democratic Party has the following of a lot of the masses. Why don't you go join it? The Communist Party has got the following of more masses than the OL, why don't you just give up the ghost and go join it? Quit putting up a front! Because being a communist means you take the hard road and you struggle and sometimes what you put forward isn't always popular at first and you have to learn how to do that skillfully, you have to learn how to use correct tactics, but you can never make a principle out of tailing behind the current understanding of the masses or promoting and tailing behind the bourgeoisie or petty bourgeoisie and the ideology they push forward.

Now you said something which we're going to answer right now, which is a slander. You said that the RU attacks the mass movements of Blacks, Chicanos, and Asians. This is just a pure and straight-out slander. You look around the country. What did you do around Operation Zebra? Nothing! What did you do around Tyrone Guyton? You know what you did? Your members went into a committee ten days before a demonstration which rallied a couple of thousand people around Tyrone Guyton, the OL members, (we knew they were OL members because we'd seen them in other places where they wear their OL hats, but in this committee they were just "Joe Blow, good trade unionist from the UAW," or, "I'm Mary Sanford, I'm from the telephone company . . . just a good trade unionist sitting here"). Anyway they put forward "we ought to go to the unions and get them to endorse this thing and rely on them to in-

form the membership." Ten days before a demonstration. Hell! You can't even get through the bureaucracy in 10 days. And even if you could, do you really think that the trade union leadership is going to mobilize the rank and file workers behind this kind of a demand?

Where have they done so? And where have you done so? Relying on the trade union officials and Hosea Williams? Yeah, you constantly rely on them and build them up. And in fact, it's you that attacks these struggles by trying to constantly promote bourgeois leadership within them. And you know what would have happened . . . instead of taking that line, we and other progressive forces, and not just us, lots of other progressive forces who were way ahead of the backward line you put forward even if they didn't consider themselves communists, went to the rank and file workers. There was a hundred postal workers at that demonstration around Tyrone Guyton. A lot of them, or most of them, were Black. Some of them came because work was done by different forces of the Black liberation movement. Some of them came because of the work of RU and others in the postal union itself. Many other workers came out, but not because we said let's get the trade union officials to agree to put out a leaflet and that's the way we'll mobilize the rank and file.

But you do this over and over again. You do this here around the questions of importation from Rhodesia of chrome and other goods from South Africa. "Let's go tell the workers the key thing is that the ILA leadership has passed a resolution in support of United Nations sanctions against these goods." Big deal. Most of the rank and file of the ILA knows their leadership are as much gangsters as the shipowners. They don't respect them and any kind of resolution they pass they're probably just as likely to oppose it.

Sure, there's nothing wrong with pointing that out, but is that what we rely on? Is that the key thing we tell the workers? Or do we go and tell them this struggle against importation of chrome from Africa is in your interests as a class. Because it's a common fight against imperialism. Do you think the leadership of the ILA is going to do that and will you please tell us where they've

ever done so? So we say that it's you that attacks these struggles by constantly promoting bourgeois leadership.

Now I want to say two more things. One on this question of narrow nationalism and white chauvinism. You heard me give a long explanation last night and I'm not going to go through it completely again. Let me just say this. We've seen in our own experience how in fact the influence of bourgeois nationalism in our own ranks and others groups has actually hurt our work and the work of others in taking up the struggle against national oppression.

For example, around the same question of South African ships. In the Bay Area, a group of longshoremen, who were mostly white, came forward and said, when a ship was coming in from South Africa, that they wanted to unite with us and other forces to build a demonstration against the importation of these goods from South Africa, and to rally longshoremen there not to unload the goods. And a bourgeois nationalist in our own group—who you always go around praising as a great hero, because you're always looking for any kind of scum to unite with to attack the correct line of Marxism-Leninism—this guy came forward and said, "We can't work on this thing because Black workers are not taking the lead in it. And besides, these white workers don't understand the national question. They don't really understand the oppression of Black people." And what we said in defeating that line was look, of course these workers don't understand the scientific basis of the oppression of Black people, neither do most Black workers ... that's our job as communists to give them that understanding. But how are we going to give it to them if we don't unite with them when they take an extremely progressive stand? And furthermore, you should go out among the Black workers and rally them to support around this thing, and if they're not taking the lead that's not the most important thing—the most important thing is that a fight is being waged in the interests of the masses of people here and in Africa. And you should rally them and raise their consciousness and help them understand the importance of playing a key role just as they have in many other parts of the country.

We've seen how the influence of this line in our own organization and others

has hurt the work. Same thing happened ... before this Tyrone Guyton case, a couple of Muslims were shot down selling fish in the Bay Area. This same opportunist in our organization said we can't do anything about it ... why? Because the RU's a multinational organization, but it's mainly white. So, the white people can't do anything about it; and the Black people can't do anything about it because they're associated with whites. Now, naturally, we don't agree with the Muslims, and we know what their line is, we know what they put out, and there would have been a problem ... but those could have been overcome because there were lots of honest Black people in the community who were damn mad about the fact that Black people were being shot down whether they were Muslims or not. And that's what we should have united with, struggled to unite with, in defeating that line.

But that bourgeois nationalist line, dressed up as being a big defender of Black people's interests, "keeping the honkies away from them," what it came down to was really that the organization should stand by and do nothing while Black people were being shot down just because they were Muslims and it would be hard to figure out how to unite with them. And this is not the way a communist acts, and this is the kind of influence we've seen in our own organization and we've seen in other organizations.

And one thing we don't do is go around promoting people in completely false ways, or trying to dangle people around and make tokens out of them. One thing we do is build Marxist-Leninist leadership of people of all nationalities within the organization.

Another thing you said which is completely false is that most Third World groups will have nothing to do with the RU. Especially since we've rooted out and struggled against a bourgeois national line, taken up the struggle against the actual oppression of Black people, as well as the general oppression of the working class, we have developed a lot more unity with a lot more Black and "Third World" groups. And that's increasing. Sure, there are problems, and we make mistakes. Do we fall into white chauvinism? Of course we do. We live

in a society and it's there and we have to struggle against it very sharply. Nevertheless, the general direction is forward, we're learning a lot and we're uniting a lot more closely with people.

We saw the same bourgeois nationalist influence in our organization around the question of African Liberation support. Where these same opportunists, these same bourgeois nationalists in our organization, said, African Liberation Support Committee is an imperialist front... everybody in it represents the Black bourgeoisie or reactionary petty bourgeois pan-Africanists, and therefore how can you unite with it? And we had to struggle to defeat that line, because obviously that was a reactionary line in our organization... it was holding us back from uniting with progressive and revolutionary forces in the Black liberation struggle and elsewhere. And since having done that we've been able to do more work in that struggle, although our work is only on the beginning level, though of course many other forces, progressive forces, have played a much more decisive role in that struggle. So you can go around again, repeating these slanders and so on, but the real facts are being proven in the real world.

Finally, about the Dasco strike. Well, you admitted one thing, the October League made a lot of mistakes in that strike. But that's not the point, lots of people make mistakes, the question is that you summed up that the reason that things were as bad as they were is that workers weren't prepared to struggle, even though lots of workers had bought May Day buttons, supported the Farah Strike, the farmworkers, and a number of workers of different nationalities had gone to political demonstrations had united against discrimination in the plant... all that had gone on. But you said the workers were too backward to struggle.

You said that the RU stood staunchly in opposition to the workers. Again, this really gives you away. Because the workers, like anywhere, were divided into different groups. There were some who were advanced, there were some who were intermediate, and there were some who were backward. There were some who saw more clearly the need to struggle and recognized their ability to

struggle, and there were some who saw it less, and some who saw it almost not at all. But the key thing of who united in opposition to the workers, was that after all the defeatism which you had pushed—don't fight the injunction, don't dare stand up to the police they might hit somebody, don't struggle over and over again, even telling people to go take jobs in other plants while the strike was going on—after all that, when a vote was held after 2½ weeks of wildcat to decide whether or not to go back to work, the workers were split almost evenly. That is the workers, if you leave out all these different "communist" forces. The workers were split almost evenly, and by a slight majority even after all that decided to stay out. But the vote was lost because the October League, the August Twenty-Ninth Movement and the other groups voted with the more backward workers to go back to work and swung the vote to go back to work. Now that's really uniting with the backward elements to oppose the advanced, and to oppose the development of the struggle.

Of course we can't always struggle, struggle and we never have to consolidate, we never have to make a retreat. That's true. But the key question for communists is to figure out what in fact are the advanced forces, how do we unite with them to win over and unite with the intermediate, even win over the backward. How do we unite with those people who see the need to struggle and are prepared to rally the rest of the workers to struggle? If that is done, and if still the objective conditions are such that the struggle can't be carried any further at a certain point, then yes, you have to consolidate and minimize your losses. But the point is you went against that from the beginning. You worked from the beginning to unite with the backward elements, to neutralize the intermediate, isolate the advanced. And this is a typical backward, upside down reactionary line that you carry out in every kind of struggle. Increasingly. And a key point, you see, is on top of all that you turn around and blame the masses, that they weren't ready to struggle so you had to make a retreat.

So what we're saying here is whether it's in the Black liberation struggle, the struggle of the workers, or whatever it

is, the dividing line comes down to whether you unite with the advanced sentiments, whether you struggle in fact with the intermediate elements, because you know workers are practical people. And workers are people who evaluate things on the basis of how it's going to affect them. And workers are people who actually struggle with you! You know, the first time you run a line out to them, they don't say, "right on." They might say, "Bullshit!" And isn't it terrible? That somebody's feelings might get hurt. Somebody might have to struggle back.

But see, that's the whole thing. All this petty bourgeois baggage left over where people always want to put their own backwardness onto the masses of people. Sure people got backward ideas. The bourgeoisie puts them there. But we're supposed to be acting as the vanguard. We're not supposed to be running to the rear and dragging the masses along behind us, playing on the backward ideas the bourgeoisie puts forward. We need a vanguard that stands at the front firmly united with the people, rallying around it the most advanced, and uniting with them to raise the level of the intermediate, and bring along the backward and raise their consciousness in the process. This is what we have to constantly seek to do, in any struggle we go into, and it is the dividing line, in the final analysis, between whether or not we serve the working class and revolution or whether in the final analysis we serve the bourgeoisie and counter-revolution!

QUESTION: I have a couple of questions I'd like to ask. The first one is about the Farah Strike, which you mentioned. In New York, I know that one of the slogans that the RU raised was stop the runaway shop, and I want to know how you justify that, in terms of did you raise that slogan to the workers in El Paso? And isn't it in a sense opportunistic and almost approaching "Buy America" when you say stop the runaway shop, because it doesn't explain the specific conditions that exist inside ... how do you, I mean what

slogan do you raise to the workers in El Paso? How do you justify two different lines?

The second point I'd like to make is that the origin of, the basis of the nationalism that you're talking about is the chauvinism, white chauvinism, and that is the base of, that is the cause of nationalism. And I think that's the way we have to look at it, and not attack the people who are nationalists. Instead, to look to fighting against the chauvinism among the proletariat, among the white proletariat.

You also spoke some about the coal strike, or the miners protesting against the importation of South African coal. And, the conditions of the miners of South Africa. And you made a lot of that, in that here were some white workers who were taking up the demand and fighting against the oppression of Black people in Africa. And you made a lot of that, but aren't the demands of the Black people in the U.S. aren't they directed toward the ruling class, but more importantly for us, that many of them are directed as well toward the white workers, the white proletariat? The proletariat in the oppressor nation.

And you said that one of the main things we've got to do was how we're going to unite the class, but you sort of passed over that pretty lightly, and you didn't really deal with, you know the ruling class makes superprofits off of exploiting the Blacks in this country, but on the other hand the facts are like that Blacks make two-thirds of what whites make, and they make up twice as much of the unemployment, as the white working class. How do you explain that? That when they do work, they're working for less, and that the object of the capitalists is to extract the most profits from workers, and here the Black workers are working for less, how come the capitalist isn't going around hiring Black workers for less? Why is he willing to keep more Black workers unemployed than whites? I'm trying to make this clear. The capitalist pays the Black worker less. But there's twice as much unemployment among Blacks as whites, so why won't he hire those Black workers who are working for less? And make more profit, you know? How do you explain that?

These demands of the Black people in the United States, against their status as the first fired and the last hired, there's no way they'll do anything about the South African coal thing. The South African coal thing is a situation where the demands coincide. The miners are fighting against the foreign coal being imported, and it happens that coal comes from South Africa. So, it's progressive, it's good that they supported the issues of the miners in South Africa, but that's just the situation where the two are coincidental. That doesn't really deal with the demands of Black people, with the demands they make toward the ruling class and some to white workers as well.

ANSWER: You see, I think what you just ran down is an example of what the influence of rotten lines does, because what you did there was to get into a struggle that was progressive and try to find a way to make it backward . . . You tried to find a way to make workers who were taking a progressive stand narrow, selfish. "Just happened to coincide." Why the hell did it have to coincide? How come the bourgeoisie couldn't push a line to make it not coincide? How come the bourgeoisie couldn't push a line that "it's the African people's fault? Why the hell do they work for that slavery? Why don't they demand higher wages?" It didn't have to coincide. A correct line had to be brought forward. The unity of interest of workers, Black and white here, with people in Africa had to be brought forward.

You talk about "Buy America," sure that was the line that the union leadership tried to inject, but that wasn't the line that a lot of miners took up, "Buy America." They weren't simply protesting around the coal coming in, they were protesting around a broader question of the way that people are treated in that country. And I don't think, frankly, that the masses of Black people in this country are unconcerned about that or think it's not related to their struggle. It's not the same struggle in a literal sense, but neither is it completely unrelated to it. So, I think you want to give the bourgeoisie credit for

everything and the workers credit for nothing. That's just a typical line put out by the bourgeoisie.

Beyond that, if you want to, everything is "coincidental." It just happens to be coincidental that the interests of the masses of Black people are the same as the interests of the workers of other nationalities. That just happens to be coincidental? That's not coincidental. Because we live under a system of imperialism. And because imperialism oppresses and exploits the masses of people in this country and every country, and so people find themselves with common interest, and so here you come up and say, "Wait a minute, you didn't have an absolutely pure understanding." Again, your whole attitude is to try to find a way to make something which is progressive—well, you had to admit it was progressive—but to try to find a way to make it seem as backward as possible, and that's typically what you did on a number of things.

I want to go back to the first thing you raised. As far as the first thing you raised, I want to, and we have, criticized ourselves for some of the ways, especially in the early stages, we dealt with the Farah strike. Not on the basis that you raised, because we also raised the question of the runaway shop to the Farah workers. But the question is, that is has a reformist aspect—not to raise the slogan, "Stop Runaway Shops"—but we went even further than that in certain cases and actually—until this line was struggled against and defeated in our organization—put forward that you could almost stop runaway shops by unionizing the southwest and the south. That's not true, and you shouldn't, and we never can, lie to the masses of people. Imperialism is imperialism, capitalism in its highest stage. The capitalists will always, in order to get more profits, sooner or later, try to move their operations to another place because of the necessities of profit. You can't stop them from closing up and moving to South Korea or Taiwan or what have you until you overthrow the system. So we are critical of ourselves for putting out, for letting a reformist line slip in which we had to struggle against and correct. And again, that's proof of what I've been saying, erroneous lines don't just exist and reside

in an organization, they exist because of bourgeois influence. The question is do you sum them up, correct them and move on, or do you raise them to the level of a line?

Now you said the origin of nationalism is chauvinism. Well, you see that's partly true and partly untrue. As far as ideology goes—bourgeois nationalism, chauvinism, trade unionism, other things—are deviations in the direction of bourgeois ideology. All of them represent in one form or another, bourgeois ideology, not proletarian ideology. And the basis for bourgeois ideology existing in people, is the fact that the bourgeoisie and capitalism exist in the real world, that, for example, among the Black people there are classes, there's a Black bourgeoisie and a petty bourgeoisie who push and are open to and susceptible to bourgeois ideology. And even the workers, among every nationality, whites, Blacks, what have you, people are influenced by bourgeois ideology because of the society we live in and there's a material basis for it. The material basis for it is that there are not enough jobs for people under capitalism. People are forced to compete for jobs. And the social services never can meet the needs of the people and people are forced to compete for them. Why do you get Chicanos and Mexicanos knifing each other? Over jobs. What's the basis for the Chicanos, not all of them, but some of them being fooled and tricked into saying "Throw all the Mexicans out." It's because on the one hand there's competition, people are forced to compete to try to live. On the other hand, the oppression of people in Mexico is even worse, there is that division, people in the U.S. have it not quite as bad as people who live in Mexico and on that basis there's a basis for turning Chicanos on a chauvinist basis even against Mexicanos. But, it's simplistic to say that at any given time, if you find somebody who's a bourgeois nationalist it's simply because they're reacting to chauvinism. It may be because their ideology is bourgeois and that's the way they think they can get over.

If you take any particular individual, particularly in the communist movement, careerism can be the basis for bourgeois ideology, to try to use the

movement as a hustle. Same way people tried to use the poverty program. And if one of the ways and the material conditions exist, as they do in the movement, that one of the ways you try to get over is on the basis of bourgeois nationalism and people will do that.

Mao Tse Tung pointed out in the CPC in the history of their Party, he pointed out something very important. He said people will try to capitalize on anything. And this has to be struggled against. Intellectuals will try to capitalize on their intellectual knowledge. A worker will try to capitalize on his background, his class background. We've had that in our organization, too. We call it the lunch-pail syndrome. You know, some people who are not serious and are just trying to find a hustle—I'm not slandering the working class but there are certain individuals in the working class who adopt a bourgeois stand also. They are surrounded by the bourgeoisie and its ideology. And we find people who say, well I'm a worker so whatever I say is correct," regardless of what their political line or their ideology is. And that doesn't only arise because there's petty bourgeois people doing anti-working class things—though that certainly goes on and is a much bigger problem than any lunch-pail syndrome—it arises as Mao Tse Tung says, because people will try to capitalize on whatever they can capitalize on because that's the spontaneous direction capitalism is always pushing people to.

And that's why you have to have criticism and self-criticism, and ideological struggle in any organization, and it will come up in one form or another in every organization. People who've been around a long time say "I'm a veteran, listen to me." People who come in new—"you old fuddy duddy, I've got a lot of energy, listen to me." People from the local area, "I know the conditions here, you're an outsider." People who are outsiders, "Look, I've come in here and you people have messed everything up, I come from an area where we do everything right, listen to me." All of these things happen in the communist movement and it's simplistic to say that it's just a reaction to something else. They arise because of the influence of bourgeois ideology. Now you said something

which is very key here. You said that the demands of Black people in this country are directed toward the white workers. Well, that may be your intent, I hope not, but the fact is that we believe that the demands of the masses of Black people are directed at the bourgeoisie.

Here's the way we would formulate it. Those demands that are raised by the masses of Black people, if they're really in the interests of the masses of Black people, then they are in the interests of the whole working class, and they are absolutely opposed to the interests of the ruling class. Our work is not to go to the white worker and say, "Black people raised this demand, do you stand with the bourgeoisie or with them?" What we say is, "Look, here's people fighting back in a righteous way, they're fighting against the same enemy which we have, and we should unite in struggle with them." And that's the way we've done productive work.

I've never seen anybody who puts forward the opposite kind of thing do any kind of productive work. For example, in steel right now in one plant in one part of this country, we have a couple of white workers who are in a study group with us right now. They went to a demonstration about the no-strike agreement in steel where the question of discrimination in the plant was raised. On the basis of that and discussion in the study group these two workers, who were in a skilled category, went into their department which is almost entirely white, and said, "Hey, look what's going on here. All the Black workers are all stuck in the bad departments, they can't get out because of the seniority thing here. We got to fight against that."

And it was very interesting what happened. About 60 workers got together and said yeah, we got to do that. And they also wrote down some other grievances they had about conditions in their department. And the first thing the workers wanted to do was to go to the union officials. So they went to the union officials. And the union officials did just about exactly what you did around this question of "coincidental" on the question of South Africa. He read over these demands and he said about four times, just like that reporter in Birmingham did, he said, "Do all of you real-

ly support all of these demands?" And it was clear what he meant. He said, maybe you think there's some coincidence of interests here between your demands for better conditions and the demands that Black people not be discriminated against in the plant. But are you sure you really want to support all these demands? And he said how many of you support them, put your hands up. About 58 out of the 60 kept their hands up, even though he did it four times. And now the question is how to move forward and develop that struggle. But those workers took that up. Not on the basis that we went to them and said, "hey, you know people are raising these demands, are you gonna be a pig or are you gonna support them?" We went to them and said, "Look, this is in the interests of our class, damn it, we want to make revolution. We don't like this system, and we've hardly found anybody in this country that likes it. We don't like it, let's get out from underneath it, we've got to fight and when people fight back, let's unite with them because that's in our interest." And that's the way we presented it.

Another example. In the auto plants and this is in the Bay area, people we were working with were presenting a petition to the union to try to force the union to take up certain demands and fight for them. And the petition listed a number of demands, and one of them was against discrimination in the plant and in fact, again, a number of Black and Chicano workers took it up and also one advanced white worker in particular—more than one white worker took it up, but this one in particular he took it up—and in fact he did a lot better work around it than some of our own cadre in the plant, which we also had to learn from. Because when he grasped it, he went out. And he went out, for example, to one white worker in the plant and he said, "I want you to sign this petition." And the guy read it and he got to the part about discrimination and he said, "bullshit, I'm not going to sign it, there's no discrimination in this plant." Well, this guy went back three days in a row, and he had the same argument, "Come on, sign it, it's important." "Bullshit, I'm not going to sign it." And after three days, the guy signed it and on that basis they went out and they got

more people to sign it and they took up that struggle. Not on the basis that somebody went and said, "Hey, you know this is a demand and you got to choose which side are you on."

Yeah, we all got to choose which side we're on, but we've got class interests. We don't even have a choice. We're on one side, we're on the working class side. The system doesn't allow you to choose. They might mislead you into thinking you have another side, but you only got one interest and that's your class interest. And what's ... (Comment from the floor: Have you ever heard of opportunism?) ... Yeah, I heard of opportunism. I've been hearing a lot of it just now. Opportunism is putting forward the line of the bourgeoisie inside of the working class movement. And one of the lines is to tell the workers that the demands of one nationality are not your interest and no matter how you dress it up and try to present it as slick, if that's what you put forth, that's opportunism. And what we're saying is, yes, and we've seen concrete examples, where mainly white workers have wildcatted against discrimination where we've been involved. Not thousands of cases around the country, but we've seen important examples. These have to be popularized, these have to be built on. These have to

be spread. And the way we do it, is we say to the working class, and in this case the people we're talking about are white workers, we say look, this system is keeping us all down, we can't live under it, we don't want to live under it and we don't want our kids to have to live under it. People here are fighting. One of the ways they keep us down is by dividing us along national lines for super-exploitation. People are fighting back against that. That's our fight, too. We have to go broadly, and with all of our class brothers and sisters to that fight, whether it's police shooting down in the community or discrimination in the plant, we've been out there doing all these things. And we've never done it, we've never seen anybody do it on any other basis than saying that's our fight, that's our brothers and sisters, that their interests are our interests and let's get together and move on to revolution. And that's exactly why we need a party with a correct line and not a screwed up line of always trying to find some fault with the masses, rather than helping the masses to recognize their true class interests and move forward to make revolution.

We want to thank everybody that came.

What is the Revolutionary Union?

Today the need for revolution is becoming clearer to more and more people, here and throughout the world. The system we live under, ruled by bankers and big businessmen, is heading into deeper crisis and chaos, in this country and internationally. Unemployment, speed-up, inflation, the decay of society and breakdown of social services, attacks on democratic rights, discrimination and degradation of women, domination of oppressed nations and minority nationalities, wars of aggression and the threat of world war—all are increasing as our rulers bear down on us harder and battle others like them for the spoils from the robbery of peoples like us throughout the world.

But this only further exposes how this system is a worldwide system of plunder, a system of imperialism. And the struggle of the exploited and oppressed against this system is growing worldwide. In this country, the last decade has seen mighty mass movements against the oppression of minority nationalities, against wars of aggression, the oppression of women, police terror and government repression, and against the attacks on our living and working conditions.

As a communist organization, the RU bases itself on building these mass movements. But beyond this, the RU bases itself on the understanding that the oppression of the people flows from the basic contradiction of this system: the exploitation of the working people by the capitalist-imperialists. And the liberation of the people lies in the overthrow of the imperialists by the working class, the replacement of capitalism and all exploitation with socialism, under the rule of the working class, which will advance society to communism completely classless society.

To achieve this historic task, to unite and lead all the people's struggles to this goal, the working class must have the leadership of its own Party, the general staff of its revolutionary struggle. In this country the working class does not now have such a Party, since the so-called Communist Party, USA long ago sold out the working class and now aims at preserving the imperialist system. At this time, while working to build and unite the people's movements, the RU sees its major task as uniting with all others standing for the revolutionary interests of the working class to form this new Communist Party.

The creation of this Party will mean a great advance for the people's struggle in this country and will help bring closer the day when the decay and corruption of imperialist exploitation will be overcome by the international working class, representing the great majority of mankind and holding the future in its hands.

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