

DISTRICT REPORT ON TELEPHONE TRADE UNION WORK

8 September 1974

For the last several weeks a strike has been pending locally in PT&T, CWA Local 9410. This report will summarize our view of the BWC trade union policy and how it should be applied in our work.

(1) BWC Trade Union Policy

"Our strategy in Trade Unions and workers movement generally is simply to unite all those who can be united around the immediate political and economic issues of the workers. Our task is to raise the level of spontaneous consciousness of the workers to revolutionary working class consciousness by introducing socialist consciousness and taking the lead in the day to day struggles of the working class and by proving them in practice that communists are their real leaders and real fighters!" BLS, BWC, PR p47

"In our work in the workers movement we must do four things:

-develop cadres...

-raise consciousness of the workers to revolutionary class consciousness

-struggle to defeat a given policy of the imperialists

-help merge the national and the class struggle..." p47

(2) Background

Comrades have been working in PT&T for 3½ years (one for 3½, another for 7mo, another 8mo, another 6mo). Mostly we have worked under the influence of the RU line, up until very recently. Many of the errors outlined in our pamphlet describe our work, ie "hiding" our politics, bowing to spontaneity, failing to bring ML to the advanced workers...

During this period the older comrade recruited one worker into the BWC, only after leaving the RU. There are now a number of advanced workers which have been identified, with whom we are getting on.

(3) The Strike

During the period of the strike we have taken a low profile, seeing our primary task as investigation, ie going to strike meetings, caucuses, talking to people. Various other opportunists have attempted to "lead" walk outs, etc, with very little support from amongst telephone workers. While we attended meetings, we have taken no public stand on the strike or the walkouts.

We did not support the walk-outs because we did not see that they would achieve any of the goals that Lenin describes as the reasons for strikes, ie what is outlined in "On Strikes." What this can be traced back to, in essence, is a failure on the part of the RU, PL, Trots, etc, to lay any basis amongst the workers to support the walk-outs, simply bowing to the spontaneous situation created by the trade union struggle - not the struggle of communists to unite the advanced element with ML. The result has been that several workers lost their jobs for participating in the walk outs, and that the RU, et al are even more isolated today than before from the mass of workers. Rather than uniting with workers, the RU even handed out leaflets threatening workers with violence if they crossed the picket lines. During the building of the strike negotiations and subsequently, the RU has been leafletting regularly at the phone company on all sorts of economist issues.

(4) Our strategy

In this period, as we try to consolidate our organization amongst the rising current of spontaneous workers struggles, we see that our primary task at the phone company is to identify the advanced elements there and develop a plan to ~~win~~ unite with them through the study and discussion of Marxist Leninism, recruiting them into the organization. Amongst all the comrades working there, we have selected about 5-6 ~~people~~ workers to focus attention on. Once these workers are united into the BWC, there task will be to win over the intermediate workers at the phone company.

Some comrades have found that in their shop there are no advanced workers, they are to transfer as soon as possible into other jobs in the phone company, laying the basis there for future comrades, ie those places which we determine are the most likley to find advanced workers (because of the socialization, national composition, production of surplus value, etc) Once comrades have recruited advanced workers out of their shop, we believe that they should move on to another shop in the company or even another job - this to be determined by the concrete conditions at the time.

Most of the units that comrades are in are phone workers, and we see that in the near future this unit will operate entirely as a factory nuclei, with other comrades forming other units.

Regarding the strike, after studying "On Strikes" it has become clear that while the objective factors are ripe at the phone company, leading workers spontaneously into trade union struggles, there has been little if any subjective element introduced by communists. For this reason there is no basis for us to try and take a leading role in the strike. Instead, we are focusing our efforts toward uniting the advanced elements, building a base, preparing the ground for the next strike or trade union struggle.

Lenin was clear that "strikes can only be successful where workers are sufficiently class conscious, where they are able to select an opportune moment for striking, where they know how to put forward their demands, and where they have connections with socialist and are able to procure leaflets and pamphlets." These conditions did not exist for us to take a leading role in the strike.

In regard to the union, we are not clear as to what our role should be. The RU, PL, and Trots have been active economists in the Union. Our tentative view, open for discussion, is that work in the union is a secondary focus, because our central task of party building focuses our attention on uniting with the advanced.

(5) Questions to clarify in the District:

- 1/ Is our focus on the advanced, on placing trade union work as secondary, correct, given that there is a strike building?
- 2/ What should be our role in the union in the future, given our CT?
- 3/ How should we relate to the caucuses? Particularly, a black caucus is being built, what role should we take.
- 4/ Should we do a leaflet summarizing the walk-outs, settlements? Why? What should be the line?

READ - UP PAMPHLET - SECTION ON TU WORK
- LENIN 'ON STRIKES'