



**the Trade Unions**

***A SPEECH***

***DELIVERED: April 9, 1978***

***BY THE  
BAY AREA COMMUNIST UNION***

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## COMMUNIST WORK IN THE TRADE UNIONS

A SPEECH BY

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APRIL 9, 1978

This is a presentation of BACU's views on communist work in the Trade Unions. Since the speech was given, in April, there has been discussion of its content internally, as well as with other Marxist-Leninist forces, which have revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the speech. Certain concepts have been further clarified and developed such as our view on bribery and privilege, the left-center alliance, etc.

However, rather than rewrite the entire speech with all its needed changes, we decided to reprint the speech as a working document for continued discussion within BACU and with our friends. We hope the reader will forward his reactions and comments to us so the concepts expressed here can be further clarified.

Some suggested readings on this topic are:

1. "The General Law of Trade Union Progress", from Outline History of the World Trade Union Movement by William Z. Foster, Chapter 56, pp. 501 - 511.
2. Lenin's preface to the Russian translation of Letters by Johannes Becker, Joseph Dietzgen, Frederick Engels, Karl Marx, and Others to Friedrich Sorge and Others from Letters to Americans by Marx and Engels, pp. 273 - 285.

Friends and comrades, the talk I am about to give is directed towards the Marxist-Leninist movement. Therefore, some people here may not follow all that is said. Some points will be taken for granted. For example, it is assumed people here understand that it is communist policy to try and establish our leadership in the trade union movement. We are going to take this understanding for granted. If you are not clear on this, are confused, or you think there's something wrong with this, we'll have to talk about this another time. Today, we will assume that this is understood.

As Marxists, we know the beginning place for determining our tasks, is a concrete analysis of concrete conditions. If we are to understand how we are to go about our tasks of winning leadership in the trade unions, the first thing we must do is to establish: What is the position of the trade unions in society, and, what is the state of the working class, at this time?

## I. THE OBJECTIVE STATE OF THE AMERICAN WORKING CLASS MOVEMENT

1) Today, the working class movement, for all practical purposes, is entirely severed from the movement of communist thought. It is completely non-socialist. It is non-political. To a great extent, it is even anti-communist, or at least fearful of communism.

2) Not only does our working class not follow a Communist Party, it doesn't even follow a revisionist party, as do large sections of the working class in Europe. In Europe, trade unions are openly affiliated with the modern revisionist CP's, or to the old socialist and social-democratic parties, and to some extent, with christian democratic and other forms of political organization. The workers join these parties. They vote for these parties. Their Trade Unions back these parties in the national elections. Despite the claims of some that the CPUSA is a major influence on the U.S. working class, the CPUSA has the open backing of not one single trade union or trade union local in the country, and receives no more than a handful of labor votes when it runs for office. The CPUSA is forced to operate secretly in the few remaining unions in which it still has influence. The CPUSA has relatively no open influence in the labor movement, and that is because the U.S. workers are not socialists, do not think as socialists, and therefore, will not vote for socialists. They are not communist-socialists, nor are they revisionist-socialists. They are no kind of socialists at all.

3) Furthermore, our working class not only isn't socialist, (genuine or otherwise). It isn't independently political. It doesn't act politically as a class in any way, shape or form. Even in England, the working class has at least formed a broad Independent Labor Party that is backed firmly by the trade unions and receives the workers' votes in the elections. This party has ruled England, on and off, for the past fifty years.

Of course, the ILP of England is a workers' party only in form. In substance it represents the bourgeoisie, and just like the American trade union leadership, it serves the bourgeoisie by spreading the ideology of class collaborationism. Therefore, it is in reality a party to mislead the workers, a bourgeois party.

Nonetheless, the existence of the ILP in England signifies that the British working class is more advanced than the American working class, for at least it has its own party. It believes that labor's cause must be pursued in the political arena.

The U.S. working class does not hold this belief. And this explains why it has not even taken the first step in creating its own political party.

4) In the U.S., the workers reconcile themselves, if they vote at all, to vote for the bourgeois Democratic and Republican parties, parties which pretend to be broad populist parties, parties representing the common interest of labor, capital and all the people.

Thus, the American worker's political activity is consistent with his basic ideology. If the interest of capital and labor are one, labor needs no party apart from the parties of capitalism. The workers believe that the parties of capitalism represent them as well as the bourgeoisie. Thus, in the U.S., the working class tails the bourgeoisie completely in the political arena.

5) And all of this exists alongside one of the most highly organized workers' movements in the entire capitalist world (save the revisionist countries).

The U.S. labor movement has organized into its ranks approximately 17 million workers. More importantly, this includes the great bulk of those workers engaged in American's basic heavy industries, a result of the great CIO industrial union drives of the 1930's and 40's. And even though upwards of 60 million workers remain to be organized, a task which the reactionary leaders of labor refuse to take up seriously, the U.S. labor movement is far more representative of the American working class than is the labor movement of many other countries.

But the U.S. labor movement continues to refuse to take up the task of organizing its own political party. In fact, it is official AFL-CIO policy to oppose this. The AFL-CIO, and other unions, limit labor's political activity primarily to the pressuring of the bourgeois parties for improved social legislation. Never for an independent workers' party.

Of course, aside from official policy against independent labor politics, the AFL-CIO leadership openly cohorts with the bourgeois parties, actively promotes bourgeois policy in domestic and international affairs, and concretely helps finance and gives direct assistance to the CIA in its activity to subvert foreign trade unions, and to undermine the sovereignty of other nations. When George Meany said, the AFL-CIO is committed to American capitalism, he meant exactly what he said.

Resistance to independent labor politics has been the historic trademark of the U.S. trade union movement. Never, for any length of time, has the trade union movement in this country pushed for its own political party. Never have its main sections backed an independent labor party. And most certainly, they have never backed a socialist or a communist party. This is why American trade unionism has been termed, "pure and simple trade unionism". Throughout its history, it has confined itself to "pure and simple trade unionism".

The most successful attempt to connect a workers' political party with the trade union movement in this country was the experience of the then revolutionary CPUSA in the 20's, 30's, and 40's. But, even then, the CPUSA never truly became the party of the U.S. working class.

## II. HISTORICAL LACK OF POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF THE AMERICAN WORKERS

Let us review the history of CPUSA involvement with the trade unions.

The CPUSA formed in the early 20's, and after about six years of internal strife and factionalism, it finally purged itself of the immediate opportunist and disruptive elements, attained a high level of political unity, and set about to implement a relatively sound Marxist-Leninist program in the mass movements. This led to significant growth in its influence in the trade unions and among large sectors of unorganized and unemployed workers. Its trade union policy was to unite left wing trade union militants around the trade union strategy of the CP. They did this through mass left wing formations such as the Trade Union Education League (TUEL) and later the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL). By doing this, and by teaching the left wing correct trade union strategy and tactics, it was able to quickly become the leader of numerous mass working class strike movements, unemployed movements, and other mass activity. Thus as W. Z. Foster,

the chairman of the then revolutionary party, the Communist Party USA, points out in the History of The Communist Party USA, the CPUSA broke from its previous sectarian isolation and began to play a role among millions of workers.

It is, however, important to note that the TUEL and the TUUL were not communist organizations, nor were they political parties. Rather, they were organizations of militant left wing trade unionists whose basis of unity was not socialism and not the political struggle, but that of militant class struggle trade unionism. However, they did call for, and to some extent did, agitate for an independent workers party and independent labor activity, and even for a workers' republic. But, for the most part, these ideas never got airborne, they were never taken up by the working class. The important part is that these TUEL and TUUL organizations, while representing an important and decisive link between the CPUSA and the masses of trade unionists, were essentially economic organizations, and were not political. They were organizations of left-wing militant trade unionists.

In the 1930's, as a result of the successful campaigns waged by the TUEL and the TUUL, and because of the severity of the great depression, conditions matured rapidly for a new upsurge in trade union militancy. Particularly so, in the mass production industries. Communists had always sought to organize this sector, the heart of the proletariat, but the reactionary AFL leadership preferred to represent only the most skilled and highly bribed section of workers, refused or sabotaged every initiative of the CP and others to do this important work. Because of staunch AFL refusal to do this work, and because AFL policy was then to expel militant trade unionists, and progressive trade unions, the CPUSA, through the TUEL, had to go about its organizing work among the unemployed and unorganized outside of, and in spite of, the main body of organized labor.

However, as the Great Depression developed and became more devastating, and consequently, as the masses of American workers began to press for resistive action. And further, as the CPUSA-led left wing militants gained ground in spite of the AFL officialdom, certain sectors of the AFL leadership began to shift toward a more militant posture. By this time, the left wing militants had worked their way back into the AFL. Responding to this favorable shift among certain AFL officials, the left wing called for and secured a united front with them in the CIO. The chief spokesman for this shifting group of TU officials was John L. Lewis, the leader of the UMW. His union had been losing membership and he found it expedient to his own interests to ally with the growing upsurge of industrial workers. So he agreed to a united front with the left wing, knowing full well that the CPUSA was the core of this group. And his policy worked quite well for him. From the leader of a dwindling 100,000 mine workers, he ultimately became the head of the growing 5,000,000 member CIO.

This united front also benefited the left wing and the CPUSA, as it gave them much greater access to millions of active rank and filers. This united front produced the greatest advance in the history of American trade unionism.

Now, some people in our movement are prone to exaggerate the influence of the CPUSA during the 30's, and 40's, and these are the same people who exaggerate its influence today. They claim that the CPUSA actually became, or could have become, the party of the U.S. working class in the 1930's.

It is true that the then revolutionary CPUSA did succeed in linking itself to the labor movement, and was, for a time, accepted among the leadership of the CIO. And this was no small feat. It represented the highest expression of the merger of socialism with the working class ever achieved in this country. But, it is quite an exaggeration to say that the CPUSA actually became the party of the U.S. working class, i.e., was accepted as its political party, or could have become such.

To prove this, we need only point out that no major trade union openly endorsed the CPUSA as its party. Most CPers operated in the trade unions not as open communists, but as militant trade unionists. And finally, in 1932, when the CP lead millions of unemployed in mass demonstrations and was accepted as a leader in the mass strike movements of millions of workers, it was able to attract a maximum of 102,000 votes for its presidential ticket of W.Z. Foster and J.W. Ford. Reflecting upon this reality, W.Z. Foster points out in the HCPUSA:

Although the workers in masses willingly followed Communist leadership in the bitter fights for daily demands... they were not yet ready to make a break with capitalism as such, which they felt a vote for communist candidates would imply.

It is clear, in practice, the CPUSA never actually became, even at its zenith, the party of the U.S. working class, though it certainly became its vanguard party. And this is not merely because the CPUSA was socialist, and certainly not because it later turned revisionist. Rather, it was because the working class was not ready to openly act independently of the bourgeoisie in the political arena, even during its highest period of militancy and the period of greatest communist influence.

So it is clear, labor in the U.S. is non-socialist, and tails the Bourgeoisie politically. It has been this way for its entire history. Those, who today, profess to magically or simply cause labor, in a short period of time, to transcend this political position and worse, those who close their eyes all together to reality and pretend labor is already exerting leadership over the revolutionary movement, are dangerously harboring subjective illusions. These people don't respect in the slightest way the Marxist-Leninist requirement of concrete and objective analysis.

To this backdrop of tailing the bourgeoisie politically must be added the relatively successful drive of anti-communism waged by the bourgeoisie and right-wing TU leaders during the Cold War, which sought to purge even the slightest trace of communist influence from the TU's.

For 20 years prior to this most recent period, the U.S. labor movement sank to the lowest level of subservience to capitalism and even anti-communism. Innumerable facts go to show that the U.S. workers were driven farther from socialism and deeper into capitalist subservience during the post World War II period than they had ever been before. And while certain revisionists and subjective idealists wish to ignore and conceal this obvious fact, they can produce not one scrap of evidence to prove otherwise. The facts are that McCarthyism triumphed, though temporarily, despite the fact that McCarthy was himself disposed of. From 1948 onward, in connection with U.S. international policy of breaking the U.S.-Soviet alliance and going over to the Cold War, the bourgeoisie, and its henchmen in the TU Bureaucracy turn every effort, and sacrificed not a single opportunity, to break the U.F. between the CP lead left wing and the then progressive middle-force CIO leaders. Furthermore, these "progressive" CIO leaders had begun to figure that they had gotten just about as much as they could from the alliance with the left, and were now ready to cut the left loose, regroup with the old line AFL officialdom, and spend the next quarter of a century constructing their own entrenched bureaucratic apparatus, living off the backs of the rank and file and adopting the old AFL approach of selling out the membership and the rest of labor.

So in Oct. of 1949, the great left-Center U.F. of the CIO collapsed as the center turned toward reaction and began a furious drive of anti-communism and anti-TU'ism, expelling a score of progressive unions and TU leaders. Among the expelled TU's were UE, the ILWU, the Mine, Mill & Smelters, etc., resulting in the expulsion of 800,000 workers from the CIO. The CIO hooked up with the AFL, forming the AFL-CIO which now consistently and openly endorses every policy of the bourgeoisie.

As a result of this extensive reactionary purge, the influence of the CP was pushed back to the perimeters of the labor movement among the expelled unions and, even there, the CP influence was forced to be indirect and not open.

So by the time the 60's rolled around, the time when most of us became involved, and when our new communist movement began to arise, the U.S. workers' movement was practically at its lowest depths politically.

Now, as most of us here are aware, during this same period the CPUSA begins once again to lose ground ideologically to the revisionist forces within its ranks. These forces, openly led by such renegades as John Gates, but later joined by the likes of Eugene Dennis and now Gus Hall, had become ideologically oppressed by the difficulties confronting the battered CPUSA, and were all too willing to discard all of the revolutionary principles upon which the CP had been founded in the false hope that this sacrifice might save the party from destruction. Fundamentally, they collapsed before the bourgeois onslaught of post war McCarthyism. While previously the Browder revisionists fell before the sugar-coated bullets of Roosevelt, these new Browderites began to fall before the real blows of Truman, McCarthy and Eisenhower.

The line of the revisionists in the CP was capitulation to capitalism all along the line. As the U.S. workers turned farther from socialism, or were driven by the bourgeoisie and their bureaucratic henchmen farther from socialism, these revisionists within the CPUSA decided to acquiesce to the backward drift by pretending that capitalism was not turning reactionary, but was really overcoming its basic ills, was actually marching toward socialism.

The reason they "figured" workers didn't come to the Party was because the Party had not realized that socialism was already maturing. That it no longer required the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalists. Rather, socialism would come not in opposition to the capitalists, but under the helmship of these capitalists. When the McCarthy era ended, once the Bourgeoisie succeeded in driving the CP out of the TU's, these neo-Browderites lauded the politicians to the sky, proclaimed Eisenhower and Kennedy new reasonable Imperialists and with all fanfare sought to tie the communist movement to the coat tails of the bourgeoisie, just as the AFL-CIO was then tied.

The mass movement was shifting to the right. Rather than regrouping, the CP revisionists decided to follow it to the right.

Their logic was, if you can't beat them, then join them. And so they waged a ferocious battle within the CP, resurrecting all that was old and wretched in the ideological history of International revisionism, and eventually succeeded in purging the CPUSA of its revolutionary ideology and revolutionary ranks.

And so, the CPUSA gave up forever its objective of becoming the political party of the U.S. working class, and rather than continuing to represent and fight for the most advanced interests of the workers, it proceeded upon a path of adapting itself to the bourgeois influence of the workers themselves.

The laughable matter is that this cowardly retreat on the part of these revisionists did not help the CPUSA in the least. Whereas in Europe, some of the Communist parties broadened their influence by selling-out their revolutionary principles, the peculiar features of the U.S. situation was that in spite of the CP's turn to revisionism they were not saved, but were driven from the TU's just the same. And this is because the U.S. bourgeoisie, unlike certain European bourgeoisies, was not about to let any communists, no matter how tame they were, and no matter how much they discarded their principles to have any open influence among the workers. So they struck a bargain with the CIO leadership, "You purge the communists and we'll let you do your thing. We will tolerate your contracts, give you relative autonomy within your movement, and put up only moderate resistance to your efforts. For your part we want the communists out, every last one, and we don't care if they discard every last particle of their principles. We don't want any communists, genuine or revisionist, in the U.S. labor movement. What we want is clear and open allegiance to the capitalist system, the Democratic and Republican parties and the two-party system." And so it happened: the CP was routed out of the labor movement.

With the break-up of the CIO left-center alliance and the routing of the CP from the unions, of necessity the left wing of labor collapsed and disappeared. Even the revisionist chief of the CPUSA, Gus Hall, has finally been forced to admit, in his words; "one of the most serious setbacks of the McCarthy period was the destruction of the left in the trade union movement. I considered whether the word 'destruction' was too harsh. It is not. This was the most damaging development in the McCarthy period." (p. 1, Political Affairs, Jan. 1978). Finally, Gus Hall admits the truth. But he is not entirely honest. The destruction of the left was not McCarthy's only damage. As significant was the strength McCarthyism gave to revisionism in the CPUSA, which eventually caused the party to fall victim to the likes of Gus Hall.

This brings us to the threshold of one of the most important questions confronting today's new anti-revisionist communist movement. In straightening out the mess that revisionism had laid before us and in attempting to reconstruct a viable Marxist-Leninist vanguard, how are we objectively to analyze the purge of communist influence in the trade unions? Surely there were two contributing factors. On the one hand, the bourgeois offensive of McCarthyism which found its allies in the right and center forces who led the AFL and the CIO. On the other hand, the capitulation of the CPUSA before this offensive (its capture by the revisionists). Both of these factors contributed to the purge of the CP influence.

But a question which continues to plague our movement, the question which in its wrong answering continues to wreak havoc among anti-revisionist Marxist-Leninists, is: Which of these two factors was decisive? Which played the main role? Was it the objective factor, that is, the tremendous strength of the Imperialist bourgeoisie as a result of their victory in WWII? Or was it the subjective factor, ie the capture of the CPUSA by modern revisionism?

A similar question was asked of Joseph Stalin in 1925, by a German communist by the name of Hezog.

Germany had just come out of the crisis surrounding World War I. Stabilization was taking place in the continent of Europe. The Communist Party of Germany was losing ground in the elections to the Social-Democrats.

Hezog rhetorically asks the question: What is the chief cause of this? Answering his own question, Hezog says: "That is obviously the effect of the shortcomings and weaknesses of the parties' methods of work". He then asks Stalin, "How can these be removed?"



Stalin answers: "That is not due to the shortcomings of the work of the Communist Party of Germany".

I warn you not to get the wrong idea. There is another article in this period where Stalin lashes into all the errors and opportunism in the Party of Germany. None the less, he still answers, "That is not due to the shortcomings of the Communist Party of Germany. It is primarily due to the fact that the American loans and the influx of American capital, plus the stabilization of the currency, which have somewhat improved the situation, have created the illusion that the internal and external contradictions connected with Germany's situation can be completely eliminated....It was not the victory of German Social-Democracy but of the Morgan group. Wells has been and remains merely one of Morgan's agents." (Wells was a leading German Social-Democrat-DH) (See: Stalin Collected Works, pg. 40, Vol. 7.)

So when asked by a leading member of the German Communist Party: what errors did our party make which causes revisionist forces to gain strength, Stalin answered, without denying they had made significant mistakes, that it was not principally the communists mistakes which produced this situation. It was the fact that an "influx of American capital" into Europe, caused a stabilization in the general situation. This created the "illusion" among the working class, that the contradictions in society were being resolved. And therefore, the victory of the Social-Democrats was in reality the victory of capitalism.

This is Stalin's answer.

Now we in BACU believe, fundamentally, this same situation held true for the American working class in the post World War II period. Not that the CPUSA did not err. Nor, that it didn't eventually fall into revisionism, and is now as much a party of the bourgeoisie as is the Democratic Party. (Of course, the mistakes and the fall into revisionism of the CPUSA contributed to its demise.) But the principal, the decisive and the overwhelming condition, was that American capital through the Marshall Plan, (i.e. the domination of Western Europe and the colonial world) in the post World War II period (i.e., the spoils of its victory in WWII) extricated the American bourgeoisie, once again. The stabilization of capitalism, and its rapid prosperity during the Cold War period, had (in the words of Stalin) "created the illusion that the internal and external contradictions connected with....(American)...situation(could) be completely eliminated."

And so the American worker fell back into the class collaborationist ideology and further from socialism.

The Bay Area Communist Union concludes from these material facts of life, and without the slightest reserve, that objective factors, and not subjective factors, were decisive in routing the communists from the T.U.'s - in giving the initiative almost entirely over to the bourgeoisie and their agents, the T.U. bureaucracy. Of this we are firmly convinced.

So during the 50's, as a result of the Cold War McCarthy counter-offensive of the bourgeoisie, based on a relatively stable and prosperous period of capitalist development, the CPUSA was driven not only into revisionism, but almost completely out of the T.U. movement. And the workers themselves turned, or were driven, further from socialism, further into capitalist subservience and even deep into anti-communism.

It would be wrong to conclude, from this, that the CPUSA had to be driven to revisionism. This depended on the internal contradictions in the party. External factors could only condition, and not determine the victory of revisionism in the Party. But, that the party would lose its base in the working class, this is another question. This was almost inevitable. (At least, to a great extent among organized labor.)

### III. TO THE 1960's

Which brings us up to the modern period, the period in which most of us became involved, when our new communist movement began to arise.

The 1960's were a period of great revolutionary upheaval. It was a period internationally where the post WWII attempt of U.S. Imperialism, to dominate the world, was ground to a halt by the National Liberation Movements of the world, principally the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese revolutions, but also by the growing revolutionary movement of peoples, nations and countries throughout the world against U.S. imperialist domination. Today, the U.S. imperialists have been forced internationally onto the defensive, both by the people of the world and by its rival, Soviet Social Imperialism. This turn from offense to defense on the part of the American bourgeoisie took place internationally during the 50's and 60's. Naturally these were exciting times.

Inside the U.S., the long suppressed Civil Rights movement of the Black people burst forth into a gigantic revolutionary nationalist upheaval. This movement gained its inspiration from the national liberation movements against U.S. imperialism throughout the world. It was triggered by U.S. Imperialism's assassination of Martin Luther King, and it ignited a decade of revolutionary struggles inside the U.S. Following in its wake, the oppressed Chicano, Asian, Puerto Rican, and Native American nationalities arose in rebellion. Furthermore, a great revolutionary anti-imperialist movement among the students of America arose, as the hypocrisy of the American dream exploded amidst the barbarism of U.S. aggression in Vietnam and of U.S. violence against the national minorities. These revolutionary movements shook the entire foundations of the capitalist system.

But what about the workers movement? What role did it play during these revolutionary days?

The workers movement was not actively involved, rather it dragged at the tail of events. Moreover, under AFL-CIO leadership, it resisted and opposed the revolutionary storm. These are the cold facts. The notable exception to this stark reality was the linking of the revolutionary national movement with the struggle of Black autoworkers in Detroit by the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) and latter the "League of Revolutionary Black Workers". But again this was the exception which proved the rule that during the 1960's revolutionary upsurge, labor did not play an active role, or to the extent that it did, it resisted the revolutionary impulse.

And this was because the combination of Cold War McCarthyism and a relatively long period of capitalist stabilization and prosperity, together with the red-baiting of the trade union bureaucrats and its crass class collaborationist policies, had, in the 50's, driven the working class deeper into subservience to capitalism and further from socialism, and revolution, than it had ever been before.

Some in our movement, quoting Marx's dictum that under capitalism "the working class is the most thoroughly revolutionary class", and turning this concept into a starre dogma, refusing to make an objective analysis, conclude that today, and throughout this entire period, "the working class has been exerting the leading role in the revolutionary struggle". Such a view has nothing to do with Marxism which requires that above all else we "seek truth from facts". The facts are that the working class tailed the revolutionary movement and even resisted it. How then could it have "exerted leadership over the revolutionary movement"? This is absurd.

The only conclusion that can be reached, is that the U.S. workers movement is not now and has not been for some time, the leading revolutionary element in society.

#### IV. POSITIVE FACTORS FOR CHANGE

Certainly, as a result of what I have thus far said, I shall evoke from many the claim that BACU is pessimistic and that BACU has lost its revolutionary optimism. But this is not true. For in fact we see in today's course of events that which is positive, that which is new, and that which we communists must link up with and give conscious guidance. And it is precisely to forward these positive factors that our organization was formed, and to which BACU is dedicated. However, unlike the "optimism" of a great many within our movement, BACU's outlook is based on sober objective analysis. We hold little stock in the phony optimism that derives from denying objective facts and substituting for this one's own subjective and pious wishes.

What then are these positive factors: the factors in our favor?

1) Of the most important is that the revolutionary storms of the 60's did succeed in defeating the attempt of U.S. Imperialism to dominate the world following WWII. This is the decisive element. It opened up the greatest of prospects for the workers movement, despite the fact that the working class movement did not understand but rather resisted these events. These events threw the weight of US history back in favor of progress, in favor of the workers' emancipation.

2) Even though labor resisted and dragged at the tail of events, it none-the less was affected and its consciousness was raised during this period. It could not but otherwise have been influenced by these events which Chairman Mao described as "a new clarion call to all of the exploited and oppressed people of the United States to fight against the barbarous rule of the monopoly capitalist class". (Mao's statement upon assassination of M.L.King, 1968)

While the CPUSA, dragging at the tail of the working class movement, shouted to the skies that the 1960 revolutionary movements were harming the cause of labor, were adventurist and would cause a "white backlash",

while Progressive Labor Party (PLP) attacked the 1960's revolutionary movements as reactionary nationalist and petty-bourgeois reformist,

while such so-called revolutionaries from the Provisional Organizing Committee who went onto form the Communist League, now the Communist Labor Party (CLP), wrote that the 1960's movements were revisionist and economist because of their spontaneity,

while these phony Marxists treated the revolutionary movements only with disdain, and would not join with them to provide conscious direction,

while all the reactionaries from the imperialist bourgeoisie on down to the phony CL opposed the 1960's revolutionary movements,

genuine Marxists viewed them as did Mao Tse-tung and hailed them as a "new clarion call to the oppressed".

And this was because these movements ushered in a brand new period of broad popular disenchantment with the rule of the bourgeoisie.

And this could not have but affected the labor movement, no matter how hard it resisted.

As a result of the 60's revolutionary storm, which, as Mao again points out, "shook the imperialist system to its foundations", a broad popular movement for democracy arose, spearheading its attack at Nixon because of his infamous role in prolonging the Vietnam War as well as his exposure at Watergate. But it did not stop there, this new democratic tide also attacked CIA dirty tricks around the world, Rockefeller barbarity at Attica, widespread corruption in Congress, and a whole host of other symptoms of this wretched system.

Whereas, in the 1950's, Americans were caught up in the fantasy of the "American dream" - i.e. "America right or wrong", this balloon was popped by the 1960's. For as in the words of the great song writer Bob Dylan, "the times they are a-changin".

And though the working class tailed this broad democratic movement, they too were swept up in its wake. They too were affected.

Though at first this broad movement drove the masses not to revolution but rather towards "salvation" with the liberals of the Democratic Party, today this road is showing its barrenness.

In the midst of all this turmoil and crisis in the political spheres of society, and as a result of imperialism's reversals, a major economic crisis has hit. It hit hard and it has held on. It continues to weigh heavy on the American people. And as a result of normal Imperialist policy, which is always to place the full burden of the crisis on labor, the working class is being hit doubly hard.

I need not go into this, because we are now all aware of it. Of great significance is labor's current disenchantment with Jimmy Carter and the Democratic Party. All this holds great promise for the labor movement.

Furthermore, as a result of this crisis, and because the absolute hold of the bourgeoisie over the American people, including labor, was shaken by the events of the 1960's, a new widespread strike wave, and broad rank and file militancy, is on the rise, and is unfolding quite well.

This upsurge has already identified the current trade union bureaucracy as its enemy, and is actively resisting and going against this reactionary leadership. A movement against the class collaborationists leadership on the economic front is clearly well under way.

However, it would be an exaggeration to say that it is a revolutionary movement, or that it is "exerting the leading role in the revolutionary struggle". This is not true. Because, inspite of its great militancy, it remains an economic i.e., militant trade union movement, and its objective is purely within the realm of reforming capitalism.

As Lenin and Marx taught us, it isn't the militancy of a movement that makes it revolutionary, and it isn't the fact that it utilized revolutionary mass action. For reformism will also utilize revolutionary mass action when it needs to.

A revolutionary movement is such because of its aims. A revolutionary movement combines revolutionary struggle with reformist struggle in order to achieve the result of proletarian revolution. A reformist movement can also use these two weapons, but its aim is confined to reform within the capitalist system. Therefore, the U.S. working class movement today is itself reformist, and thus even though it is growing in militancy, it is not "exerting the leading role in the revolutionary struggle".

Especially this is so because it has no political party, least of all does it follow a true Marxist-Leninist vanguard party.

None-the-less this new widespread rank and file upsurge holds great promise.

More so as a result of this upsurge, a great deal of pressure is being placed on the AFL-CIO officialdom, leading to squabbles, bickering and rifts. It is possible that these may break open into major rifts, rifts which an organized rank and file could utilize to forward its objectives. This is another important objective factor favoring progress and favoring revolution.

So let's sum up these objective factors favoring revolution:

- 1) 1960's revolutionary storm halts Imperialist Cold War counter-offensive;
- 2) Broad democratic anti-bureaucratic sentiment arises among the general population;
- 3) A widespread rank and file upsurge within labor, targeting the trade union bureaucrats as the enemy;
- 4) Signs of potential rifts in the AFL-CIO officialdom.

These are the positive objective factors.

In addition we must of course add the growth and maturing of the new anti-revisionist communist movement. For this is also an objective fact.

The question before our movement is: how are we going to link up with the growing rank and file upsurge in labor? How can we join with it, provide it with concrete guidance, unite its most progressive elements, and help it to take full advantage of existing and maturing conditions.

How are we to link our party, the CP, the party we are building, with the mass spontaneous U.S. workers movement? This is the question.

Today, many have raised the slogan "unite the advanced" as the route to connecting communism to the workers' movement. Make the party, they say, "a party of advanced workers", workers who are at once communists, i.e., study Marxism and apply it, even develop socialist theories, and who are at the same time leaders of the masses of workers, leaders of the spontaneous w.c. movement.

"Unite these advanced".

Now, we know there is a big debate going on as to what an advanced worker is. One side says he is the one who grasps M-L, or most readily grasp M-L. The other side says he is primarily a militant t.u.'ist and in fact might even be anti-communist. And the debate between these two views goes on and on.

BACU believes that both of these views have meaning, and neither is absolutely correct or absolutely incorrect. We think that the advanced stratum of workers in the U.S. is divided and does not constitute a combination of these two points, but is actually divided into two parts. And this is a peculiar product of U.S. labor history.

If you truly study Lenin's concept of the advanced, you will see that he is talking about a worker who combines two qualities. He is talking about a worker who is at once a Marxist or quite willing to study Marxism, and, furthermore, is "elaborating socialist theories" and, at the same time, a working class leader. He is the actual practical leader of the spontaneous, i.e., the workers movement. Hence, he is a direct bridge between theory and practice; it is through him that the fusion between Marxism with the w.c. movement can take place. Hence, Lenin's plan, his view on building the RCP(B), his set of tasks for Russian Social-Democracy, was designed with the aim of uniting this stratum, "uniting the advanced", to form a nation-wide, disciplined and fully Marxist vanguard party.

Furthermore, because of the position of the Russian advanced worker, such a party was destined to be at once the vanguard party of the w.c. and, as well, the actual party of the w.c., receiving the backing not just of the masses of workers, but of their TU organizations and later their political org. (i.e., the Soviets).

Now, Lenin's definition has two sides, two components. It has two parts. The absolute side of his definition is that the worker is a working class intellectual. One who can grasp Marxist science. This is the absolute side. This is the side he stressed in the fight against those who would deny the workers socialism. Who would rather have the workers confined to the trade union struggle. The "economists" as he called them. They denied the importance of this absolute side of the definition. Rather, they insisted, the advanced worker in Russia

was not socialist, but merely a trade unionist. They wanted to build the Russian Social-Democratic Party on the mere basis of serving the trade union movement, abandoning the political movement altogether. Not as a vanguard political party.

And this, of course, is an important lesson for us. We too must guard the quality of the party we seek to build, and we too must insist that everyone who joins our party is a M-L. This means a worker who joins our party must fit Lenin's absolute definition of an advanced worker. A militant TU'ist is not enough. He must be a M-L worker.

But, Lenin's definition of the advanced was not only this. His definition also said that the Russian advanced worker was also the one who was leading the mass movement. Stalin, in HCPSU, later points out that the advanced workers were, during this period, leading every strike in Russia down to even the smallest strikes. You see, the advanced stratum of workers in Russia were not only Marxist. At that time, they were also leaders of the spontaneous mass w.c. movement, of the TU movement.

So, in addition to the absolute side of Lenin's definition of the advanced, there is clearly a relative side, that is, relative to the great body of labor. The advanced is actually the leader of the spontaneous workers movement. Not the leader in an abstract theoretical sense, but a practical leader of the day to day movement. He is one who receives the confidence of the masses and is able to lead them. Thus, he is also a militant leader of the TU movement.

So Lenin's concept of the advanced was that of 2 qualities, rather a combination of 2 qualities, the advanced was at once a socialist, and as well a mass leader.

In the U.S. today we have no such stratum, or at least we have no significant stratum of workers fulfilling both of these criterion. Not one of the groups that claims we do, who insist that "uniting the advanced" is an automatic bridge to the masses, not one of these persons has produced one scrap of evidence to show that we have such a stratum. Rather they simply assert it, claiming that 1000's of these workers exist. As far as BACU is concerned, this is pure subjective conjecture and cannot stand up to the light of the slightest objective analysis. There is no significant stratum of workers in the U.S. who combine both components of Lenin's definition. This is a fact!

There are, however, workers who are socialists and are striving to become socialists. Some are already in M-L organizations, others are not. Certainly it is correct to "unite" these workers and bring them into the party building movement. And certainly a criterion for party membership is that one be a M-L.

But also, there are leaders of the w.c. movement in this country. Some of these are reactionary, some of them are progressive. And some of them are in between. But even the most progressive, the most enlightened of the actual leaders of the spontaneous movement is not a socialist. He is at best a TU militant, a leftwing TU'ist, but not a socialist. Furthermore, even this TU militant is not the main leader of the w.c. today. Rather, right wing, pro-capitalist workers lead labor. Today, the most advanced section of actual leaders of the spontaneous movement is not socialists.

It might be said that in the U.S. the advanced stratum is divided. Does not constitute a single whole, but rather is divided into two different groups.

One, the absolute advanced, and the other, the relative advanced.

One is a socialist but does not lead masses of workers. And the other is a TU militant, and not a socialist, but who leads masses of workers.

A peculiar feature of American conditions during the past 20 years, is that many socialists, including socialist workers, have turned away from leading the trade union movement. This situation, is a reflection of the reality that the workers in the United States have been driven further to the right.

Therefore, if "unite the advanced" has any meaning for us, it can only mean unite both elements of the advanced. For uniting just the absolutely advanced, i.e., those who are already socialist, will not connect us with the U.S. masses of workers, will not be a direct bridge.

And secondly, uniting the relatively advanced, i.e., the TU militants, will not guarantee a M-L party, but will tend to drag the party down to the level of TU militancy. However, it will connect us with the mass movement. This too is a fact.

Hence, if we are to raise the slogan "unite the advanced", we must be clear that we are talking of a divided advanced and not a single group that can directly link socialism to the working class.

And this is because, in our circumstances, workers are not led by socialist-minded workers.

To "unite the advanced" in our country, two things are required. First, the TU'ist must be raised to the level of communist. This requires conscious effort on the part of socialists, (including socialist workers), to educate him and to win him to communism. This is an absolute requirement. But additionally, and frankly more importantly, in our circumstance, and in order that we can catch the ear of the militant TU'ist, we must, first, take up the economic struggle, the TU struggle, the spontaneous movement, and we must take it up seriously. Communists, if they want to "unite the advanced" in the U.S., can do this only if they take the economic struggle seriously. This too is an absolute requirement.

#### V. "BUILD THE LEFT-WING, FIGHT FOR LEFT-CENTER UNITY"

The left-center coalition is the strategy for taking up the economic struggle. It corresponds with the immediate issues confronting labor, and thus provides the route for the communist movement to join with and give concrete guidance to the w.c. movement. This is the only way communists will be able to gain influence in the TU movement in the U.S. It is a tried and tested strategy, the strategy of the once revolutionary CPUSA during its most influential period, and that is because it is the necessary strategy for TU progress.

1) The first assumption of the Left/center strategy is that the w.c. movement in the U.S. today isn't political as it was in Russia. Therefore, the differentiations we are about to make have to do with the attitude workers take toward taking up the economic struggle primarily, and only indirectly their attitude on politics. The Left-center differentiation of forces is today essentially economic, reflecting the actual state of the w.c. movement which remains "pure and simple" trade unionism.

2) Recognising this, it can be seen that within the labor movement there are 3 strata: the Right, the Left, and the Center.

The right wing currently dominates the labor movement. This group is mostly representative of the most highly paid and bribed workers, the workers who benefit most during capitalist prosperity periods, and who turn their anger against rank and file militancy during periods of crisis. Most of the AFL-CIO officials represent this grouping of workers who are the most anti-communist and most subservient to capital.

This stratum is what is known as the "labor aristocracy" and it is in fact a bribed stratum of the working class which has acquiesced to capitalism, is willing to accept the crumbs of imperialist plunder in exchange for its allegiance, and has abdicated the cause of its own emancipation. It is the running dog of capitalism and is likely to side with Imperialism until the very end. The influence of this stratum, and its representatives, the current trade union bureaucrats, must be isolated and thrown out of the trade union movement.

Opposed to this bribed stratum is the left wing. The left wing tends to grow and decline as the objective conditions cause the rank and file to become more or less militant. The left wing of labor actually represents the progressive interests of the great body of labor, the majority of workers who are not permanently sold to the system: workers who must be and can be won to stand for class struggle unionism, workers who don't want to continue their absolute subservience to capital, workers who realize that the only gains they can really get depend on their consistent struggle against the employer.

The left wing today, however, is not fully class conscious and has not arrived at even the basic understanding that workers need their own party. In the 30's, the left wing did call for a labor party, and many did follow the CPUSA. But today, because of the objective factors I have previously outlined, the left wing has lost this elementary consciousness.

Nonetheless, the left wing of labor is today growing as rank and file militancy is on the rise. Furthermore, communists are beginning to play an active role within it, attempting to organize it. But it is also the case that McCarthyism destroyed the old left wing of the 30's, and so today's left wing is young, inexperienced, fragmented, and disorganized. Thus, while there are pockets of these militants in practically every trade union, and every factory, office, and agricultural combine, they do not act as a strong united body. Hence, even the influence they have today is not great, is temporary. It needs to be strengthened and consolidated.

The organization of the left wing into a viable force is a major task for the communist movement. It is essential for the further advance of the trade unions.

Some communists mistakenly believe this task is merely to expose the trade union bureaucracy and is not to organize the left wing militants. This is wrong! These communists think they are doing the working class a great service by handing out leaflets exposing the trade union bureaucrats for being bribed agents of the bourgeoisie. However, this isn't real leadership.

To a great extent, the ordinary worker already knows that the trade union bureaucrats are bribed and corrupt. He already knows that the trade union bureaucrats dominate and betray the trade unions. This is common knowledge. However, having lost faith in the bureaucrats, has the ordinary worker gained faith in anyone else? No, he has not. Certainly not in the communists. Instead, he has been immobilized and has little faith in anybody, least of all himself. The ordinary worker has seen so many would-be saviors pass by and whip up excitement, and then go on to sell out just like those he originally criticised. The dictum: "absolute power corrupts absolutely", has become the militant workers' watchword, as he turns not to organized mass activity but to various kinds of escapism, individualism or spontaneous mass rebellion.

Communists cannot win this worker's allegiance through the handing out of leaflets and the engagement in study circles. This worker demands concrete proof that we are able to organize, to lead, and most importantly to do this without selling out.



The organization of a viable left wing leadership is the key to winning his allegiance. Communists must become the core of a new breed of trade union leaders who will respond to the growing rank and file militancy and give it concrete, and specific leadership.

Therefore, we communists must actively fight to organize a viable left wing by providing the left wing militants, who already exist in large numbers, with concrete and specific guidance. Most importantly, we must teach them trade union strategy and tactics.

Importantly, today, third world workers make up a sizable section of this left wing and this represents both the broad proletarianization of these peoples, as well as the advanced consciousness they have gained as a result of the dual oppression as exploited workers and oppressed nationalities. These workers are concentrated in the most oppressed and exploited sections of industry, and are well situated in the key industrial unions.

More so, they possess a political consciousness far in excess of the average white, left wing militant because of their direct influence by the revolutionary national liberation movements of the 60's. Thus, both in terms of militancy and of political consciousness, as well as by virtue of their position in key sectors of the economy, third world workers are among the most advanced of the left-wing militants. They are and continue to play a leading role in the movement.

This is very important to understand, because not only can third world workers play a leading role in inspiring and guiding rank and file militancy, but because of their advanced political consciousness, they play an even greater role in imparting a proletarian consciousness to labor. They are in this way a direct link between the reformist and economist labor movement, and the more advanced revolutionary and political movements in society. This is not even mentioning the important role third world workers can play in the national liberation movements themselves.

Nonetheless, third world workers are only a component of the left wing, and, by and large, the left wing is not political. Its basis of unity is class struggle trade unionism.

In between the left and right exists a scattered array of forces that can loosely be defined as the center.

The center is an unstable and vacillating element that fundamentally can not stand on its own. Because it has no ideology of its own, it must either tail the class collaborationist right wing, or the class struggle left wing. The only time it can stand alone is when the left and the right strength is relatively equal and the two cancel each other out. These are periods of great stagnation. Whereas right leadership means reaction and backwardness, left leadership means progress, center leadership tends to re-enforce the status quo, which is subservience to capital.

The basic struggle within labor is between the left and the right. The left (however economist it is) is striving toward a class conscious position. The right actively resists this and is openly bourgeois. The center is pulled, and depending on objective factors, heads in a reactionary or progressive direction.

Today, and since the expelling of the left from the CIO, the center completely tails and is wedded to the right. Hence, despite certain liberal and radical rhetoric emitted by its representatives in the trade union bureaucracy, these so called "center" or "progressive" leaders are today actually representing the right wing. Only they are smarter than the average right wing labor leader; they know that to actively represent the right, they must pretend to be somewhat "progressive".

Hence, while Wookcock, Fraser, Winpissinger, and others, mouth pseudo-progressive rhetoric, they are doing this in words only. In deeds they have long ago adopted the actual policy of the right wing. All this goes to show that the center is genuinely progressive not by virtue of its rhetoric, but only when it links up with the left. As long as it is linked to the right, as a chameleon, it turns reactionary. Finally, even the revisionist leaders of such so-called "progressive" unions as the U.E. and the ILWU know they too tail after the right wing.

But this is simply a reflection of objective circumstances, for the labor movement as a whole, including the ordinary worker, has been pushed to the right by McCarthyism. But as well, imperialism is no longer in the same position as it was, and hence the growing crisis and growing rank and file militancy. This is giving great impulse to the left wing and is shaking loose the grip of the right. Hence, the signs of a rift in the trade union bureaucracy, and the potential of a center leadership re-emerging apart from the right wing, is growing and becoming great.

All of this is so not because some AFL-CIO leaders are "seeing the light", but rather because objective conditions are causing a shift among the rank and file toward the left.

In the face of these events, what must be our policy? The most important thing is to consolidate the left wing. For the stronger the left wing, the better it is at leading the rank and file, the greater will be the rank and file drift to the left. This will increase further the impact on the trade union bureaucracy, and will hasten its breaking up. So the key is to unite the left.

But what should be our policy toward the center? We should call on them to break from the right wing and unite with the rank and file upsurge. Some say our policy is to attack potential center forces as more opportunist than the right wing, that we today win the workers over from the opportunist leadership of the center. These leaders they call conciliators with opportunism. Some even go further and do not recognize a left wing of labor, but call it opportunist as well because it remains economist, i.e., confines itself to militant trade unionism. These people sometimes even claim the left wing should not be united with, but should be attacked as being even more opportunist than the center; they call the left wing conciliators with the conciliators.

What can we do with this hopeless sectarianism?

When the working class is just beginning to come alive out of its long hibernation, when it is shifting to the left, but its left wing remains fragmented and disorganized, when a new progress is in the air for the U.S. working class, what do these sectarians proclaim? That the progress is too slow? "No, it isn't progress at all." The only progress they recognize is a complete break with capitalism. They acknowledge no intermediate progress. Hence, all they can do is stand aloof from the progressive motion and shout phrases. They are wrong. We must unite the left, and we must call on the center to unite with us as well by fighting for a left-center united front.

Let's deal with the major objections to a united front with the center:

1) The first objection points out that there are no genuine center forces at this time. They ask us, show us where these center forces are right now. Who and what. And where are they? And they easily demonstrate that even the most "progressive" talking trade union leaders practice the same reactionary and sellout policies. Of course they are correct! No actually clearly defined center forces are present among the trade union bureaucrats as of yet.

The fatal flaw in this argument is the assumption that the center has a permanent body of leaders that are forever committed to some form of "centrist" ideology. This is ridiculous! The center has no principles and therefore only mutates when and as a genuine shift to the left takes place.

Look at the CIO period. John L. Lewis was the leader of the center. However, was he always a center force? Of course not. Prior to his break with the AFL, he was one of the most reactionary AFL leaders. He was an arch-reactionary who was ruining the UMW with sell-out and bureaucratic policies that would put any current trade union bureaucrat to shame. He was an out-and-out right wing leader.

Furthermore, he was a Republican and endorsed the Republican ticket throughout his career. He even quit the CIO when his Republican presidential candidate lost.

You see, the center isn't a political category, and it isn't judged upon the basis of the intent or subjective inclinations of its leaders. Rather, it is the concrete result of their actions that we must consider.

Some people claim to want to "unite the honest against the dishonest forces", and are always talking about "honest" forces. What is an "honest force"? What does this have to do with objective analysis? You know, when the CPUSA joined forces with Lewis, many "honest" Marxist-Leninists and militants in the UMW had a fit. They even quit the CP and the CIO. But, this only goes to show that these "honest" people allowed themselves to be guided by the subjectivity and not objective analysis.

Lenin once was asked to expose the "insincerity" of a working class leader and he responded "it had not yet been invented, a sincerometer", and he pointed to the old adage: "The road to hell is paved with the best of intentions."

No, the center is not a permanent group and certainly is not defined by its "honest" or dishonesty. The center becomes a force when the rank and file shifts toward the left and a section of the bureaucracy breaks from the old order. But they lag behind the left, because they are not willing to make the necessary break from class collaborationist policy, entirely.

None-the-less, a rift within the current trade union bureaucracy is inevitable, if the current crisis continues and if, consequently, the current upsurge of the rank and file continues. It is inevitable that there will be a break up of the current bureaucracy.

So, the lessons of J.L. Lewis teach us that it is not necessary today to look at every bureaucrat and speculate as to what side he may line up on, for this cannot be foretold. History has proven, that even the most "progressive" sounding trade unionists can prove in practice to be the most reactionary.

So, from whatever quarter arrives the break from the old order, even if it comes from the most reactionary of the trade union leaders, as long as that break is in order to link up with the growing militancy, we should encourage this and support it. This weakens the enemy, which cannot but do otherwise than give us strength.

Today, we should call on any trade union bureaucrat who shows any signs of breaking to make a full break, to join with the left and adopt a class struggle policy. We must criticize and expose them to the extent that they resist joining the UF.

2) This brings us to the second point. The next argument thrown up in our faces is: "While it may be OK to unite with the center at some times, this depends on the left wing being a strong independent force, if not the leader of the united front."

This view does not understand united front tactics and does not know how to use the united front as a strategy to build the left, and how the left gains leadership in the united front.

If we study Chairman Mao's writings on the united front, we learn that the left grows strong through the united front, both by gaining more access to the masses and by exposing the inconsistencies of the other elements within the united front.

Currently, the masses of ordinary workers cannot fully understand the differences among those who claim to represent their interests. Now they are torn between the impulse to go to the left and the sweet promises of the "progressive" talking reformers. What should we do? We should call on these reformers to put up or shut up by demanding a united front for trade union progress. A dialectical relationship exists between the growth of the left and the building of the left-center united front. First, the stronger the drift toward the left, the greater the potential for a united front. Second, the more we call for a united front, and the center refuses, the more we appear as unifiers and the center as the splitters, the workers are drawn to the left, and the more pressure is exerted on the center to come over. In this way the left grows and the united front is secured. Third, the united front brings millions more within our reach and gives great impulse to the leftward drift. Fourth, during the united front the center drags it feet, vascillates, and shows its unprincipled colors. We never cease to criticize and expose this before the masses, but we don't break the united front either. The more they wrangle and resist, and the more we expose their true colors to the rank and file, the more the masses are drawn to us, and away from them, the stronger we become and the weaker do they. Ultimately, the scale is tipped in our favor and they then must go along with us, or go against the masses. This is the dialectics of the united front. This is why we can only benefit today by calling for a left-center united front.

So the left-center united front is the strategy we need to gain influence in the trade union movement, for it is also the necessary strategy for trade union progress.

## VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Now, I'd like to make a few additional concluding remarks.

What are the most important things to conclude from what I have said?

The first thing is: Don't look immediately to the labor movement for leadership in the revolutionary struggle. If we do that, we can not but fall into subservience to economism. As the 60's showed, there are elements outside of the labor movement who are not yet able to accept leadership from the working class, because the working class is not itself organized under revolutionary leadership. These movements, outside of the labor movement, have played and will continue to play a profound political and revolutionary role, at times a more profound role, in society, than has the labor movement, or it will for some time. Therefore, it would be a serious mistake for communists to concentrate all of their forces in the labor movement. If they do this, they are bound to become subservient to the economic basis of the labor movement today.

Trade union work must not represent the totality of our work. It is but a component of communist work at this time.

Secondly, it must be realized, whereas the economic crisis of capitalism is definitely maturing, this will not necessarily or automatically lead, in a short order, to the revolutionization and politicization of the workers movement. If the 1930's teach us anything, with the country thrown into the deepest of depressions, even then the masses of workers did not politically side with the CPUSA, though they followed it in economic activity.

Therefore, the concept that many have floated, that the route to working class leadership of the struggles which arise outside of the labor movement (e.g. the revolutionary nationalist movements) is to first go to the plants, to only then return to the national movements, is a-historical. Such a view forgets that the national movements themselves, organized apart from the labor movement, have displayed a profound role not only in challenging the system of imperialism, but in raising the mass consciousness of the workers themselves.

Our policies cannot be to place, so-to-speak, all our eggs in one basket, and to opt for a single, linear approach of first winning the workers and then returning to the rest of society. We must build, in addition to our base in the working class, leadership and guidance in those struggles which are able (forced) by circumstances to play a more profound and revolutionary role, at this time.

Thirdly, we should not confuse the left-wing of labor with the communist movement. The left-wing is today an economic grouping, that can be raised in time, if we do our work right, to a political grouping. This will however be a matter of time. It will not be a matter of a few months, or of a few years. It will take some time.

The communist movement, therefore, must guard its independence even from the left.

People have raised, in opposition to a mass left-wing formation, that our task is to build communist nuclei at this time. Where they fall short is in opposing the one to the other. One (the nuclei) speaks to the means in which the communists must organize. If the communists organize merely on the basis of left-wing militancy, they will have abandoned communism and will have become mere tools of the economic struggle.

We must, in addition to uniting the left-wing, and in addition to the fight for left-center unity, guard our ideological independence by organizing ourselves on a nuclei-cell basis. We use this as our prime basis of operation in each plant and in the trade unions.

These nuclei must be connected, if they are to avoid "economism", to a political party, a vanguard Marxist-Leninist party. Such a party must not confine its work to trade union work but must be active in all of the progressive and revolutionary movements in our society.

Within the plants, the nuclei has the responsibility of representing that party, distributing the newspaper and other agitational materials and to develop its presence and leadership.

Fourthly, we must agitate broadly, within and outside the trade unions for independent political action. We must promote political break from the bourgeois parties. We must look for all forms possible to create independent political action, and not insist that it can be independent, only if it is thoroughly communist.

This is a lesson drawn from the entire history of the working class movement, which Marx and Lenin taught the working class. We have handed out a piece of literature entitled "Lenin's Preface...". If you read this, you will find that, at the same time he fought the idea of a mass political workers party in Russia, calling this concept "economist" in 1907, he pointed out the circumstances elsewhere, where the working class had not even taken the first step of a break from the bourgeoisie politically. There, the first task of the working class was to establish a political party on whatever program it could. This is the lesson he draws from studying Marx and Engels comments on the workers movement of various countries in their correspondence.

This is in the same period when "What is to be done" was written. Lenin's Preface...will help give us an idea of what it will actually take to stir the U.S. working class politically.

Fifthly, we come to a very important point: building the open presence of communism publicly in society and breaking the grip of anti-communism on society by taking advantage of the "popping of the balloon" that the 60's represented. Whereas communists are not now persecuted in the form of being thrown into jail for our beliefs, nor purged from all institutions, the communist movement must take the field politically. It must get involved in national and local elections, go out broadly before the people spreading its views, standing firmly on a communist program. It must establish its open existence in society and not continue to slink around in small clandestine formations.

Of course, we understand, in the trade union movement, laws continue on the books, making it illegal for communists to hold trade union office. It is possible for employers to fire workers not for being communists. There is a decision on the books which allowed a worker to be fired not for being a communist, but for merely being accused of being a communist, if suspicion of his being a communist cause dissension among the workers. Therefore, in the U.S. today, one not need be a communist to be fired for "being a communist". One need only be a militant, and be accused of being a communist in the course of labor disputes, to be fired.

This problem must be overcome. Importantly, communism must establish its open presence outside of the workplace where recrimination is less possible. Currently, communism and communist affiliation is not illegal. We must take advantage of this situation to push the open presence of communism into the mainstream of american life, wherever possible. This helps to create a more favourable climate in the trade union movement for the defense of communists who are often fired for their affiliations and beliefs. While secrecy is often necessary, particularly in the plants, this is an incumbrance and, as well, a reflection of the isolation of communism and the communists within the movement. A strong movement, with mass backing, would be able to rely on the rank and file to protect the jobs of the communists. Our desire is to operate as openly as possible in all spheres. We must explain this to the workers who often do not understand and are even taken a back by our secret ways. We must explain to him that the bourgeoisie forces us into secrecy because they fear our open connections with the labor movement and our influence over the rank and file.

We stand for the complete liberation of the working class and the elimination of the bourgeoisie. We must win the workers support for our right to an open existence without fear of recriminations, including being fired.

The key to developing the open presence of communism in the workplace is to gain the mass support of the rank and file. We can only do this if we take up the economic struggle of the workers, and take it up seriously.

This brings us to the last and the main point of this presentation. The essential pre-requisite for winning the workers backing for our right to an open existence without fear of recrimination, to win the rank and file to vote for us in trade union elections, and to gain their backing, and the backing of the trade unions in political elections, is that we take seriously organizing the economic struggle. We must weld its most militant sectors into a viable left wing leadership, equipped with a clear understanding of basic trade union strategy and tactics.

The basic strategy of trade union work is the left-center united front.

Our call words must be:

UNITE THE LEFT WING!

FIGHT FOR LEFT-CENTER UNITY!

APPENDIX: Center Forces at the Local Level

There is one point which we feel needs more elaboration at this time. In the section "Build the Left Wing, Fight for Left-Center Unity", we discuss the question of Center forces. The speech leaves the impression that the Center will emerge only from the rifts within the trade union bureaucracy at its highest positions of office. Because now there is little evidence of Center forces breaking from the highest order of the entrenched AFL-CIO officialdom, on page 16 the speaker states: "No actually clearly defined Center forces are present among trade union bureaucrats as yet." This is not a correct statement. Today, Center forces are beginning to emerge from lower level trade union bureaucrats. These forces, sensing a more militant mood in the rank and file, and seeking a new base for themselves, switch sides and break away from their fellow bureaucrats. Their programs stand out as a challenge to the crass, class-collaborationist bureaucrats at all levels, local, district-wide and international.

In other words, the speaker failed to point out that struggle is developing more on the local level than at the top, which is still solidly entrenched. Struggle at the top will come later. (The Miller reform campaign in UMW and the Sadlowski campaign in USWA are exceptions to this rule). As the economic crisis deepens in the U.S., as rank and file militancy grows and the left-wing becomes stronger, the economic struggles of today take on as their objective the transformation of the unions into class struggle trade unions. These struggles come into direct conflict with the class-collaborationist trade unionism of the international officialdom and their lackey bureaucrats at all levels of the trade union hierarchy. As we have seen, this conflict can break out in numerous ways, such as: when Internationals attempt to put their locals into receivership to keep the rank and file in line; when the International steps in to sabotage and sell out militant local strikes; or when within the locals and district, forces rise up to challenge their corrupt "leaders" in elections and other internal union struggles. Often, it is the Center that is the leader of these struggles rather than the Left, because the Left has yet to establish the respect of the rank and file. The Left must ally with these Center leaders. The necessity to ally stands out clearly in the recent Culinary Local 2 elections, when Culinary workers in San Francisco voted in a Center figure, MacDonald, for President of the local, ousting Joe Belardi, who was also President of the S.F. Labor Council. The need to ally with the emerging Center forces is on today's agenda in numerous local struggles throughout the U.S.

The forces challenging the entrenched, class-collaborationist bureaucrats come both from the ranks of the lower level bureaucrats, those who have already gained experience inside the trade unions, as well as from the shop floor. This is the reality we face. Lower level bureaucrats, Center figures, can take up the demands of the rank and file for a democratic, fighting union and seek to use this movement to rise to power. Whether or not these Center forces have the interests of the rank and file at heart, their programs objectively reflect the demands of the rank and file. The left wing must unite with these programs, pushing them in better directions, ally with

these forces, and keep the pressure on them to stick to their programs after their election victories. In this way the Left gains access to workers and increases its influence and prestige in the trade union movement. The alternative can only be to sit on the sidelines while these struggles rage, boycott the elections and wait until "pure" leaders arise. Or, the Left can pursue a policy of "Left initiative alone" and only participate in those struggle where it is the leader. Both these courses would be infantile "leftism" and are guaranteed to keep the Left small and isolated. In this period the Left will grow stronger by uniting with other forces than going it alone.

We realize that as of this writing, many of these Center forces, e.g., MacDonald and Miller, have already sold out. But we also see that this was not inevitable. A strong left-wing could have made these Center forces stick to their programs. In fact, the Center's vacillation and tendency to sell out cannot be prevented without the presence of a strong and independent left wing. In addition, the Left has little to lose even if the Center does sell out, as long as the Left has kept its independence and not unconditionally thrown all its weight behind the Center. After all, the objective is to build the Left, and the Left can gain by allying with the Center whether or not the Center remains true to its program. If the Center sells out, the Left will increase its prestige if the rank and file recognizes it as the group that has maintained its principles. At that point, the Left has a good opportunity to sweep away some of the Center's supporters and win them to supporting the Left and its program. Finally, in those situations, rare at best in these times, when the Left has the overwhelming support of the rank and file, the Left will have no use at all for the Center, and can pursue its course in absolute independence