

A WORKING PAPER TOWARD A BASIC MCLL PUBLIC STATEMENT

(for discussion at the August 1972 Convention)

My own questions and criticisms of the draft:

1. What I've written seems closest to a short, mass distribution pamphlet rather than a Changeover box or a letter to the rest of the left. We may need such a document much less than either of the other two.
2. The attempt to make a very summary statement of the problems of advanced capitalism is not very strong. Those with the ability and energy should try to redraft this section. Everyone should try to add some mini-analysis/positions like the three attempted.
3. A relatively large space is given to the discussions of racism, sexism and the "privileged" section question. This may be a mis-investment.
4. We probably want to say more -- and more specifically -- on strategy and tactics. It's probably here that that we can do most to distinguish ourselves from other left groups. That is, after all, one purpose of the paper.
5. On the positions taken on some international questions: some cadre no doubt don't yet have sufficient knowledge to feel responsible in endorsing or not the positions taken. If our goal is consensus, we have a difficulty. The positions taken are more or less my own undiscussed views.
6. The section on organizational relations is pretty much lifted from the excellent formulations in Changeover I. Do we want to keep the little ass-kicking at the end? It's us; but in the street?

## THE MOTOR CITY LABOR LEAGUE : VIEWS AND GOALS

The Motor City Labor League is a young organization: we have existed for less than two years. We have much to learn and are fully aware of our current limitations. We are also increasingly confident that we are making an important contribution to the struggle of progressive people in our city.

We belong to Detroit. Most of our members were born and grew up here. We know the city's past and we are ready to fight for its future. All members of MCLL work: some in the factories and hospitals and offices, others as teachers, social workers, and lawyers who defend the rights and interests of working people, and still others as members of people's organizations we have helped create.

### OUR GOAL : SOCIALISM

The Motor City Labor League is a revolutionary organization. We are people who work for the political and social defeat of those few hundred thousand powerful men who now run this country in their own interests. And we are people who hope to participate in building a socialist America where the degradations of war, poverty, racism, sexism, and meaningless and exhausting labor will be replaced by the liberation of peace, community, and cooperative work which ensures a just distribution of the social wealth which all create.

The socialist revolution for which we work will not be some private capture of administrative power by a clique of elite, but the seizure of social power by the vast majority in the interests of the vast majority. Socialism is not just a question of who governs, but how, and for what ends. Socialism in America must bring a profound change in all social relationships: workers will decide how the factories are run and what they produce; citizens of communities will control and administer the institutions which serve them; and the distinctions between manual and intellectual labor will cease as all work is shared and the very nature of work is transformed through the sane and humane use of technology.

But this good society can be won only if we see clearly that a socialist revolution is a hard contest between two groups: the small and very powerful capitalist ruling class and the massive and eventually even more powerful working class. The capitalists will never give up their power and its privileges without a fight. We of the working class must be prepared to defend our just objectives by any means necessary. We must be ready to suppress the illegitimate "right" of the exploiters to exploit. Only thus can we claim our right to democratically control the society our labor creates. Only if we prepare for this inevitable contest can we hope to establish, for the first time in history, a truly human world.

### AMERICAN SOCIETY : THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM

For a decade and more most Americans have felt that the country faces its deepest crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Every day the newspapers and television have brought news of a senseless and incomprehensibly murderous war in Indochina, of racial conflict in our cities, of crime, of the seemingly irreversable pollution of our environment. Inflation and unemployment increase, cities go bankrupt, schools cease to function, hundreds of thousands are wasted by heroine addiction, and millions remain ill for lack of adequate medical care.

We are told by the Nixons and Agnews that the problem lies with the black or the young or the foreign or the "greedy" workers. They tell us the solution is more law and order, more wage controls, more Vietnams. Some believe this. We are told by the McGoverns that the solution is only a matter of a few modest reforms. Some believe this.

But the Motor City Labor League is part of a growing movement of Americans who see that all the problems of our society are part of the general crisis of capitalism.

Although capitalism has been the dominant world system throughout the entire modern era we know that it is only one stage in the development of human society. Though always brutal and exploitative, in previous centuries capitalism was a necessary and essentially progressive force in the development of social organization. It broke down the isolation of small communities and built up a mighty industrial capacity.

But in the 20th century capitalism has ceased to play any progressive role. Its death agonies have led to two world wars, to repeated depressions, and to the imperialist domination of two-thirds of the world. It has also led, inevitably, to the rise of the system which will replace it: socialism. The great theme of 20th century history is the contest between a dying capitalism and a rising socialism. There have been and will be many twists and turns to this contest but there can be only two results: either a conflagration which will destroy civilization or the end of human exploitation through the victory of socialism.

Capitalism cannot exist forever because it is an inherently contradictory system. The "logic" of capitalism is the logic of profit: the owners of the means of production and distribution expropriate the wealth created by the labor of workers. On one point capitalists and socialist agree. Profits can be maintained only if capitalist enterprises continually expand. It's root, hog, or die! The history of capitalism is the history of the strong absorbing the weak. Where once a thousand firms might compete in a single industry now the industry is controlled by a few mutually tolerant giant corporations.

Today the monopoly corporations have reached the limits of expansion. They have revolutionized the means of production as far as is socially tolerable under capitalism. They have saturated other industries and other countries with the investment of their excess profits. The reversal has begun. Socialist nations have come into existence and closed the door to large scale capitalist investment. The ranks of the unemployed and underemployed in the capitalist nations have swelled. Imperialism has created not new markets for commodities by wars of national liberation. America's genocidal expansion westward has finally come to an end in the jungles and highlands of Indochina.

American capitalism has survived for the past thirty years without a major depression only because the capitalists have been able to use an ever larger federal budget to shore-up their stagnating system. During the past quarter century they have squandered over one trillion dollars of worker's taxes on the military spending which keeps the economy fueled.

But capitalism remains contradictory. The economy sputters along but the effects of wasting the national wealth on the arms budget are ever more evident in the conflicts and decay which have defined the national life for a decade:

- Pollution is not caused by careless citizens but by profit-hungry, waste-belching corporations and by a national government which has neither the will nor the funds (after the bombers are bought) to coerce corporations into ecological responsibility.

- The crime rates rise and the streets are unsafe not because "criminals" choose crime but because they have no choice. When the schools destroy rather than train and educate, when capitalism offers less rather than more jobs, when the police are bought by the big smack pushers and the federal government fails to stop the flow of drugs at the borders, when the criminal justice system rehabilitates no one, when people must choose between a quick rip-off or a slow death, then there will be more crime, but the real criminals will be those few who profit from a system which makes crime inevitable.

- The government adopts wage controls not as some temporary expedient to cool inflation but as part of what will become a prolonged and systematic attack on the working class and our first line of defense, the trade unions. This is done for the American capitalists so they can reduce their wage bills, up productivity, and maintain or regain their edge against foreign competition.

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The continuation of capitalism will mean more war, more poverty, more racial conflict, more pollution, and more misery for all but the privileged few. It will also mean, if we do our work well, that more and more of us will work to take control of our own lives and fight for our future. It will mean a growing movement for revolutionary change, and growing movement for socialism. How can this be brought about?

#### WHAT WE THINK SHOULD BE DONE

The Motor City Labor League believes that socialism can be won only through the unified and militant leadership of working class organizations, organizations which directly represent the vast majority who do not own the ~~means~~ means of production and distribution and therefore must sell their labor power in order to survive. We working people are brought together in mighty numbers in the factories and offices to do the essential labor of society. We can withhold that labor. We are the great majority in all the cities of the nation. We can move to exercise this power.

To realize our potential power we must understand who we are and what at present divides us. American is an advanced and complex capitalist nation and its working class is similarly complex. The single most important element within our class are the millions of industrial workers who labor at machines and turn out products which the capitalists sell. But there are other millions who toil as secretaries, as clerks, and as service workers, who labor in the communications and transportation industries, and who have no more stake in capitalist society than their brothers and sisters on the production lines. And there are also other millions who are employed as teachers, as social workers, as engineers, and as technicians and whose true interests are also opposed to capitalism. Finally, we count in our number not only those who draw a modest wage or salary, but the unemployed, the retired workers whose labor helped build America, and most especially the millions of women who toil long hours every day to maintain our houses and families. We are workers, all.

The workers of America and their families comprise perhaps ninety per cent of the nation's population. Yet our potential power is undercut by many antagonism which divide us. The most fundamental division is created by the racism of many white workers. Ever since the time of slavery the ruling class has exploited the labor of people of color as a crucial source of super-profits. To justify this exploitation maintained and

propagated an ideology of racial superiority and this ideology has become deeply rooted in the culture of many white Americans. Blacks and Chicanos and Puerto Ricans and Asians have always been at the bottom of the workforce and the bosses have always been able to threaten militant white workers with this supply of surplus labor. The employers have often been able to divide whites and people of color even though their true interests lay in class solidarity.

In recent years the rise of the black liberation struggle and the insurgency of other peoples of color have begun to alter racial relations within the working class. White workers have felt threatened by the black movement but some have also begun to pay a grudging respect to its militancy -- especially when it appears at the workplace and is directed primarily against the racist bosses.

The Motor City Labor League believes that the highest responsibility of revolutionary white working people is to struggle against the racist policies of the capitalist class while helping our fellow workers move from racist attitudes to one's of full class solidarity. Further, we believe that in building a revolutionary movement in America the single most important initiatives will come from the militant black workers in the mass industries. We also believe these initiatives will be one of the essential conditions for the defeat of racism within our class.

Another deviation within our class is maintained by the ideology and practice of male supremacy. Like racism, this set of attitudes and actions has its roots in a structural arrangement which ultimately benefits only one group: the ruling class. For as long as capitalism has existed women have been forced, without compensation, to reproduce, nurture, clothe and feed the working class. When capitalism has needed more labor women have been marched into the mills and offices to take up the lowest paying jobs; when the need slackened they were the first to go. Most men have to some degree adopted the myth that women are inherently inferior, that their labor is worth less and that their proper place is in the home as the servant of the man and "his" children.

Only recently have women again begun to openly challenge the system which oppresses them. As yet this movement has had little influence within most sections of the working class but its effect must and will eventually be profound. The Motor City Labor League believes that a strong and broad-based anti-sexist movement is a necessary condition for the working class unity which can defeat capitalism. We believe that it is a duty of revolutionaries, both women and men, to constantly serve and build this movement.

A third significant deviation within our class is that between the more and less "privileged" sections. This exists both within and between industries. Skilled tool and die makers have at times acted in their own immediate narrow interests at the expense of their fellow workers on the line. The working conditions, pay, and job "status" of most teachers is better than most other workers and thus teachers often feel superior to the people whose children they teach. The attitudes and actions of which these examples are typical are a seriously divisive force working against class unity and the possibility of a mass movement for socialism.

The Motor City Labor League believes it is crucially important to carry out the education and build the organizations which can move all sections of our class, and especially the more privileged, toward full working class solidarity.

Overcoming our internal divisions is, of course, only one part of our struggle. We must also develop the strategy and tactics which help us build up the power of our own organizations. This can and must be done in many different ways.

Take a situation most of us face every day: the job. In Detroit most of us who work belong to unions and we're glad there. We know we need them. But we also know the unions never do all they should to defend our interests. The union big boys have their own interests to look after and this often makes them sell us out. They rarely fight for the better working conditions we rank and file demand and they usually stomp down on the union reforms we know are necessary.

All most unions really do is sell our labor power to the bosses on somewhat better terms than we'd get on our own. That's important, but it isn't enough. As our struggle develops we'll need a different kind of worker's organization. We'll need worker's councils which fight for us every day on the shop floor and in the office, councils which see the bosses and the unions for what they are. These councils must be committed to building the independent power of the rank and file so that we can eventually take over our places of work and run them in the interests of our class.

The Motor City Labor League is committed to building this kind of worker's organization.

Or take our situation as residents and citizens of various communities. We know we don't have much to say about how the schools or the utilities or the police and courts function. Most of us get to vote but that doesn't end up meaning too much because almost all the candidates we get to choose from are going to be a lot more responsive to Henry Ford and his class of people than they will be to us. After all, he's got the money and the power.

But this can change. We've got the numbers and we can run this city. We can chuck the Democratic/Republican tweedle-dee/tweedle-dum game and build our own grass roots organizations. These community organizations can begin to really influence the decisions which effect our lives! it will take hard work and courage and a willingness to bend a few noses, but it can be done. Eventually these community councils could begin to take over some parts of the school system and the police department and the welfare and unemployment agencies. And such grass roots community organizations can come together and support our own candidates, candidates who will directly represent us and be bound by our decisions.

The Motor City Labor League will continue to build such community organizations.

There are other ways we can defend our interests and build up our power. We can combine in cooperatives, cut out the middle man, buy good food at wholesale prices, and distribute it ourselves. We can get people's lawyers to teach us the law and how to use it. And we can establish our own schools which meet our immediate needs and where we can learn and teach each other how the city is really run.

The Motor City Labor League is building such institutions. We believe in the power and capacity of the people. We know we must endure many defeats in the future but we also believe we can and must win many victories on our way to the final victory of socialism.

There is another kind of organization which must be built if we are to win. Revolutionary struggles must have leadership, leadership which is responsive to the people because it can make

correct assessments of situations and take actions which help people decide what course to take. If there is to be a socialist revolution in America there must first be a revolutionary party. Such a party must bring together the revolutionary leaders of all elements of the working class. It must be able to understand the ballance of class forces at any moment and be able to help mobilize our class for action. It must be very disciplined. After democratically choosing a course of actions, it must be able to act with one iron will.

The Motor City Labor League is committed to joining with other revolutionaries to build such a national party. Despite the posturings and sectarian claims of some groups no such party exists today in America. Its construction will depend primarily on the prolonged, patient, and self-critical work of revolutionaries in all America's major cities. A revolutionary party is not built by a few conferences. It is not a debating club to serve the vanity of its members. It is a tool which belongs to the working class because it has brought together in one disciplined force our most advanced and resourceful leaders.

#### OUR RELATIONS WITH OTHERS

As socialists, the Motor City Labor League is ultimately part of a world-wide movement which has been struggling for a century and more. We take our international revolutionary heritage very seriously and have the responsibility of offering our tentative views of some of the debates and results of this struggle.

In the great contest between capitalism and socialism we look with hope toward all present and potential socialist forces no matter how compromised they may be at present. But the Motor City Labor League is in nobody's pocket. We are not and never will be apologists for any revolution, any tradition, or any policy of a socialist state. We are prepared to criticize any and all fellow revolutionaries because we know that no just criticism can ever harm the revolutionary movement.

The first anti-capitalist revolution was won over fifty years ago when the Soviet Union was created out of a war-torn czarist Russia. Despite the horrible burdens of civil war, economic isolation, fascist invasion, and capitalist encirclement the Soviet Union has built a society which has vastly improved the life of all her citizens. But the advances of the Soviet people have not been matched by the "revolutionary" leadership. We do not believe that the Soviet Union has returned to "state capitalism" but we do acknowledge that there has grown up a privileged elite based on the party hierarchy. This elite has held its power by the totalitarian suppression of the criticisms and initiatives of the people of the Soviet Union and her Eastern European neighbors. We have severe criticisms of the Soviet Union and place our faith not with the party and the government but with the soviet working class and its future,

We look with much more immediate optimism to the other great socialist state, the People's Republic of China. There, also in the face of stupendous onstacles, socialism has made great strides in transforming the lives of one quarter of humanity.-- all in the space of barely twenty years. Our judgement is that Chinese socialism has not only vastly improved the material conditions of peasantry and the workers but has also made real progress toward the establishment of workers power in all aspects of life. But we are not uncritical Sino-philis. There is much that we simply do not know about the internal life of People's China, especially since the concealed nature of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.

And there are some things which we do know about China's recent foreign policy of which we are very critical: their unwillingness to criticize and oppose the fascist actions of the Kahn regime in Pakistan during the slaughter of thousands of innocents and (pro-Chinese!) liberation fighters in what is now Bangladesh, and their willingness to support Sirimavo Bandaranaike's brutal suppression of revolutionary forces in Ceylon. No justification which has been advanced for these actions has persuaded us that they are anything but grievous errors which stain the record of the Chinese revolutionary leadership.

We also take inspiration from the heroic revolutions which have been won in Vietnam, Cuba, North Korea, Tanzania and other smaller nations of the imperialized world. The international character and spirit of these revolutions is a major element of the 20th century world-historical picture for they point the way to national liberation and socialist development for the millions of Latin America, Africa, and Asia.

And we are heartened also by the rebirth of revolutionary movements in some of the advanced capitalist countries such as France, Italy, West Germany, Canada, Japan and the United States. Especially in France and Italy these movements have broken with the powerful and objectively conservative influence of the established Communist Parties and have begun to find a real base within the working class. We believe that our own American movement can learn important lessons from these international comrades.

As socialists the Motor City Labor League should also take a public stand on the principles which guide our relations with other organizations in Detroit and the nation.

We are prepared to enter into principled relations with all progressive forces. We are committed to building a mass, united movement of working people in which we all see our common interests, are prepared to bury false divisions, and are willing to move forward on common ground to struggle for revolutionary change in our workplaces, communities, schools and other social institutions.

We respect the fact that real differences do exist at the present time and consequently we respect the real basis for the existence of separate organizations for whatever racial, geographic or political reasons there may be.

We believe there is a basis for cooperation and that basis is honest respect and actual practice -- not guilt, racism, intimidation, or expediency.

We expect to be judged on our practice and we will judge others on that basis. We are open, But we will not be liberal with arm-chair radicals, irrevelent sectarian grouplets, or "revolutionary" parasites whose only activity is to fasten like leeches on the hard work of dedicated people.

This paper has set forth the views and goals of the Motor City Labor League. We in MCLL welcome your views and criticisms of this paper and of our practice in Detroit.

Through struggle and solidarity we can win.