

PARTY-BUILDING

and the TRADE UNIONS

You know, when I first entered the trade unions in the city of Philadelphia a little over 6½ years ago I must admit that I was quite naive about a lot of the things that we were trying to do in the shop. I understood, like most of us do now, that what we're trying to do is somehow connect work in the rank and file movement, the building of rank and file caucuses, with communism and the struggle for socialist revolution in the U. S. But in the very early stages I could not figure out for the life of me exactly what this meant, how exactly one does this. So while struggling with this in my own mind I began to do the work of trying to assemble the most conscious workers in the shop, those workers who had demonstrated some willingness to take on the struggle at a very minimal level against the company.

So this is what happened for the first eight months or so in the plant. Now, to my surprise, and this is why I say I was naive, all it took to make this connection, at least the first connection between the rank and file caucus and communism, was to publish a single leaflet in the name of a rank and file caucus in this plant. The leaflet said nothing about socialism, it said nothing about communism, in fact the leaflet was a very modest beginning for a rank and file caucus. But at the very first meeting after this leaflet was published in the plant our local president saw fit to strike the first blows against the rank and file movement. He's a very good orator, and he got up there and in a very loud voice he told the workers to beware because communists were on the move in 1971. And this is what that leaflet represented. Communism was on the move. I myself was in the back of the room and unfortunately those who helped me pass the leaflet out weren't with me, and I was shaken myself when I heard him speak about what communists were up to in the union! So for those of you who are maybe just beginning to organize in the rank and file movement, or haven't yet entered the shops — don't worry! The labor bureaucrats will be the first ones to make the connection between our very limited rank and file caucuses and the struggle for communism.

Now it's important to analyse the reaction of the different strata of the workers to this first attack. The great majority of workers were initially confused and disoriented and taken aback by the whole red-baiting assault. On the

one hand their image of communists and communism is that of an undemocratic, evil system and of a manipulative, untrustworthy and unAmerican worker. Yet at the same time the workers are attracted to the content of the work of the rank and file caucus. They are attracted to those who are the objects of red-baiting and therefore their reaction is one of ambivalence. Some of the middle forces dismissed the charges against us outright. Yet most turned away and recoiled, waiting to have more to go upon to make their own decision.

The backward workers generally responded with extreme hostility to us, and in fact many backward workers themselves will take up the banner of red-baiting and help to consolidate its influence on the middle forces. This is due not only to the deeply rooted and erroneous views about communists and communism, but also, and this is primary, I think, because of their deeply rooted hostility to what the rank and file caucus really stands for — class struggle, anti-racism, and so on. Often times the backward workers will spontaneously begin the red-baiting attacks even before the trade union bureaucrats have had a chance to organize this against us.

The advanced workers directly involved in the rank and file movement saw and understood the role and the purpose of red-baiting. These workers know and knew that the union officials and the company were promoting a red scare as a means of discrediting and undermining the influence of the rank and file movement. They know too that red-baiting is a weapon used not only against the communists but against all rank and file militancy.

However, to say that the advanced workers understood the object of red-baiting is not to say that we are therefore guaranteed that the position of the advanced workers or their reaction to red-baiting is going to be a correct one. There is no guarantee, because the advanced workers may very well be influenced and overwhelmed by the initial reaction of the center forces. And therefore it is essential for us to have a sound political approach to defeating red-baiting from the very beginning and we must take steps immediately, even before red-baiting begins, to prepare the advanced workers to wage a struggle against it.

Now, what is a communist approach to red-baiting? We've developed an approach which we've called the de-

mocratic defense. It consists basically of three points. First, we have to expose the red-baiting for what it actually is, and that is an attack against all rank and file militancy within the trade unions. Secondly, we have to promote the democratic rights of communists to participate in the rank and file movement and in the union. Now, in the very beginning this principled defense of communist rights is an abstract defense. We say in our leaflets that the caucus is open to workers of all political persuasions, as the union should be. But in the very beginning it's very difficult to come right out and say, yes there are communists participating in this rank and file caucus and we should all defend their democratic rights to do that. That's something that generally has to wait until the movement is more developed and has a better understanding. So in the beginning we're making an abstract defense — we're stating a principle to the mass of workers.

Finally, in the course of agitation against red-baiting we have to begin to develop for the masses of workers a positive content for what communism actually is. I think the easiest and most popular way that this can be done is to draw upon the rich history of the communist involvement in our own labor movement — to point out the role that communists played in building the industrial unions, for example, in the 1930's. This begins to reorient the image that the middle forces hold towards communists and enables them to feel not only more secure about supporting the rank and file movement around its program which they are initially attracted to, but also in the long run to support open communist participation.

Now if we approach it this way and apply these tactics successfully what we will have done is preserve the broad left-center alliance between the advanced workers in the caucus and the broad middle strata. We will have opened up the possibility for the middle forces to come to accept open communist participation in the future. We will have isolated and neutralized the backward elements, making it very clear to the vast majority that what the backward workers are really fighting against is not whether you're a communist or not, but against what the trade union program that you're putting forward really stands for. And the final thing is that if we do this successfully we will undercut red-baiting as a weapon in the hands of the bureaucrats. We will compel them to deal with the real issues that divide us.

Now I think there is something that we should give some thought to, and I thought about this when I first got red-baited in the plant — why is it that rank and file militants are red-baited as opposed to being called fascists? I mean, fascism is equally evil in the eyes of the workers, its equally undemocratic, it's something that would repel as many people as red-baiting does. Why is it that red-baiting is the thing that's actually used spontaneously and consciously in the labor movement? I think the answer is obvious if we think about it, and that is that red-baiting is rooted in the history of the workers' movement in the U. S. and around the world. It's a history in which communists have played a leading role in both the economic and political struggles of the working class. So red-baiting in a sense a subconscious and backhanded compliment to communists because it identifies class struggle principles and trade union militancy and communism, and this is

correct! That's what it is. It's a correct link.

Now our own history clearly demonstrates, and this is a critical lesson for every worker in the rank and file movement, that those labor unions that have come closest to approximating the ideal of class struggle unionism, those trade unions which have militantly defended the standard of living of their members, have fought for class unity and for trade union democracy, and those that have taken up the question of independent political action, have been the ones where communists have been allowed more or less free and open participation. When communist workers have been driven from the trade unions the result is the emergence or the consolidation of class collaborationist policy and undemocratic bureaucracy. We can see the correlation of communism and the development of class struggle unionism in the UAW of the 1930's, the Fur and Leather Workers Union which was mentioned this afternoon, in the UE as well as many other unions in the U. S. And we can also see in our own recent history the correlation of class collaboration with the vicious attacks on communist workers in the late 40's and early 50's. I think that we must conclude from this that without the influence of communist workers the rank and file movement will inevitably be transformed as was the industrial union movement of the 1930's.

To become a really effective instrument of the defense of the workers' day to day interests, the rank and file movement and its organizations must be guided by scientific theory. And to achieve its aims the rank and file movement must establish an ever closer union with the communist movement. Without socialism the working class remains petty, fragmented, and does not acquire any political significance. Without socialism the rank and file movement will remain impotent — especially since in the present period, as we have heard this morning, the working class must fight not only a monopoly bourgeoisie, but also a powerful and entrenched labor bureaucracy. This is a critical point for us to grasp. For communist workers it reveals the organic unity between our trade union and our advanced tasks. For the rank and file workers it is critical as well, for it shows that whether or not one agrees with the ultimate aims of communists, communism is essential to the growth and development of the rank and file movement. Communists have a definite role to play in the rank and file caucus and without the assistance of scientific theory, without proletarian ideology, the workers will never be able to regain control of their trade unions and mount even a partial defense of their day-to-day interests.

Now of course as communists, we take our analysis one step further. We understand that not only is Marxism essential to the transformation of the trade unions, but also that only a socialist revolution can really secure the basic and fundamental interests of the working class. Only under socialism can the demands of the rank and file movement — demands for jobs, a decent standard of living, for equality and control over the pace and conditions of work — can these demands be attained. We also recognize that a socialist revolution is inconceivable without a vanguard party.

For this reason we have identified party building as our central task. And to say that it is our central task signifies that party building is organically connected to all other subordinate tasks, that party building is an integral link or

aspect in all of our mass work, particularly in our trade union work. We must therefore approach our presence in the trade unions primarily as party builders and not primarily as builders of the rank and file movement. To do otherwise would not only undermine the struggle for socialism but it would also undermine the development of the rank and file movement.

I think that it's important to stop here a second and speak a little more about this because there is a lot of confusion about it. When people first go into the trade unions it's obvious that it's wrong to wear a button that says "I am a communist". It's wrong to begin to organize by passing out a communist newspaper among the masses. To say that party building is central is not to say that that's what we do first. What we have to do first is to begin to build a certain degree of unity around a very minimal program which we talked about this afternoon. But in this period of history the central task is party building. And this means that everything that we do, even though in the very early stages 99% of our actual practice may be limited to what we could



call trade union work, all of this has to be geared and lead to an eventual integration of communist work into that work, otherwise it's going nowhere.

The perspective of the PWOC on the question of party building is that we must fuse communism with the workers' movement. At the present moment these two movements exist in relative isolation -- and by the way, this is a perfectly inevitable condition in the early stages of any communist movement. "When this fusion takes place, the class struggle of the workers becomes *the conscious struggle of the proletariat* to emancipate itself from the exploitation by the propertied classes. It has evolved into a higher form of the socialist workers' movement, *the independent working class social democratic party.*" That's a quote from Lenin and I think that this quote is an important one because it does differentiate in a most general sense our own position on party building from the position of the dogmatists who argue that the party can be built prior to fusion having taken place and that the main task of the party in its early life would be to fuse communism with the workers' movement.

Our discussion tonight on party building and the trade union question is not and cannot be a full treatment of the question of party building. But since our method for party building is fusion and since communist work in the trade unions is the focal point for fusing the workers' movement and the communist movement my presentation will attempt to treat the inner kernel of our whole position, which is the day-to-day task of party building in the trade unions. In other words, how do we fuse communism and

the workers' movement?

A failure to grasp the connection between the rank and file movement concretely and practically, whether or not one holds a dogmatist view, will lead to the same effect as the dogmatist position. If we go into the rank and file movement and all we consider of importance within the shop is building the rank and file caucus and we see communist work as taking place outside the shop then we will have been doing the same thing as the dogmatists, which is to keep the isolation of the two movements a permanent condition. So the first question we have to ask ourselves is what is a communist current?

The process of fusing communism with the workers' movement can be expressed as the process of building a communist current in the working class. Now a communist current is a mass phenomenon, and not merely a handful or even two handfuls of communists working secretly in the trade unions. When we speak of masses in this particular period of our history we are not necessarily speaking about the majority, or even of 1/3 of the workers. We are not

talking about millions of proletarians. But what we are talking about are thousands in a city and perhaps a couple of hundred in a particular factory or other large workplace. A few hundred workers who are systematically being drawn into the political struggle constitute the masses for us at this time. And not every worker who is a part of a current is a communist. But all of the workers who make up the current are open to the viewpoint of communists on any given number of questions that face the workers' movement. A communist current is a fully developed united front.

Now, in order to concretize what we mean by a communist current let us return to the rank and file caucus and describe what this formation would look like after fusion with the communist movement has taken place to a considerable degree. There would have been three interrelated developments, all adding up to a qualitative change in the character of the rank and file caucus. In the very early stages, as we said this morning, the basis of unity within the caucus is generally around those three points in our class struggle program. What's important to realize, not only are they limited to those three points, but given the whole perspective of the caucus, it is invariable that these three points are seen as a struggle against a particular capitalist and a particular company and nothing more.

However, after having been fused with communism the rank and file caucus will be committed to a class struggle program. This will reflect the merger of the economic with the political struggle of the working class. Every class struggle is a political struggle. The rank and file movement

will grow out of its embryonic state, out of its infancy so to speak, to the extent to which it becomes a class movement. And in becoming a class movement it will make a transition into the political struggle. For by its very nature a class movement must be directed not against a particular capitalist, but against the entire bourgeois class. This transition occurs to the extent that the rank and file caucus passes over to a class approach to its program, to the degree to which it places its economic demands in a political context, recognizing consciously a fundamental, irreconcilable antagonism between its interests as a class and the interests of the bourgeoisie. At this point the rank and file movement will tend to broaden its program, understanding that its own oppression at the hands of the bourgeoisie is not limited to the inside of the factory but is manifested in all areas of the society. There must be the understanding that the proletariat must also take up, in fact must lead, the struggles of all of its potential allies.

Therefore when we speak of the political struggle of the working class we are not limiting the content of the struggle to broader political issues, like the struggle for quality education and desegregation or the struggle to support the MPLA in Angola, or the struggle against the war in Vietnam. A movement doesn't have to be united around those kinds of broader issues for it to be considered a political movement, a class movement. And in fact, we can expect that the political struggle will develop in the beginning around economic issues. The difference though will be that these issues — job security, a decent standard of living, an end to discrimination in hiring and upgrading and so on — will be fought by the working class as a whole. And the blows of this class movement will be directed against the entire bourgeoisie in the form of a struggle against the state, the executive organ of the bourgeoisie.

And it is only logical that as the economic and political struggle of the workers movement is merged, that this qualitatively different movement will strive to consolidate itself into a higher form of organization. At first this may be a city-wide rank and file organization, due to the uneven development of our movement. But eventually it must evolve into a mass independent political party, a people's party, the form for the consolidation of the left-center alliance on a class-wide basis on the political terrain. And

naturally also the proletariat will try to draw its allies into that formation.

Now, the second change of the rank and file caucus as we fuse it with the communist movement will be that communists will have won for themselves freedom of agitation among the broad masses of the workers. Communists will be able to participate openly in the rank and file movement. Now, freedom of agitation for the communists will open the door and aid in the development of this merger between the political and economic struggles. So in other words, this process cannot wait until the communist current has been built around a classwide program, it has to go on simultaneously. We have to open the doors for our own ability to agitate. And equally important, if not more important, in the context of a growing class movement, this agitation will point toward the need for the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and the establishment of socialism. In the context of a class movement, this agitation will enable us to draw more and more workers into the ranks of revolutionary organizations. This is agitation that's going on within the shops by people who are part of the rank and file movement and therefore will have a qualitatively different effect than the kind of agitation that we can do outside the shop gates. The third point is that communism will have established its leadership within the rank and file movement. Now, while communist leadership does not necessarily mean formal leadership, it does mean that the caucus will be guided in its work by scientific theory and a scientific approach.

Now we have to keep in mind a number of things in understanding how we make this transition. First of all, when we talk about all this we're talking about a theory for the united front in its fully developed form. It's a description of the communist current in its ideal form. As such it provides us, as any theory should, with a guide to action, with a basis for checking our work and charting our course forward. The conditions for a genuine united front are not and cannot be the preconditions for joint work in the rank and file movement at first. To see things this way would be an infantile and absurd understanding of our theory and would lead to the most sectarian practice.

Imagine, for example, the question of leadership within the rank and file movement as something that is



prerequisite to joint work, as something that must be negotiated with the workers. Imagine what would happen if instead of striving to earn the confidence of the masses, instead of winning leadership through prolonged and persistent practical work, we left every rank and file organization where our leadership was not accepted, gratis, from the beginning. It may sound silly, but there are people who call themselves communists who behave precisely in this manner. Imagine also the effect of demanding at first a commitment to our fully developed class struggle program. Imagine what would happen if we neglected to take into account the actual level of class consciousness of the masses and failed to make a sober analysis of the actual situation. If we were to approach the masses in this way we would wind up working only with ourselves. Yet here again many communists have behaved precisely in this way.

But while remembering all of this, we must never forget that if we rest content with joint work for the sake of joint work, if we rest content with the rank and file movement as we find it in its early stages and as we first encounter it, we will never get anywhere and the rank and file movement will forever consume itself in a circular struggle, which eventually will demoralize its participants and lead to its disintegration. It will be defeated.

When building the communist current it must be clear also that we in no way intend to compromise the mass character of the rank and file organizations. What we are working to establish is a parallel and often overlapping existence between communism and the workers' movement. We are not attempting to take these two movements, to make them synonymous with each other.

Now one more quote before I get on to some of the concretes. "In every country this combination of socialism and the working class movement evolves historically in unique ways in accordance with the prevailing conditions of time and place. . . It is a very difficult process and therefore there is nothing surprising in the fact that it is accompanied by vacillations and doubts." And I think every one of us who is grappling with this question would confess that this is a very fitting quote, that it still expresses exactly what we're up against today. So I think that we also have to realize that these are the kind of things we're going to get from reading Lenin and Marx and so forth. The general task that we face is fusion. But I think that according to what has been said, each historical period, each country, each time and place requires a different road to fusion. And so this is where the real question of theory comes in, figuring out how in our own situation we fuse communism with the workers movement.

The first dimension to the problem is the fusion of communism with the advanced workers. And before we can figure out how to do that we have to define for ourselves who the advanced workers are. I know we did this somewhat this morning, but I think that we can never do it enough because there's always a lot of confusion around this point. What is of primary importance for us is not how the advanced workers express themselves on any particular question but what role they play in the class struggle. For us a worker is an advanced worker by virtue of not only taking an advanced political position on a particular question facing the masses but primarily on whether that worker is willing or not to take concrete steps to implement

that position by organizing the workers in the struggle for it. Thus the term "advanced" expresses a relation to other workers. Workers are advanced because they play an advanced role in the class struggle. The advanced workers are these self-activating workers who consciously seek to organize and sharpen the struggle against capital.

Now in the real world we often find a certain contradiction between the two sides of this question, one being the consciousness of the worker, the other being the worker's practical leadership in the class struggle. And I think that it's really important that we try to orient ourselves in the face of this contradiction. Now obviously there's a connection between the two. Obviously there's only so much a worker can understand politically and have a zero as far as practical leadership is concerned. And the other way is true also. But I think that we have made, and the communist movement across the country is making errors around this question. The most common error that we make is that we over-emphasize consciousness as a consideration in identifying the advanced workers.

In my own experience when I first went into the shop I met a couple of workers who were very astute, very sophisticated intellectually, had done a lot of reading — not necessarily of Marxism, but who were familiar with what's going on in the world and know what's going on in Angola, in Vietnam, who see the connections between the oppression in the shop and the oppression outside, who see the ruling class and the working class — who see all these things, but who aren't willing to do anything to organize the workers. You run up against this pretty frequently. And if you spend all of your energy trying to move that person with that kind of understanding they should know already that they should be organizing other workers. If they don't, then there's only so much you're going to be able to do to draw them off their hands.

I think that what we've done is, because of our class background and because of our own self-image, we ignore and neglect the really advanced workers who are really willing to take up the struggle against capital. And I think that this is because we read Marxist theory and we see that we are the most class conscious, the vanguard, the most resolute, and we look at the average advanced worker and we say, well, this person is never going to become a communist. He can't live up to my ideal, to my image of myself. But the worker who is really intellectually developed, we take that consideration over and above the practical ability of the worker to organize. And I think this is a serious error that we've been making. And it's disastrous to the development of the class struggle.

I must say now that we've been talking about having established a relationship with the advanced worker in the course of building the rank and file movement. Everything I'm going to say from here on in is premised on the understanding that this organizing is going on constantly and that these, our advanced tasks, are being integrated step by step into that — this stuff cannot happen independently of rank and file organization.

So, having identified the advanced workers, the next thing that we have to do is to develop their class consciousness. And how do we do this? Well, basically there are three things. One area is that we need to do communist agitation and propaganda with the advanced work-

ers. To differentiate what the two are — agitation focuses on a single idea that can be grasped by the masses and propaganda presents a complex of ideas on the same subject and generally can only be grasped by a comparatively few workers; agitation is oral, propaganda is written. Both of these things need to be going on simultaneously with the advanced workers.

Now what is *communist* agitation and propaganda? Communist agitation and propaganda strives to place the concrete questions facing the worker in their class context, showing the connection between the concerns on the shop floor and the basic relations of production under capitalism, and pointing toward the need for a socialist revolution as the only means by which these problems can be settled once and for all.

So, for example, on a question like quality education and desegregation. I think many people believe that because the only people bringing such issues into the shop are communists, that because you don't find too many middle forces or even advanced workers bringing those kinds of questions to the shop, that we delude ourselves into believing that that's what we mean by communist agitation. And that's *not* what we mean. That's a kind of agitation that would fall into an independent political action program. It's something that we have to do before the masses of workers, but it's not necessarily communist agitation.

Communist agitation links the struggle for reforms with the struggle for revolution. And it's important in doing this kind of agitation (and the more you're involved with the advanced worker in these struggles you'd be surprised how easy it is to do this) that it has to be systematic, it has to be approached systematically. We can make a list of 50 different areas for communist agitation — but we've got to develop a focus, we must say to ourselves, here are the advanced workers that we're working with, here is a strength of this person, here is a weakness, in order to move this person towards communism we have to focus our agitation and propaganda on these particular questions. That's the only way to really make the most of our advanced organizing work in the rank and file movement — to be systematic about it.

And another critical thing is that this agitation and propaganda must be linked to a concrete task. In other words, to say to a worker, well look, we're never going to be able to eliminate unemployment until we have socialism, he may say, 'that sounds right to me'. But unless you link that to a concrete task which could help that person move forward, to put into practice that idea, it is really not that important — you've taught the person something, but it's just not enough.

And one of the things that I think that we should link, one of the questions we can link to all of our communist agitation is the question of party building. There's the time to talk about the developing communist movement. There's the time to talk about a specific organization that you're a member of, and what it's doing in the city that you're working in. There's the time to show the worker how they could become involved in putting into practice the struggle for socialism in a very concrete way.

The second whole area for developing the advanced workers is a study or discussion circle. Now this is a collective form for agitation and propaganda among the advanced

workers. It has a good number of strengths over and above the individual agitation that we have to do on the shop floor. For one thing, as a form of organization it's an intermediary between the rank and file caucus and the communist organization. It's not a part of the rank and file caucus necessarily, and normally it wouldn't be something that the whole rank and file of the caucus would be aware of. Neither is it a communist organization. And what this form allows us to do is to develop the workers, the advanced workers, in conjunction with other advanced workers. This may not seem very important, but it really is a critical point. For all the advanced workers moving step by step towards socialism, what's uppermost in their minds no matter how alluring our ideas may be is the question of whether this is going to lead them to be isolated from everybody that they've known all their lives in the factory. They want to know if this is going to lead them to only be able to talk to a couple of other communists.

So it's critical that we bring the advanced workers together into this form so that they can see that their movement, their willingness to put into practice what we discuss there is not necessarily going to isolate them, at least from the other advanced workers. I think that the proper focus for the circles in the early stages should be the question of party building and our trade union program, strategy and tactics.

Now the form has a two-sided character to it. For us it's primarily a recruitment form, it's a form to help the worker move from the rank and file movement into a communist organization. But it's not likely that the advanced workers are going to see that as its primary focus from the very beginning. In fact, if they saw that there wouldn't be any need for it, they would just join the organization. But where the advanced worker is coming from is, how can this study form, this discussion group, lend assistance to their work of organizing the rank and file movement. That's why I think that it's essential not only to include party building but all the different aspects of our approach to the trade union work. Having done that, we'll talk about the struggle against racism, but not necessarily the national question — they are two different things.

Now the third whole area for developing the advanced workers is their participation in broader struggles — forums held in the city, film showings where different rank and file people are brought together, at social events. Political action and experience in broader struggles establishes the links between the struggles of the worker at the point of production and in the society at large. Contact with other rank and file organizations will concretize the breadth and the potential strength of a class movement. In other words, if the advanced workers are coming out of their shops into social events or political events of some kind, then they're able to make contact with rank and file caucuses in other parts of the city, other advanced workers, and they begin to see that what you're talking about is a class movement — not an abstract dream, but a developing phenomenon. Uniting all these different rank and file forces can lend great assistance to the work in each shop and strengthen the struggle of the working class as a whole.

Another aspect of the question of winning the advanced workers to communism is the whole question of the struggle against racism. This is of particular importance to

this question of the advanced workers because most of us find that generally speaking the most advanced workers in the rank and file movement are the Black and other national minority workers — not 100%, but generally speaking. It's also true that in many situation the only communists working in that factory, trying to win those advanced workers to communism are white communists. So we have a contradiction here that is really important and really highlights again the whole question of the struggle against racism.

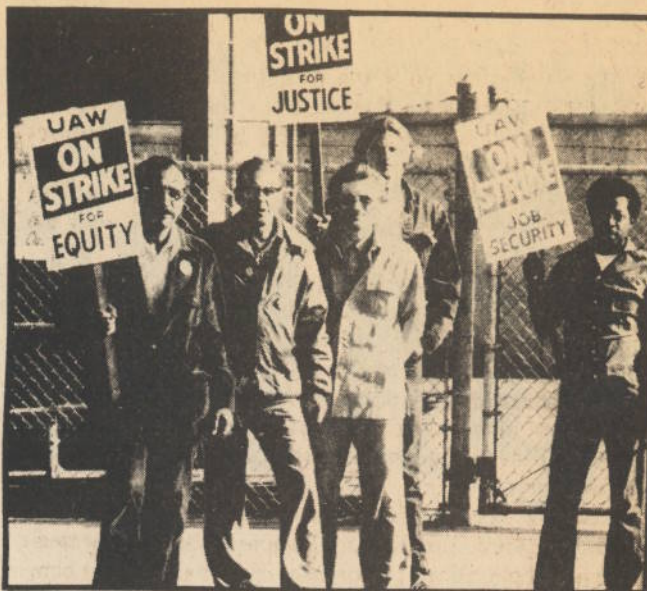
I want to talk about a couple of different aspects. For one thing we said this afternoon that the struggle against racism is primary, it's central, it's the main division within the working class movement. But it's one thing to say this and it's another thing to grasp it. And in the discussion we had this morning it wasn't really clear that we grasped what we meant by this. So I want to say a couple of things about it.

One point is that we can make a whole list of divisions within the working class. There's obviously the division between Black and white workers, there's the division between skilled and production workers, the division between the unemployed and employed workers, right? You can make a list of others too. And to say to ourselves that the struggle against racism is primary and essential is not to say that on that list it's number one. That's part of what we're saying, but it's not all of what we're saying. What we're saying is that the struggle against racism is bound up with all those other divisions in the class. The division between skilled and production workers is not a division between workers who are machinists and carpenters and painters and workers who work on an assembly line. That does play a role in dividing those two sectors of the class but it's minimal. What's essential about that division is racism — because the skilled trades are for the most part white and the production departments are for the most part Black. Also with the unemployed — the chronically unemployed workers — that's not just a division between workers who have jobs and workers who don't. Racism is primary in preserving that division.

Racism is a critical problem in the struggle for the left-center alliance. As we said, the advanced workers are primarily Black workers. Not only that, but even the active or passive supporters of the rank and file movement in the early stages are usually in mass the Black workers. It's the white workers who aren't certain, the white workers who are sitting on the sidelines. So that question is tied into the left-center alliance also.

It's tied into the whole struggle against red-baiting. The reaction of the masses of Black workers to red-baiting is qualitatively different than the reaction of the white workers. And to a certain degree this is tied up in that communism and the struggle against racism are a whole in the minds of the white workers. We're never going to defeat red-baiting really among the white masses until we've eroded racist ideology. They're both bound up together.

So I think that it's important that we really sit down and think about this some more, what it really means that this is central and primary. Another thing is that it's easy to sit down with a group of Black advanced workers and hammer out the most advanced program for the struggle against racism — this is an easy thing to do. It's easy to explain to the Black workers how you understand the struggle against



racism. It's easy to differentiate ourselves from the masses of white workers. But that's not going to do a damn thing to win the advanced Black workers to the struggle for socialism. Because what's uppermost in their minds is not whether or not we are different, but whether or not we are capable of winning the masses of white workers to the struggle against racism, whether or not we're capable of building unity between Black and white workers. If we can't do this, if we can't even show steps in that direction, the advanced Black workers are going to tell us that socialism is a pipe dream, a utopia, and that we should go back to the campuses and do some more studying before we come into the shop talking about socialism.

I'm saying, then, that we have to be careful that what we're doing is not posturing. We have to realize that our task is to win the white workers to the struggle against racism, and it's not an easy task. Winning the advanced workers is the key to the development of fusion between communism and the workers' movement. Winning the advanced workers multiplies our capacity to win the masses to the political struggle. Imagine, for example, the difference between myself — I've come into this plant for 6½ years, I'm young, from the very beginning I've had a certain reputation among the masses of workers — imagine my influence or my ability to influence masses of workers, to move them into political struggle and being open to socialism and communism as compared to the worker who has been there 20 years, who's really rooted in the factory, who's known all around. There's a qualitative difference in each of our abilities to win the masses to the struggle for socialism. So that having won the advanced workers will do enormous things for our ability to fuse communism with the workers' movement.

Obviously, winning the advanced is key because it's the advanced workers who will make up the cadre in any revolutionary party in the U. S. Now, while it is true that winning the advanced is the key, we will not be able to do even this except for a handful of advanced workers if we are unable to fuse communism with the mass movement as well. Fusion with the mass movement establishes the ideal context — even more, it establishes the *only* context — for really winning the advanced. It creates a broad base out of which the advanced can become communist and do open



communist work. It is absolutely essential as a safeguard against the isolation of the advanced workers. And while it is true that the advanced workers can influence the broad masses, it is also true that they themselves are influenced by these same masses. In the main the advanced workers will not become communists if it means isolation from all but a handful of other communists.

So now the next question is how do we fuse communism with the mass movement? First of all, we have to talk a little bit about the role of the revolutionary newspaper. Now it's possible, — and we have done it and I think everybody would say that they have done it to a certain degree — to do communist work among the advanced workers in the absence of a revolutionary newspaper. Even among the advanced workers we are restricted, limited and constrained by not having that tool. But for fusing communism with the mass movement a revolutionary newspaper is indispensable. There's really no substitute for it. This is because the paper is mass, it's circulated among the broad masses of workers, it's topical, and it's many-sided. It deals with economic struggle, broader issues, and it deals with revolutionary theory — combining all those three into one, developing the consciousness of the masses and building a class-wide political struggle.

Agitation with the newspaper will invariably be an advance on the agitation that can be done from within the rank and file movement. Like right now the *Organizer* has been distributed outside the factory gates for a few years. This is where we're providing the masses of workers with an idea of what communism is, of the broader political issues, and of revolutionary theory — linking that, or trying to, with their economic struggle. Inside the factory our agitation in the form of rank and file newsletters and leaflets is restricted and restrained to the very basic struggle in the shop against a particular capitalist. So a revolutionary newspaper is an advance over that. It will help lay the foundation among the broad strata of workers for understanding the importance of the class-wide political struggle, particularly if we are utilizing the paper and maximizing its influence once it goes into the factory. It's not like we ignore the paper coming in there. We have definite tasks to perform to maximize the paper's effect.

Now, at first, the communist movement in the eyes

of the masses of workers is seen as synonymous with its newspaper, its organ. To the masses of workers in the plant where I work the *Organizer* represents the communist movement in the city. They don't know what the organization is, even in name, let alone in the real world. But the newspaper is, in the eyes of the masses, the communist movement. The followers of the paper, its readers, the people who are influenced by it, constitute the embryonic base of our communist current. Where I work now there are approximately 250 workers who take the newspaper pretty consistently. Given the fact that there are dozens of other newspaper being circulated outside of this plant that aren't taken nearly as much and given the fact that it's a risky thing for those 250 people to take our paper because of all the red-baiting that goes on in this plant, for those workers to take our paper means that they're going to read something in it. A lot of people read it openly in the plant at this point. Some take it home and read it.

Now, if we did a scientific study — I'm just giving you my impression — but if we did a scientific study of the people who read the *Organizer* and the people who follow and support the rank and file movement, I'm sure that we would discover a great overlap of these two forces. So to a certain extent you can see it. There's a certain amount of fusion beginning to take place between the mass movement and the communist movement. It's not conscious, it's not open, but it's happening. It's beginning to happen. So a revolutionary newspaper is indispensable.

I have to say a word of caution about this, because publishing a revolutionary newspaper in itself demands a degree of fusion with the workers' movement. I think that one of the common errors of the left historically has been that the first thing everybody does after they get themselves together is to say, "Let's put out a newspaper". Having no experience at all, having no roots in the factory, having no real concrete theory — everybody's going to put out a newspaper. So while it's indispensable, it has to be a genuine organ of communist agitation and propaganda, which means that to a certain degree it's based on its limited fusion with the working class movement.

Now, how do we build the influence of the revolutionary newspaper? How do we extend its readership and consolidate the influence that it has on those who already

take it? And how do we link it more consciously and openly to the rank and file movement? This, in a nutshell, is the question of fusion with the mass movement. One thing we do is that articles in the *Organizer* are written about the shops in which the paper is distributed. They're written about the rank and file movement that's going on in those plants. And that in a serious way differentiates the *Organizer* from other so-called communist newspapers. This is the main reason why to date it is so much better received than other left newspapers — because never in all those papers is there any coverage, or even limited connection made between those newspapers and the rank and file in the shop. So from the beginning people who read the paper see something is happening, something is going on.

Another thing that those of us who are in the shop have to do is cut out articles and post them up on bulletin boards, especially articles that have some direct bearing on what's going on in that plant. We have to sell subscriptions to everyone who's in the rank and file movement — not just to the advanced workers, but to everyone who's involved in the rank and file movement because they all have a stake in reading this newspaper. And we've got to demonstrate this to people. Also, another thing that we can do inside is limited internal distribution. If I pass by somebody who's passing out the paper, the *Organizer*, I can take, say ten copies, because I have read it before, I like it, and I think other people should read it. If there are three or four of us in the plant, we have 40 copies going into the plant that we can distribute ourselves to people who may be afraid to take it or who may have never read it before and didn't think it was interesting. We could distribute the paper without ever having been openly identified as a member of this organization.

Many, many of these tasks can be done before having become open. But people are so uptight, and I think every one of us has experienced this feeling, so alarmed and frightened about the prospect of being seen as a communist that we don't do this stuff. Things we can get away with we don't even do, because of this fear.

Another thing we have to do is agitate around the newspaper. If we see people reading the newspaper we have to go over to them and talk to them about it. Focus on a particular article. Try and draw the connections and lessons that the article can draw.

And another thing is that we have to develop ties between the leaders of the rank and file movement and the newspaper itself. Now for example in the last issue that we discussed this morning you'll find that speech, which didn't come out right — not only didn't it come out right but it made me sound like a mafioso character — that's what we're trying to do with this speech. I'm a fairly public figure in the shop that I work in and that I'm organizing in. I'm identified throughout as a member of the leadership body of the rank and file caucus in the plant. I've been red-baited many times. The speech does not say that I'm a fighter for the socialist revolution, it doesn't say that I'm a member of the PWOC. It's a speech given by a leader of the rank and file movement. Obviously just being in there it is going to have a definite impact on our work in the plant and on the advancement of fusion. But what I tried to do further in the speech is talk about the paper. I promote the *Organizer*, trying to explain to the mass of workers that whether or not they believe in socialism, whether or not

they want to become communists, this newspaper has something of value and something that can contribute to the development of the rank and file movement which they are interested in and are trying to build. And I think that this is one way that we can draw the connection for the masses of workers, between our newspaper, what we're doing, and the rank and file movement.

Moreover, in the newspaper we have to begin to speak directly to the tasks of the rank and file movement in a particular shop or industry, and we have to begin to give leadership to the rank and file movement. Up until now what we've done is report on the rank and file movement, and to some degree analyze its weaknesses. But what we need to do also is concretely point the way forward for the rank and file movement so that the advanced workers and the other workers, the center forces who are most active in the movement, will see it. Here's this newspaper that not only is describing what they're doing, not only does it know what's happening, but it has some real insight that could help the workers accomplish the goals they're trying to accomplish.

And the final stage of this link, this connection, is actual open distribution of this newspaper in front of the plant, both for the communists in the plant and the advanced workers who are actively supportive of the *Organizer*. This would have a qualitatively different effect on the masses of workers, if this were to happen, than when we started out just a handful of unknown people passing out this newspaper.

Now, the third thing as far as fusing with the mass movement is that we have to move towards establishing open communist participation in the rank and file movement. When we evaluate and analyze how to do this the main question that has to be foremost in our minds is how can the left-center alliance be maintained. That's the question. How can we accomplish the task of becoming open without jeopardizing and severing the left from the center? And I think there are three questions that we have to ask ourselves before we will be able to make the right judgment concerning this. One is, are the advanced workers ready to defend the rights of communists in their own movement, openly, before the masses? In other words, are the advanced workers ready to take the offensive against red-baiting? This is to differentiate what the task would be at this point and what it was at the beginning, when all we were doing was stating a principle, a democratic principle. Now we're down to the nitty gritty -- "Yea, he's a communist, and I defend his right to be, in fact I think we need that kind of outlook in the rank and file movement." That's what we're talking about.

Secondly, has the communist won sufficient confidence among the broad masses to preserve the left-center alliance? Will the broad masses respond, "well, I knew it all along and I don't really care because the main thing is what this person is doing in the rank and file movement." That's the kind of reaction that we have to have among the broad masses of workers before this becomes possible.

And the last thing is, do the masses understand that communist participation, or even communist leadership in the rank and file movement does not mean that the caucus is thereby a communist organization? That's a very critical thing, and it's a very confusing thing because often if workers associate the leadership or even one person

in the leadership with communism, well, somehow the whole thing is communist — they don't grasp the united front, in other words. And that's why it's very important that we establish that among the masses.

Now, open communist participation, once we have established it, will allow for mass communist agitation from within the factory and will eventually find expression in the form of a communist shop newspaper. Right now what we have to do as far as organizing the communists and giving them expression, political expression within the shop is that we form factory cells. This brings together those from the PWOC, for example in a given factory or industry and enables them to focus their work, to develop a division of labor, to maximize their influence within the rank and file movement. Well, eventually, that cell, while not necessarily having every one of its members open, will publish a shop newspaper that expresses its political standpoint. This is a communist paper that will exist alongside the organ of the rank and file movement. Both will exist alongside one another. But once we establish open communist participation of an individual, we've laid the basis for that kind of agitation. Once we have enough strength organizationally to actually do it.

Now to talk again a little bit more about that speech. We're trying to lay the groundwork for becoming open in the plant. What we're doing here is we're testing the waters. Here is a clear and public link between myself and a communist newspaper, without necessarily saying I'm a communist. Now what's the reaction going to be? Well, one thing we're doing is we're taking the speech and we're bringing it to the advanced workers before it's going into the plant. We're actually going to bring it to every worker who can play a role in determining the reaction to it in the shop. In other words, we're not just going to rely on spontaneity and hope that things go well. We're going to try to have the advanced workers understand what this means, understand its legitimacy and play a role in making sure that the center forces are not influenced by the backward workers. So if you go back to your hometowns and read in the newspaper about this electrical worker in Philadelphia that got run over by a forklift truck or got put into a machine, well, then you'll know we moved to soon!

All right, so in summarizing what we've been saying, what will fusion with the mass movement mean? It will mean that communists will move into a position where they have become leaders of the rank and file movement openly and it will mean that the advanced workers are becoming communists. Openly. Both together. In other words, if we pass this test, if we show the advanced workers that this can be done without getting lynched or beaten up, and without alienating the masses of middle forces, then they're going to be willing to do it themselves. Everybody would like to have their name in the *Organizer*. It's true! But this is going to open the door to that. Also, having fused communism with the mass movement and having been able to do communist agitation and for the workers to see the connection between the two and identify the two in some parallel sense, new forces and new advanced workers will be brought forward from the ranks of the workers. The rank and file movement will have developed both the leadership and sufficient consciousness among a broad strata of workers to go over to the political struggle, to move its program from the struggle against its own capitalist to the

struggle against the capitalist class. We will have created a real vanguard. We will have communists with a mass base in the rank and file movement, and after we do that we can call a convention, then we can call a congress, and then we can have a genuine communist party.

One more thing that I've got to say. And this is what I see as the major obstacle — not necessarily political obstacle though it is political — but the major psychological obstacle to doing this. Everybody could sit here today, and many of us have understood this, and even understand it today, but that doesn't necessarily mean that we're going to go out there and do it. Because we're constantly up against fear, our own fear. Hesitation. And this takes the most incredible forms. Like when I first joined the PWOC we were organizing a workers' forum. I'm embarrassed to tell you all this, but I'll tell it to you anyway. We were organizing a workers' forum. Now this was supposed to be focusing on the trade union program, an educational forum, right? But it was also going to integrate the communist task — talk a little bit about scientific theory, Marxism-Leninism, the need for a vanguard party. Now the first seven points in the program were about the trade union stuff — building class unity, building militant trade unionism — everybody could dig that. The last two points, though, were about Marxism-Leninism and the vanguard party. Now I sat on this for weeks. I was supposed to go organize people to come to this thing — all the advanced workers. And I didn't do it. I wasn't sure what was going to happen if I did it. You know, if I showed them this, told them I was a communist, well, would they talk to me again? I mean there are people who don't talk to you anymore if they find out you're a communist! And I wasn't sure what would happen and I was afraid. So anyway, a couple of days before this meeting was supposed to happen, I got a telephone call. "How many people are coming from your plant to this forum?" And I said, "Oh yeah, that's right, well they're coming."

So I had to do something. So I cut off the last two points on these programs. And I gave them all out among the workers and I brought people to this thing. But they didn't stay after the first meeting. A lot of workers didn't really grasp what this was all about and never came back.

This happens time and time again, it happens every day. Every time we do an advanced task I'm sure we struggle with this. Am I going to get away with this? Should I do this? It's not just to say that you're a socialist or a communist — it affects the struggle against racism. It affects broader political issues, integrating them into the rank and file movement. It affects everything we do and we're not going to get anywhere unless we do it. In a sense we have to discipline ourselves in spite of our own fears.

Now when I first started doing this work and hadn't yet had any experiences to find out how it all goes, I used to have nightmares about this. I used to wake up in the morning and say, what am I, crazy? What am I doing in this factory? The American workers organize a revolution? It took me until I woke up, about 15 minutes, until I could overcome this thing. And this is the kind of thing I'm talking about. We have to get a handle on this, even if it means suppressing it. So I have a solution for everybody. Do a lot of work and go to sleep very late so you won't be able to dream and when you get up in the morning don't look in the mirror.