

EDUCATION IN DETROIT:

BUSING AND THE DUAL SYSTEM

by

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## INTRODUCTION: WHY IS BUSING IMPORTANT TO MARXIST-LENINISTS?

Half of all American school children ride buses to school; busing only becomes an issue for the 7% of public school children who are bused to achieve integration. On a theoretical level, the question of support for or opposition to court-ordered busing plans designed to promote racial integration has its roots in the Marxist-Leninist perspective on how workers should respond to instances of oppression. From their earliest writings, Marx and Lenin made it clear that working class revolutionaries should fight against all forms of repression.

Working class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected -- unless they are trained to respond from a Social Democratic point of view and no other.

### What Is To Be Done?, emphasis in original

Of course, that doesn't mean running from one incident of capitalist oppression to another, taking on all struggles. Clearly, there is a particular strategic and economic importance to certain cases of oppression, and revolutionaries must make specific priorities. Seen in this light, busing is of considerable importance.

Any attempts to obtain equality for Black people in America are significant. Black people are an oppressed national minority living inside America, but denied many basic democratic rights. Despite all the recent talk about achieving equality, capitalism does not "assimilate" Black people, but rather maintains a dual system of housing, employment, social life, and schools. The intent of this dual system is to segregate Black people from the rest of the society, forcing greater exploitation and hardship upon them. As revolutionaries, the ending of this separation is fundamental for any development of working class

consciousness. In order to develop a serious revolutionary movement, you must be united, and among the working class that unity must be built upon real equality. Thus, the struggle for democratic rights for Black people is an essential aspect of the class struggle, not a divisive sidetrack. The existence of any form of segregation of workers splits and weakens the struggle for worker unity and the fight against capitalism.

Again, there is no question where Marxist-Leninist theory stands:

In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralyzed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the Republic. Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the Black it is branded.

Marx, Capital, Vol. 1, chapter 10, section 7

Whoever does not recognize and champion the equality of nations and languages, and does not fight against all national oppression or inequality, is not a Marxist, he is not even a democrat. That is beyond doubt. But it is also beyond doubt that the pseudo-Marxist who hears abuse upon a Marxist of another nation for being an assimilator is simply a nationalist.

Lenin, Critical Remarks on the National Question

Thus, the complete democratization of the country is the basis and the condition for the solution of the national question.

Stalin, Marxism and the National Question

Lenin even specifically dealt with the question of segregation in the schools. Again, his interest was what would be best for the creation of proletarian unity.

From the point of the proletarian class struggle we must oppose segregating the schools according to nationality far more emphatically.... the urban workers we are best acquainted with developed capital and perceive more profoundly the psychology of the class struggle -- their whole life teaches them or perhaps they imbibe it with their mother's milk -- such workers instinctively realize that segregating the schools according to nationality is not only a harmful scheme, but a downright fraudulent swindle on the part of the capitalists. The workers can be split up, divided and weakened by the advocacy of such an idea, and still more by the segregation of

the ordinary peoples' schools according to nationality, while the capitalist ... cannot in any way be threatened by any division or weakening through "cultural national autonomy."

Lenin, Collected Works,  
Vol. XIX, p. 504

Busing, then, is important because it raises the question of oppression and equality. If the busing plans further the development of equality, they should be supported by all Marxist-Leninists. If it takes a step in eliminating the dual systems of education that have excluded minority workers from educational opportunity, a busing plan should be supported. The fight for these goals is essential for any serious revolutionary movement.

An analysis of the dual system is crucial to a position on education and busing. All institutions, both in production and in the superstructure, have functioned in a racially-dual manner under the direction of the bourgeoisie (and its allies in the petit-bourgeoisie and the aristocracy of labor) and have maintained the racial oppression of Black people and oppressed Black people as a national minority. They have continued to divide the working class along racial and national lines, increasing the extraction of surplus value from all workers and operating to ensure that the revolutionary potential and class consciousness (particularly of white workers) have been frustrated. The major institutions which maintain the division between Black and white workers while specially oppressing Black people are the dual labor market, the dual systems in housing, education and political structure. All of these are interrelated and fundamentally based on the contradictions of capitalism. In the U.S. the struggle against the dual system, the struggle against the oppression of Black people as a national minority and as a racial minority, is inherently a revolutionary struggle. It can only be achieved with the destruction of capitalism and the establishment of socialism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Likewise, the struggle against the dual system of racial and national oppression must be waged as an

integral part of the struggle for socialism; it is only in the struggle against the dual system that the class unity, consciousness, and forces can be developed capable of defeating the bourgeoisie. It is only with the defeat of the bourgeoisie that the dual system can be completely obliterated.

In evaluating busing we have developed the following criteria:

- 1) It should give minorities the same rights to education as enjoyed by other workers.
- 2) It should materially address the dual system by beginning to remedy institutionalized inequalities.

By challenging the dual system under capitalism, we lay the material basis for class unity.

Through an analysis of how the dual system has operated in the Detroit education system and the struggle for equal rights by the Black community, we hope to put the current plan in its historical context. It should be clear, however, that in all cases revolutionaries should fight against racist or chauvinist reactions to the plans. These poisonous ideologies must be countered among the working class. However, this struggle against the reactions of workers to plans is different in degree and kind from the outward support and encouragement for a program of court-ordered busing. Finally, the fight against segregation of the working class and the demands for full equality must merge with the struggle to eliminate existing inequalities within the working class.

## THE DETROIT BOARD OF EDUCATION: A DUAL SYSTEM

The modern Detroit Board of Education has its origins in a struggle in 1840 to place a 1/4 of one percent property tax upon Detroit residents for a public schools system. Mayor Zina Pitcher stated that schools should be open for all -- even the Irish and Germans who were committing the majority of the considerable street crimes -- so that the illiterate would cease to be a burden upon the society. He suggested "if the school tax were omitted then the jail tax and criminal court costs must take its place." (Conot, p. 34)

From this beginning (the tax passed), the Detroit school system has a long record of serving the interests of capitalism by disciplining children for working class life. Reflecting the new modes of production, which required better trained workers for industry, much more capital was pumped into the school system during the 20th century. In 1900 the Detroit school budget was one million dollars; by 1970 it was \$226 million, the fourth largest in the nation.

The population of Black people in Detroit grew dramatically after World War II, as conditions in the South worsened and the potential of jobs in the Detroit auto plants became a reality (although Ford hired Black workers in the 1930's, it was only in the foundry. The first Blacks on the line were not until the early 1950's). As Black people entered the city in great numbers, some of the white population was already beginning the movement to the suburbs in search of the newer jobs. By 1950 the Black population was 16.2%, and in the next decade almost doubled in size. By 1970 Detroit was 47% non-white.

One of the myths perpetuated was that whites were leaving because of Black people, but a clear statistical breakdown indicates that white outflight continued in a gradual sense as long as the suburban jobs were present. (Reynolds Farley, "Population Trends and School Segregation in Detroit Metropolitan Area," Wayne Law Review, 1975)

What was being established was the dual employment policies that some plants would remain until today with heavy populations of white workers, while

the others were being integrated until the majority of the production workers were non-white.

Inside Detroit, the school board was faced with the new influx of Black students who already by 1961 comprised 45% of the city's public school enrollment. Yet the Board did everything possible to keep the two racial groups in separate schools. The following is a finding from the Roth decision:

During the decade beginning in 1950, the Board created and maintained optional attendance zones in neighborhoods undergoing racial transition and between high school attendance areas of opposite predominant racial compositions. In 1959 there were eight basic optional attendance areas affecting 21 schools. Optional attendance areas provide pupils living within certain elementary areas a choice of attendance of one or two high schools.

The Board, in its operation of its transportation to relieve overcrowding policy has admittedly bused Black pupils past or away from closer white schools with available space to Black schools....With one exception (necessitated by the burning of a white school), defendant Board has never bused white children to predominantly Black schools. The Board has never bused white students to Black schools despite the enormous amount of space available in inner-city schools. There were 22,961 vacant seats in schools 90% or more Black.

The Roth decision continued to cite how the Board of Education changed feeder patterns, altered school boundaries, and created north-south district lines, despite the awareness since 1962 that by drawing east-west district lines, greater integration would result. The result of these practices during the decade of 1960 - 70, which saw the Black school population rise from 45% to 63%, was that in 1960, 65% of Detroit's Black students attended schools that were 90% or more Black; by 1970, 74.9% of Detroit's Black students attended schools that were 90% Black.

In brief, despite a growing Black population, when school integration was very "feasible," the school board chose to continue the pattern of segregation. These practices were even continued after 1964, when supposedly the UAW and the Democratic Party elected a liberal school board for the first time in history! Black students were consciously shifted to Black schools, and whites kept in overcrowded all-white ones. Not only was there a dual school system established

between the city and the suburban schools, but within the Detroit school system a dual system was maintained.

As a result of the conscious division of whites and Blacks by the Capitalists through the dual system and the failure of integrationist strategies to either solve the basic problems of Black people or to involve all sectors of the Black community in these attempts, an important struggle around community control of the schools developed within the Black neighborhoods of Detroit from 1966 to 1973.

#### COMMUNITY CONTROL

During the late 1960's, this movement was inspired and guided on the national level by the ideology and rhetoric of the "Black Power Movement." At the local levels, schools and the control of neighborhood schools by the Black community became the centers of conflict and institutional battles. Undoubtedly the best known of these struggles came out of New York City and the publicity around the Intermediate School 201 in Harlem and the bitter contest in Ocean Hill - Brownsville (Brooklyn) between the Black community led by Rhody McCoy and the United Federation of Teachers union representing the established ruling class and led by its president, Albert Shanker.

In Detroit many of the forces which were to lead the first phase of the community control movement were in motion as early as 1965 - 66. However, it was the great July Rebellion of 1967 which provided the new focus for the complete break with the past. Looking at that struggle from the perspective of the present, it is possible to see two related movements with similar demands but different ultimate goals. It has everything to do with the mood of the times on the national and local levels in addition to different class forces developing within the Black struggle during those years. Out of this analysis it is possible to divide the demand for community control of the schools into two distinct peri-



ods: the first from 1966 - 69 and the second from 1969 - 73.

The Detroit Rebellion of 1967 set the mood for the first period. And that mood was objectively revolutionary. The Rebellion gave Black nationalists and community organizations the objective basis for organizing which had been lacking in the past. Groups such as the Inner City Organizing Committee, Citywide Citizens Action Committee led by Rev. Albert Cleage Jr., the Republic of New Africa, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, the Black United Front, Black Parents for Quality Education, Citizens for Community Control, and the Association of Black Students at Wayne State University, along with numerous block clubs, set the political climate of these years. The class base of this movement was predominantly Black working people, some professionals, and a fairly large and active student base on a day to day level.

The revolutionary quality of the movement in this period can also be seen in the thinking which was behind all of its specific demands. First of all, the demand for community control was set within the rhetoric of revolution. It saw control of local institutions as impossible without control of the total society. But at the same time it focused on control of local institutions as the best way to make that larger struggle more concrete to the needs of people on a daily basis. Second, the movement dealt primarily with the question of power and the changing of those who had power in Detroit and the country. Third, and very important, it saw community participation and control by the average Black person in their neighborhoods as the heart of the idea of community control, and it was the general belief of those in the movement during those years that it was these type of people who should have power in society. Finally, the movement activists linked the question of education and who controlled the education of Blacks to the possibilities for the development of revolutionary consciousness for Black people in America. A pamphlet, Education to Govern, written by Grace Lee Boggs and Dan Aldridge, two activists in the community control movement, represents a good summation

and conceptualization of the above ideas that guided the struggle in this first phase.

Of course the local thinking in Detroit of those years had a great inter-relationship with what was happening nationally with the Black movement. In fact, it was when the national Black movement began to fall apart due to internal weaknesses and outright government repression that the local movement in Detroit began to retreat and move into a different political stance. Forces which represented more moderate positions, many of whom had never been revolutionary, made their bid for leadership and to channel what had been a movement against established institutions and leadership into an accommodation with it.

In Detroit this political departure was very clearly the Mayoral election of 1969. The loss of the lackluster Black candidate Richard Austin to the white sheriff Roman Gribbs meant that for at least four more years Detroit would remain under white political control. In addition, Austin had not been able to unite many of the young militants and activists in the Black community to his candidacy. But the moderates and upcoming Black politicians who had supported Austin and who saw themselves supplanting the elected white rulers of the city were now cut off from any possible leverages of political power to buttress their claims to leadership of Black Detroit.

From this political situation came the foundations for the second phase of the demand for "community control." Now the meaning of the term was quite different. If it was impossible for them to control the entire city, then the Black political leadership would control some of its parts (neighborhoods) along with parts of the key institutions. Thus community control became more directed at finding centers of power for Black initiatives away from the still-white-controlled city administration. Control often became "decentralizing" various city structures for neighborhood participation with Black political leadership. This was the basic strategy of Black political forces up until the election of Coleman

Young as Detroit's first Black mayor in 1973 over Police Commissioner John Nichols.

In this period the rhetoric of community control became more accommodating to the maintenance of established institutions as befitted the aspirations of the rising Black political leaders. The community control movement became the way to link their class positions with the hopes of the mass movement at the grassroots level. This change in the meaning of the concept could be observed on several fronts.

"Community control" became talk of "participation" and "involvement" as distinct from "control." The idea of "decentralization" (coined by Vietnam war strategist McGeorge Bundy in the New York City schools crisis) replaced that of controlling the schools. It was seen as important to accommodate the political system by working within it (although in a militant fashion) rather than seeking to overthrow it. Communities were defined either by electoral districts or by areas where voting patterns dictated that Blacks were in a majority position. This new definition was made to order for well-known Black political leaders, in addition to eliminating the power of Black students in the movement who were too young to vote even if they were inclined to see voting as a means of a solution.

One other aspect of this thinking is worth mentioning because it would grow in importance. By limiting the concept of community control to sections where blacks had a clear majority, it was obvious that some neighborhoods would remain under white racist neighborhood control. While recognized at the time, this was seen as a lesser evil which would be overcome once Detroit elected a Black mayor.

The class base of the community control movement in the second phase was a combination of middle-class professionals from business groups and political organizations; Black elected officials; anti-poverty and model cities organizers dependent upon Federal grants and funds; traditionalist-oriented block clubs; a few militant community organizations; and junior and senior high school students.

Across the country with the break-up of the national Black movement on a

mass level, with Richard Nixon now in the White House, and the ideology of "Black capitalism" being promoted by business and government leaders in a cynical attempt to sponsor a Black elite to administer the decaying central cities as a front for white monopoly-capitalist interests -- it is not surprising that the revolutionary elements that once led the community control movement were no longer its driving force.

Locally, the New Detroit, Inc., Detroit's answer to the National Urban Coalition, was the center for the attempt of the giant corporations to rebuild post-Rebellion Detroit and promote the new Black leadership of the city.

But the more radical advocates of community control were still very active. The West Central Organization and the Parents And Students for Community Control (PASCC) under the leadership of John Watson provided most of the revolutionary rhetoric that spurred on many of the power moves and compromises made by the Black political leaders during this period. The "Black Plan" drawn up by PASCC set the ideological basis for then-State Senator Coleman Young's bill which passed the Michigan Legislature for school decentralization into regions in Detroit. However, after the split in the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in 1971; the gradual weakening and cooptation by funding of many grassroots groups on the neighborhood level; the continually changing student population; and the departure of many of the past radical leaders for other movement pursuits (e.g., Cleage and the Boggs), it became clear that the radicals were no longer in the forefront of the movement.

Despite the influx of moderating forces and petty-bourgeois Black politicians during this latter phase of the community control struggle, it is important to see that given the reality of power relationships in Detroit at that time, the movement was still very progressive. It could no longer be called revolutionary and given its growing contradictions a tremendous mistake could be made (as many have been) by advocating "community control of schools" in the

abstract, divorced from the material and human forces which represent its current manifestations. Put this way, community control becomes an idealized goal impossible of real implementation and thus a substitute for real struggle in the present around ending the dual system in education and anti-racist struggle on every front.

In practice the decentralization of Detroit's schools into eight regions has brought mixed results in the Black communities. The original decentralization plan assumed that four regions would be dominated by Blacks and the other four by whites. However, in region board elections whites turned out in greater numbers and won elections even in some of the regions with large black majorities. Thus after the first region board elections in a city where the school population was over 65% Black (1971), only two of eight region boards had Black leadership. More important, given limited state and Federal funds, the boards were thrown into constant competition with each other for scarce resources. The politics of the local boards vary tremendously given ethnic and class compositions in differing neighborhoods. This makes the boards' relationships to the Central Board much like that of a local barony to an isolated capital city.

The elected board positions are usually made up of local political figures and neighborhood politicians with upcoming politicians and social service careerists holding down positions of community agents in the various schools. Community aides, although taken from the immediate neighborhoods, receive little training and have become wed to the system as it is because any changes could mean the loss of their jobs. The biggest asset has been the increased "participation" of parents and neighborhood figures in their surrounding schools. However, much of this has been offset by the failure to show that such participation leads to any better quality education for the students. The problems of crime and violence in the schools have continued to grow with local school administrators and allied neighborhood organizations completely unable to meet

this challenge. It is these failures above all which breed the cynicism and despair that many Blacks have as they look at the schools in Detroit today.

If the idea of community control was raised out of the militant Black movement between 1966 and 1973, it also set in motion the ability of many whites who were unable to move to the suburbs to institutionalize control of schools in predominantly white areas of Detroit. In 1969, the Michigan State Legislature passed a bill dividing the Detroit school system into eight regions which would have the power to supervise their own schools. However, when the liberal school board decided to redraw the high school boundaries, and for the first time send Black students into white schools, a massive reaction occurred. The Board had used the change in the law that established regions as a means to redress an amazingly obvious imbalance. In 1969, with the Detroit school system 63% Black, Cody, Denby and Redford High Schools had Black student populations of 2.1%, 2.2% and 3.1% respectively. The school board's proposal would have increased their enrollment to about 30% non-white, busing 9000 white students to other Black high schools.

A white organization -- Citizens' Committee For A Better Education -- was initiated by northeast Detroiters with a policeman as its chairman. They called for demonstrations outside the schools, and started a petition drive to recall all the members who voted for the changes in boundaries.

For the first time in the 128-year history of the Detroit school system, the four Board members who voted for the plan were recalled in a special election. The actual recall campaign already forced the Governor to get a bill passed in the State Legislature nullifying the school board's decision. In the northeast areas, where some of the white students would be bused to black schools, the turnout was 90% for recall. As the Chairman of CCBE pointed out after the successful recall:

I had a right to fight. My daughter was being sent to a black school. We knew we were going to win because we were fighting for our children. They were fighting only for an idea.

The white minority had turned out to support and defend "their" schools. Much of the leadership of CCBE is now found among the ranks of the present anti-busing group, Mothers Alert Detroit (MAD).

The new School Board elections, which were held in conjunction with the elections for the eight regional boards, produced only three Blacks on the Central School Board, the lowest percentage in 15 years. (There were 13 positions on the Board and a 63.4% Black student majority.) Many of the white people in the northeast and northwest areas of Detroit saw very clearly that "community control" supported by progressives could be utilized to maintain a dual school system. One of the Region Seven Board members elected was Carmen Roberts, the leader of MAD.

From the period of 1970 to the present, the Detroit school system still maintained its dual character. By 1975 the system was comprised of 249,956 students, 75.1% Black, 22.8% white and 2.1% "other" (The "other" category tends to underrepresent the Chicano minority because in at least one region they are counted as whites.) The Detroit school system has demonstrated an absolute decline in enrollment from the peak years of the early 1960's. In 1975 there were 36,000 fewer students than in 1961.

Yet in the same period the total school personnel -- teachers, administrators, kitchen workers, and maintenance -- increased by over 1000, for a total of 11,499 by 1975. A good many of these newly hired were Black community people, in some of the regions, representing a certain form of Black patronage. The racial employment composition of the Detroit schools became 49.6% white, 49.9% Black, and 1.9% other.

The 526 Detroit schools are still divided into eight regions from the 1970 plan. Essentially most of the remaining white population are found in region 7

(53.8% white) in the northeast section and region 4 (43.6% white) in the northwest. Yet of the 226 elementary schools in 1975, in 44 schools, 70% of the students were white. There were 80 schools with a white population over 50% -- over 1/3 of the total schools. Both Denby and Redford High Schools remained over 70% white. Still, the Board of Education feeder patterns were maintaining a dual school system.

Even more important, the racial segregation produced different and unequal programs. While Black schools may have similar supplies and equipment, they are often under- or unutilized due to lack of staff. The only major vocational high school constructed in the city -- Aero Mechanics High, located in a virtually all-Black neighborhood on the east side -- was only 38% non-white. In white Denby High School, drivers' training classes were available after school for students, something almost non-existent in most other Detroit high schools.

All of this is not to argue that the Detroit school system is adequately educating white workers. Obviously, in any industrial area, the school system exists to skim off the gifted few and recreate the working class out of the rest. There is no quality education for white students in the Detroit system. But the great difference between the white and Black schools cannot be ignored. Recent evidence from Region One (the high school population is 98% Black, with 37.8% below the poverty level) indicates that of students who take a math test in the first grade, 26% score above the national average, 19% below. By the seventh grade, the same students score only one percent above the national average, 69% below. As bad as schools are for white students in the Detroit system, they don't retard development of the individual as this suggests is the case for Black students. Most importantly, as bad as the school system is for white people, they will never have an opportunity to change it until they unite with the masses of Black students and parents.



### THE ROTH PLAN: AN OPPORTUNITY LOST

The decision by the NAACP to seek a court-ordered busing plan was directly related to the fight for community control. On July 7, 1970, the state legislature nullified the action of the Detroit School Board in ordering integration of the white high schools. On August 4, 1970, the four board members were recalled in a special election. On August 18, 1970, the NAACP sued in Federal Court asking that the law of the state legislature be declared unconstitutional since it overruled the actions of the local school board. Through the fall of 1970 and spring of 1971, a number of legal decisions were made by Federal Judge Stephen Roth on the question of segregation of the Detroit school system. On June 5, 1971, Roth ruled that the Detroit Board of Education could not build any new facilities or expand old facilities until the integration case was heard.

The testimony before the Federal court was unmistakably proving that the Detroit Board had maintained a dual school system. The Board's only defense was that all it did was establish patterns that fit the housing and neighborhood structure, although at times the Board admitted they wilfully segregated the schools. The case appeared to favor the NAACP when all testimony ended on July 22, 1971.

At this point, however, a new dimension was added to the case when the Citizens' Committee for a Better Education filed a motion to include as defendants in the suit 85 school districts in suburban Macomb, Oakland and Wayne Counties. The CCBE argued that since the Detroit schools were already 65% Black, there was no real way integration plans could be constructed unless these suburban districts were included.

Of course, this motion, made by a group which a year before had led the recall campaign, was a legal and political tactic. Legally, by bringing into

the case 85 defendants, almost all white suburban school districts which would fight any desegregation plans all the way to the Supreme Court, the case would remain tied up perhaps for years. The CCBE was afraid that the Detroit Board would not appeal a decision to integrate the Detroit schools. Politically, by including all the suburban school districts the suit would give the embattled white Detroiters hundreds of thousands of allies who would fight with all their powers to stop integration. The strategy of CCBE was very successful. On September 27, 1971, Judge Roth announced his decision, finding the Board of Education guilty of segregating the school system, and ordered a meeting of all parties to discuss remedies. In March, 1972, Roth rejected a Detroit-only plan, and in June, 1972, he adopted a plan which called for the busing of 360,000 students over 59 school districts and Detroit.

Obviously, the decision was met with tremendous hostility in the suburban communities. Reactionary anti-busing groups sprang up in every suburban community (some of them already had developed in response to the integration of the Pontiac schools in the fall of 1971). Meetings were held with thousands of people attending. In Warren, a meeting was called in the afternoon for that evening, and 20,000 people turned out. All local politicians up for election were in the leadership of the anti-busing movement, not simply because they wanted votes of constituents, but also because they saw the Roth decision as a threat to their political power.

From the perspective of the ruling class, there was no real support for the plan. Despite the tactical approach of the need to "obey the law," none of the regional organizations gave support to the plan. Nor did the ruling class develop organizations to promote implementation of the plan. Privately they doubted it would ever be implemented, and publicly they adopted a wait-and-see attitude until the Supreme Court had made the final decision. Clearly the ruling class was not in favor of the plan because if implemented it would cause not

only considerable unrest, but also potentially challenge the dual school system constructed between city and suburbs. Second, the plan would strike at the heart of the question of school financing by property taxes -- a system which always guarantees that rich areas will have the money to support good schools, and poor areas will not.

From the perspective of the black petit-bourgeoisie, the NAACP was handed a decision it never thought possible (when the CCBE introduced their motion to include the 85 school districts, the NAACP argued against it). Suddenly they were faced with a direct city-suburban confrontation over the school system. Roth's busing plan had included the state's fourth wealthiest school district, and if funds from these could be tapped, the hard-pressed Detroit schools would benefit. However, for many of the rising black petit-bourgeois politicians, the decision had very mixed benefits. The dispersal of the Black children over the tri-county area seemed an obvious method of blunting their newly-acquired power in the Detroit governmental structure. Particularly after the election of Coleman Young in 1973, this part of the Black petit-bourgeoisie was very suspicious of any attempts to erode their positions of power, and their fears had some influence over the present plan. A large part of the Black proletariat shared the same concern. One year before, organizations such as the NAACP were supporting the regionalization of the Detroit schools as a means of community control, and now, the same organization was supporting a plan to disperse their children to schools in areas they knew were unsafe for people of their skin color.

Of course the Roth decision was appealed immediately by the State of Michigan (for political reasons in the election year, as well as for the reason that Roth seemed ready to tag the State with the bill for the buses) and the local suburban school districts. For the next two years the plan was held in abeyance as it moved through the appeal process. Finally, on July 25, 1974, the Supreme Court, in a 5-4 decision, overturned the plan and sent the case back

to Federal Court in Detroit for a different remedy. The Supreme Court ruled the Roth plan unconstitutional on a technicality: Roth had included the 59 other school districts in his plan without giving them the opportunity to prove they were not segregated. Most had no Black students or Black families at all. The court sent the case back to the Federal District Court, and since Roth had recently died, the case was sent to the new Nixon-appointed Federal Judge, Robert DeMascio, for a new remedy.

The whole process merely underscored what Lenin pointed out in State and Revolution: The State exists to regulate the class conflicts for the dominant class. The Roth decision violated some of the basic aspects of capitalist rule in Detroit, and it had to be overturned. This is not to suggest that the Roth decision was a revolutionary one. Personally, Roth was a judicial liberal, but not interested in supporting the struggle for democratic rights. His proposed plan, however, attacked some of the basic tenet of the dual school system in the Detroit metropolitan area, and it provided the basis from which some real challenges to the educational power structure could have been made. For example, the fact that suburban school districts would have been forced to share programs and monies with the city schools would, in itself, be an extremely progressive step. The Roth plan would have also jeopardized the growing consolidation of suburban power in the hands of reactionary, anti-proletarian politicians. Roth's decision was so vague that it was difficult to see what sources of power were going to coordinate the busing of more than 300,000 children.

To summarize: The Roth decision was the product of strange tactical stalling by the white racist parents' organization. Yet, its potential for introducing real change in the Detroit schools, as well as for ending the city-suburban dual school system, made it very progressive. The bourgeoisie also saw these factors as potentially undermining their power and interests in

the Detroit area, and were confident the Supreme Court would nullify the plan. The Black petit-bourgeoisie was divided on its support for the plan because of the threat to the newly-won political power.

#### THE DEMASCIO PLAN

In Judge Robert DeMascio the bourgeoisie has a firm ally. As a former Executive Judge of Detroit Recorder's Court, he responded to charges of assembly line justice by stating "we are going to move as fast as we can. We have got to get people to trial faster." (PAR, *The Color of Justice: An Analysis of Recorder's Court*) The Judge held hearings on a Detroit-only busing plan during the spring of 1975 with both the NAACP and the School Board offering plans. After a series of judicial conferences, meetings with community leaders, and discussions with government officials, DeMascio announced his plan on August 15, 1975, which would be implemented on January 26, 1976, the first day of the winter term. There were more meetings and conferences in the fall of 1975 to clarify and revamp some of the plan, so it became more palatable to various parties involved, but the essential characteristics of the DeMascio plan are now in effect in the city of Detroit.

The essential thrust of DeMascio's proposals was to make some inroads into the white segment of the school system in Detroit, with as little disruption as possible. The plan called for all schools with over 70% white majorities to become 50% non-white, busing white children from these schools into others that would be not more than 55% Black. The Judge's decision called for a uniform grade structure of K-5, 6-8, 9-12. In addition, to bring more equality to the schools, the plan called for a comprehensive reading program, a uniform code of student conduct, a revision of the citywide testing programs in the schools, vocational education, bilingual programs, multi-ethnic education, co-curricular activities, in-service training for all teachers, expanded

guidance and counseling, and school-community relations. The Court appointed a monitoring commission to supervise the entire process of alteration of the Detroit schools.

The intention of the DeMascio plan was to utilize as little busing in Detroit as possible. Much of the credit for this may be taken by the attempts of Black petit-bourgeois politicians to bring about a minimal busing program. During the hearings in early 1975, the NAACP leadership was approached by a group of Black trade unionists and Mayor Young. This group took the position that more money would be the only way to solve the problems of the Detroit schools, and the threat of large-scale busing would increase white flight to the suburbs, <sup>and</sup> shrink the tax base and the political power of Detroit in the State Legislature, where funds would originate. Mayor Young was supported by Marcellus Ivory (UAW Region 1A, one of the two Blacks on the UAW Executive Board) and Tom Turner (head of the Metropolitan AFL-CIO). They contended the NAACP demands for large-scale busing were hurting the Black working class. The NAACP countered by stating these officials were only interested in saving their own political bases, and publicly affirmed they would not drop the suit. However, in private the NAACP said it would be willing to accept a minimal plan that basically integrated the 84 majority-white schools, which allowed DeMascio to propose so little busing.

The lack of a united Black community demanding busing on a mass level therefore allowed DeMascio to cater to the political reaction of the white minority parents. The threat of another Boston hung clearly in the background and permitted the judge, no friend of Black people in his past judicial history, to tailor the plan to the white population as much as possible. Of the 21,853 students involved in the actual busing plan, only 8706 were white students, less than 15.3% of the entire white school population. DeMascio very carefully developed his plans for the northeast white schools, the heartland of CCBE and

now MAD. Of all white people in the city, the plan bused them the least. Most white northeast children will remain in their elementary schools and be bused only for the middle school grades. One of the schools these white children will be bused to is Joy Middle School -- considered the best on the east side. This will send half of Joy school's Black population into poorly equipped St. Clair School, which is all Black.

DeMascio was also conscious of not disrupting the schools of the Black petit-bourgeoisie and remaining white professional community. He ordered no busing in Region 8 -- which includes the area of Lafayette Park, a high-income co-op and apartment center close to downtown -- or in Region 5 -- the area north of Palmer Park and near the University of Detroit where almost all of the Black politicians and many white professionals live. Indeed, a Free Press reporter found that none of the city leaders, NAACP lawyers, monitoring commission, or even the MAD leadership had children in the Detroit schools affected by the busing plan (some of the MAD did have children in the schools, but when the plan was announced they immediately withdrew them).

Finally for the masses of Black children, the plan has no effect at all. There are still 137 schools in the Detroit system that will be over 90% Black. Region 1, considered the center of the poorest, most needy Black student body, was not included in the busing plan. In effect, this helped in the plan's thrust of not threatening white homeowners by containing the inner-city schools. However, there was strong opposition to busing in Region 1 from both the community of poor Black people, among whom there is a history of struggle for community control, and the Black petit-bourgeois professionals dominant in the Region 1 administration. The situation of crowding, poor facilities, and lack of permanent teaching staff and programs for the majority of the city's Black school children will continue.

The plan also contains a student code, reading program, and proposals for

vocational high schools. In the court order, DeMascio outlines the purposes of the code: "To provide regulations governing the behavior of students; to prevent actions or activities interfering with the school program and/or prohibited by law; and to provide for students' rights and responsibilities." The student movement of the '60's and current individual acts of violence are both targets of the code. In the sections dealing with student rights, instead of reprinting the essential aspects of the Bill of Rights, each statement of a right is couched in a way to indicate that if a student abuses these rights, he/she will be punished. The Judge was attempting to allay the white parents' fears that Black youth equals crime and violence. As Marxist-Leninists, we recognize that violence within the schools is a reflection of the decaying economic system they serve; however, individual terrorist acts against others must be condemned. In the face of the repression of the Code, students are beginning to fight collectively for their rights.

The institution of a city-wide reading program and a similar use of school books is a progressive aspect of the plan. For years the Detroit school system has been plagued with the problem of different sets of books used by different schools. Many times the non-white schools were forced into accepting very inferior material as the result of the dual book policy. The Court might have gone further by including in its plan the even distribution of audio-visual equipment, etc., and ordering the State to pay.

The original plan called for five new vocational high schools and two technical high schools which would be open to enrollment on a citywide basis, with a Black majority of no less than 55%. While the vocational schools have been approved and funded (the State was forced to pay part by the Court), plans for the technical schools have been dropped, thus limiting the educational options of Detroit's students to working class skills. The effectiveness of even having vocational schools may be questionable, since Robert Ross,



the business manager of the Operating Engineers (LUOE), appointed co-chairman of the vocational sub-committee of the monitoring commission, is opposed to making the vocational schools a direct conduit and training center for the skilled trades.

Finally, to implement the program, DeMascio was clearly trying to avoid difficulties Roth's decision encountered with the bourgeoisie. He wanted a plan which from the beginning would be under the control of the local ruling bourgeoisie and their agents. He also wanted that power shared with the Black petit-bourgeoisie so they would support the plan and not feel it threatened their power base. Thus, the 58-member monitoring commission reads like a list of the notable people of the Detroit elite: Stanley Winkelman, head of a large downtown department store; Walter Green, one of the few Blacks in the Gribbs administration; Ivory from the UAW; George Gullen, President of Wayne State University and connected to the automobile industry. In addition, so concerned was DeMascio that his plan receive ruling class support that he held private meetings with many government and business leaders before the announcement of the plan on August 15, 1975, which the NAACP charged in their appeal brief was a "fundamental abuse of judicial office." DeMascio wanted to make sure he had the support of the bourgeoisie before he proceeded to the public with his plan.

Ruling class support meant neither supplying funds nor really being concerned with education. The bourgeoisie has always put social needs far down on its scales of priorities. The limited funding puts the other components of the plan in competition for money and pits many interest groups against each other as they each attempt to actualize their segment of the plan. Competition for funding is further complicated by the continuing rivalry among the eight school regions and their separate administrative bureaucracies. Under capitalism, education will continue to serve the interests of the ruling

class while having to do so on less money as the economic crisis worsens.

To summarize: The DeMascio plan has the following objectives: 1) to end white majority enclaves in the school system of Detroit 2) but not to cause major disruptions which would incite whites to rebellion or an even greater flight; 3) to develop the least possible busing plan; 4) to use the student code and a bourgeois monitoring commission to maintain a fairly rigid system of controls which would allow little institutional power to change hands; and 5) to omit the poor, Black, inner-city area from the Detroit plan.

How does the plan fit our criteria of support discussed in the first part of this paper? Not very well, but enough for DMLO to give at least critical support. The ending of the white majority schools was a progressive step which will enhance the progress of Black students for a better education. By promoting pupil integration, it may spill over into other forms of integration and expand the struggle for democracy inside of Detroit. Second, the implementation of the busing plan will cut away some of the control exercised by racist and reactionary forces in Region 7 and Region 4. Finally, the plan for standardizing the books and reading programs and the retention of the bilingual programs suggest that the order will advance the sharing of resources equally in Detroit. It is a step in the right direction.

For these reasons the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Organization supports the proposed DeMascio plan and struggled to make sure it was implemented. Yet, our support was not full support. Our support is not for an abstract principle but for a practical movement for equality. By the criteria outlined earlier, the plan barely is acceptable; support for the present plan comes from the absence of any real mass alternative. Our objections to the present plan are threefold: 1) It still maintains the power of implementation in the hands of the bourgeoisie that created the dual school system; 2) it does not alter the oppressive education for the masses of Black people; and 3) it does not address itself to the ques-

tion of quality education except in a very brief and insufficient manner. For these reasons, while we support the basic program, we will struggle to have our concerns and objections to the present plan incorporated in future policy. The Detroit Marxist-Leninist Organization does not see the implementation of the present DeMascio plan as the final step, but rather the beginning of the end of the dual school system and the start of the fight to bring quality education to both white and Black students.

Finally, our position on the DeMascio plan is also couched in the understanding that any "Detroit-only" school integration plan hardly touches the more essential, and fundamental, disparity between city schools and those of the suburbs. In a sense, the DeMascio plan ends the dual system in Detroit, but will probably intensify the demands for retention of the now-greater, more important dual system that has a geographic, racial and legal basis. Thus, the efforts of the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Organization in fighting for the DeMascio plan were minimized by our knowledge that whatever the plan was for Detroit, it was going to be inadequate if the needs of the entire Black and white working class were kept in mind.

DMLLO believes the position of critical support for the current plan to be correct because it avoids the reactionary trap of many Marxist-Leninists who argue that the plan is of no value to the Detroit working class. At the same time it recognizes the failures of the plan in advancing the struggle for equality and quality education further, instead of making the error of some left forces of tailing after the bourgeoisie. In a later section of this paper, we will try to talk about the practices of groups who fell into these traps. In addition, we will attempt to analyze our own practice both in terms of its strengths and of its weaknesses.

Finally, as we have noted before, support for the plan is different from the struggle against a racist reaction on the part of workers to it. The De-

troit Marxist-Leninist Organization took a clear position, even before the specific nature of the plan was agreed upon, that any racist reaction would be fought by DMLO. We stationed people at schools in sensitive areas on the watch for this type of reaction. Second, we worked in alliance with other organizations to picket against a MAD demonstration and against racist harassment of a Black family who moved into the white northeast side. It is our firm conviction that any self-defined Marxist-Leninist who sits by to accept racist attacks as not part of the class struggle makes such a grave error that it is permissible to wonder in whose interest such behavior lies.

Of course the reaction of the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Organization represents one revolutionary group. Our practice was limited by objective conditions: 1) we were a newly formed organization (2-5 months) when the busing order came down; 2) as we had no mass base in the schools or community, our role could only be supportive; 3) left disunity within the city prevented the formation of an umbrella, anti-racist group; 4) objectively then, we were supportive of anti-racist activity and attempted to guard against such responses in the first stages of busing. The Demascio plan and all the major forces around busing are clearly not revolutionaries. But it is their reactions that shaped the implementation struggle, and suggest what future lies ahead for the elimination of the dual school system in Detroit and its suburbs. It is to this reaction that we now turn.

#### REACTIONS TO THE PLAN

Depending upon the class relationship, the reactions to the DeMascio plan were varied. The bourgeoisie, both inside and outside the city, was relieved and overjoyed that the plan included as little busing as possible. DeMascio not only kept the dual city-suburban school system intact, but he tried to make the changes with as little disruption in the power relationship in the school system

as possible. The bourgeoisie and their Detroit allies -- the UAW leadership, the Democratic Party organizations, and both Detroit newspapers -- rapidly lined up in support of the plan. The political mechanism of this support was an organization, PRO-Detroit, whose honorary chairman was former Mayor Roman Gribbs, but was in actuality directed by W. H. O'Brien, the secretary of Civil Searchlight, a ruling class do-good agency. This group, supported by some considerable funds, ran a very subtle advertising program through the media to support the plan.

The Black petit-bourgeoisie came around more reluctantly to support the plan. The Black politicians still called for a suburban-city integration plan (which they knew could not happen), but Coleman Young came out for the implementation of the DeMascio plan. (His support for cross-district plan was rhetorical.) Many of the Black trade unionists worked with DeMascio for the implementation of the plan through the monitoring commission. Once it was clear that the plan did not hurt any of the power bases of the above groups, they began to line up in support of it.

Finally, it must be pointed out that soon after the plan was announced, federal funds were made available to support peaceful integration. It was clear that the federal government did not want "another Boston" and acted quickly to maintain order. Working closely with the Detroit Police Department, Federal Justice Department agents worked out very intricate security arrangements, and assisted in training of the bus drivers. The Federal agents were present at many meetings of anti-busing groups, and they were obviously present during the actual integration of the schools.

For other members of the Black petit-bourgeoisie, there was less outward support for the plan. The Black members of the Board of Education, the original defendant in the case, were unhappy with many specific aspects of the plan. They even considered joining the NAACP in a unique appeal where both defendant

and plaintiff would appeal the decision. One of their major concerns was how much it appeared that DeMascio pandered to the northeast racist sentiments in the actual construction of the plan. For example, Finney High School, located in the northeast, which was 61% non-white before the implementation, was to be reduced to 55%, with the excessive non-whites sent to Southeast High School, which is all non-white. They were also unhappy with some of DeMascio's changing of grade levels in schools (the Judge ordered K-5 grades as opposed to the K-6 which now existed). This would force the "massive" walking of many students to other schools, causing great disruption in the schools. Finally, there were some of the white members of the Board who wanted no busing at all and threatened to support an appeal on that basis. However, in the Board's December 19th plan, that was submitted to the court, many of the issues were resolved when the Board simply took its own actions, and DeMascio refused to force them to obey his plan. This thereby gave them de facto approval.

The situation was quite different with the NAACP. They were all ready to appeal the decision, as soon as it was announced, citing DeMascio's consistent private conferences with the Detroit bourgeois leadership to insure their acceptance of his proposals. They also complained that in the process of implementation DeMascio refused to select any of the people they recommended for his monitoring commissions, and "acted as if we were not plaintiffs in the case." (Free Press) Yet the NAACP did not attempt to halt the implementation of the plan, and preferred to wait for the appeal to run its normal legal course. The NAACP saw the future struggle to be the question of cross-district busing.

For many of the white workers and petit-bourgeoisie in the suburbs, the DeMascio plan was given little concern. The Detroit News buried much of the news of the plan on the inside pages. Even the still-active anti-busing groups which could have been involved in sympathy boycotts with MAD, chose to stick to their strategy of support for a Constitutional amendment to prohibit court-

ordered busing for integration.

The response of Black workers to the DeMascio Plan was not very enthusiastic. A poll conducted by the Detroit Free Press indicated that 39% of Black families considered the plan bad, 38% good, and 22% didn't know. About 40% of the Black Detroit residents questioned did not believe that integration was important and about the same number favored no busing at all. (Free Press, Jan. 25, 1976) None of the community organizations or block clubs took major positions in favor of the plan. Some Black citizens, Detroit clergy and liberal white parents did form, with Federal government funds, the Coalition for Peaceful Integration, which sponsored mass citizen involvement through "Let's Make It Work" committees in regions. Although the CPI took no position on the merits of the plan, it was clear that all the leadership supported the DeMascio plan and the concept of busing to promote integration. The masses of Black parents, however (many of whose children were not affected by the plan), were either neutral or opposed to the plan.

The Latino community's response was limited support for the program, as long as the bilingual programs were included in any plans to bus Latino students. In a presentation to the Detroit School Board, La Sed, a Latino community group, opposed the present monitoring commission as not being independent of the defendant in the case -- the Detroit Board of Education. They also demanded greater numbers of Latino staff -- a clear classification that would maintain Latino students as distinct from Black and white students, and the creation of certain schools in the Latino community as centers for the new bilingual education. The clear thrust of the Latino community was that they wanted to be treated as a distinct group, not lumped together with whites or Blacks or used by either group to support or reject the plan. As far as we can determine, there was no organizational resistance or support from the Arab population.

The most vocal response from white parents from the northeast and south-

west sections of Detroit. These groups formed two major organizations -- Mothers' Alert Detroit (MAD) and Metro Area Parents (MAP) -- which were formed in the spring of 1975. MAD -- which has its mass base and organizational roots in the old CCBE -- is the largest and best organized anti-busing group. It claims over 4000 members and its leader, Carmen Roberts, is one of the school board members in Region 7 and is on the Central Board.

The MAD opposition to busing took the traditional forms: a march in the spring, some rallies at churches in the northeast, picketing of the Federal Building, and some fund-raising dinners. At first, MAD attracted a few white politicians: city councilman Jack Kelly (before he receded from visible politics), a school board member Patrick McDonald (whom white racists rallied behind), and a few state Representatives from the northeast areas. But MAD has been unsuccessful in lining up any substantial trade union, UAW, Democratic Party, or other institutional support. There have been definite attempts by MAD to link up with other anti-busing groups in the nation. On October 6, 1975, in support for the anti-busing struggle in Boston and Louisville, MAD selectively boycotted about 20 white-majority schools, causing over 3/4 of the students to stay home. Two weeks later, MAD held a fund-raising dinner-dance (typically, in suburban East Detroit) which included representatives from the Louisville and Boston anti-busing organizations. Although they have contact with the massive suburban anti-busing opposition, MAD has been unsuccessful in getting their organizations stimulated to act against the DeMascio plan. A call by MAD for a boycott of schools in the suburbs the day the plan was to be implemented fell on deaf ears.

While MAD did have some strength, given the particulars of the DeMascio plan (so few white students being affected), and the demography of the Detroit school system, their protests appeared rather weak in comparison to their allies' in Boston and Louisville. The MAD leadership called for a boycott of the schools when the decision was to be implemented on January 26, 1976, and promised to



develop private academies and other forms of education for the students. Some mothers did take their children out of schools -- some in support of the boycott and some out of fear of chaos and violence -- and the boycott was successful for the first few days. However, it soon dwindled, except for the opposition of white parents to their children being sent to the formerly all-Black schools. None of the plans for private tutors or private academies have materialized, and it appears Carmen Roberts and some others of the MAD leadership have simply placed their children in other private schools. Since the implementation of the plan, 827 white students have left the school system due to busing.

One of the major reasons why MAD failed to generate greater support among workers was its clearly petit-bourgeois leadership and anti-working class ideology. MAD opposed, for example, the ERA, abortion rights and child care reform measures which many working class Detroit women clearly supported. Second, the specific neighborhood that MAD originated in was historically a center of petit-bourgeois people considerably more affluent than most white working class areas. These were not oppressed people who led MAD; they included lawyers, government workers, high seniority police officers who were out to protect themselves and hardly extended their concerns to the material problems affecting the Detroit working class. Third, there was a decided lack of white-organized resistance (aside from MAD) in a majority Black city. Thus the majority of white workers took no role in support of MAD activities and complied with the plan when it was implemented. However, they certainly did not support the DeMascio plan. Over 75% of whites who were interviewed in a Free Press survey wanted no busing and over 60% did not believe that integration was important. Yet, a check of the school enrollment patterns indicated that all summer of 1975, when it was clear a busing plan would shortly be announced, very few white parents actually pulled their children out of schools. The white working class appeared hesitant about the specific plans, but was not willing to openly

oppose them.

In general, the response of the Detroit working class, both white and Black, has been one of resignation, reflecting the elite nature of the plan's implementation. Only 1/3 of all Detroit families have children in the public schools, and a limited plan such as DeMascio's generates little direct impact upon the masses of Detroiters. Second, since the busing struggle in Detroit is almost six years old, the threat of busing is nothing new to the people of Detroit. But perhaps most important, is that there is a clear sense, by both Black and white people, that busing does not solve any of the enormous economic difficulties that confront them and their children, as the city continues to decay. There seems to be a surprising unity that the education system is bad, suggesting that most workers remain skeptical about the effectiveness of busing in dealing with the future of their children. In a city where the unemployment rate is on the average 33% and in some areas 60% (Free Press, February 23, 1976), there are some more pressing questions about jobs. When the Free Press asked people if they thought education was better or worse in their neighborhoods since busing, 21% of both white and Black residents believed it was worse. Busing and the control of education becomes a burning issue when the dual system of race-class power relationships are being confronted and challenged. This is simply not the case in Detroit.

#### THE RESPONSE OF MARXIST-LENINISTS

We will attempt to analyze Marxist-Leninist groups on the basis of three criteria: 1) position on busing, 2) practice around the plan, and 3) how does their practice relate to their line. In addition, it seems necessary to at least state what positions other groups developed. The revisionist Communist Party supported the plan but did little public work. Most Trotskyist groups supported the busing implementation, with the International Socialists forming a

group called Women Against Racism that often picketed IAD and the Socialist Workers' Party concentrated on rallies and debates on the campus of Wayne State University, basically supporting the line of NAACP through their student group, Students Concerned About Racism. The Congress of African People, locally hampered by internal struggle, held to the position that they did not support busing, but undertook little or no work in Detroit. A mass Latino group, La Sed, supported the plan with reservation. We do not know of other mass organizations or cadre groups which have taken positions on the question or undertook work in Detroit.

The three groups of importance to us are the October League, the Communist Labor Party, and the Revolutionary Communist Party.

The position of the October League was to support the Detroit plan, relying on their activity in Boston as proof of their support for busing struggles. At the National Fightback meeting in Chicago in January, the position on busing was to support all busing that would lead to integration. As of late November, when members of the Detroit Marxist-Leninist Organization approached OL to learn of what actions they intended, the response was, "we are studying it." At a local Fightback meeting immediately prior to implementation on January 26, there was discussion of relating busing to unemployment offices, but no specific plans for action around the busing implementation itself. In general, the OL has initiated no programs or actions concerning the DeMascio plan in Detroit that we know of, which is in stark contrast to their work in the Boston struggle. The only conclusion we can reach is that since local work around busing would have to have taken place at the same time that they were organizing the National Fightback conference, that a priority was given to the conference over local work, speaking to how the OL defines party-building, i.e., as primary and immediate and at the expense of building local mass activity.

The Revolutionary Communist Party continued its traditional political

position of seeing the busing plan as part of a capitalist ploy to divide the workers. They call upon workers to unite and oppose the decision and to oppose racism. While the local RCP initiated a petition drive against the plan, except for some superficial "power structure" analysis that reveals that the bourgeoisie controlled the writing and the implementation of the plan, there was almost no analysis of the concrete situation of the Detroit schools. In developing their position that busing was a hoax for workers, the RCP failed to develop any alternatives to integrate the schools, or to suggest how quality education (which they call for instead of busing) could be implemented. Their political line and their style of work kept them on the sidelines for most of the struggle, and the mass media reported their demonstration in front of the Detroit Board of Education on the day the plan was implemented as another example of racist opposition to busing. We find the RCP position reactionary and without merit whatsoever. We can in no way justify the practice of communists as being indistinct from the practice of racists around an issue dealing with the struggle for democratic rights of Black people.

The position of the Communist Labor Party has been to support peaceful integration and to support the Detroit Busing plan where it promotes equal education and to fight for its expansion to a metro busing plan. They propose the joint slogans of "peaceful integration -- oppose MAD -- nationalize education -- full state funding for schools," while analyzing the plan itself as "another cold, hard step of fascism toward state power."

Of all the M-L groups, the CLP has been the most active in support of busing in Detroit. They turned out in force to counter MAD demonstrations and rallies, were active at school board meetings and in local community groups supporting busing as a means of integration. They carried support for busing into the plants through their shop papers and in communities in a very consistent way. Many revolutionaries can learn from this practice.

The importance CLP attributes to the struggle around busing can be seen by their statement in The Peoples' Tribune that it "in essence embraces the future of the revolutionary struggle of the Anglo-American working class" (November 1, 1974) and that "the ability of the working class to stop fascism depends to a real extent on whether or not the battle for busing is won in favor of busing" (February 15, 1975); that it is a "fight against segregation, a fight for liberation of the Negro Nation and a fight against fascism." (Ibid.)

The force behind their practice around busing in Detroit is related to the cornerstone of CLP's line -- impending fascism vs. liberation of the Negro Nation. Their idealistic analysis, reflected in their line and practice, is derived from the view that white workers must give up their privileges by forsaking the "bribe" ("exploitation of the Negro national minority reinforces white chauvinism, institutionalizes the divisions in the working class by making the bribe to the Anglo-American workers clearer and facilitates an alliance between the Anglo-American workers and capitalists in the exploitation of the Negro Nation and the whole of the colonial world." Nelson Perry, The Negro National Colonial Question, p. 123), before there can be unity in the class, and that fascist forces (KKK, MAD, etc.) are the prime forces opposing integration.

Although defining the plan as "tracking our children as either bribed, skilled workers, unskilled workers, or into the reserve army of the unemployed before they are 16 years old," in an internal research paper (February 12, 1976) they avoided articulating the "bribe" in their mass work. Instead, they focused on MAD forces as exemplifying the fascist end-product of white chauvinism at the expense of seeing MAD, the bourgeoisie or the majority of the white working class in a realistic perspective. The CLP's refusal to place the MAD people into some form of class analysis gave some of their mass work a sort of "hysterical" style, calling for a "return in kind of acts by the

fascists" and making interfering with busing a capital crime. Wherever MAD held meetings the CLP picketed to "expose" their fascist tendencies without any clear idea given to the workers what these fascist tendencies were and how MAD was a threat to their interests.

The failure of MAD to develop a significant following and the avoidance of violence was attributed to the heroic role of CLP and other progressive forces. (Peoples' Tribune, February 15, 1976) The fact that MAD had to postpone its motorcade a week because it couldn't compete with the Superbowl apparently did not signify to the CLP how the white working class prioritized MAD's program. When DeMascio postponed busing to January, the Peoples' Tribune saw the reason as "the emergence of the CLP as a political force to be reckoned with has forced the bourgeoisie in Detroit into a tactical retreat on the busing issue." (September 1, 1975) This represents a tendency on CLP's part to test its theory through practice idealistically in order to prove it correct.

The call for nationalization of funding of education has several errors -- 1) it identifies money as the primary source of inequality, suggesting the solution being a better system of taxation rather than looking at power relationships and who controls the means of production; 2) distributing funds equally to all school districts (Peoples' Tribune, November 1, 1974) would not deal with the existing inequalities that would require more funds for Detroit schools; 3) it identifies (in a January 25, 1976, leaflet) Grosse Pointe schools as having quality education, equating quality with money and bourgeois class training; and 4) it disregards the question of who will hold political power over public education, especially when their line sees impending fascism.

In an effort to place revolutionary demands in an operable framework, the CLP very nearly liquidates a revolutionary perspective and borders on

liberal reform and economism. They find themselves in the position of overestimating the effect of MAD to prove impending fascism and supporting nationalization of funding, putting all their marbles in one economist bag. Even the progressive demand for cross-district busing is seen as only a tactic to gain support for nationalization of funding. The effect is to not provide a materialist analysis and a revolutionary alternative to the majority of the Black and white working class in Detroit.

#### DMLO's PRACTICE

As Marxist-Leninists we understand that genuine democracy and equality are possible only under the dictatorship of the proletariat, yet we still fight for and support the struggles of oppressed peoples for their bourgeois democratic rights and equal access to all the same institutions shared by everyone else. The present Detroit busing plan is very limited in that very little desegregation is taking place. Most of the majority Black schools will remain majority Black. In addition, the plan does not fundamentally challenge existing power relationships that serve to perpetuate racist ideology and keep the class divided. However, the plan does eliminate majority white schools and thus makes a beginning step toward ending the racist segregation of the Detroit Public School System. Hence, we offer critical support of the current plan, given that it is a definite, though limited, beginning toward ending segregation.

In practice this meant that we participated in an anti-racist demonstration, attended school board meetings, and acted as hall monitors during the first week of the plan's implementation to observe the reactions of students, teachers, and parents to the plan, and to oppose any organized racist activity. We were most heavily concentrated in Regions 2 and 7, where organized racist activity was most likely to occur.

DMLO was a newly-formed organization and at the time of the implementation of the busing plan we had no fully-developed position on the issue. However, we were able to take the above position on busing in Detroit in light of a perspective we have been able to develop up to this point. That is, busing must be seen in the historical context of the long struggle of Black people for their democratic rights and equal access to all institutions of this society. Racism is the means by which the ruling class keeps the working class divided, maintains a reserve labor force, and extracts huge super-profits through this special form of oppression. Segregated education is one of the many ways by which the ruling class carries this out. It is with this perspective that we offer critical support to the current Detroit busing plan.

#### UPDATE ON DETROIT

Nearly one year after our original analysis, how has busing affected Detroit? Has the prophesied "white flight" taken place? Have the other components of the plan resulted in quality education for the city's schoolchildren? How have the identifiable racist forces fared? Has equal or quality education moved a step forward? Is there now a material basis for alliance of the white and Black working class in the city?

As the crisis in capitalism and specifically in Detroit has deepened, it has been reflected in the status of education; funding has not emerged for basic education, let alone the components of the plan. The lack of money is the most glaring deficiency in the school system. The city as a whole has been forced to cut back on all city services, yet the total Detroit tax rate is one of the highest in the state. People have responded to this contradiction by rejecting an increase for the only tax they have a say in: the school property tax. In August and again in November, 1976, the voters rejected the school board's request for a 5-mill increase, which would have increased the operating budget



by \$37 million. While having one of the highest tax rates in the state, Detroit has a school tax rate below the state average. Further, to receive full state funding a school district must minimally contribute 28 mills; before the millage defeat, Detroit raised 24.76 mills toward schools. While legislation has been passed to allow those districts which could not get an expiring millage renewed to institute a compensatory income tax, Detroit does not legally qualify. The historical resentment toward Detroit by the outstate forces (much of it racist) concretely means no money for Detroit. The state superintendent of schools, while wanting to change the basis of school funding from the current property tax, must wait until all districts in the state are in crises before the legislature will consider his proposal. The DeMascio decision, which mandated the state to pay half the cost of the other components of the plan, was challenged by the state until Detroit put up its share. The hard-pressed Detroit school system was caught in the bind of cutting back on the "basics" (staff, hours, etc.) to pay its share toward the components. The fiscal crisis of the schools is based in the crises of capitalism: Detroit businessmen have told the city to keep the cutbacks in the city services to convince them that Detroit is fiscally sound. While there are many grants coming to Detroit as a result of Young's "tightening" the belt around the peoples' throats, they are nearly all for capital outlay, not for the necessary services.

While it is clear that Detroiters have cause for resentment, receiving so few services in return for their tax dollars, there are more implications to the denied millage request. While Blacks comprise 79% of the school system, they are only half the electorate and the majority of Detroiters do not have children attending public schools. Blacks overwhelmingly supported the millage, while white areas rejected it. Many of the whites voting against the increase had children in the Detroit public school system or even held jobs which were eliminated as a result of the defeat. The material basis of unity was warped by

racism. Whites rejecting the millage pointed to the region system as filled with Black administrators who were not taking their fair share of the cutbacks and the money being spent for busing. In reality, the region system is defended by all its petit-bourgeois participants, white and Black. Class interests were obscured by racism. Racism also resulted in the denial of the democratic rights of Black people. Though the dual system of education in Detroit had been addressed by busing, many other aspects of the dual system within Detroit remain -- i.e., housing patterns -- but, more importantly, all other aspects of the dual system remain between the city and the suburbs. The bourgeoisie's policy of "redlining" the city, making it more and more expensive for anyone to live here, results in the white suburbs appearing to be a better alternative. Working class whites see the difference between the city and suburbs in terms of race. Further confusing class unity were the opportunist contributions of negligible amounts of money by the Bank of the Commonwealth and a Grosse Pointe Park (a wealthy white suburb) auto dealer which "saved" the school extra-curricular swimming, football and basketball programs in the fall. While the bourgeoisie came away smelling like roses, the working class appeared to be denying their own children a basic education.

As a result of the failed millage, students have encountered larger classes, have had most music and art programs cut as well as extra-curricular sports, and are often without a permanent teacher. All substitutes were laid off, while former art and music teachers with high seniority serve as permanent, rotating substitutes. An hour of class time has also been cut. All the maintenance staff has been cut to bare, skeleton crews, which means the inevitable rundown of older buildings. In this light, it is of limited consequence that some of the progressive components of the DeMascio plan are being carried through. The reading program and the provisional bilingual education are being implemented. The vocational programs, however, are stalled by lack of funds and facilities.

To see busing and integration as the roots of the Detroit school system's problems is clearly incorrect. When all social services are being cut back and the bourgeoisie no longer needs a pool of literate, disciplined workers, the first to be written off are Black and other minority children. Unemployment for Black youth is between 50% and 60% in some areas of the city. There are no objective results (jobs) to be achieved by going to school; the condition of the schools offers little alternative to the streets. The struggles of the students in the '60's called for relevant education which would give students concrete experience and skills, physically and analytically, to carry that struggle on outside the schools. Now students are faced with much stronger repression and most do not know the history of the past Black consciousness struggles.

While conditions are worsening, there are teachers, students, and staff beginning to develop collective responses. Traditionally, the different unions within the school system have not worked together. Every category has been cut back drastically, so that working together is becoming necessary to make even basic economic demands. On another level, the unions and the white workers in them must come to understand that their fight for economic security is materially linked to the rights of Black children to quality education. Class unity between the unions is imperative; fighting for their jobs has a material link with fighting for the democratic rights of Black people.

Incidents of racial confrontation in the schools have been minimal, partially due to the construction of the plan (minimal busing of whites to majority-Black schools). The enrollment count for the fourth Friday revealed a drop of 11,117 students, with a decline in the overall white percentage from 23% to 19%. Total enrollment dropped from 247,774 to 236,657. Undoubtedly, a portion of this drop is a result of the conscious removal of white children, especially in the northeast side of Detroit. More significant, though, is

the ongoing drop in enrollment evidenced throughout the state as a result of a declining birth rate and drop-outs at the high school level. Busing alone would not cause white flight from Detroit; redlining -- the conscious practice of banks and insurance companies to deny mortgages and insurance based solely on location -- as well as the fact that there are at least more jobs (though not an adequate number) in the suburbs, are material factors rooted in the dual system which in sum make whites choose to leave. The issue of busing was never able to hold any number of whites together; in April, a MAD-endorsed bus cavalcade to the capital was poorly attended, even though an east-side shopping center allowed people to leave their cars there. However, Carmen Roberts, head of MAD, again received the largest number of votes from her region. Formerly this would automatically have put her on the Central Board, but the regions now vote a Chairman (who is Central Board Representative), and she was replaced.

While busing has been used as a scapegoat, the real issue is the capitalist cutbacks and the operation of the dual system which divides the working class while specially oppressing Blacks racially and as a national minority. Within Detroit, the plan has moved to give minorities the same rights to education as enjoyed by other workers' children, but this move towards equality has been obscured and confused by the overall deterioration of the school system. While the dual system was partially addressed within the Detroit school system, white Detroiters have not perceived their material unity with Blacks because all other aspects of the dual system raise the suburbs as an alternative which is better, not because of bourgeois policy but because Blacks do not live there. False leadership from racist forces has also obscured the material basis of unity.

The Detroit Marxist-Leninist Organization is fighting for the democratic rights of Black people and for class unity by struggling against the dual system. This work is only beginning. We are beginning to work within parent

groups and in the unions in the school system. We are also developing an analysis of quality education. Clearly, work in education must be integrated with struggles against all other aspects of the dual system, i.e., housing, unemployment, jobs, etc. We are beginning to develop program and strategy in these areas.