

# TRADE UNION QUESTION

## PART 1

The U.S. today is in extreme difficulty. The most highly developed productive apparatus in the history of the world produces social instability, poverty, and extreme hardship for the overwhelming majority of the country's populace. Never has so much wealth been concentrated in the hands of so few. Never have so many human beings suffered when the means to eliminate that suffering are so close at hand. Never have the contradictions in our society been so great.

The source of these contradictions is the economic system which forms the basis for our society -- state monopoly capitalism. State monopoly capitalism means the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few large financial institutions. These institutions make decisions which, because of the concentration of social wealth under their control, immediately affect the lives of millions of people. The decisions, however, are not made with the welfare of these masses in mind but with the welfare of the financial interests of the finance capitalists as the determinate factor. And the welfare of finance capital depends on the increasing exploitation of the broad laboring masses.

The solution to this situation can only come from the overthrow of this exploitative system. The solution can only come through socialist revolution. It is only socialism which can free the exploited and oppressed peoples from the horrors of monopoly capitalism. It is only socialism that can liberate the laboring masses.

There is but one class in modern society which is capable of the overthrow of monopoly capitalism. That class is not only large enough and powerful enough, but it can only abolish its own exploitation by abolishing *all* exploitation; it can only liberate itself by liberating all the exploited peoples. That class is the proletariat -- the most advanced class of our epoch.

At present, however, the U. S. proletariat is a long way from taking up this task. Ideologically and politically the proletariat is dominated by the bourgeoisie. While the class struggle continues its unremitting flow, its conscious arm, the working class movement, falters. The working class movement is still in its embryonic stage, despite the existence of large and powerful trade union organizations. Here and there the working class forges class unity in the struggle, only to slip once more into confusion and disarray.

Here and there the workers engage in revolutionary action, only to fall once more into the old passivity and submission. The working class movement remains mired in the spontaneous forms of the class struggle.

In order to free itself from the unending circular motion of the spontaneous class struggle, the workers movement needs a vanguard. It needs a vanguard of dedicated revolutionary fighters who are capable of leading the movement through the struggle for reforms to the successful overthrow of the finance capitalists. The working class movement needs a communist vanguard.

The political activity of communists, Lenin taught, consists in organizing and developing the working class movement. The spontaneous and disunited manifestations of the class struggle must be built into a conscious and unified movement. This movement will have as its chief and fundamental aim the overthrow of the capitalist mode of production. In order, however, to be successful in this endeavor, communists must be able to solve the concrete problems which face the workers' movement at each stage of its development. This means that communists must come up with the correct ideological, organizational, and tactical formulations which, when grasped by the masses, will be capable of guiding them to victory.

Since, then, the working class must itself become conscious of the nature of its tasks and how to carry them out, it is the vital task of communists to build links between the workers' movement in its present embryonic state and the developing communist vanguard. In order to achieve this, communists must utilize a variety of 'transmission belts' which will serve to connect the masses to their communist vanguard detachment. We, therefore, have need of organizations which have a broad base in the masses and are deeply rooted in the class struggle. In the present period the primary transmission belt is the trade union -- the economic organization of the proletariat.

### TRADE UNIONS: LINK TO THE MASSES

The trade union is the primary link to the laboring masses for the following reasons: first, the trade unions are broad, mass organizations made up exclusively of workers. Some twenty million workers are organized into trade unions in this country. Secondly, the trade union is

not only necessary but inevitable under capitalism.

The trade union springs directly from the relationship between the capitalist and the wage-laborer. The trade union was organized by workers with the precise purpose of carrying out the economic struggle against capitalist exploitation. Beginning with the struggle over the market price of the commodity labor power, the trade union soon finds itself in sharp contradiction with capital. The workers come to see the trade union as the only thing which stands between themselves and starvation.

Finally, the trade unions predominate as organizations of the industrial proletariat. While less than one fourth of the U. S. working class is organized into trade unions, nearly half of the industrial proletariat is so organized. The industrial sector of the proletariat is not only its most organized sector, it is also its most advanced sector. The industrial proletariat is the vanguard of the proletariat as a whole.

The industrial proletariat is the most advanced sector of the proletariat because it is the most highly socialized sector. Prior to the development of capitalism, the means of production in society (the various implements through which a society produces its needs — machines, tools, workplaces, etc.) were dispersed and isolated owned by many scattered individual producers. Each producer owned his own tools and produced his product by himself. The means of production at that time were geared to the nature of this isolated, individual production and were consequently small and primitive in development.

The capitalist mode of production, in the process of its development, gathered and developed these isolated and primitive means of production into the huge, centralized productive apparatus existing in this country today. It thereby transformed the former individualized means of production into the modern social means of production.

The socialization of the means of production brought about a consequent socialization of the laborers. Whereas formerly the producers were isolated, each working by himself, the new means of production required large groups of individuals all working in concert. Not only were large numbers of workers gathered together in central locations, but each laborer performed only one detail operation in a larger productive effort.

In order for the common productive effort to be successful, each laborer had to work according to a prescribed plan of operations and he had to subordinate himself to a central motive mechanism. The product, then, was no longer produced by a single individual, but only came into being on the basis of a combined effort of a number of workers. The product and process of production itself had become social in nature.

The social nature of production produced a socialization of the laborers. It brought each individual laborer to alize his real relationship to his fellow producers, and the dependency of the productive process on his work in concert with the rest of the workers. It also taught him that only a collective effort on the part of *all* the workers in a given enterprise could really halt the process of production. The capitalist could easily replace an individual worker, but could not so easily replace his entire workforce.

In addition, the concentration of the means of production in central locations by a number of capitalists

brought together large numbers of workers into towns, and eventually into cities. These workers did not all work in the same factory, but when they changed jobs, they learned of the common problems faced by all workers in their locality, and their common relationship not only to each individual capitalist but to the capitalists in general. This experience taught the workers that their oppression had a common source and that all capitalists were their enemies.

It is this socialization of the workforce which provides the basis for class consciousness. The industrial sector of the proletariat works in the most highly social productive process and is therefore the most advanced sector of the proletariat as a whole.

It is these three facts (the character of the trade union, its origin and predomination in the industrial proletariat), then that make the trade union question a central one for the communist movement today. In spite of the fact that there is no revolutionary vanguard party, that the communists movement is only in its earliest stages, the trade unions and work within them are immediate dilemmas for all real communists.

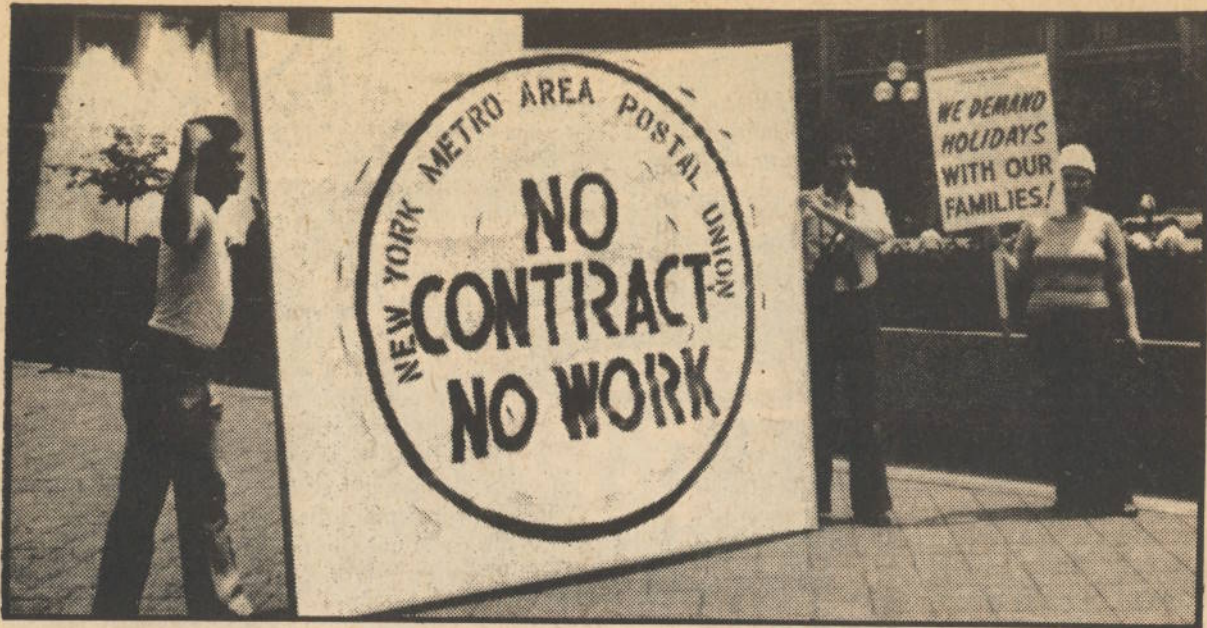
Why? Because in spite of the fact that the construction of the revolutionary party is our most urgent task, this party cannot be built in isolation from the working class movement. If we are to have a really revolutionary party, a truly vanguard party, we must be guided by the most advanced theory, which must be tested and proven in the workers' movement. For it is only in and through direct involvement in the working class movement that the party can be constructed so as to be a revolutionary *proletarian* vanguard party.

It is within such a context that this paper is being written. We do not pretend to have anything near a definitive understanding of the trade union question. We do not pretend to say the last word on the communist and correct attitude to the workers' trade union movement. Rather, we are attempting to break some ground on this question in order to facilitate the development of such a perspective. Nor do we claim originality; a great deal of what is presented here comes from the massive theoretical contributions of Marx, Engels, and Lenin. (Any errors contained in this piece are our fault alone, however!) Nonetheless, we do feel that it is essential that serious work be done on the development of the correct attitude toward these fundamental proletarian organizations.

While there is certainly considerable latitude for disagreement on the question in the present period, there is no room for those who would ignore the question or put it off to a later date. It is a question which confronts all real communists from the moment they attempt the very first communist task — to build a socialist current in the working class. To ignore the trade unions means objectively to ignore the industrial proletariat and thus to ignore the proletarian revolution.

## ORIGINS OF THE TRADE UNION

The trade unions are the first and most fundamental organizations of the proletariat. They are the organizations of the economic struggle of the proletariat for better conditions in the sale of the proletariat's only commodity — labor-power. They usually arise as the workers' movement reaches its adolescent stage, when it first becomes conscious



of the need to organize itself in order to struggle against the capitalists. The existence of trade unions marks the maturation of the spontaneous class consciousness (in embryo), produced inevitably by the class struggle.

In order to better understand the origin of the trade union we must first take a step backward for a moment to discuss the defining relationship between the laborers and the capitalists, which forces the trade unions into existence. Under capitalism social wealth takes the form of commodities, which are privately owned. Each commodity owner takes his commodities to the market and exchanges them for the goods of others which are of use to him. The capital-labor relation also begins with an exchange, for the workers are also commodity owners — although their commodity is unique.

The workers' commodity is labor-power (or the ability to work) which is taken to the market in an effort to sell himself to the capitalist for a period of time, and in exchange for this sale to gain the necessary goods to feed, clothe, and care for himself and his family.

In some respects, the worker is not *unlike* any other commodity owner. Like all commodity owners he must be the sole owner of his commodity or he could not sell it. In addition, the worker must have no other way of making a living other than by selling himself or he would never bear himself to market. And since he can only sell himself for a given period of time or become a slave, the worker is forced to continually bear himself to market, put himself up for sale, give up his labor power for his means of subsistence, only to throw himself on the market once again. This constant repetition of the act of selling himself determines the character of the laborer's existence under the capitalist mode of production.

While the laborer sells himself to gain his means of subsistence, the capitalist buys in order to appropriate the unique qualities of the commodity labor-power. The uniqueness of labor-power consists in the fact that it is the only commodity which is capable of producing more value than it itself contains. This provides the impetus for the capitalist to purchase this commodity so that he can appropriate the surplus that the commodity produces. It is, of course, the capitalistic production and appropriation of this surplus which is the driving motive for the entire capitalist

mode of production and the society based upon it.

The value of the commodity labor-power is not determined by the value that it is capable of producing. On the contrary, the value of labor-power is determined by the socially necessary labor requisite to its production. More simply, the value of labor-power is determined by the amount of labor necessary — given the level of development of society — to acquire the food, clothing etc., necessary to maintain the laborer and his family.

Moreover, the price of labor-power can deviate from its value, the amount of deviation depending on the conditions in the market at the moment of sale and purchase. The capitalist, quite naturally, strives to drive the price as far below the real value as possible. The laborer tries to drive the price up. By a low price for labor-power, the capitalist gains an extra portion of value to expropriate, whereas, by a high price for labor-power, the worker gains an extra command of the means of subsistence.

### STRUGGLE IN THE MARKET

The first impetus for the formation of the trade unions comes directly from the struggle over the market price of labor-power. The workers quickly come to recognize that the chief and first advantage of the capitalist comes from the competition among laborers for jobs. The capitalist has a large accumulation of social worth from which to buy a multitude of workers. As long as the workers remain unorganized, the many individuals will compete with one another for a job — each trying to undersell the other.

To obtain better conditions in the sale of labor-power, the workers have no choice but to organize themselves and withhold their labor-power from the market until they obtain the desired results. The workers, then, strive to eliminate the competition among laborers in order to command a higher price for their commodity. In striving to obtain a higher price the workers are competing with the capitalist for a greater share of the society's wealth.

However, the unions' "disruption" of the capitalist mode of production does not cease at the time of sale. It is part of the peculiar nature of the commodity labor-power that neither its use-value nor its exchange-value are actually appropriated at the market. All that really occurs is that the capitalist agrees to pay the laborer a certain



amount in wages after the work has been performed, and the worker agrees to work a certain number of hours for specific conditions.

The market yields only a contract; the production process itself yields the reality. Since the contract is not fulfilled in the market but in the factory proper, the trade union is dragged along with the workers into the production process. Here the union must try to see that the capitalist lives up to the terms and conditions of work that their agreement specified.

The factory forms the stage upon which most of the day to day struggles between the capitalist and the laborer are carried out. For it is capital's inherent tendency to attempt to violate the terms of the agreement made in the market. As Marx wrote, "*Capital is dead labor, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks*" (Capital, Vol. 1, p. 233) Capital constantly attempts to increase its exploitation of the laborer, and it develops a variety of means to do so. It may try to extend the time worked, or increase the intensity of the work itself, or increase the productivity of the laborer. But all these means have the same motive: to decrease that portion of the value of the product which goes to pay the cost of the laborer and increase the portion which capital appropriates.

The worker and the capitalist, then, make an agreement by which they determine the price of labor-power and the conditions of work. If one approaches this agreement from the standpoint of the market relationship alone, it would appear as if it were an agreement between equals. The worker receives the value of his labor-power from the capitalist and the capitalist receives, in turn, the use of the commodity he has purchased. To be sure, each strives to do the best possible for himself, to obtain the best possible conditions for himself in the bargain — but this striving is characteristic of every exchange relationship. Insofar as the market is concerned, each is free to bargain as he sees fit.

#### SUPREMACY OF THE CAPITALIST

The appearance, however, distorts the reality. As soon as we look beyond the market relationship we can

find the source of the real relationship between the capitalist and the laborer, which is not a relationship between equals but between the superior and the subordinate. The supremacy of the capitalist begins and extends from the process of production. In the process of its development, the capitalist class continually appropriated the skills of the laborers. Beginning with the various skills of the workers then at hand, the capitalist merely gathered the various workers under one roof and set them to work in common.

As soon as this first stage was past, the capitalist set to work to break down the old division of labor and concentrate the attention of the worker on only one segment of his original skill. When industry arrived at its final stage, its present stage, it had, through machinery and technology, reduced the worker to a mere appendage of the machine. No longer was the worker capable of producing a good by himself; he was now dependent on the machinery — and consequently on the capitalist owner of that machine — for his livelihood. The very nature of the development of the production process itself increased the dependency of the laborer on the capitalist to the point where presently most labor is unskilled, or semi-skilled at best, and each individual is easily replaced.

It is the capitalist process of production as a whole — which includes both the process of production and the process of circulation — which establishes the supremacy of the capitalist over the laborer. Marx explains as follows:

*"It is his labor of last week, or of last year, that pays for his labor-power this week or this year. The illusion begotten by the intervention of money vanishes immediately if, instead of taking a single capitalist and a single laborer, we take the class of capitalists and the class of laborers as a whole. The capitalist class is constantly giving to the laboring class order notes, in the form of money, on a portion of the commodities produced by the latter and appropriated by the former. The laborers give these order notes back just as constantly to the capitalist class, and in this way get their share of their own product."*

(Capital, Vol. 1, p. 568)

and further:

*"Capitalist production, therefore, of itself re-*

*produces and perpetuates the condition for exploiting the laborer. It incessantly forces him to sell his labor-power in order to live, and enables the capitalist to purchase labor-power in order that he may enrich himself. It is no longer a mere accident, that the capitalist and the laborer confront each other in the market as buyer and seller. It is the process itself that incessantly converts his own product into a means by which another man can purchase him.*

*"In reality, the laborer belongs to capital before he has sold himself to capital. His economic bondage is both brought about and concealed by the periodic sale of himself, by his change of masters, and by the oscillations in the market price of labor-power. Capitalist production, therefore, under its aspect of a continuous connected process, of a process of reproduction, produces not only commodities, not only surplus value, but it also produces and reproduces the capitalist relation: on the one side the capitalist, on the other the wage-laborer."*

*(Capital, Vol. 1, p. 577-8)*

Capitalist production of itself produces the supremacy of the capitalist over the laborer. As long as capitalism exists, so must this supremacy exist.

We have seen that the capital-labor relation is not a relationship in which two independent and equal forces mutually interact upon one another. Yet labor is often called 'free' wage labor. In a certain sense the laborer is indeed free—in that he is 'free' of any means of making a living other than by selling himself to the capitalist.

The bourgeoisie has long sought to propagate the mythical freedom of the laborer which comes from limiting one's view to the act of exchange alone. By propagating this myth the bourgeoisie desires to propagate the idea, especially among the workers themselves, that the capital-labor relation is mutually beneficial and that therefore the workers have an interest in the maintenance of monopoly capitalism.

It is important to be clear on the nature of the real relation between labor and capital for several reasons. First, because no amount of organization on the part of the laborers can fundamentally alter this real relationship without overthrowing the capitalist mode of production. Certainly the workers can gain a degree of strength by being organized. It is also true that an organized group of workers can gain a momentary advantage over an individual capitalist.

However, these factors cannot become decisive or permanent. For as long as labor remains wage-labor, that is, as long as labor remains labor for capital, labor remains subordinate. This is the fundamental and unalterable fact inherent in the very nature of capitalist production. Therefore, while the organization of workers into trade unions is of great importance to the quantitative alternation of the workers' position under capitalism, it cannot alter that position qualitatively. The qualitative alteration is a task for socialism alone.

Secondly, the economic inequality between the worker and the capitalist necessarily translates itself into poli-

tical and social inequality. The economic basis of any society determines the character of its superstructural institution. That class which is supreme economically will necessarily be supreme politically and socially. It is for this reason that Marxists hold that real democracy for the proletariat is impossible as long as capitalism continues to exist. "Democracy" under capitalism necessarily means democracy for the capitalist exploiters, while they collectively exercise a dictatorship over the proletariat.

Finally, the workers must approach their subordinate relationship to capital as a class if they are to be successful in the overthrow of that relationship. As long as the workers remain isolated and approach their situation as small groups against individual capitalists, they cannot possibly liberate themselves. An individual trade union cannot alter the fundamental character of the exploitation of its membership. Even the entire trade union movement is incapable of this task. These organizations can change the quantitative level of the exploitation but they cannot alter the exploitation itself. A real and permanent solution can come only on a class basis — through the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The character of the trade union is, therefore, determined by the character of the economic relation of labor to capital. The trade unions, as the organizations of the economic struggle of the proletariat, must, to a certain extent operate within the bounds of the capital-labor relation. The trade unions must carry out the struggle for reforms, for minor improvements in the conditions of the workers' exploitation. This makes the trade union a central organization of the workers' reform struggle.

However, this does not mean that the trade unions do not have a responsibility to aid in the class struggle for the overthrow of the monopolists. It does not mean that the trade unions can be allowed to follow their natural inclination to focus entirely on the struggle for reforms.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRADE UNIONS

As the trade union expands and concentrates more and more labor-power into one organization it branches out, drawing greater numbers of laborers into its fold. It then begins to develop a technical skill and expertise in the manipulation of the market for labor-power. This accumulated skill finds its material expression in the development of a professional trade union machinery, a staff of experts, speculators in the sale of wage-labor — e.g., researchers, legislative advisors, organizers, lawyers, negotiators, etc. It is the objective of these individuals to obtain the best possible conditions in the sale and use of the workers' commodity. Marxist-Leninists regard this as a positive development which accelerates the growth of the trade unions.

Along with the growth of the trade unions comes the need for a more effective centralization and discipline in the workers ranks. This becomes the secondary function served by the leadership portion of the professional trade union machinery. If the professional and technical trade union apparatus is to be effective in its responsibilities to the rank and file, it must have the support of a strongly centralized and disciplined movement.

The most effective form of this centralization is obviously based on the subordination of the minority to the majority in the trade union and the subordination of the

trade union machinery to the majority of the trade union membership. The development of a strong and *democratically* controlled center in the trade unions is an asset to the movement and increases its effectiveness.

A parallel development in the expanding field of activity is development of the 'legality' of the trade union movement. At the initial stages of the movement, trade unions are held by the bourgeoisie to be illegal, and the bourgeoisie tries by every means at its disposal to exterminate the budding movement. These means have included the courts, the police, armed militias, private detectives, gunmen, thugs, and federal troops. After a time, however, the bourgeoisie realizes the futility of its efforts in the face of the workers relentless pursuit of self-organization.

Realizing that the movement cannot be stopped outright, the capitalists turn to subtler means to turn it aside. While allowing the movement a concession in terms of allowing it 'legality', they strive to limit, channel, and dull the cutting edge of the movement. This is accomplished by an elaborate net of legal procedures which, although they expand the field of activity of the workers, also attempt to set new obstacles before them.

### INDUSTRIAL LEGALITY

Industrial legality is thus a great victory for the working class, which deserves to be supported because it develops wholly new forms and tools for the class struggle. It must nevertheless be regarded as no more than a temporary compromise, a compromise which had to be made to advance the workers' movement, given its strength relative to the capitalists. Legality has enabled the workers to make tremendous gains in terms of self-organization, working conditions, and general standard of living. But we must remember that it is only a compromise which deserves to be supported as long as the relative balance of power remains the same. In the long run, the only legal position to which the workers' movement is well-disposed is one in which the bourgeoisie is itself illegal.

The labor bureaucracy makes a fetish of legality, maintaining that the working class must always bow before the laws of the land. They and their revisionist allies are subservient to industrial legality, arguing that the working class must strive to change the law and in the meantime obey it. As communists, however, we firmly reject this approach. We only support industrial legality to the extent that it benefits the working class — that is, to the extent that the laws and the contractual agreements based upon them reflect the real objective balance of forces existing at the time.

But even here our support is tenuous; for we will strive to alter the balance of forces in favor of the workers' movement so as to undermine the basis of the existing compromise and therefore weaken the necessity of the compromise itself. If our attitude is taken on by the mass of workers in the trade union movement as it must be, legality will be a revolutionary instrument in the hands of the workers.

### IMPERIALISM AND THE TRADE UNIONS

The tendency towards bureaucratization of the trade unions is inevitable as long as capitalism exists. Many who have not understood this fact maintain that bureaucracy is a product of the ideological weakness of the working masses of their infatuation with bourgeois ideology. Certainly

where bourgeois ideology is not only hegemonic but barely challenged, a working class will allow a great deal of room for the development of bureaucracy in its trade unions.

But even countries where years of class struggle have taught the working masses valuable lessons in proletarian consciousness have witnessed substantial labor bureaucracies. True, these bureaucracies and the bureaucrats that make them up are much more sophisticated than the bureaucrats of the U. S. trade union movement; they mask the essence of their opportunism behind Marxist phraseology. But this is a characteristic of opportunism in general: as the working class grows ever more sophisticated so does the language of the opportunists. Sophisticated bureaucracy is bureaucracy nonetheless.

The tendency towards bureaucratization of the trade unions is inevitable because it is a social product of the basic relations of the process of capitalist production; it is a superstructural feature conditioned by the economic foundation of the capitalist system. Capitalist production, which everywhere reduces the masses of the population to the position of wage slaves, makes the "exercise of democracy" an impossibility for the exploited people. The very conditions of the wage-laborer form so many material impediments to his participation in the "democratic institutions". The intensity of modern labor which induces, not so much physical as mental exhaustion, is one such block.

In addition, the economic dependency of the laborer on overtime, moonlighting, etc., serves to limit any but very limited participation in politics. And for the most part, the necessary background knowledge for real activity is not available to the average worker. He is forced to depend on others for that knowledge — for example, politicians, priests, trade union bureaucrats, or other charlatans. The exercise of democracy for the masses is a political fiction undermined by the economic base of capitalist society. It is a luxury available only to the bourgeoisie. Bourgeois democracy masks capitalist dictatorship.

### THE LABOR BUREAUCRACY

These inherent limitations on the political activity of the oppressed and exploited masses lead to a tendency towards corruption even in the workers' organizations. Functionaries elected from the ranks of the workers themselves tend to be corrupted by the dictatorial powers of capital. Many an honest and sincere worker, beginning his life with the noble purpose of representing the best interests of his class, has ended up as a bureaucrat — an individual who puts his own career first and his class interests second. Many, of course, began their struggles with their own interests at heart. But this is not the case for all.

To explain the development of bureaucracy in the trade union movement on the basis of 'evil' individuals is to fall into the bourgeois trap of seeing a phenomenon only in the way that it manifests itself and not in its dialectical development. Such a view is utterly inadequate to the task of explaining the fact that many of the leaders at the local level have clean and honest records and that these same individuals are soon corrupted when they move up to the top levels. (To say that a local leader has an honest and clear record is not to say that such an individual is free from domination by class collaborationism.)

The corruption of honest trade union functionaries into bureaucrats is a function of, on the one hand, the im-



possibility of democracy for the working masses, and, on the other, the economic power of the capitalist. The economic power of capital makes it possible for the bourgeoisie to buy off in one form or another the workers' leadership with the workers' own product. The concrete form of this bribery is secondary, whether it is hard cash, an offer of a lucrative position in return for services rendered, a position of honor in the state apparatus, or social acceptability. When it comes to an individual's career, the capitalists hold all the cards.

The capitalist's interest in such activity should be obvious. Where the capitalist himself is excluded, he has need of an opportunist lieutenant loyal to his interests. He seeks, therefore, to transform the honest functionary into a hardened bureaucrat, holding a privileged position separate from and above the masses, based on privileges which he holds on account of the capitalist's "kindness and generosity". Thus the bureaucrat becomes the main perpetrator of opportunism in the labor movement, a "labor lieutenant of capital", to use DeLeon's apt words.

Opportunism is nothing more than the sacrifice of the class interests of the proletariat (especially its interest in capitalism's overthrow) for the petty concerns of the few. *(Note: We are not saying here that the bureaucrats do not take active steps to secure the bureaucratization of the trade union organizations. The institution of the appointment of officers, indirect elections, communist prohibition clauses, ratification of contractual agreements only by negotiating committees are all functionally bureaucratic measures to ensure the continued existence of the bureaucracy. However, it is not our purpose here to describe the actual process of the bureaucratization of the trade unions. We are discussing the material basis for that process.)*

Since, then, the development of bureaucracy in the trade unions is inevitable, does that mean that nothing can be done to limit this bureaucracy and curtail its detrimental effects? No, it does not. Some have suggested that a solution to this problem is the elimination of all functionaries from the workers' institutions. Marxists reject such an idea as utopian and reactionary, placing it on a par with the idea that management can be eliminated from modern industry.

The working class has need of such functionaries precisely because of the economic strictures upon its activities. The only solution is the removal of as many of the present bureaucrats as is possible and the institution of concrete material forms which will tie the functionary economically, politically, and organizationally to the position of the proletariat.

#### THE LABOR ARISTOCRACY

The development of imperialism further induces opportunism in the labor movement undreamed of under capitalism. The inherent tendency towards bureaucratization finds an ally in a new feature of capitalism become imperialism — the labor aristocracy. The development of capitalism into imperialism, Lenin taught, is characterized by the "supplanting of free competition by monopoly" — "the fundamental feature, the quintessence of imperialism" — which leads to the supplanting of capitalism by monopoly capitalism. A consequence of the development of monopoly capitalism is the negation of export of commodities by the export of capital. Whereas under capitalism the primary exports were commodities to be sold to other nations, under monopoly capitalism the primary export becomes capital to be invested in these countries.

Why the export of capital? Because monopoly has

closed off the major industries of the imperialist country as arenas for further investment. Monopoly depends on control of the market; newly invested capital out of proportion to the growth of demand in that market would necessarily tend to drive down the rate of profit on the capital already invested.

Capitalism has become 'overripe' and a surplus of capital has been accumulated. Short of distributing this capital to the masses (which would also drive down the rate of profit on existing capital) the monopoly capitalists have only one avenue of escape: export the capital to the less developed countries, where land, cheap labor and raw materials are relatively abundant and capital in relatively short supply.

This exported capital results in what is called monopoly "superprofits", i.e., profits above and beyond those 'normally' obtained in the imperialist country. A part of these superprofits form the material basis for a privileged upper stratum in the labor movement betraying the interests of its own class. The process works like this: a certain sector of the labor movement is bribed by the monopolists, who give them a portion of the superprofits in return for support for imperialist exploitation abroad.

The concrete forms this takes are varied (e.g., wages above and beyond the 'normal' price for this sector's labor power, privileged positions in the state apparatus, etc.) But the concrete forms are of secondary importance; what is central is the creation of an alliance between this bribed upper stratum of the working class and the imperialists in the interests of the exploitation of the oppressed peoples of the underdeveloped nations and against the interests of its own proletariat.

The development of the labor aristocracy makes the development of opportunism in the labor movement inevitable. Opportunism has a material base in the crumbs from monopoly superprofits. Thus, under imperialism, the labor aristocracy becomes the major basis for the opportunist trend in the labor movement, advocating class collaborationism and by so doing, sacrificing the interests of the whole class for their own narrow concerns.

Thus we see that, in addition to a substantial bureaucracy, the U. S. trade union movement has also seen the development of a substantial labor bureaucracy which at present dominates the AFL-CIO leadership. The main components of this labor aristocracy are the Building Trades Council and highly paid government and office workers, especially in Defense. The Meany foreign policy line in the AFL-CIO is no accident; it results directly from the economic interests of his base in the building trades.

#### QUESTION OF BRIBERY

If the AFL-CIO is dominated by the labor aristocracy, does that mean that its entire membership has been bribed by superprofits from imperialism? No, it does not. The importance of the labor aristocracy to the bourgeoisie lies not only in the actual numbers in that sector itself. An additional substantial sector of the labor movement falls under its influence. This second sector, while not materially bribed, follows the lead of the labor aristocracy's alliance with the petty-bourgeoisie in support of imperialism. The development of the second sector is facilitated by the ideological bourgeoisification of the working class.

The labor lieutenants propagandize the working masses in the interests of their bourgeois masters in order to further that process of bourgeoisification. Since the time has passed when the entire working class of one country can be bribed by the superprofits of their own imperialists, the monopolists can only bribe a sector of the class and a relatively small one at that. No one imperialist country has the industrial and colonial monopoly sufficient to yield it the superprofits sizeable enough to buy off its entire proletariat. It therefore becomes necessary for them to influence the mass of workers through what Lenin termed the "petty bourgeois upper stratum of the proletariat."

In this endeavor, the bourgeoisie receives the aid of the bureaucracy in the trade unions based in the non-aristocratic sectors of the proletariat. The non-aristocratically based bureaucrats become wedded by their careerist interests to their allies in the more highly bureaucratized leadership of the aristocracy. It is this wedding which provides the basis of unity in the top echelon of the AFL-CIO today. In fact, the merger of the AFL and CIO in 1956 on the AFL's terms was in essence merely the formalization of this development — with the AFL predominantly representing the labor aristocracy and the CIO representing the non-aristocratic but bureaucratized sectors of the organized proletariat.

While the unity between these two forces is very strong, as witnessed by the I. W. Abel repeat of the 1920's Green cooperation schemes, the differences are nevertheless important. While the bureaucrats of the labor aristocracy have a certain basis for their class treachery in the members of their unions, the bureaucrats in the non-aristocratic portions of the labor movement find a basis for their treachery in their personal futures alone. This makes them more vulnerable and necessarily more responsive to the real interests of their rank and file. The traitor I. W. Abel just doesn't rank with George Meany.

But the labor aristocracy also has interests which really lie with the rest of the proletariat; it is only in the short run that their interests tie them to their "own" imperialist bourgeoisie. In spite of receiving the morsels from the capitalist superprofits, they are nevertheless still exploited by these capitalists. In spite of their alliance with the bourgeoisie, they are still part of the proletariat and do not leave it by virtue of their privileged position. Their long run interests still lie with the only revolutionary class, the proletariat.

Does this mean that the opportunist trend will eventually come over to the standpoint of class struggle unionism? No! While individuals among the bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy will come over to the class standpoint, neither the labor aristocracy nor the labor bureaucracy will ever cease to exist as long as imperialism remains. As long as there is imperialism there will be superprofits, a labor aristocracy, and an opportunist trend in the labor movement. As Lenin said:

*"Certain individuals among the present social-chauvinist leaders may return to the proletariat. But the social-chauvinist or (what is the same thing) opportunist trend can neither disappear nor "return" to the revolutionary proletariat. Wherever Marxism is popular among the workers, this*



*political trend, the "bourgeois labor party", will swear by the name of Marx. It cannot be prohibited from using any particular label, sign, or advertisement. It has always been the case in history that after the death of revolutionary leaders who were popular among the oppressed classes, their enemies have attempted to expropriate their names so as to deceive the oppressed classes."*

— (*Imperialism and the Split in Socialism, 1916*)

### NEW ALLIES OF THE PROLETARIAT

In spite of increasing the basis for opportunism in the labor movement, the development of imperialism also brings new allies to the cause of the proletariat. First and foremost among these new allies are the peoples of the nations oppressed by imperialism. The intense exploitation and oppression suffered by these peoples at the hands of imperialism drive even a section of the oppressed national bourgeoisie into a struggle to rid their nation of imperialist domination and exploitation.

The overwhelming majority of the oppressed peoples, even though the working class is small, unite in a struggle against imperialism. These national liberation struggles are the greatest allies of the proletariat of the imperialist nations in their struggle against imperialism. Thus the development of proletarian internationalism reaches new levels; the old slogan "Workers of All Countries, Unite!" is discarded in favor of "Workers of All Countries and Oppressed Peoples, Unite!"

In addition, Lenin wrote:

*"Imperialism means the subjugation of all strata of the propertied classes to finance capital, and the partition of the whole world among five or six "Great" Powers means that all their propertied classes are interested in possessing colonies and spheres of influence, in oppressing other nations, and in securing the more or less lucrative posts and privileges that stem from belonging to a "Great" Power and an oppressor nation."*

While all the propertied classes have an interest in the maintenance of the imperialist exploitation of the colonies, they also have a heightened (with respect to their position under capitalism) interest in the overthrow of monopoly capitalism. This interest comes from the fact that all propertied classes are subjected to oppression by the forces of monopoly capital.

The development of monopoly capital means necessarily the curtailment of free competition (and therefore democracy) which provides the economic basis for the petty bourgeoisie's life-long dream — to become a capitalist exploiter. As the proletariat grows stronger and the national liberation movement grows more powerful, the monopolists will be forced to step up their exploitation of the petty bourgeoisie. Sectors of the petty bourgeoisie will thus be forced into the arms of the proletariat.

Therefore, while the development of imperialism increases the opportunist trend in the labor movement on the one hand, on the other it increases the objective forces allied with the proletariat. Imperialism therefore increases the objective urgency for its overthrow and increases the material forces allied to do it.

### THE STATE OF THE UNIONS

In the United States today, the monopoly capitalists are ruthlessly attempting to intensify the exploitation of the working class. In the factories they are automating the labor process in order to cut the number of workers employed. They are speeding up the process in a concerted effort to get more production for less money; they are shipping the jobs of substantial numbers of workers overseas to areas where the working class is weaker and therefore wages are lower.

In the political arena, the monopolists are attempting to curtail the rank and file proletarian's control over his trade union organization. Through all sorts of schemes these exploiters are trying to insure the absolute dictatorial control of the trade unions by their agents in the labor bureaucracy. In addition, the monopolists are curtailing the ability of the masses to exercise what limited democratic rights they do have; they are assaulting the national minorities, trying to increase the exploitation of those already greatly oppressed peoples.

The response to these intensified attacks on the proletariat has been relatively feeble. In spite of the growing consciousness of the proletariat, of its growing awareness of the real nature of bourgeois democracy and capitalism, the workers' movement has not been able to effectively challenge this assault. Witness the failure of the working class to break the monopoly of the bourgeoisie in the political struggle, evidenced by the continued support for the two bourgeois parties.

These parties, which offer nothing to the proletariat, continually allow the proletariat and the oppressed and exploited masses to "freely elect" a party of monopoly capital to 'represent' them for the next four years. And yet the working class still continues to support these instruments of bourgeois domination.

In the main, the reason for the ineffectual challenge of the proletariat to the bourgeoisie's policy of intensified exploitation and oppression results from the bourgeoisie's hold on the trade union movement. The trade unions — as the most powerful organizing centers of the working class — are the most natural organizations to spearhead a drive on the part of the proletariat to beat back the bourgeois offensive. But the trade unions presently make only minimum efforts to defend the proletariat — and this only when they are forced to do so by the rank and file. The trade unions are presently holding back the development of the proletarian movement.

### UNIONS DOMINATED BY BOURGEOISIE

Why is it that the trade unions are holding back the working class movement? Because at present they are dominated by the representatives of the bourgeoisie, who make use of them as instruments for the suppression of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie, through its labor lieutenants makes use of the trade unions to foster class collaboration in the workers' movement.

The labor lieutenants continue to shore up their bureaucratic apparatus, struggling to maintain their privileges above the mass of the trade union rank and file, in order to limit the ability of the rank and file proletarians to control their own organizations. They are stepping up their attempts to foster white chauvinism in the ranks of the proletariat, hoping thereby to increase the divisions between

the white workers and the oppressed nationalities. Further, the labor servants of the bourgeoisie still strive to channel the outrage of the masses into the two monopoly parties.

In spite of the present domination, recent events have shown an increasing attempt on the part of the membership of the unions to regain control of their organizations and fulfill their rightful role as class organizations of the proletariat. All over the country small groupings of rank and file workers are banding together to fight for democracy in the trade unions, to fight for a class struggle trade union policy, to fight for the ousting of the bureaucracy that presently stifles their organizations, to fight against white chauvinism and to fight for independent working class political action.

At present this struggle is at a low level; it is based on small, isolated groupings which are quite often strongly influenced by bourgeois ideology. But even at this level it provides a basis for introducing a socialist, class struggle current in the trade union movement. And it is only such a current that can really lead this embryonic struggle to victory.

At present, there are two lines clashing in the labor movement — representing the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. The proletarian line (it exists only in embryo) is one which seeks to free the trade unions from bourgeois domination; the bourgeois line seeks to make them even more effective instruments for the suppression of the proletariat. The proletarian line is for class struggle, the bourgeois line is for class collaboration.

#### CLASS STRUGGLE VERSUS CLASS COLLABORATION

The central relation in the capitalist mode of production is the relation between the capitalists, as the owners of the means of labor, and the workers, as the owners of labor-power. On this relation is based the mode of production and appropriation of the social surplus and its consequent mode of distribution.

In addition, on either side of this relation stand the two main classes in capitalist society, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The struggle between these two classes, which revolves around the basic capital-labor relation, determines the course of the development of this society. The relation itself gives that struggle its antagonistic character.

The same relation produces the trade union and determines its character. As we have shown above, the trade union is a product of the workers' attempt to gain some control over the market for their commodity; it represents the workers' conscious attempt to equal the powerful advantage that the capitalist has on the market for labor-power, owing to his monopoly of the means of production. The trade union, then, is an organization which has no interests apart from the workers' interests as a seller of labor-power. (The fact that an individual is a seller of labor-power and has no other way of making a living other than by selling himself determines his class status; it makes him part of the proletariat.)

Therefore, the trade union is inherently a class organization: first because it is a direct and inevitable product of the determinate relation of the capitalist mode of production; second, because its ability to succeed depends upon the number of workers it can organize behind itself; third, because it has no interests apart from the interests of the worker as a wage-laborer.

The ideology of a union as a *class* organization we call class struggle trade unionism. Class struggle unionism is an ideology which is based on the irreconcilability of the working class and the bourgeoisie, and on the necessity of the overthrow of the bourgeoisie. Class struggle unionism is the trade union ideology which reflects the class interests of the workers that the union represents; it is the application of Marxism to the trade union movement.

Opposed to class struggle unionism is class collaborationism. Class collaborationism is the ideology of the bourgeoisie in the trade union movement. It predicates itself on a non-antagonistic relationship between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, on the reconcilability of their interests. It thus attempts to maintain the supremacy of the bourgeoisie based on the exploitative relation between capital and labor. Class collaborationism is an alien ideology in the trade union movement.

#### TASKS OF THE CLASS STRUGGLE UNION

The difference between class struggle unionism and class collaborationism becomes clear if we understand that the tasks of the trade union as a class organization are twofold. First, the trade union must carry out a struggle in defense of the workers' day to day existence under capitalist society. The trade union must strive to keep the working class from being forced into starvation by the bourgeoisie.

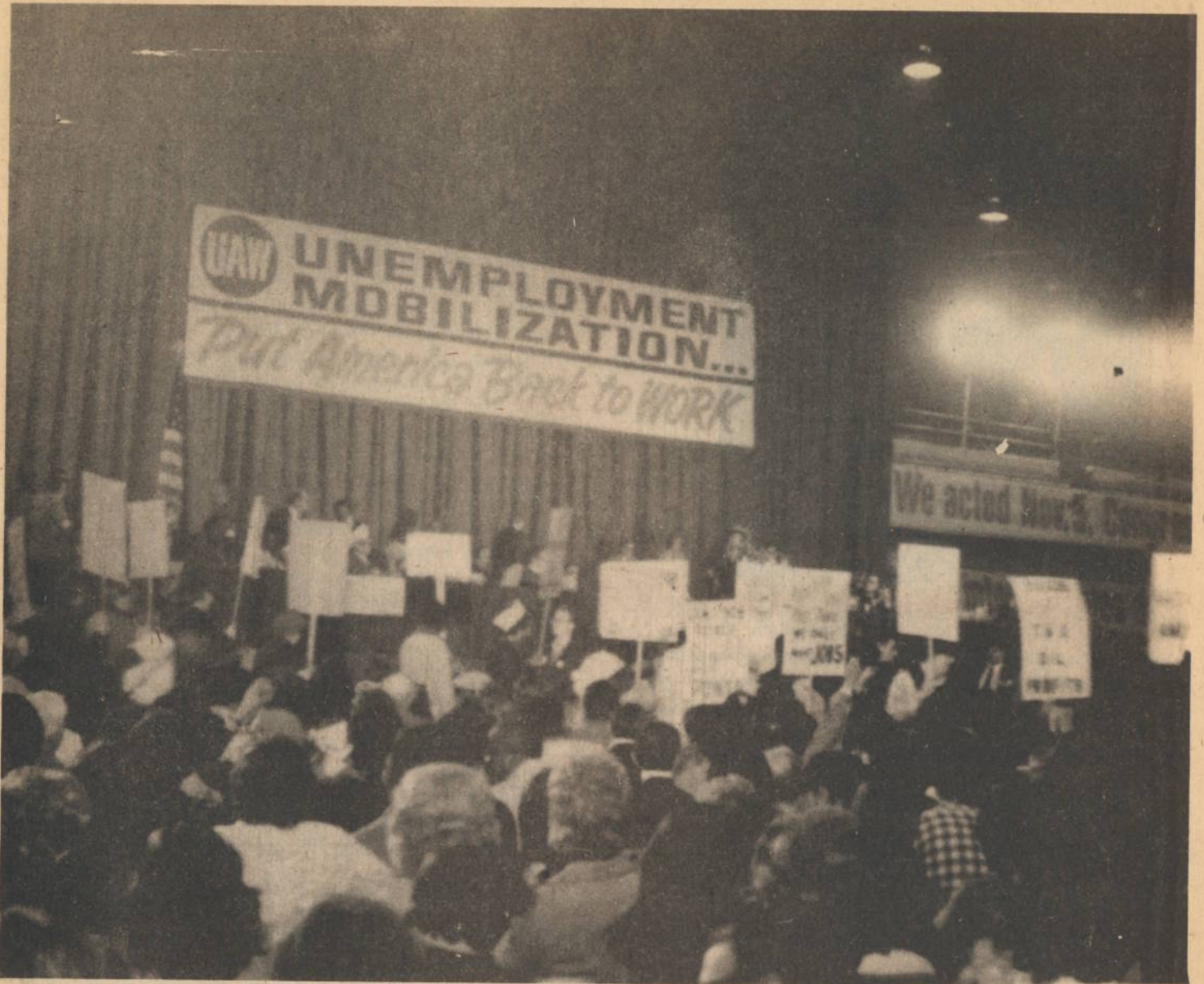
Secondly, the trade union must strive for the overthrow of the system of production based on the exploitation of the working class. The trade unions must actively prepare the proletariat for its eventual rise to the position of ruling class. It is this second task which is denied by class collaborationism.

The entire history of the working class movement has proven that neither task can be ignored if the union is to be successful in the other. To ignore the first task is to resign the working class to complete slavery and starvation. To ignore the second is to seek only minor improvements in the workers' economic position while leaving the source of his oppressed existence alone; it is as effective as trying to eliminate cancer with soap and water.

In fact, the struggle for the betterment of the workers' economic position is a component of the struggle for the abolition of his exploitation. Conversely, the struggle for the abolition of the wage system is a component of the struggle to alleviate the workers' subordinate economic position. Just as one cannot separate what exists from its future, one cannot separate the trade unions' immediate day to day struggle from its future struggle. The trade union that concentrates merely on alleviating the workers' economic position only succeeds in eliminating minor miseries by leaving the source of the misery intact. The trade union that concentrates only on eliminating the system of exploitation leaves the workers to the mercy of the capitalists completely.

Class struggle unionism is the dialectical interrelationship between these two tasks; it takes care of both the present and the future of the movement. While it struggles for reforms, it is making the necessary preparations for the eventual overthrow of the exploiters. While it is taking care of the immediate concerns of the movement, it is constantly reminding its membership of its future as a ruling class and actively preparing that membership for that future.

It neither falls into reformism nor into sectarianism;



it forgets neither the struggle for reforms nor the struggle for revolution. Class struggle unionism strives at each moment to develop the correct dialectical interrelationship between these two tasks: correct in terms of the concrete material conditions in which it finds itself.

The essence of class struggle unionism is that it acts upon the irreconcilability of the workers' interests with the bourgeoisie. This kind of unionism always brings to bear the utmost possible force of the working class movement on its class enemies, constantly striving to alter the balance of forces in favor of the working class and thereby winning even greater gains.

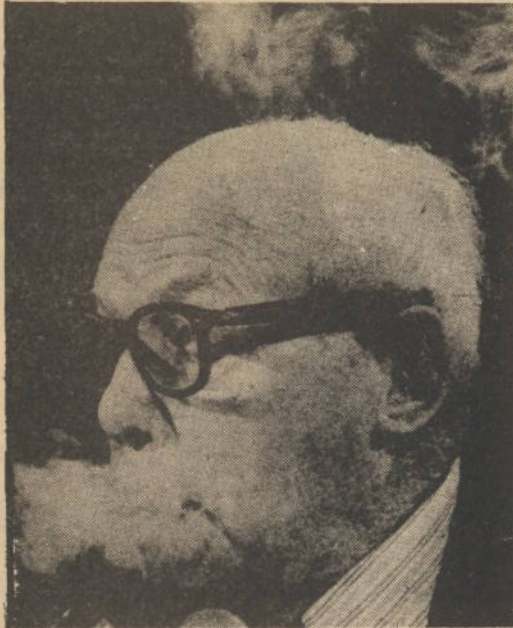
The policy of class struggle does not reject in principle any forms of struggle — always using that one, or any combination, which is most appropriate to the concrete context of the particular struggle. It never flees battle when battle is necessary, nor does it engage in adventurist activities. The class struggle union bows to no one, ready though it is to compromise when compromise is necessary. Furthermore, it will not sacrifice the interests of its class to the petty concerns of a few. The class struggle union stands for the class as a whole at all times.

### CLASS COLLABORATIONISM

Class collaborationism stands on the opposite pole from class struggle unionism. It consists in carrying out the workers' struggle within the confines of the fundamental exploitative relation of capital and labor, never looking beyond this, never seeking to eliminate this basic exploitation. Class collaborationism is therefore a bourgeois labor policy which takes a subservient attitude to the bourgeoisie. By advocating class peace, 'peaceful coexistence' with the bourgeoisie, this bourgeois labor policy takes care of the interests of the bourgeoisie in the labor movement.

It aims to foster among the workers the idea that they can live happily under capitalism, that their interests and those of the bourgeoisie are fundamentally the same. It stands for 'reason' and 'collective bargaining' with the bourgeoisie, rather than militant struggle against them. Class collaborationism is bourgeois trade unionism.

The proletariat which is conscious recognizes its interests to be antagonistic to those of the bourgeoisie. This proletariat recognizes that there will be entire periods of open, then submerged struggle, of strikes, demonstrations and insurrections, of revolution and counter-revolution. It will have to pass through all of these periods if it is to win



victory over exploitation and social degradation. The proletariat recognizes that only an uncompromising and determined struggle against the bourgeoisie will ever lead to a decent life on earth for working people.

#### AT PRESENT CLASS COLLABORATIONISM PREDOMINATES

As we said above, class collaborationism is the dominant ideology of the U. S. trade union movement today. The majority of the major trade unions are explicitly in favor of "good relations" with the bourgeoisie. The leadership of these unions and a good portion of their membership think that they can work out a mutually beneficial arrangement with the capitalists, and they strive towards this end.

These individuals are opposed to the idea that the interests of the capitalist and the worker are necessarily antagonistic. When antagonism breaks out into the open, they try to explain it away by saying that it is caused by irrational and overzealous management. To these individuals, struggle is always a last resort.

The fact that the U. S. trade union movement is dominated by class collaborationist elements would seem at first glance to contradict our statement that trade unions are inherently class organizations which have no interests separate from those of their class. If the trade unions are indeed class organizations, how is it that they are presently dominated by elements who espouse an ideology contradictory to the interest of their class? The answer to this question lies partly in the nature of the growth of trade unions and partly in the nature of the subordination of the working class itself. We will take the latter first.

The working class under the capitalist mode of production is the subordinate class economically. It produces the society's needs, but the allocation and distribution of these products is determined by the capitalist class. The economic subordination of the proletariat lies in its existence as a class of wage-laborers who must sell their labor to the bourgeoisie which holds a monopoly on the means of

production. The bourgeoisie's monopoly on the economic resources provides it with effective control over the various institutions of the society, which it utilizes to maintain its economic supremacy.

What is true of the superstructural institutions is also true of the ideology. The hegemonic ideology of an age is the ideology of its ruling class, to paraphrase Marx. Because of its economic monopoly, the bourgeoisie obtains a monopoly on the various means of communication and education in the society. Newspapers, television, radio and the various educational institutions are all dependent on the bourgeoisie for their futures. The bourgeoisie in turn puts these means of communication and education to good use: it uses them to proliferate its ideology.

The ideology of any social group reflects its social status. Bourgeois ideology therefore reflects the interests of the bourgeoisie. It presents the class interests of the bourgeoisie in a rational context through a system of ideas. The advantages to the bourgeoisie of a working class imbued with bourgeois ideology should be obvious.

The bourgeoisie therefore seeks to create a bourgeoisified working class, a working class which is dominated by the ideological conceptions of its class enemies. Such a working class will never seriously challenge the system upon which the bourgeois ideological hegemony is based. The workers, however, can never assimilate bourgeois ideology entirely, for the very conditions of their lives teach them otherwise. The conditions under which the proletariat lives produce proletarian consciousness — consciousness of the real position of the laborer in capitalist society and his relation to the system of exploitation constructed upon wage labor. This consciousness is therefore constantly confronting the ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie.

In order to maintain its ideological hegemony, the bourgeoisie must keep this embryonic proletarian consciousness from developing into a full blown proletarian ideology. To this end, the bourgeoisie plays on the seeming separate interests of separate and isolated groups of workers, trying to turn individual groups of workers against their class or their objective allies. Proletarian consciousness is necessarily based on a unity of interests in a way that bourgeois consciousness is not. Proletarian ideology is a unity and consequently contains no contradictions. Proletarian ideology cannot arise except on the basis of a class conscious group of workers.

The growth of the trade union movement provides obvious threats to the supremacy of the bourgeoisie. One of these threats is the possibility that through the assembly of ever greater numbers of workers in these organizations, embryonic proletarian consciousness will be systematized into proletarian ideology. This the bourgeoisie must prevent at all costs. To this end the bourgeoisie encourages the development of its own ideology within the trade union movement. Through its ideological hegemony in the society as a whole, and its agents in the labor movement, it seeks to gain a following among the workers for the interests of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, it fosters the development of class collaborationism in the trade union movement.

#### NOT A PURE IDEOLOGY

However, class collaborationism is not a 'pure' ideol-

ogy nor can it be if it is to have any following whatsoever in the proletarian movement. Class collaborationism reflects some of the legitimate interests of the proletariat which are antagonistic to those of the bourgeoisie. Those antagonistic interests which it does reflect, however, it attempts to filter through a non-antagonistic framework.

It seeks to narrow the development of any antagonism and explain it away as so many malfunctions in the "proper relationship between labor and capital". Class collaborationism is necessarily heterogeneous, containing elements of both proletarian consciousness and bourgeois consciousness. Bourgeois consciousness, however, is the predominant aspect.

Class collaborationism, because of its ideological heterogeneity, can only maintain itself on the basis of isolated and segmented groups of workers. The more the workers' movement moves toward objective unity of the class, the more contradictory does the basis of the ideology become. Class collaborationism must therefore work to slow the pace of the development of the working class movement.

The nature of the growth of the trade union movement itself provides a basis for the development of class collaborationism as its predominant ideology. Because workers are fragmented and isolated from each other by the very nature of the development of the capitalist system of production, each group "belonging to" an individual capitalist, the growth of the trade union reflects this segmentation and division.

Unions were first organized by small groups of workers in one trade, then in one industry. They grow on the basis of voluntary membership of small groups of workers whose only substantial contacts with workers from other shops comes through the union itself. This voluntary growth does not necessarily mean that the workers will be truly unified by these organizations. The development of

unity depends partly on the individual groups of workers themselves.

The development of imperialism on the basis of monopoly capitalism leads to further growth of the objective basis of unity in the workers' movement. The supplanting of individual capitalist firms by monopolies forces the workers to unify in order to deal with the qualitatively greater power of the new monopolies.

This is why the development of a labor aristocracy increases tenfold the power of bourgeois ideology in the trade union movement.

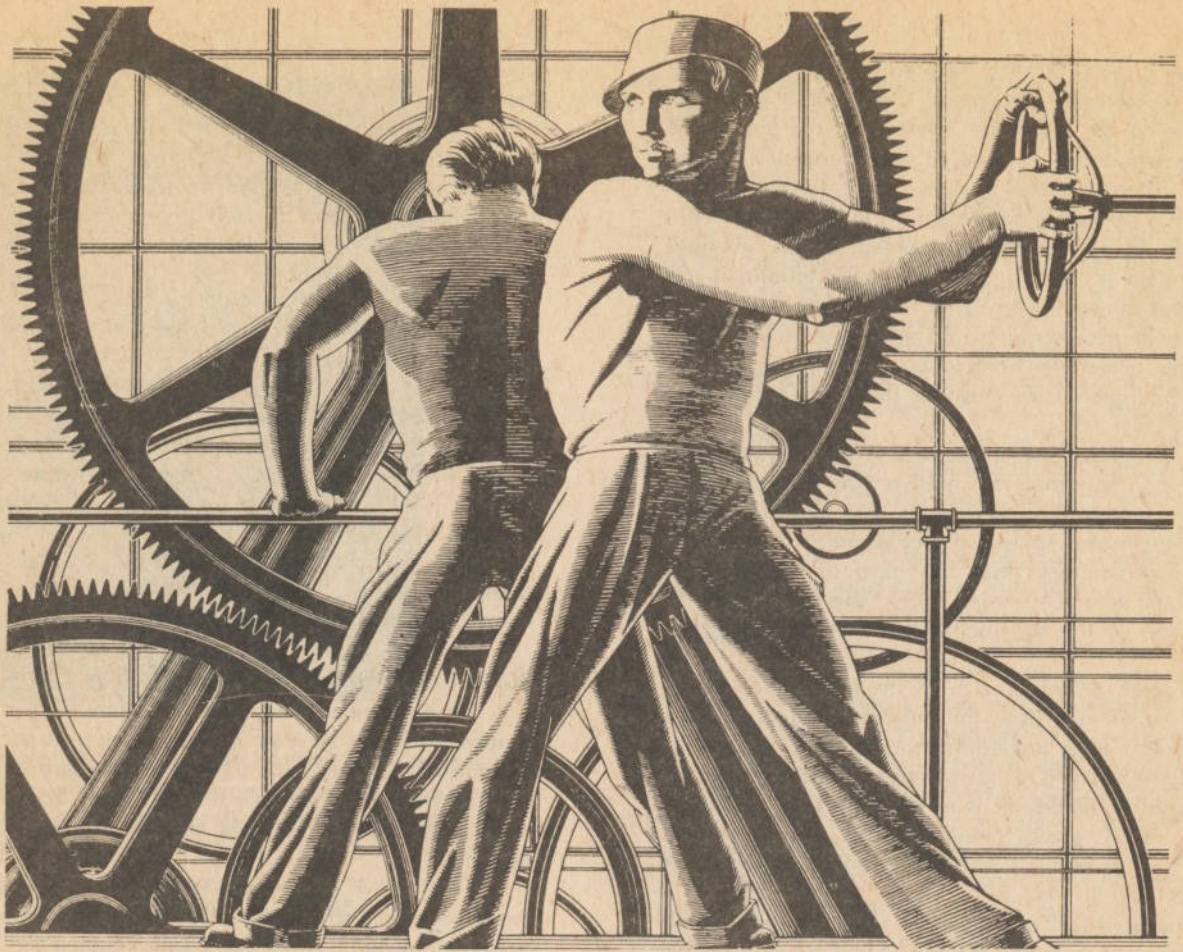
Given the hegemony of the bourgeoisie in the trade union movement, it therefore naturally tends (if left to itself) to class collaboration. In the imperialist era, this tendency increases markedly. Left to themselves the trade unions, in spite of their class character cannot develop into real and effective instruments for the class struggle. **Only the active participation of communists can transform the trade unions. This, then, is the fundamental task of communists in the trade union movement.**

#### SOME FEATURES OF CLASS STRUGGLE UNIONISM

If the fundamental task of communists in the trade unions is to win the mass of workers over to socialism and revolutionize the trade unions, it is necessary to have some idea of what class struggle unions would be like. The following section outlines some of the features of class struggle unionism.

1) THE ECONOMIC STRUGGLE: The trade unions would continue to carry out the struggle for reforms in the economic position of workers under capitalism. This struggle must be carried out on a *class* basis, not on the narrow basis of a small minority of the class putting its interests ahead of the class as a whole. Instead of each union seeing the economic struggle as an isolated struggle for the interests of its own membership, it would wage the economic





struggle in a political way.

That is, the reformist economic struggle must always be placed in its true class context. The trade unions should seek to raise the level of the struggle from its present context of individual workers fighting their individual capitalist to a struggle against the capitalist class as a whole. Moreover, the economic and reform struggle must be subordinate to the political struggle for the economic emancipation of the entire proletariat.

2) **ORGANIZING CENTERS:** The trade unions, as the primary mass organizations of the proletariat, should seek to fulfill their natural functions as organizing centers for the entire proletariat. Therefore, the trade unions must be conscious of carrying out struggles of both an economic and political nature for their entire class, not their organized membership alone. Moreover, the trade unions must become organizing centers for the entire oppressed and exploited peoples.

To this end, the trade unions must champion the cause of the masses of working people outside the proletariat who are oppressed and exploited by monopoly capitalism, and this not only of the oppressed peoples of this country, but of the entire world. The trade unions must be guided by proletarian internationalism, by the principles of international working class solidarity.

3) **POLITICAL CENTERS:** The trade unions should seek to serve as the foundation of a mass political party of the oppressed and exploited. (Note: we mean here not a communist party but a mass anti-imperialist party.) To this end, they would seek to break the stranglehold of the bour-

geois parties on the masses in this country. The trade unions would seek to place themselves at the forefront of all democratic and revolutionary struggles, striving to implement the leading role of the proletariat in these struggles. The trade unions must directly take up the struggle for socialism.

4) **UNITY:** The fight for unity is critical to the proletariat and to the revolution. The trade unions, then, must play a leading role in this fight — steadfastly attacking all forms of ideological division within the working class. The most important ideological division of the U. S. proletariat is caused by white chauvinism. This bourgeois and alien ideology divides the majority of the proletariat from its most militant and conscious sector, aiding the bourgeoisie in its efforts to dominate the proletariat. The struggle against white chauvinism is one of the most central struggles facing the proletarian movement of this country today.

Another extremely important struggle for unity which must be waged by the trade unions is the struggle against sexism. Women in the U. S. are forced into lower paying jobs than men by virtue of their sex, they are refused equality in advancement and are generally discriminated against in every area of society. The ideology of male chauvinism, which preaches that women are inferior to men, buttresses this discrimination; it therefore divides men from women. The trade unions should take up the struggle against all forms of sexism — both actual discrimination and ideological — as one of the vital arenas for the struggle for unity.

The trade unions would, in addition, struggle against

all other forms of chauvinism, including national chauvinism, anti-communism, anti-semitism, etc., doing this not only in the proletariat, but among all working people.

5) **SCHOOLS OF COMMUNISM:** The trade unions should seek to educate their members as to the basis of the capitalist mode of production and to the inevitability of the proletariat's exploitation as long as capitalism exists. The trade unions should consistently use the spontaneous economic struggle to elevate the consciousness of their membership and their class. Obviously, the highest level of attainment of that consciousness is Marxism-Leninism, the science of the proletariat. This should be the goal of every trade union. Every trade union should seek to draw its membership close to the communist party, the vanguard of the oppressed and the highest form of class organization. **It should be obvious that the revolutionization of the trade unions and the establishment of class struggle unionism is impossible without the leadership of communists. Moreover, without the party there can be no question of a stable revolutionary mass movement of any kind.**

#### CAN THE U. S. TRADE UNION MOVEMENT BE REVOLUTIONIZED?

The central task of communists and proletarians in the trade union movement is the revolutionization of the existing trade unions. These organizations must be transformed from head to toe, keeping only the positive contributions that the workers have made before now (a centralized trade union machinery, professional staffs, etc.). Bureaucracy, class collaborationism and racism must be eliminated, and democracy, class struggle unionism and class unity established in their place. Bureaucrats, traitors, and labor lieutenants must be replaced by honest, militant, dedicated class conscious proletarians.

Certainly this is not an easy task; anyone who has done any work in the trade union movement can tell you that. But just as certain is the necessity of carrying out this task: it is a fundamental prerequisite of the proletarian revolution in this country. If the workers of the U. S. trade union movement — who represent the most advanced sector of the U. S. working class — cannot be won to class struggle unionism, they cannot be won to socialism. If the workers in the trade union movement do not revolutionize their trade unions, they will not succeed in establishing their proletarian dictatorship.

Are not the U. S. trade unions presently instruments for the supremacy of the bourgeoisie in this country? Yes, they are! Is not the apex of the present unions the state apparatus of the bourgeoisie? Yes! Do not the trade unions serve the interests of U. S. imperialism at home and abroad? Yes! Is not, therefore, the effort to transform them as hopeless as the effort to transform the state? **No!**

To call the trade unions hopeless is to call their twenty million members hopeless, as was pointed out by the great revolutionary and trade union leader A. Lozofsky in his pamphlet, *The World's Trade Union Movement*, published in 1924. Speaking of the German trade unions and the communist attitude toward them, he wrote:

*"What does it mean to consider the trade unions 'hopeless' in the revolutionary sense? If the nine million workers of German (sic)*

*are "hopeless", then the revolution is itself "hopeless" . . . The leaders, especially the trade union bureaucracy are hopeless; but the laboring masses are not, for their consciousness is created not by abstract considerations but by the increasing capitalist contradictions which we have in every country."* (P. 85)

If the workers in the trade union movement, the predominant sector of whom come from the industrial proletariat, cannot be won to class struggle unionism, which is a prerequisite to proletarian ideology as it has been developed by Marxism-Leninism, then the proletarian revolution in this country is "hopeless". This is the inescapable conclusion which follows from those who hold that we cannot revolutionize the existing trade unions.

#### THE LIMITS OF TRADE UNIONISM

Trade unions are the fundamental organizations of the proletariat under the domain of capitalism. They are the spontaneous outgrowth of the workers' collective struggles to obtain better conditions in the sale of their only commodity— labor-power. It is this fact that makes the trade unions extremely important to the development of the working class movement and necessitates the participation of communists in them. It is the spontaneous and inevitable character of the trade unions that makes them vital to the developing revolutionary movement.

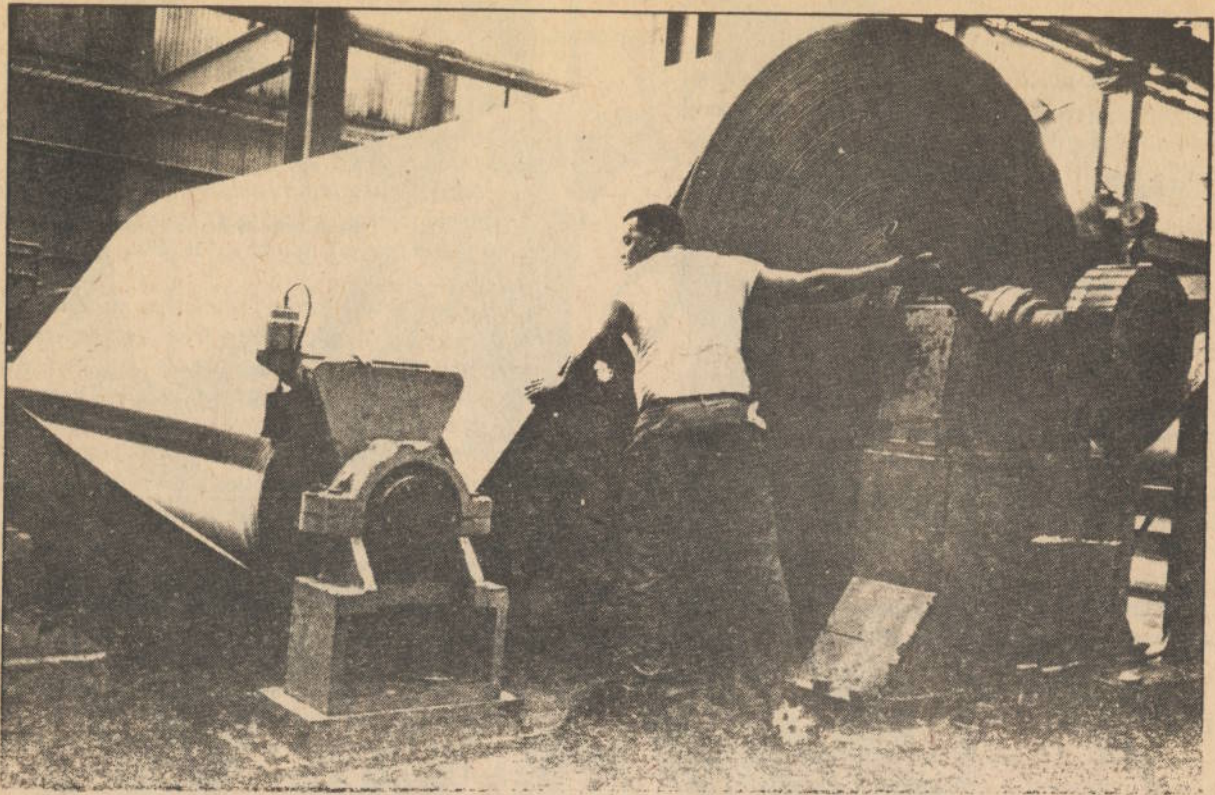
While the trade unions are indispensable to the working class and its revolutionary movement, they do have important limitations. An understanding of these limitations is vital to the development of a correct understanding of the role that the trade unions have to play in the class struggle.

The trade unions are proletarian organizations spontaneously developed by the working class to carry out the class struggle at its lowest level. They are organized for the purpose of the most successful pursuit of the narrow economic struggle for reforms in the conditions of the exploitation of labor. Thus the economic struggle for reforms in the conditions of exploitation is the trade union's overall goal. This goal also dictates the character of the organizations which are to carry it out. The character of the trade union is determined by the features of the economic struggle for reforms in any given period.

It is for this reason that trade unions reflect the disorganization of capitalist society in their very make-up. The trade union movement is thus industrially stratified, as is the bourgeoisie.

This industrial stratification is inevitable as long as capitalism exists, and it must be reflected in the trade union movement. Its reflection is caused by the differing conditions of the workers in each industry, which need particular attention. While all workers share some common problems, the proletariat in each industry has special problems owing to the particular character of the industrial process in its industry.

Since the trade unions aim at and are characterized by the economic struggle for better conditions in the sale of labor-power, they are not adequate to the popular tasks of the seizure of proletarian power. The seizure of power and the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship is the



highest form of class struggle. Its very character is determined by a struggle for power, by the struggle to alter the very essence of the capital-labor relationship. This highest form of the struggle for power thus has its own form of organization. In the advanced capitalist countries, that form has demonstrated itself to be the Soviet form.

Soviets are organizations of workers that come into being in periods of revolution. They are mass organizations which assemble all the working and exploited people in a given region, regardless of trade, industry, or occupation. Their tasks are to take control of the production, distribution and government of the locality in the name of the exploited masses. Soviets are thus embryonic forms of the proletarian dictatorship, the highest form of proletarian mass organization. (The party is the highest of all forms of proletarian organization, but it is a vanguard organization and cannot include the entire masses without compromising its vanguard character.)

Distinguished from the trade unions, the soviet form is the product of a revolutionary situation. It only comes to light in periods of extremely strident and rapid revolutionary development. And its character is determined by this fact. A soviet must at the outset be what Marx called a "totally expansive political form" in that it must draw together the entire oppressed masses in each locality in rapid order.

Trade unions, on the other hand, are the products of the non-revolutionary periods of the class struggle. They grow slowly, picking up a few thousand members here, a hundred members there. Their growth is voluntary and evolutionary in character. They cannot represent the revolutionary power of the masses.

Trade unions are, however, a necessary *prerequisite* to soviets, especially trade unions of the class struggle var-

ety. There can be no question of viable soviets except on the basis of a class conscious and revolutionary proletariat, steeled in the class struggle. The proletariat cannot develop to the higher levels of the class struggle without participating and learning from the lower levels. The proletariat cannot construct soviets without first transforming the trade unions into revolutionary class struggle organizations which consistently pursue a class struggle trade union policy. (*Note: this is not to say that each and every trade union must be revolutionized before soviets are formed. Nor do we mean to imply that trade unions do not have a role to play during and after the revolution.*)

#### THE TRADE UNIONS AND THE PARTY

The highest form of proletarian organization is the party, the vanguard communist party. In the vanguard party are gathered all the most resolute and conscious proletarian elements, the most advanced that the proletariat has to offer. Steeled in revolutionary struggle, guided by the most advanced theory, these dedicated professional revolutionaries seek to guide the proletarian movement to the dictatorship of the working class, and ultimately to communism.

The relationship of the party to the trade unions is the relationship of the leadership to the masses, of the most advanced sector of the movement to the broader masses in the movement. The party seeks to draw the trade unions close to it as it seeks to draw the masses close to the party. The party seeks to have the trade unions affiliate with the party, not in the interests of requiring every member of the trade union to join or otherwise endorse the party, but in order to bring about the closest possible alignment between the trade unions and the party.



To this end, the party requires that all its members in a given industry where workers are organized into a trade union to be active members of that trade union. In the trade union, party members seek to lead the economic struggle of the workers, all the time striving to raise the level of that economic struggle to the level of a conscious class struggle. The party members in the trade unions educate the workers to their class tasks and to the policy of the party in relationship to these tasks. Communists in the trade unions thus work for a close association of the trade unions to the party.

While communists work for a close association of the trade unions to the party, they do not seek to turn the trade unions into the party, nor do they require each trade union member to support the party. Communists recognize that such an approach would compromise the mass character of the trade union and make it ineffective. In order for the trade unions to be effective, they must draw under their wing all those workers who are willing to wage a struggle for better conditions in the sale of their labor-power.

Moreover, to require endorsement of the party as a condition of trade union membership would serve to drive a wedge between the party and the more backward sectors of the proletariat. The more backward sectors of the proletariat will be won over to the class vanguard not through endorsements and propaganda alone, but primarily from the leadership that the party provides in the economic struggle for reforms.

The party, then, seeks to utilize the trade unions as transmission belts from the class vanguard to the broad masses. It sees the trade unions as a great reserve of the party, as important organizations of proletarian strength. The party seeks to aid the development of the trade unions into broad, popular, class and class conscious institutions of the proletariat.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, allow us to sum up the position of the PWOC on the trade union question as developed in the initial section of this paper:

1. *THE TRADE UNION IS THE CENTRAL MASS ORGANIZATION OF THE PROLETARIAT IN THIS PERIOD.* This is true because trade unions predominate in the industrial proletariat which is the most advanced sector of the proletariat as a whole. Secondly, the trade union is a purely proletarian organization, which is a direct and inevitable product of the lowest form of the

class struggle — the economic struggle for better conditions in the sale of labor-power.

2. *THE EXISTING TRADE UNIONS ARE DOMINATED BY THE BOURGEOISIE.* The existing trade unions have class collaborationism as their philosophy, and the labor aristocracy and its allies in the labor bureaucracy as its leadership. As such, the trade unions carry out their tasks with minimal effort and minimal consciousness, objectively suppressing the class struggle. The trade unions are at present instruments for the subjection of the workers to the bourgeoisie.

3. *THE TRADE UNIONS MUST BE REVOLUTIONIZED.* The influence of the bourgeoisie in the trade union movement must be destroyed. To this end, the trade unions must be cleansed of their bureaucratic elements, of class traitors, of class collaborationism, of white chauvinism and other divisive ideologies. The trade unions must be made into class struggle institutions which carry out a militant economic struggle, pursue a revolutionary political struggle and aid the development of revolutionary fervor in the masses. The trade unions must become representatives of the advanced class in its relationship to the rest of the people in this country and to the working classes and oppressed peoples of other countries. The trade unions must thus pursue the policy of proletarian internationalism.

4. *COMMUNISTS SEE THE ENORMOUS POTENTIAL OF THE TRADE UNIONS WHILE NOT IGNORING THEIR LIMITATIONS.* The trade unions are of enormous importance to the class struggle. No true communist tries to bypass or shun them. To bypass the trade unions is to bypass the masses. On the other hand, trade unions have a limited historical role in the revolutionary movement. They themselves are not capable of taking power into their own hands. Nevertheless, the trade unions have an important role to play in the building of the revolutionary movement.

5. *TRADE UNIONS CANNOT BECOME CLASS STRUGGLE ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT COMMUNISTS!* The trade unions can only become consistent instruments of the class struggle under the leadership of the revolutionary communist party. Since at present this party doesn't exist, the central component of communist work is the struggle for the formation of such a party. However, such a party cannot be formed in isolation from the industrial proletariat and the class struggle. The actual struggle for the formation of a party is inevitably bound up with the struggle to build a communist current in the reformist trade unions.