

DRAFT SPARTACIST LEAGUE TRADE UNION PROGRAM

I. TRADE UNIONS AND THE STATE

The trade unions in our time can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining of the workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

--Trotsky, Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay, 1940

The period of the Vietnam war and the growing domestic and international economic crisis has ended not only the longest continuous boom in the reactionary period of capitalism, but also the "American Century"--the period of imperialist domination of the world by the U.S. The Nixon economic program, which is a declaration of war on both the American working class and the international trade rivals of the U.S., is a codification of the interests of the U.S. ruling class for the next period. These are chiefly that the American working class must be made to pay, by force if necessary, for the inefficiencies of American capitalism, so that the U.S. bourgeoisie will be better able to compete with its international rivals. This series of events has dispelled a number of illusions, not the least of which was the illusion growing out of the post-war boom that finance capital had been replaced in its commanding role in the economy. Also smashed is the illusion that the class struggle was dead, leaving the unions to a permanent position of peaceful, business-like pressuring within the system for piecemeal reformist crumbs, which would be endlessly forthcoming from the bountiful table of Americanism.

The trade union bureaucracy went through two basic reactions, one following immediately on the heel of the other, to the sudden declaration of the new reality. First came the shocked and frightened realization that the calling off of the "normal" process of collective bargaining--banning of strikes, abrogation of contracts, etc.--threatened the very existence of trade unionism as such, thus putting the continuation of the bureaucracy itself into question. This led to blustery cries of protest from most of the major leaders, although the head of the Teamsters union declared his cooperation immediately. Second, however, was an immediate attempt to find a new peace with the capitalist state, which led Woodcock and Meany, heads of the two major federations and the most representative spokesmen, to flip 180° in a matter of days and call for cooperation and for a wage control board which would have these bureaucrats as "labor" representatives. This merging of the unions with the state power to more efficiently discipline the workers, which is the goal of the ruling class itself, is entirely consistent with the social position and practice of the trade union bureaucracy.

The experience of the post-war period confirms the prognosis made by Trotsky on the basis of the lessons of the 1930's, that in the age of imperialism there is no longer any room for independent trade unions in the context of the capitalist system. Imperialism is characterized by the dominance of monopoly finance capital, which

concentrates economic control into giant combinations and eliminates competition at the lower levels, transferring it to higher, chiefly international, planes. This causes a tendency of the trade union bureaucracies to "grow together" with the capitalist state. Based entirely on the reformist concept of attempting to improve the bargaining position of labor through collective sale of labor power to the capitalists, and seeing no longer any room to maneuver as there was in the period of free competition, the trade unions are forced to bargain at the highest levels on the terms of the monopoly capitalists. These terms are harsh: the trade union bureaucrats must cooperate fully in the disciplining of the workers, and must actively support the predatory imperialist aims of the bourgeoisie. The trade union bureaucracy, for its part, having accepted these conditions, has no other recourse against the power of monopoly capital than to compete with the capitalists for the favor of the capitalist state itself. This reformist course only prolongs a meager existence for the trade unions; it is inevitably doomed to lead to complete state control over the unions. In this, the fascists invent nothing new when they militarily subordinate the unions to the capitalist state. They merely draw to its ultimate conclusions this tendency, which is inherent in imperialism, usually with the aid of the liberals. Thus trade unionism as such is not only reactionary but ultimately impossible. Only the program of revolutionary proletarian internationalism, aiming at the overthrow of the capitalist system itself, can ensure the independence of the trade unions, lead to the ouster of the traitorous bureaucracy, and enable the unions to really struggle for the interests of the workers.

Just as trade union independence has become less and less compatible with imperialist capitalism, so workers' democracy within the unions increasingly has succumbed to tight, bureaucratic control. As they are forced more and more to be the policemen of the bosses, enforcing the contract, side-tracking grievances, expelling dissidents, etc., the bureaucrats cannot afford to allow a free competition of different ideas and programs within the union. Some say that these tendencies mean that the unions are no longer unions, that they no longer have any "progressive" character whatsoever, or simply that it is futile to try to struggle within them against the bureaucracy; therefore, the workers' movement must be based elsewhere, drawing strength from the unions perhaps, but lying fundamentally outside them and hoping to by-pass the struggle against the bureaucracy. No conclusion could be more disastrous. Revolutionists of course prefer a free and open arena within the unions, just as they prefer bourgeois democracy to fascism, since this way it is easier to test out various programs in practice and win the workers on the basis of experience. It is not possible to choose the conditions under which we must struggle, however. In Russia it was necessary to work in unions and phony "factory committees" set up by the Czar's government in order to reach the mass of the workers; in a fascist country it is necessary to organize within the state-controlled unions, even if only in a conspiratorial manner. To abandon the struggle within the mass organizations of the working class, no matter how minimal their defensive, economic role has become, is a sterile, ultra-leftist course, a cowardly surrendering of the field before the battle is joined, and is incompatible with the Spartacist League program.

Just as the SL opposes sectarian substitutionism, however, it also opposes the opposite, opportunist deviation to which ultra-leftism gives rise. The Spartacist League always intervenes with its own program, never as the hand-maiden, informant or coattail rider of some clique or faction of the trade union bureaucracy. The SL opposes on principle the opportunist impulse to advance prematurely into positions of power within the union on the basis of combinations or alliances, however critical, with one section of the bureaucracy against another, whether in local union elections or on the plane of federations. Thus SL members and caucus supporters in a radical municipal white collar union in New York, whose own slate had been eliminated in the initial vote and faced with a run-off election between two candidates representing different wings of the bureaucracy, called for abstention while opportunists (black nationalists, CP, Workers League) supported the "lesser evil" bureaucratic choice. Similarly, the SL had this to say on the formation of the ALA: "The SL opposes the formation of the Alliance for Labor Action (ALA), the ostensibly 'progressive' breakaway from the conservative AFL-CIO. The ALA, initiated by Walter Reuther and based mainly on the United Automobile Workers and the Teamsters, is being sold to rank and file unionists as an organizational step toward militancy and, especially, to increasingly active black workers, as a break from "lily white" mainstream unionism. In actuality, this move is an attempt by a section of the union bureaucracy, especially Reuther, to mollify tremendous rank-and-file discontent, while establishing an outside base to challenge and simply replace the Meany bureaucracy for international leadership of the AFL-CIO. The split avoids the necessity for internal struggle against the manifestly insupportable positions and practices of the Meany leadership, leaving everything basically as it is, pending an eventual return. The 'liberal' Reuther could do a much more effective job for the ruling class than the rigidly anti-communist and conservative Meany in dealing with, for instance, the French general strike. A union leadership which was seriously interested in defeating Meany and Co. politically . . . , would have taken their fight to the membership inside the AFL-CIO and would not have left until physically thrown out. But such a process would have unleashed a force that would also unseat Reuther himself... We must oppose any attempts by other labor fakers, like the Livingston leadership of District 65, to lead their members into this fake-militant dead-end, and insist on a program of irreconcilable struggle to oust the entire Meany-Reuther-Hoffa bureaucracy." (Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League, 1 September 1969.)

The chief task in the trade unions, as in society in general, is determined by the historical crisis of proletarian leadership: to politically expose and defeat the current traitorous leadership, and replace it with one committed to proletarian principles. Thus while revolutionists refuse to choose sides in struggles between differing wings of the bureaucracy, they always support and seek to win over genuine movements of the rank and file against the bureaucracy, even though they may be politically very backward and insufficient. The SL, however, never adapts to such broad movements, but maintains its program and seeks to provide political clarity and leadership. Through transitional forms of organization in the unions, such as the caucus, the SL struggles to win the best of the militants to a full revolutionary trade union program.

The SL trade union program, like the SL program as a whole, is based on the experience and lessons of the communist movement, as codified primarily in the decisions of the first four congresses of the Communist International and the founding conference of the Fourth International, and most directly on the document produced by the latter, The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International--The Transitional Program (1938).¹ It is not, however, composed of a rigid orthodoxy and stale reiteration of the demands of the past, but on a living adaptation of the principles and central thrust of the historic program of the communist movement to the realities and class struggle issues of the present period. This entails an unbreakable adherence to the underlying lessons of the struggles led by Marx, Lenin and Trotsky, and a wariness lest any "adaptation" to "new realities" be a cover for a revision of the basic tenets of Marxism, but it also requires a constant, creative re-working and re-application of the demands of struggle, i.e., the methods by which the basic principled goals are to be fought for. Thus the call in the Transitional Program for a workers' and farmers' government is outdated by the virtual elimination of the small farmer as a social factor and the fact that U.S. agriculture is dominated by giant capitalist operations, so that the chief contradiction is between capital and labor, as in the rest of the economy, rather than between small producer and big capital.

The SL program does not accommodate to the current level of consciousness or mentality or mood of the workers, nor is it based on the conception pushed by all reformists, but also by many misguided revolutionists, such as Progressive Labor or trade union opportunists like the Workers' League, that the struggle can only be built around those demands which are capable of leading to immediate victories. It is to be taken for granted that the level of consciousness of the workers is an important tactical consideration bearing on the question of how the program is to be presented, and that revolutionists always support all genuine actions of the oppressed, however minimal or partial in terms of goals, to better their condition. It is precisely the task of the revolutionists, however, to point the way and provide leadership for the struggle to go beyond the level of minimum demands, which can never break through the pattern of accommodation with the capitalist exploiters, and raise the consciousness of the workers to an awareness that the only solution to the problems of their exploitation lies in the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist class and the building of socialism, through the political power of the workers themselves.

A transitional program is thus not composed of demands which "can be won" under capitalism. Rather, it is based on the application of aspects of a revolutionary, socialist program to the current situation in a manner that exposes the inability of capitalism to satisfy demands of the working class arising from the social crises generated by the anarchic capitalist system itself. The "realizability" of these demands in a particular instance depends then on the relationship of forces, which will only be decided by the struggle. It expresses the objective, scientifically determined needs

¹ For a full elaboration of the Spartacist program, see: Statement of Principles of the Spartacist League, Black and Red: The Class Struggle Road to Negro Freedom and Development and Tactics of the

and tasks of the working class in its attempt to deal with the present situation in a truly revolutionary way. It is only upon this course that permanent gains and real victories, victories which bring the ultimate goal of socialism closer, by raising the level of struggle, can be attained.

The trade union program is never a comprehensive program for the class as a whole. In addition, because of the pressure of day-to-day struggles, trade union cadre are particularly prone to opportunist deviations. Hence it is important that trade union activity be closely supervised by the communist party. The aim is never merely to disseminate anti-capitalist propaganda among the masses, but to build trade union fractions that carry out the policies of that party in particular, as a necessary component of the struggle for leadership.

The Spartacist League expects and welcomes the fact that such a program necessarily entails a constant state of tension, of struggle between itself and its environment, especially in the context of the labor movement. The SL rejects all paths which, based on a tired unwillingness to struggle, lead to an accommodation of its forces with the trade union arena. It is always necessary for the revolutionist to counterpose to the narrow view of the path of least resistance for struggle within the individual union the world-historical view of the interests of the working class as a whole and to counterpose to the temptation of illusory "immediate gains" the alternative of a long, slow base-building for the communist program. The SL seeks not simply to recruit numerous trade union militants into its ranks, but to build a solid core of communist cadre in the trade unions!

FREE THE UNIONS FROM GOVERNMENT CONTROL!

No Cops or Courts to Settle Union Affairs!

Especially in the current period of imperialist decline and renewed rivalries, the primary slogan must be for complete and total independence of the trade unions from the bourgeois state. All attempts by the bureaucrats to find new accommodations with the state in its drive to halt the class struggle and chain the working class to the status quo must be resolutely opposed. "Labor representatives" on government wage control boards have no power to "pressure" the state into giving the workers a better deal, since the state is completely the organ of the imperialist ruling class itself. Government price "controls", profit "controls" and labor leaders on the control boards are all part of a facade to create the impression of democracy, fairness and supposed "neutrality" of the state in the class struggle, while in reality the unions are being bound hand and foot by the state. This facade must be ruthlessly ripped away and replaced by the independent struggle of the workers to expose capitalist machinations, price-fixing, rent-gouging, etc., through the trade unions, price control committees, tenants councils, and other independent organizations of the workers. No labor fakers on the control boards!

Especially in recent years, the full implications of the labor laws (Taft-Hartley, Landrum-Griffin, etc.) have come to the fore. Thus the only action of the Nixon government on "civil rights" was

Spartacist League, upon which this document draws heavily. (ed. note: this point could be included in a possible introduction to the finished document).

to back the "Philadelphia Plan" of back liberal attacks on the blatant discrimination in the construction unions, which was an attempt financially supported by the large corporations to destroy these powerful unions (it is noteworthy that this was followed by the noxious efforts of sections of the bureaucracies of these unions to win Nixon's favor by supporting the war, which got them exactly nowhere, since Nixon then imposed wage-price controls prior to the general freeze on - the construction unions!). All laws which in any way seek to control, regulate, or in any way relate to the internal affairs of the unions are reactionary and must be opposed, since the state is never neutral, and will always use these laws to hamstring the left wing, destroy the ability of the unions to struggle, etc. The Landrum-Griffin Act, for instance, has had no effect on gangsterism in the union movement. Its principal effect has been to railroad Jimmy Hoffa, a tough and troublesome business unionist. It will be used even faster against a revolutionary leadership, but probably never against the Mafia!

The SL's policy has always been one of uncompromising opposition to government interference in the labor movement. We are the only tendency which has resolutely opposed the efforts of reformists and misguided radicals to deepen the involvement of the state in the internal affairs of unions by appealing to bourgeois courts to act "impartially" against corrupt and undemocratic union bureaucrats. Thus the SL opposed, while most of the left, particularly the International Socialists, supported a legal suit against Harry Bridges' ILWU under the Civil Rights Act in order to oppose discriminatory practices against a section of the ILWU membership. This appeal to the government only served to hand the bureaucracy a perfect hammer with which to beat and help isolate the left. This unprincipled practice leads to replacing the control of the unions by the "labor lieutenants of capital" with control by the capitalist state itself, completely by-passing the need to build a movement based on the rank and file capable of cleaning house in the unions and replacing the bureaucrats with a qualitatively better leadership.

FOR UNION DEMOCRACY!

For Rank-and-File Control of the Unions!

Second only to the demand for trade union independence from the state is the demand for union democracy, which assumes a more and more crucial character the closer the cooperation of the bureaucrats with the bourgeoisie becomes. Its realization presupposes the complete independence of the unions from the state and the overthrow of the internal regime of bureaucratic policemen of the bosses. It will only be won the basis of the awareness that there is no longer any possibility for a return to the free, democratic, politically neutral trade unions concerned only with the economic interests of the members, just as there is no possibility for return to the peaceful, business unionism of the "benevolent" bureaucrats who assumed that the membership was basically irrelevant to the running of the union. Political neutrality is dead. The only truly democratic unions of the future will be those in which a militant, highly organized movement, deeply imbedded in the rank and file and fully conscious of the social and political needs of the class struggle, smashes the regime of the bureaucratic labor fakers and places in power a leadership

firmly committed to the principles of revolutionary proletarian internationalism.

Thus while democratic unions are generally incompatible with the current period of monopoly capitalism (though it is still possible for isolated small unions and locals to permit a modicum of democracy for short periods), it is not true that a program of struggle based solely on the issue of union democracy is sufficient to lead to a break from the capitalist system's dominance over the unions. Caucuses and "left" oppositions with such limited programs inevitably adapt to the status quo and compromise with the anti-democratic, bureaucratic forces precisely because they shy away from the revolutionary implications of their position in order to unite with all those who espouse "democracy" in the abstract but oppose the more radical political course which is necessary to achieve it. Thus the attitude of the Spartacist League to movements such as the Abel opposition in the Steelworkers union (which is now in power, busy betraying the members in the true spirit of MacDonald), Yablonski of the mine workers, Morrissey in the National Maritime Union etc., is either to polarize the group along programmatic political lines, in the case that it embodies a genuine motion of the rank and file against the bureaucracy, or, which is more often the case, to oppose it entirely if it simply represents the interests of a section of the bureaucracy on the "outs" which wants to be "in".

AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND WAR!

For Labor Strikes Against the War!

The tendency toward national chauvinism and support for the imperialist designs of the U.S. ruling class, on the grounds that some workers at least would benefit--particularly the more skilled and older sections upon which the venal bureaucrats have always chiefly relied for support--has always been strong in the American labor movement. Now, however, it is more vital than ever to the bourgeoisie that the labor bureaucracy be tied to its imperialist program and war aims, since both are fundamental to the survival of the bourgeoisie as a class and neither is possible without disciplined and relatively docile work force. The day the working class rises in open rebellion against the imperialist policies of the government will be the day that all the plans and hopes of the parasitic international capitalists and their war-mongering "defense" industry allies will come tumbling down like a house of cards.

The war in Vietnam, like every imperialist adventure, was, from the first, part and parcel of the American bourgeoisie's war against "its" own people. Not only did the government send--and still sends--the working-class youth to die for imperialist goals in which they had no interest whatsoever, but it also robs the workers through war-caused inflation and bloated taxes and then breaks their strikes; uses savage "law-and-order" lawlessness against restless Blacks and other oppressed minorities; and shoots down in cold blood the innocent students who oppose it. In spite of all the atrocities, both foreign and domestic, the only reason that part of the trade union bureaucracy now tentatively opposes the war--after whole-heartedly supporting it until only recently--is because the American bourgeoisie itself, having attained some of its goals but not others, at much greater expense than it desired, became confused and was divided against itself as to how it should proceed.

From the very beginning, the Spartacist League fought in the anti-war movement and in the unions for an uncompromising opposition based on the class struggle, under the slogans, "Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops", "Turn the anti-war movement into the anti-capitalist movement", and "For labor strikes against the war". We were denounced as sectarians for asserting the elemental proposition that the war was a central issue in the class struggle and should be treated as such, not as a non-class question of "peace" which could be fought by uniting all class forces together under the banner of the liberal imperialists, who differ only tactically from the "hawks" and seek an end to the war only on the basis of the continued rule of the bourgeoisie. It is this latter sort of "opposition" which is of course favored by the "progressive" trade union bureaucrats, who, in this as in all things, only tail after their liberal allies. Their sole purpose is to present a "left" bureaucratic face to the workers in order to head off and contain the mounting rank-and-file militancy which is more and more consciously linked to the war question. The Spartacist League does not compromise with these fakers, but instead continues to struggle against them to tie in the political question of the war with the class struggle as a whole, particularly emphasizing the need for working-class action, i.e., strike action against the war and all other imperialist schemes of the ruling class.

The objective situation is changed now, however, since the current period is characterized not by the sole economic domination of the world by U.S. imperialism, which led to the U.S. "policeman" role in Korea, Vietnam and elsewhere, but by the renewed rivalry of the major imperialist powers. This puts the question of Vietnam into a secondary position for the American bourgeoisie, but in its place is the threat of a new world war for redivision of the world amongst the major capitalist powers. The bourgeoisie of the various countries are already preparing for this and have been for some time. This is the absolutely inevitable outcome of the imperialist rivalries; only the class conscious intervention of the proletariat can forestall it. An imperialist war flows directly from the predatory actions of the different imperialist powers, which more and more come into conflict on the world arena. Such a war will sharpen and heighten the class struggle but not change it fundamentally. Thus it is more vital than ever to build a workers movement capable of wrenching the trade unions out of the clutches of the traitorous compromisers who hand them over to any imperialist aim the bourgeoisie can conjure up, and steering them on the path against imperialism and war. Rank and file caucuses must oppose any and all impulses of the bureaucrats to compromise with the new imperialist goals, such as capitulating before the capitalist demands for protectionism which only passes the costs of inefficiency onto the backs of the workers (as in the shoe industry in New England), or generally going along with the Nixon program on "foreign" questions (the 10% import surtax, etc.) in exchange for minor concessions on the domestic scene.

Liberal lies about "defending democracy" are shallow cover-ups. The imperialist bourgeoisie fights a world war only because it must find a way to redivide the world in order to continue plundering it. The proletariat in such a war has no interest in the victory of any side; it has no country! The main enemy is still the boss at home; thus the defeat of one's "own" bourgeoisie is the lesser evil.

All countries, however, are not imperialist. The efforts of the backward countries to free themselves from the yoke of imperialism should be supported by the workers of the advanced countries (though never through the auspices of their "own" government). However, this does not imply the slightest political confidence in the bourgeois-nationalist regimes in these countries. Furthermore, the so-called "Communist" countries have a dual nature similar to the reformist trade unions. Because they represent historic and economic victories of the workers they must be defended against imperialism; at the same time, however, their bureaucratic leaders betray them to the bourgeoisie and must be smashed and replaced by the revolutionary workers' movement.

The SL calls for an end to the draft to hinder the ruling class from mobilizing the population to fight for its imperialist designs. In addition, we favor strengthening soldiers rights so they can resist being helpless servants of imperialism. We call for a serviceman's union, supported by the labor movement, to be organized on an explicitly anti-war and anti-imperialist basis.

FOR TRADE UNION UNITY!

For United Front Defense Against Capitalist Attacks!

Oppose Bureaucratic Divisiveness!

The announcement of the Nixon "freeze" program was a declaration of war on the American working class. The automatic reaction of all the U.S. trade unions should have been to unite and, pooling their resources for the fight, present a common front to the capitalist enemy. Instead, the bureaucrats acted in their usual individual, random manner, concerned only about the position of their own particular union organizations and even then, only about the security of their positions as privileged despots within those organizations. Their initial announcements of opposition were entirely bureaucratic, i.e., not based on any attempt to mobilize or even consult the rank and file. This, of course, is what enabled them to completely reverse themselves in a matter of days. Rank and file workers, however, saw the need to defy the government in a meaningful way and did so by maintaining their strikes in the face of Nixon's threats.

This behavior by the bureaucrats is the inevitable, disastrous result of the previous epoch of reformist trade unionism, in which all that mattered to the bureaucrats was the security of their own organizations (i.e., their ability to dependably collect the dues), and everyone else be damned. Endless jurisdictional squabbles predominated, leading in many cases, such as the printing trades, to the open herding and organizing of scabs by one union to break the strikes and seize the territory of another! Similarly, disputes between craft and industrial modes of organization, and between different crafts, have played consistently into the hands of the bosses. Generally, organization by crafts is more and more outmoded, especially since jurisdictional lines based on crafts that have some validity in one historical period very quickly become meaningless in the next, leaving trade union organizational divisions which only obstruct the effective organization of the workers. Furthermore, craft "pride" is simply used as a tool to divide the more skilled workers from the less skilled. This is especially harmful when it occurs within the

same plant, since it is often used to prevent the presentation of a common front to the employer. The Spartacist League calls for the united front against the attacks of the bosses on all levels and generally, in keeping with the principles and practices of the communist movement, oppose the splitting tactics of the reformists and trade union bureaucrats, from the ALA down to the phony radicals who are ceaselessly looking for one "lesser evil" bureaucratic faction to back against another.

— FOR THE RIGHT OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES TO ORGANIZE AND STRIKE!

Increasing numbers of under-paid city, state and federal workers are finding that they need to organize and strike in order to protect their interests. In the last several years there have been significant strikes by transit workers, sanitation men, postal workers, teachers, welfare workers and others. In the white collar areas, this development is fairly recent. Organizing drives and unions which result from them often have a more militant and democratic character than older unions and are therefore more open and important arenas for work by communist cadres. In many cases, these struggles involve the need to transcend a middle-class attitude of "professionalism" which flows either from the main characteristics of the social role of the stratum involved, as in the case of teachers, or chiefly from the need and desire of the bourgeoisie to erect unnecessary, consciousness-distorting barriers between the stratum and the working class, as in the case of welfare workers. In both cases, these attitudes are based on an obsolete relationship of class forces, and obstruct the increasingly felt need of these former middle-class strata to become proletarianized. True to form, the trade union bureaucracies, in all except the youngest union formations, tend to adapt to professionalism and rely for support on the older, more skilled sections, to the detriment of the younger and more militant layers. This tendency goes hand in hand with the betrayal of these bureaucrats and their sell-out to the capitalist state, which in this case is the employer.

Nowhere is the lack of "neutrality" of the state more evident than in the case of public employees. Not only is the state quite comfortable in the role of capitalist employer, but it unabashedly uses every resource at its command to deny its employees the right to organize and strike. Because of this, strike struggles have been greatly sharpened. In two major cities, San Francisco and New York, virtual general strikes, led by the newer public employee sectors, were deflected by the sell-out betrayals of the union bureaucrats. The bourgeoisie particularly fears labor militancy on the part of the public employees, because these struggles have an almost automatic political and generalizing character about them, and because they strike at the heart of the system, by paralyzing the general staff of the ruling class. It is all the more important, therefore, for the revolutionists to involve themselves in these struggles and bring pressure to bear wherever possible throughout the labor movement for support to the public employees.

It should be taken for granted that cops, FBI agents, military police, professional officers, etc., are not part of the labor movement, but rather are the voluntary, conscious agents of the ruling class in its struggle against the workers, just as plant managers and departmental supervisors, while they may be salaried "employees"

are not workers because they are fundamentally on the other side of the class line. Cops particularly are increasingly conscious of their role as the core of the capitalists' repressive apparatus, as the strike of New York City policemen showed. The SL, unlike opportunist political bandits like the Workers League, does not take sides in an internal dispute within the repressive apparatus of the bosses.

ORGANIZE FOR WORKERS' ARMED SELF DEFENSE!

In the present period the class struggle will tend to become more violent as it heads toward the ultimate showdown between capital and labor. The danger of fascism, i.e., the resort to direct military role of the capitalist class to destroy the labor movement, will once again become imminent. The tendency of the trade union bureaucracy to physically repress dissidents within the unions will increase. Already we have seen what the bourgeois state is willing to do to anyone who dares oppose it, in the treatment of the Blacks and the murders of students. Only the power of the labor movement prevents the same rough treatment of it at this time. The nationwide postal wildcat strike showed how quickly the government will call out the troops to break a strike when it has to, and the Newark teachers strike, in which anti-union hooligans beat several NTU teachers and right wing black nationalists continually threatened pickets, demonstrated the potential for right-wing, anti-labor attacks. The right wing bands and military power of the state can ultimately only be defeated by armed workers detachments, who have the support of the masses of workers.

The first task, then, is to organize the defense of the strike pickets and meetings, etc., and to be prepared to defend the right of all tendencies loyal to the labor movement to exist in the union. Workers self-defense groups should be organized and, wherever possible drilled and trained in the collective use of arms. A new upsurge in the level of struggle, such as a general strike in response to government intervention, should be accompanied by not only the numerical increase in these units, but also their linking up throughout regions, districts, cities, etc. into a workers militia, as the only sure way to break scabbing and ensure the protection of workers meetings, press, etc. Thus is the way prepared for the full arming of the proletariat, which is a necessary part of the workers' revolution and the underlying basis for the workers' state.

Only with the help of such systematic, persistent, indefatigable courageous agitational work, always on the basis of the experience of the masses themselves, is it possible to root out from their consciousness the traditions of submissiveness and passivity; to train detachments of heroic fighters capable of setting an example to all toilers; to inflict a series of tactical defeats upon the armed thugs of counter-revolution; to raise the self-confidence of the exploited and oppressed; to compromise fascism in the eyes of the petty-bourgeoisie and pave the road for the conquest of power by the proletariat.

- Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International (Transitional Program).

II. TRADE UNIONS AND THE ECONOMY

Not only are the trade unions completely incapable, in the advanced period of capitalist decline, of remaining at all democratic and independent of the bourgeois state power except under the leadership of the revolutionary proletarian vanguard, but also, due to the declining rate of profit, and need for the imperialist bourgeoisie to compete on the world market, they are increasingly incapable of even playing an effective defensive economic role for their memberships under the present leaderships. Day after day the bureaucrats sidetrack or actively sacrifice local grievances on the altar of production; consign up hundreds and even thousands of their own members to the army of unemployed without a fight, so that some - the older and more skilled - may get some more money and a great deal of overtime; and bargain away all protections and provisions about safety and working conditions (speed-ups, etc.) so that the employers may make up many times over in increased production what they "lose" when the workers' wages advance to meet the rising cost of living.

These practices are the inevitable results of trade unionism, which has always represented only a minority of the more privileged workers and generally tended to ignore, amidst great pretensions, the rest of the exploited and oppressed. The trade unions have always catered solely to the needs of their own members (and this only partially), completely failing to recognize how this related to the needs of the rest of the working class, growth of the unemployed, needs of women, racial and immigrant minorities other than their own members, etc. The result has been the remarkable decline of the labor movement, to the point at which once mighty organizations such as the UMW and NMU are mere shells of their former selves, narrow-minded crafts such as the construction trades are literally being physically assaulted by the ignored black unemployed who are sufficiently desperate to scab on their more privileged brothers, and new production methods and pools of scab labor are allowed to continuously undermine the hard-won positions, job categories and organizations of the workers.

At the head of all this sits the union bureaucracy, content, fat and satisfied to draw the full implications of their policies as long as they may also be able to draw their tremendous salaries. They rest on an increasingly narrow base, however, as the recent economic crisis especially has revealed. The bite of inflation and the wide swath of lay-offs has cut deeply into the whole working class, white, privileged and high seniority (and highly educated as well) sectors in addition to the poor, unorganized, low-skilled and minorities. Trade union bureaucrats and certain misguided radicals to the contrary, the working class has no material interest in the class collaborationist, patriotic and pro-imperialist policies of the trade unions. This cannot be said of the "aristocracy of labor", which has traditionally formed the core of the trade union bureaucracy's base of support in the unions. However, this more privileged section of the working class, actively identifying with the interests of imperialism because of marginal material benefits, is limited to a relatively small group of the older, white, male, highly skilled workers and tradesmen.

Some say that because of the inability under imperialism of the unions to even act reasonably well as defensive economic organizations of the class, and concomitantly, because of the bourgeoisie's

increasing inability in crisis periods to grant even the most minimal concessions, that a minimal economic program which advances the class rather than falling backward, ("wages offensive") is transitional", and therefore sufficient, because it is impossible for the bourgeoisie to grant. As in the case of union democracy as a "sufficient" program, nothing could be further from the truth. It may be ten times more difficult for the bourgeoisie to grant simple economic demands now than it was ten years ago, but it is never impossible for them to grant concessions of this kind, even concessions that hurt, if it is necessary in order to help keep the labor movement on the path of bargaining with the bosses and away from the road toward revolution. It is precisely the task of the revolutionists to put forward a program which breaks with simple economic unionism, which hits at the causes of the crisis at its roots in the capitalist system itself, and which qualitatively reorients the labor movement in a revolutionary direction. The SL is never satisfied to merely ride along on momentary moods of militancy which, however massive and rebellious, have nevertheless not broken from trade unionist habits of bargaining for a better material deal within the system, but always seeks to push the struggle further, onto the plane of political and revolutionary consciousness.

CONTROL PRICES, NOT WAGES!

Smash the Wage Freeze!

The liberal piper pipers of the bourgeoisie, who demanded wage-price controls, compulsory arbitration of contracts, no membership ratification of contracts, etc., since the end of the post-war boom, all in the name of "fighting inflation and unemployment", got what they were really after: "They enticed the trade unions into willingly accepting their own bondage; they aided the trade union bureaucrats in confusing the workers while the chains of government control were locked into place on the labor movement. The liberals did their job so well that even the bureaucrats were a bit shocked when the key on the lock was finally turned. One candidly remarked that Nixon's vicious "freeze" (which he happened to be opposing at the moment) was merely an accomplishment of what the Democrats had been calling for.

Needless to say, the wage-price controls are for the purpose of holding down wages as an artificial inducement to a new round of business expansion, and have nothing whatsoever to do with controlling prices. Likewise, the sleeping potions of the liberals and trade union bureaucrats have nothing in common with the program of the working class for fighting unemployment and inflation. The bourgeoisie blames inflation on the unions in order to prepare the public for the smashing of the labor movement, but the workers' militancy has merely been in response to the gobbling-up of hardwon wage gains by the rising cost of living, which has caused a drop in real wages. Now it is necessary, in addition to demanding an end to the wage freeze and strike ban, independence of the unions from all government control and no labor participation on the control boards, to call for independent labor organization to expose price and rent increases and to raise the demand for stringent control of prices of consumer goods and of rents, medicine, insurance, etc. Committees should be set up under the leadership of the labor movement, involv-

ing consumers, tenants, etc., to keep watch over prices, expose violations and agitate for these demands.

FOR A SLIDING SCALE OF WAGES AND HOURS!

For a Decent Standard of Living for All!

In addition to efforts under workers control to curb price increases, revolutionists must put forward the slogan of a sliding scale of wages and hours, which is the solution to the twin evils of unemployment and rising prices. The sliding scale of wages, which is identical to an unlimited cost-of-living escalator clause, means that wages rise in exact proportion to increases in the cost of living, while the sliding scale of hours simply means that all available work is portioned out evenly amongst the available workers, through the mechanism of shortening the work week with no loss in pay. (Any proposal for shortening the work week which eliminates the last point, as in Meany's call for a four day week, is an atrocious betrayal which slashes wages, passing the cost of curing unemployment to the workers.) We demand jobs for all, not guaranteed annual hand-outs!

Both these demands, the sliding scales of wages and hours, should be extended to society at large; in fact, they cannot be fully conceived of in any other context. The sliding scale of wages is the basic first step in ensuring a decent standard of living for everyone by keeping the minimum acceptable wage, which legally always seems to be about ten years behind the times (and at that always eliminates huge sections of workers, such as farm workers, who are apparently presumed to be sub-human) strictly in line with the rising cost of living. The sliding scale of hours, like the scale of wages, can be partially implemented in a single union contract, but its extension to society at large is vital if the hoarding of jobs by some workers at the expense of others is to be fully replaced by an equal distribution of the work, recognizing the right to employment for all workers.

ORGANIZE THE UNORGANIZED AND THE UNEMPLOYED!

For Strikes Against Lay-offs!

Responsibility for unemployment, or rather, for preventing it, begins at home: no union worthy of the name should allow massive lay-offs, whether contractually legal or not (*), to occur within its jurisdiction without launching a struggle of the most serious proportions. Lay-offs must be met with industry-wide strike action to force the re-hiring of laid-off workers.

The responsibility of the labor movement does not end there, however. "Under the menace of its own disintegration, the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the (*) Richard Nixon has shown us in what little regard the bourgeoisie holds the "sacred inviability" of the contractual obligation: he has single-handedly revoked the bourgeoisie's obligations at a single stroke. The bosses, of course, continue to insist that the workers continue to obey to the letter all of their obligations!

workers into chronically unemployed paupers, living off the slops of a crumbling society" - Death Agony of Capitalism and Tasks of the Fourth International (Transitional Program). It is one thing to despise the hard-core lumpen-proletariat, i.e., those who, having been unemployed and generally downtrodden by the capitalist system for so long that they have completely given up looking for honest work and have been turned from reasonable human beings into vile parasites: drug pushers, petty gangsters, pimps, thieves, professional strike-breakers, etc. It is entirely another to be indifferent about the process of lumpenization. The working class, for its own survival, must actively struggle for the right to employment, the only serious right left to a worker in a society based on exploitation. In addition, the trade unions have to continually seek out the new pools of potential scab labor and hard, non-union areas, such as the South, and commit all their resources to breaking into them and organizing the workers. The alternative is not merely that employed workers will increasingly regard welfare recipients as their main enemy, when in fact they are honest poor and workers who cannot work or whose unemployment benefits have run out, but that the entire labor movement will be swamped and destroyed by the army of the destitute, which will be unleashed by the capitalists. The ruling class will be the only victor in the war between the employed and unemployed worker!

OPPOSE THE SPECIAL OPPRESSION OF BLACK WORKERS!

Fight All Forms of Racial and National Discrimination!

American Blacks are not a "nation", potential or otherwise. They are a race-color caste, in the main fully integrated into the U.S. economy and working class, but forcibly suppressed and segregated into the bottom layers. However, they are not only the most oppressed section of the working class, but also that section which is most victimized, through ghetto life and permanent unemployment, with the process of lumpenization and forcible removal from the working class. The race question in the U.S. is thus intimately bound up with the question of the right to employment and the survival of the unions. Besides wiping out all forms of racial discrimination in industry and in the labor movement itself, and raising other demands relating to unemployment, etc., the trade unions must pay attention to the special struggles of black and all other racial and national minority workers (Puerto Ricans, Mexicans in the Southwest, etc.) interceding wherever possible to help eradicate the basis for these social divisions and create truly integrated class organizations capable of uniting all of the oppressed.

The up-grading of black and other minority workers into skilled job categories from which they are presently excluded is an important aspect of this task. As in the general case of ensuring a fair distribution of work, however, care must be taken here to preserve the hard-won gains of all workers, not sacrifice some for the sake of others. No worker of whatever color should be made to give up his job for another; rather, the work should be shared equally by shortening the work week at no loss in pay. While union-sponsored training programs, up-grading classes, etc., should clearly be made available to those who need them most, the SL opposes preferential treatment for any section of the working class based on race, and

emphasises instead the struggle against all barriers standing in the way of equal access to all jobs by all workers.

Impelled by both the legitimate grievances and oppression of blacks as workers, and by the mood of petty-bourgeois black separatism which has been prevalent in the black ghettos since the failure of the reformist-led civil rights movement to affect any real changes, the black caucuses formed in many important trade unions have shown a contradictory nature. Sometimes vehicles for militant rank-and-file struggle against the bosses and reactionary trade union bureaucrats, they have also been turned into organizers of black scabbing, dual unionism and simple union-busting. Thus a black caucus in an important municipal strike in Chicago captured leadership of the entire strike and won the backing of the white workers on the base of a class struggle program, while another in a New York city municipal union, as part of a power-play based on a separatist approach, sought in the bourgeois courts to have the union de-certified for failure to sign a no-strike pledge! Similarly, in the UAW, where black workers have shown themselves to be more willing than whites to engage in serious struggle and thus potential leaders in the fight for class demands, black caucuses have ranged from those that saw no difference between the company and the union and called upon blacks to stop paying dues, to one other that dropped all-black exclusionism and came close to adopting a transitional program.

If a black caucus is to play a positive role and not a reactionary one of further dividing the class, it must be built on the basis of a program which fights for the class interests of all workers, as well as against the special oppression of black workers. Such a caucus must lead a unified struggle to smash the union bureaucracy and re-direct the labor movement toward revolutionary unification of all the oppressed. This cannot be done by a caucus representing one section only, especially if it excludes others from its ranks solely on the basis of race. The basis for judgment of a caucus, however, especially in the initial stages, is its political program (which includes its actions as well as its words), not its composition or initial basis of support. A black caucus with a class struggle program can play a transitional role in the unions, representing the special needs of black workers in the struggle against discrimination, unemployment, etc., just as any principled caucus is a transitional form standing between the trade unions and the revolutionary vanguard party.

The proletarian attitude to the race question thus has nothing in common with the petty moralisms of the bourgeois liberals or the non-struggle palliatives of the black nationalists, both of whom blame the white masses for the racial discrimination which is fostered and maintained by the capitalist system for the exclusive benefit of the bourgeoisie. Rather, it is based on the understanding that while the struggle for Negro freedom is more than simply the class struggle of black workers, nevertheless it can only succeed through the struggle for socialism to liberate all the working and oppressed peoples. The Spartacist League has no patience with the white-guilt liberal patronizers who despise the workers, applaud any phony with a black face, never criticize, etc. We say instead to the class-conscious black workers: the choice is up to you; either the futile path of petty-bourgeois separatism, leading inevitably to race conflict and genocide for all blacks, or the class

struggle road, which alone can lay the material basis for the final elimination of race hatred!

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE WOMAN WORKER!

The special oppression of women is the oldest form of social oppression and perhaps the most deeply imbedded aspect of class exploitation. The liberation struggle of women is a vital part of the fight for working-class emancipation, in the trade unions as elsewhere. Based in the institution of the bourgeois family, which is central to capitalism, woman's oppression pervades all of society and has always been an important question in the labor movement. Thus despite the early discovery by the capitalists of women and children as sources of cheap factory labor, it has always been more important to the bosses to maintain religion and the family as schools for docility, submissiveness and superstition among the workers than to sponsor alternatives which would have freed women to play a greater role in the labor force. "In short, the family is the key social unit for the maintenance of capitalism: the worker's family by which the labor force is reproduced, the capitalists by which his property (i.e., the congealed life blood of the workers) is transmitted to his sons." -letter of J. Robertson, Development and Tactics of the Spartacist League, p. 39.

The economic aspects of the oppressed position of women provide the most immediate benefits to capitalism. Whenever the bosses need to draw women out into the labor force, they use the ideology of male superiority to justify the super-exploitation of women workers - that is, women being paid less for doing the same work as men. After all, a "woman's place is in the home", "a man has the responsibility of supporting a family, a woman only works because she wants to." The lie is pushed that women are fit only for domestic chores and that therefore their labor is not worth as much as the labor of men. Women make up over one third of the American labor force, but the wages of the full-time working woman average only 60% of those of the average male working full time. Socialists must seek to raise consciousness, pointing out, for instance, that male chauvinism divides the workers, and that lower wages for women mean lower wages for everyone. In Britain, where unions have calculated that wages would increase 11% if women received the same pay as men, equal pay for equal work has become a major union demand. If ignored by the labor movement, and allowed to be steeped in religious and familial superstition by the capitalists, women can become a ready source of anti-union and counter-revolutionary forces; but as part of the labor movement, rather than being "fragile" or "helpless", women can wield workers power as well as men and play a vital and leading role with steadfastness and determination.

Besides raising the slogans of "equal pay for equal work and equal access to all job categories", the trade unions must fight for demands which tend to alleviate the social burdens of women as mothers and unpaid domestic laborers, such as free twenty-four hour child care, free cafeterias at the work place, paid leaves of absence for pregnancy, free abortion on demand, freely available birth control devices and information, etc. The trade unions should lead in setting up price control committees and other worker-

consumer organizations to fight for these demands, but it is important, especially for would-be radicals to note, that the core of the problem is the impossibility of replacing the family as a fundamental social union under capitalism. Thus trade union sponsored co-operatives, child care centers, etc., while they may have some merit in a transitional sense, are entirely secondary to the task of building an anti-capitalist movement of struggle which can reach out to and mobilize the great masses of women behind the banner of working-class power.

Special protective labor laws for women are discriminatory in a certain sense, since they exclude women from some occupations and appear to consign women to a special, "inferior" status. In the main, however, they are concessions which have been wrenched out of the capitalists through struggle, and consist basically of elementary human protections and rights. It is completely backward to advocate their removal in the name of "equality"; this inevitably means a worsening of conditions: the "equality" of oppression. While we oppose those laws that bar equal access to all job categories, the SL seeks simply to extend these basic clauses to men as well.

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHTS OF YOUTH!

Like the black and woman worker, the young worker is often the victim of a double oppression. Often forced out of oppressive conditions in school and onto the job market at an early age out of economic necessity, the youth finds most of the social cards stacked against him. The unskilled young worker, often with a family to support, finds it impossible to get a decent job with any promise of advancement, and must accept the worse, dead-end jobs at the lowest pay and with the greatest chances of getting laid off or fired. Thus it is that the brutal and de-humanizing life of the imperialist army, because it at least offers some economic security, often seems more attractive than the life of a civilian worker.

More often than not, apprenticeships and training programs, whether sponsored by unions or the employer, are used not to train but to provide the boss with a source of special cheap labor for as long as possible. Furthermore, the legitimate rights of seniority have, under the job-trusting policies of the union bureaucrats, been turned into an oppression of younger workers. Many unions allow the boss to hire youths, at low pay, and work them twice as hard as the older, skilled workers, and then fire them just before they are "qualified" to join the union. We demand an end to all probationary periods for union memberships. Furthermore, union regulations often permit various abuses of new young workers. This has nothing in common with protecting the rights of the older workers! Unless it turns its face toward the youth, the labor movement will literally die of old age, unless it is smashed first. Training programs must be strictly for training, under full control by the rank and file on the job, with trainees receiving full pay. The sell-out of the rights of younger workers by the bureaucrats must be broken: fight for the closed shop, union control of hiring, and no victimizations, firings, or lay-offs for any legitimate worker! Apply uniform standards of safety and working conditions, and apply the shorter work week at no loss in pay to accommodate all those looking for work.

The Spartacist League recognizes the vital importance of youth in the revolutionary movement, and seeks to orient these fresh forces into the struggle to revitalize the unions. As many of the older, more privileged workers surrender the struggle, it will be the younger and more oppressed layers who take up the banner. They have the spirit, courage and determination to fight and they see their enemy with the clear vision of youth. We are building for the future!

NO SECRETS! OPEN THE BOOKS!

EXPROPRIATION OF INDUSTRY UNDER WORKERS CONTROL!

The era of free trade and competition has been dead and gone for a long time, but the monopoly capitalism which replaced it has not only failed to eliminate the anarchy of production, but has carried it to a higher plane, concentrated & intensified the unplanned, convulsive nature of the economy and posed the inevitability of crises and depressions of undreamed of, international magnitude. With this has gradually come the awareness on the part of almost all capitalist politicians of the need for controls on the economy of some kind or another. Thus the cold war "defense" budget, carefully turned on and off like a spigot by high level capitalist "planners," was the mechanism by which the post-war boom was maintained, and liberal and conservative alike now applaud Nixon's wage freeze and "special" hand-outs (Lockheed).

The question, of course, is who controls. When workers raise defensive, economic demands, the capitalists say, "That is inflationary," "This is too extravagant," "The economy can't afford that", etc. When the relatively more democratic unions hold discussions on their demands for negotiations, you can always hear the bureaucrats saying, "We can't possibly win this," "The money's just not there for that," etc., etc., ad nauseum. The problem is that neither the bourgeois politicians nor the trade union bureaucrats are the least bit capable, nor do they have the desire, to even know what can be afforded or not, let alone attempt to wring it out of the parasitic exploiters in spite of their howls. The excuse for the secrets of the corporations, that they are necessary for protection from competitors, is based on the dead era of competition; it is a lie to cover up the real purpose of the monopoly corporations, which is to find new ways to bleed both workers and consumers dry in the interest of greater profits. They have no secrets from each other (interlocking directorates ended that long ago), only from society. Workers must demand to see the books, and to themselves oversee and explain to society the debits and credits of the economy, behind the scenes deals and swindles, and the unconscionable squandering of human labor that results from the pursuit of profit.

This first step toward workers' control must be accompanied by demands for the expropriation under workers' control of the key branches of heavy industry and central transport, as the beginning of the reorganization of production for social needs. This has nothing to do with the plans for partial "nationalization" of sectors of the economy by the bourgeoisie itself (heartily endorsed by the labor bureaucrats, who are always eager for new posts for

themselves as "labor representatives"), since the bosses' goals in such cases are merely to preserve a bankrupt section of the capitalist system by passing the debts on to the workers through taxes. When the bourgeoisie and bureaucrats call for nationalizations, our response should be: expropriation under workers' control with no indemnification!

At this point it becomes clear that the heart of the economic ills of society is that under capitalism, production is for profit, not for social use, and that the core of monopoly capitalism, the monopolies themselves and the banks, need to be expropriated in order to reorganize the entire economy, eliminating anarchy and waste. The banks are chiefly important because they already play a heavy hand in organizing, directing and controlling the economy, but they do so anarchically, from the point of view of maximizing profit rather than social production. For this it is necessary to pose the question of the expropriation of the bourgeoisie as a class through workers' power. Any other road necessarily means the loss of the gains of the workers so far, the turning of the worker-controlled industries into impotent cooperatives, at the mercy of the capitalist market; new attacks on the living standards and organizations of the workers, etc. Forward to workers' power!

III. THE TRADE UNIONS AND POLITICS

"The question of the relationships between the party, which represents the proletariat as it should be, and the trade unions, which represent the proletariat as it is, is the most fundamental question of revolutionary Marxism."

--Trotsky, Communism and Syndicalism

The trade unions by themselves are inherently an institution of capitalist society, being for the purpose of defending the workers against the capitalists. Incapable of organizing more than a minority of the workers and completely blind to the fact that the only successful defense of the workers involves an offensive against the capitalists, the trade unions are partial and unsatisfactory even in their assigned role. Left to their own devices, they are completely incapable of perceiving or acting in any way inconsistent with the continued existence of the capitalist system. They have been created or advanced only when thrust forward by the class struggle and revolutionary actions of the mass of workers themselves, as in the sit-down strikes which built the CIO; and even then, the trade unionist leaderships have at once sought to hold back the struggle and find ways to work within the system. Differences between the AFL and CIO very quickly became subsumed under the problem of competition for the allegiance of the Roosevelt government.

BUILD A LABOR PARTY BASED ON THE TRADE UNIONS!

The U.S. is the only major industrial country in the world which has no major party separate from the capitalist parties, claiming to represent the working class. The historical reasons for this situation include the role of the Communist Party in wedding an important section of the labor movement to the Roosevelt administration, especially in the period of the rise of the CIO, when independent working-class committees for political action were being formed, and

the CP's subsequent role as the "left-wing" of the Democratic Party. In addition, the post-war anti-communist witch hunt physically purged the labor movement of thousands of its more conscious and militant elements. The slogan for a labor party has been an important component of the Trotskyist transitional program for the U.S., but in most periods has had a generally abstract educational character because it did not correspond to any strong felt needs of the workers. The Vietnam war, rise of trade union militancy and renewed capitalist crisis has changed that.

The significant support for the racist, right-wing Wallace campaign among Northern ethnic white workers was both an example and a result of the utter disorientation of the U.S. left on this question. While many of Wallace's adherents, especially in the South, were hard-core reactionaries and bigots, many were traditionally Democrats, often former supporters of Robert Kennedy, and union members who were fed up with liberal pabulum and responsive to Wallace's "little man" populism. These discontented workers, willing to desert the two major parties, responded to high taxes and inflation by demanding an end to welfare "hand-outs" and to the Vietnam war through victory, reflecting in a racist way their own economic insecurity. Had a class-conscious labor party been present with the forces of the "independent" anti-war campaigns, a significant section of Wallace's supporters might instead have rallied behind demands which cut through the objective basis for racism: decent jobs for all and immediate withdrawal from Vietnam.

The struggle for a labor party based on the trade unions is inseparable from the struggle to replace the trade union bureaucracy with a revolutionary leadership. The bureaucrats are so hopelessly bound up in the mechanism of capitalist politics that the only answer they had to the obvious crumbling of the post-war liberal-labor coalition in the Democratic Party was to seek the favor of the reactionary Nixon government in the middle of a counter-revolutionary war and Nixon's mounting attacks on labor itself! To make as the main axis of one's tactical implementation of this demand the call that the bureaucracy form a labor party, as does the Workers League, is an opportunist adaptation to the bureaucracy at the expense of the rank-and-file struggle which is the slogan's only real basis. Some bureaucrats, faced with complete defeat, may join a labor party "bandwagon" to consciously deflect it, but in general, the labor party can only be built over the political corpse of the bureaucracy.

Some say that a labor party can only be an obstacle on the path to the building of the revolutionary vanguard party, since it will require such a mass upsurge to build it that the mass revolutionary communist party will be able to be built instead and anyway, it will just be immediately taken over by bureaucrats and turned against the revolution. This is a completely ahistorical conception. If an upsurge is powerful enough to form a mass communist party and pose the question of revolution, it will not simultaneously create obstacles to itself. Labor parties, like trade unions, are only created as a result of class advances to serve the interests of the class. The CIO was necessary, even though it was quickly taken over by bureaucratic leaderships because of the lack of a revolutionary vanguard party to challenge the bureaucrats. Later, in times of waning struggle or retreat, these formations can turn into obstacles

if their leaderships are reformist or counter-revolutionary.

Workers need their own party to defend their interests and test in practice the results of policies of working-class leaders and mis-leaders. Revolutionists must always fight for their revolutionary program and leadership, before, during and after the formation of such a party. Even if mis-leaders temporarily win dominance, such a formation will establish a framework in which the political leaders are directly responsible to the workers, who will be the ultimate judges of the leadership, rather than only to themselves, which means in practice to the capitalist system. In those circumstances we will struggle within for our revolutionary program. The formation of such a party in itself would be a qualitative step forward, since the working-class programs of the revolutionists would thereby have a class framework within which to come to the fore and be tested.

BUILD CAUCUSES, FACTORY COMMITTEES AND
SHOP STEWARD COMMITTEES!

The initial form of organization of the communists in the unions is the caucus, which is the nucleus of the alternative, revolutionary leadership for that union. It unites members of the vanguard party with those union militants who agree with that section of the party's program for the unions, making clear that it is not simply personal positions, but the program of an organized grouping which competes for leadership with the union bureaucracy. The caucus struggles for union democracy and rank-and-file control of the union. The caucus must expose the union bureaucrats as unwilling and unable to fight for the felt needs of the workers, and must transcend simple bread-and-butter unionism with its program of transitional demands linking proletarian class consciousness with a unified perspective of general social struggle against capitalism. Thus the caucus program is a full, not partial, revolutionary program for its arena, but it is not the same as the full program of the party itself, thereby enabling all those who agree with the revolutionary program for the unions to work together with the communists whether they agree with other aspects of the program or not.

In strikes or times of greater upheaval, caucuses can form the nucleus for the formation of strike committees and factory committees, which deal chiefly with issues relating to the normal functioning of the union, but which are often necessary simply to prevent the betrayals of the bureaucrats, or wage the shop floor struggles around local grievances, firings, work conditions, etc., which the bureaucrats never seem to have much time for.

Factory committees, furthermore, especially if they continue and grow, are especially important because they are an elemental, shop floor organ of dual power, i.e., they are the workers' organization for control over the work process and the factory itself in complete and irreconcilable opposition to the management of the bosses. They are able to mobilize the more oppressed and backward layers of the workers that the union ordinarily cannot reach. They are important and the idea of them should be raised as early as possible, for they form the fundamental basis for dual power on the higher levels later. Lacking them, the workers will be unprepared to seize the opportunity in a general strike or revolutionary situation to set up workers' councils, which are essential organs of

workers power on the national levels. It should be noted, however, that the caucus is not the same as the factory committee; the party is not the same as the workers' council. Factory committees, strike committees, workers' councils are organizations of workers power, which are essential at various periods for the workers' conscious organization and operation of their own struggle and their social and political conquests.

Despite the New Left's lack of interest in the labor movement, it is not surprising that current forms of labor radicalism reflect elements of New Left ideology. New Left commitment to militancy for the sake of militancy combined with a belief in the virtues of decentralization has produced a form of New Left syndicalism. The goal of New Left syndicalism is to break the shop floor from the authority of the international unions. The socialists' goal in the unions is not occasional defiance of the bureaucracy, but rather its overthrow to command the tremendous power of the organized working class for revolutionary ends. Shop floor militancy can be an important element of a left-wing oppositional movement, but only if it is put at the service of all-union, politically based caucuses which alone can provide an alternative leadership to the bureaucracy as a whole. The trouble with the American labor movement is definitely not that it is too centralized. On the contrary, it is too fragmented and a revolutionary leadership would concentrate the entire resources of the movement in support of previously isolated groups of struggling workers.

FORWARD TO A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT!

Revolutionists do not raise the slogan for a workers' government in the bourgeois-democratic sense, i.e., counter-posed to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Rather, it is raised as a means of exposing the false leaderships of the workers, by demanding that they break with the bourgeoisie and take the power into their own hands. In 1917 the bolsheviks demanded that the Socialist Revolutionaries (SR's) and Mensheviks break with the liberal bourgeoisie and take power, refusing, however, to enter their government or carry political responsibility for it. Since these were the major "socialist" parties, their refusal to break with the bourgeoisie and take power had a tremendous educational impact on the masses, who were class conscious, pro-socialist, but unsure of how to throw out the bourgeoisie and achieve workers' power. This experience doomed these false leaderships in the eyes of the masses as worthless, and other experience has confirmed that the parties of petty-bourgeois democracy (including phony "socialists": SR's, social democrats, Stalinists, anarchists, etc.) are incapable of leading the workers to power, that is, of breaking with the bourgeoisie.

"The central task of the Fourth International consists in freeing the proletariat from the old leadership, whose conservatism is in complete contradiction to the catastrophic eruptions of disintegrating capitalism and represents the chief obstacle to historical progress. The chief accusation which the Fourth International advances against the traditional organizations of the proletariat is the fact that they do not wish to tear themselves away from the

political semi-corpse of the bourgeoisie. Under these conditions, the demand, systematically addressed to the old leadership: "Break with the bourgeoisie, take power" is an extremely important weapon..."--Transitional Program.

The slogan for a workers government, then, is not identical to the call for workers' councils, dual power, or workers' power generally, nor is it contradictory: it is a transitional formulation for asserting the generally understood need for the working class to take power in order to expose false leaderships who are unable to act because of their ties with the bourgeoisie. Its application is equally valid in the case of Stalinist popular fronts, such as Allende in Chile, or trade union bureaucratic formations, such as the British Labor Party. The former requires the demand in order to break the cross-class alliance of the workers' and bourgeois parties, the latter in order to expose the bureaucrats in the role of front men for the capitalists, governing in the name of the workers only. In both cases, political support or responsibility for the acts of such a government is absolutely excluded. (In a popular front, no political support, however critical, is possible for the workers parties involved, since by seeking power in alliance with bourgeois parties they have fundamentally subordinated themselves to the ruling class. A reformist labor party seeking power independently, however, may be critically supported in the elections in order to facilitate the communists' intervention in the labor movement to challenge the leadership.

THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The incessant struggle between capital and labor, of which the trade unions are merely a part, can only be resolved from the proletariat's point of view by the revolutionary destruction of the capitalist ruling class and its replacement in power by the proletariat itself. For this the workers need a revolutionary vanguard party to take up, lead and organize the struggle from the points at which the trade unions leave off. Thus in order to run a strike in one industry, the trade union form of organization is sufficient in most cases, although the sharp eyes of the ranks, including special strike committees sometimes, etc., are usually required to prevent a crass surrender of the field by the cowardly bureaucrats. In a general strike in a whole city or country, however, many more tasks are required than the trade unions can perform: uniting the strike leadership into one central body, organizing the non-unionized masses of workers and oppressed behind the strike, developing coordinated armed self-defense against scabbing, etc., and organizing essential services such as food and other supplies, keeping the hospitals running, etc. Organizing the insurrection, the centralizing of workers' control units, militias, etc., into a workers state requires even more the central leadership of an "active minority" organized into a party and prepared in advance, through struggle, to be able to act swiftly and correctly, at the head of the vanguard of the working class and with the confidence of the mass of the workers behind it.

Thus together with the need to overthrow the union bureaucracy and replace it with a revolutionary leadership is the even more

important need to build, and prepare consciousness of the need for, organs of workers power and a workers vanguard party. The party, in turn, must work in the unions in order to reach the masses of workers and prepare them as much as possible for mobilization for the seizure of power, so that if, by bureaucratic trickery and delaying tactics, elements of the trade union bureaucracy manage to cling to their posts right up until the time of the revolution and even past it, as it is likely that many of them will, their ability to disorient, confuse and hold back the masses will be reduced to a minimum. The bureaucrats, liberals, reformists and even phony "socialists" of all kinds will constantly try to obstruct the work of the party and drive it out of the unions, by red-baiting and other noxious tactics. They will claim, for instance, that the party, because its members hold discipline to the party higher than obedience to the trade union bureaucrats, seeks to destroy the independence of the unions by "annexing" them to itself and destroying them. To this we must respond, "Trade union 'autonomy' means inevitably the victory of 'trade unionist' reformism, and thus of capitalism itself; therefore it is you who destroy the unions. There is no 'autonomy'; there is only the dishonest leadership of the pro-capitalist minority or the open leadership of the vanguard party!"

The trade unions cannot substitute for the vanguard party, nor can the functions of the two be artificially separated, the one "autonomously" performing its "economic" function while the other separately handles the political. The struggle for leadership of the class does not take place in a vacuum. The communists assume this leadership of the class not only by virtue of their militance in the class struggle, but also by consciously counter-posing themselves to the traditional leadership of the class: social democrats, Stalinists, trade union reformists. False leaderships represent the ideology of capitalism within the workers movement, and they cannot be combatted by circumvention. The very essence of revolutionary leadership is that it is built on the basis of struggle within the organizations of the working class for earned authority to lead. Only in this manner can the communists recruit the core of the proletarian vanguard into its ranks, and thereby secure the essential links with which to mobilize the masses. .

BUILD THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE!

The Spartacist League, while not yet a party, is the nucleus of the revolutionary vanguard party in the U.S. The building of the vanguard party in the U.S. depends in large measure on the ability of the SL to root itself in the working class, principally in the trade unions. It is for this purpose that the present program is elaborated.

At our present level of size and influence, the SL is not generally able to shape and direct major aspects of the class struggle. Therefore, the nature of SL union work is necessarily of an exemplary character, demonstrating in practice, although in a limited way, those policies which we will fight for when we can provide direct leadership on a wider scale, and at the same time, giving our comrades the experience and skills necessary to assume that role.

Just as redirecting the trade unions in the direction of revolutionary proletarian internationalism is the only conceivable way of wrenching them out of the service of the most die-hard reactionaries, so the rooting of the revolutionary communist movement in the trade union struggles in this period, through the SL, is the only path by which the historic crisis of leadership of the proletariat can begin to be conquered.

**FIGHT FOR REVOLUTIONARY PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM IN THE TRADE
UNIONS!**

SMASH THE TRADE UNION BUREAUCRACY!

BUILD THE REVOLUTIONARY VANGUARD PARTY!

BUILD THE SPARTACIST LEAGUE!