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## THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY

International capitalism is in the midst of a growing crisis. Throughout the capitalist world, there are high and uneven rates of inflation that contribute to international monetary instability; unemployment levels that show no sign of returning to "acceptable" levels even though these standards are being raised by the authorities; a quarter of productive capacity lying unused in the United States despite an ongoing war; continued speedup and pressure on working conditions in the effort to wring higher productivity out of the work force; periodic readjustments in the delicate international monetary system that fail to satisfy even the major powers; the threat of trade wars and tariff wars as the powers seek entry into each other's internal markets; and not least, the decline in the quality of human life, especially the urban crisis exacerbated by the deterioration in public services, and the threat of ecological destruction hanging over the world.

Most of these ills have occurred before in the history of capitalism; many have occurred before at the same time. What is new is that they all are happening at once, even those (like unemployment and inflation) that are forbidden by the reigning economic laws to arrive together -- and that every attempt to overcome one problem seems to worsen another. The effect of the crisis is magnified in the US by the collective memory of two decades of relative prosperity and stability that followed World War II.

The sequence of unexampled growth and stability of western capitalism in the post-war period followed by the recent stagnation is explained chiefly by the permanent arms economy. Although the US government had intervened significantly in the economy in the 1930's, it was only the massive arms budgets of World War II that brought the Great Depression to an end. The arms economy has been the only alternative to a new depression for thirty years. This is not to say that the permanent arms economy was introduced *for the purpose* of economic stimulation; once it existed, however, it developed a life of its own and could not be controlled by purely military considerations. But it could not be managed for purely economic purposes either, because of both military needs and its own inherent limitations -- limitations that reflect the contradictions of the capitalist system as a whole.



The arms economy succeeded in putting to use productive resources, both material and labor, that would otherwise have been unemployed. Using both direct and indirect intervention, the state enforced the process of capital concentration and centralization, so that capital was concentrated into large enough amounts at a high enough rate of profit to make investment possible in the capital goods industries. State intervention became necessary when market forces were unable to do the job automatically; the length of the Great Depression is testimony to that.

The stimulation induced in the arms sector spread throughout the economy because of the central role of the industries and corporations involved: they relate to all sectors of the economy, and their technological developments were generally applicable to other advanced industries. Although the costs of the permanent arms economy are distributed very unevenly throughout the capitalist world, the benefits were spread more evenly by means of US investments abroad and through exports from the growing economies of Europe and Japan to the US market. While after the war it was the devastated economies of Europe and Japan that invited investment, throughout the post-war period their comparatively high rates of profit served the same purpose – and these were due in large part to the costs of the arms economy for the US and Britain.

Because armaments are unproductive in the sense that they do not return into the production cycle as either production or consumption goods, the arms economy is a drain on surplus capital and consequently on new investment. One effect of this is that the capital drain from the most capital intensive industries restrains potential capital expansion and thereby also restrains the potential decline in the rate of profit. In addition, the continual need to replace obsolete arms provides a floor to the level of production in the capital goods industries, since the arms industry is the most sophisticated, the most competitive internationally, and thus the most rapidly advancing of all. Both of these factors combine to stretch out the business cycle and dampen its slumps, since the threat of overproduction and the fall in the rate of profit are both restrained.

On the other hand, the drain of surplus value into non-productive uses reduces the amount of surplus available to productive industries, and consequently represents a reduction in the overall rate of profit. This stifling of potential growth has contributed to a decrease in the relative size of the arms budgets since the 1950's. It has also led to a high rate of inflation, since business finds raising prices to be the solution of least resistance when faced with a decline in profits.

The limitations of the permanent arms economy as a stabilizer are accentuated by its growing capital intensity. As armaments become more sophisticated, the arms budgets sop up less unemployment per dollar spent and lose touch with the technological needs of the economy as a whole. The predominant international role of US industry and the dollar led to the spread of inflation, and as the burden of the arms economy increased, the US has tried to export the costs of the permanent arms economy and the consequent stagnation as well: hence the New Economic Policy.

Twenty years after the permanent arms economy began, its relative size is declining and its benefits have begun to wear off. The earliest indication of the crisis was the decay in public services, due to the pressure on other forms of government spending by the size of the arms budgets. By the late 1960's, capitalism was faced once again with its periodic dilemma of unprofitability and overproduction; in a word, stagnation.

The Vietnam War was superimposed on the arms economy and had mixed economic effects. It raised the total arms budget and thereby swelled the capital drain, so inflationary tendencies accelerated. But the technically sophisticated sector of the arms budget declined in favor of more traditional war production, thus reversing the permanent arms economy's declining effect on unemployment and reducing its contribution to the welfare of the most advanced and dominant corporations. As the US troop involvement in Indochina diminishes but the war remains and even becomes more expensive, the war's effect on the economy follows the pattern of the arms economy as a whole: the return of high unemployment and continuing high levels of inflation. In its economic effects, the war – like the permanent arms economy overall – could be only temporarily successful in holding off the crisis of stagnation.

Nixon's earliest economic policies were dismal failures. His "Game Plan" No. 1 was designed to stop inflation: federal spending was cut back and interest rates were raised in an effort to hold production down. Business was to be threatened with lower profits because of the declining production so that it would resist wage demands, and labor in turn was to be softened up by growing unemployment. Nixon did succeed in getting a recession: the Gross National Product went down for the first time in over a decade, and unemployment rose. But inflation was hardly touched, chiefly because business chose to raise prices to make up for the lower volume of production in the face of organized workers who insisted on keeping up with the standard of living after years of no improvement in real wages.

Game Plan No. 2, at the start of 1971, reversed No. 1. It called for rapid expansion along Keynesian lines, in the hope that high output and rising productivity would preclude further inflation. That hope fell through as well. The federal budget deficit widened, and dollars flowed abroad as the US interest rate sank below European rates. The US appeared to be incapable of controlling inflation, and the outflow of dollars weakened other currencies as well. The threat of further international imbalances, especially the first US trade deficit in this century, was the immediate cause of Nixon's New Economic Policy.

The N.E.P. was able to win certain concessions for the US from other capitalist nations in trade, tariffs, and currency parities. Domestically, the N.E.P. represents a significant advance in direct state intervention into the economy, in the attempt to alleviate the system's problems at the expense



of the working class. Wage controls in "peacetime" and official productivity formulas were introduced for the first time in the US, and other forms of state intervention that have already been tried elsewhere may well follow. Since the N.E.P. began, there has been some increase in profit rates but no improvement in unemployment and inflation, despite some shifts in inflation rates due to the price freeze.

The outlook for the present period is for a much slower rate of growth and higher levels of unemployment than in the past decade - a period of slow stagnation punctuated by a series of crises and recoveries. The low average profit rate prevents any significant upturn, and the arms economy at its present level or slightly higher can prevent a cataclysm. No solution to the present crisis that approaches the stability of the post-war period is foreseeable. A new arms race at a high technological level would in all likelihood come up against its negative consequences immediately, rather than after a 20-year delay, because of both the level of technology required and the international obstacles to smooth capital concentration. A new war at a relatively primitive level would have little effect on the structure of capital, not to speak of the political obstacles. It should not be ruled out, however, that the new possibilities of East-West trade might raise growth rates for a time beyond our current expectations.

If the bourgeoisie is to alter this picture significantly, what it must do is achieve the benefits of a depression without actually falling into one. That means major intervention by the state into the economy to concentrate capital, drive out weak industries, chasten the working class, and thereby allow profits to rise. Nationalization of unprofitable industries (or the formation of semi-governmental corporations), forced cartelization in competitive industries, heavy subsidies as an early step, internationalization of industries - any or all of these steps may be attempted in the coming period. The drive for increased productivity that is already in progress will of course continue.

The problems of the period for the working class will be the fight against productivity requirements, sharp economic dislocations in some industries and regions, and the steady or slightly increasing high level of unemployment - made even more serious by its uneven distribution, both regionally and against the oppressed sections of the class. Internationally, the US and other ruling classes may quarrel over who must first take on its own working class in order to attempt to break out of stagnation. The US has some leverage because of its hegemony, despite the decline from its post-war position of dominance, but its turn will come soon if not tomorrow.

## US POLITICS

The emerging crisis of capitalism has already had an impact on US society which can be seen quite clearly in the present

state of US politics. One of the most obvious effects, and the one that sets the context for the others, has been the demonstrated failure of liberalism. In a sense, one can say that the entire post-war period has been a test for liberal ideology and in both foreign and domestic policy it has failed miserably.

In foreign policy, the major arena of this performance has been the war in Vietnam. Held up as the way to "fight communism" without the risk of thermonuclear war and with only a limited military commitment, the war has escalated to the point where it involved full scale military operations replete with US advisers, ground troops, air force, etc. Yet, incapable of finding less than completely-reactionary social strata upon which to base its intervention, the US faced an enemy which had the active and passive support of the majority of the nation the US was supposedly defending. As the inevitability of defeat became increasingly clear, the hypocrisy of the US posturings as the defender of the Free World became more and more obvious; with the failure of "counter-insurgency" the whole structure of US foreign policy was undermined, and "our" European allies were given the opportunity and excuse to break from US hegemony in this domain. Meanwhile, at home, bipartisanship in foreign policy, the tacit understanding that the "outs" would not break the united front in the prosecution of the Cold War, has been buried (the Pentagon Papers incident was its epitaph) while nobody has produced an alternative approach to the "fight against Communism."

The failure of liberalism on the domestic front has been just as clear. The plight of blacks, latinos, and other oppressed minorities, the decay of the cities, and the ravaging of the environment are testimony to this. In the face of the fiscal crisis at all levels of government and the cutbacks in essential social services, there are few who will now speak seriously of the achievements of the "welfare state," while all the much-touted goals and programs of liberalism - integration, War on Poverty, etc. - have been shown up for the frauds they always were.

Replacing the bipartisanship in foreign policy is a new united front on the domestic scene; all bourgeois political figures agree on the need for government intervention to stabilize the economy through incomes policy. This consensus was not accomplished easily, however. A thirty-five year commitment to Keynesian-inspired fiscal policy on the one hand, and balance-the-budget economics on the other, do not die easily. Yet, after the liberals first raised the call for wage controls, Nixon, looking for something to replace his first two game plans, announced his New Economic Policy. The fact that the liberals are now calling for "profit controls" as opposed to the "unfairness" of Nixon's program should not blind us to

the fact that, in response to an economic situation that has severely restricted the options open to capital, they too have no solution beyond a direct assault on the living standards and working conditions of the working class.

Underlining the failure of liberalism has been a long term tendency toward the narrowing of the parameters of bourgeois democracy. As practiced in the US, with its bicameral legislature, direct elections at many levels, and the more or less open buying of candidates, bourgeois democracy allowed for a relatively direct and democratic decision-making on the part of broad sectors of the bourgeoisie and its hangers-on. Today, with the growth of government bureaucracy, the virtual disappearance of Congressional opposition, the atrophy of Congress, and the enlargement of the presidential prerogative (Nixon has governed by decree since August 15, 1971), the nation is experiencing a fairly steady centralization of political power. While the panic of those who see this as a step toward fascism may be disregarded, there should be no doubt that what is occurring may help set the stage for a strong man regime, say, a la de Gaulle (within the formal confines of the Constitution, of course), should that become necessary some time in the future.

On a more popular level, the crisis of liberalism is reflected in the break-up of consensus politics, the politics that gave rise to the "End of Ideology" and other such slogans. No longer do we see relatively broad and stable coalitions in which disparate groups unite to give their votes unquestioningly to a single political figure, machine, or political party. Nor can we say that a majority of the population finds itself in general agreement with the policies and programs of the leading government figure. The material basis for the New Deal and post-war coalitions, the ability to grant real concessions to disparate interest groups, has been undermined by the economic crisis, and, as a result, we find a proliferation of constituencies in various degrees of opposition to each other and chasing after a disparate assortment of political figures to give expression to their immediate concerns.

The first to break the post-war consensus were the black masses in the Civil Rights and later, Black Power and Black Liberation movements, which even when formally allied with the liberal wing of the ruling class were never quite integrated into the US political setup. Following the black masses in the middle 1960's, were broad sectors of students and intellectuals and others of the "middle class" that comprised the student and anti-war movements, while in the later '60's, third world minorities, women, and gays went into motion outside the political mainstream. Paralleling, and partly in reaction to, these was a general drift to the right on the part of sectors of the white workers, exemplified by the tax-payers' revolts, growing Wallace sentiment, and the anti-bussing outbreaks. With the exception of a relatively small section of the student movement and somewhat larger segments of the Black and Third World movements, however, these rebellions did not involve significant breaks with bourgeois pol-

itics. Yet their impact was significant. Even today, with these movements disoriented, in disarray or actually in retreat, many of their demands and slogans are still in circulation while the sentiment that gave rise to them and which they in turn organized has prevented any return to the passive, conservative mood of the '50's and early '60's.

Filling the vacuum created by the eclipse of mainstream liberalism has been the rise of a new "populism," exemplified on the one hand by the anti-Big Government, pro-Little Man themes of George Wallace and the "New Politics" refrain of George McGovern. In an attempt to capitalize on the widespread distrust of the government and "Establishment" figures and the disaffection over the deteriorating quality of life, these individuals attempt to pose as opponents of "the system" and leaders of mass movements. Yet devoid of any program themselves they can, as yet, only express the confused and contradictory sentiments on the part of their followers without being able to mold them into coherent ideological or organizational forms.

In the cities, the collapse of the liberal center has led to the decline of the political machines (Chicago being a partial exception) and the rise of a new kind of ethnic politics, based directly on the decay of the inner cities and the white flight to the suburbs and outlying areas. Mayor Lindsay of New York, for example, makes no effort to appease the alienated and harried white workers and lower middle class elements in dogged opposition

to him, instead contenting himself with maintaining his popularity with Blacks, Latins, and upper middle class white liberals. Similar situations are reflected in the rise of black mayors (usually backed by liberal ruling class elements) in major cities throughout the country and in the emergence of local and national political figures drawing their support on a more or less open racist appeal.

Basing itself precisely on this development is the conscious strategy of certain liberal forces who are attempting to recoup their losses and in the process stabilize the urban scene. Seeking to organize a coalition of black, Latin, and white "middle class" elements on the basis of a "radical" appeal, they hope to push through some urban reforms designed to ameliorate the most blatant conditions of the ghettos, streamline the city bureaucracy, and weaken the backward political interests that are tied to it, while financing such a program through the taxation (direct or indirect) of the income of organized white workers. While it is doubtful that they can succeed in the near future, the danger that sections of disaffected, semi-radicalized black, Latin and white youth can be mobilized to provide the political muscle to enforce wage controls against organized sections of the working class is a real one.

On the most general level, the political crisis in the US today can be seen in the malaise that is plaguing every sector of our society. In place of the patriotism and hopes (the American Dream) of the 1950's, there is disgust with the government and cynicism about the future. Instead of

the values paraded as pure "American" in the past -- honesty, fair-play, achievement, etc. -- there is barely concealed lying, blatant corruption, and general disorientation. This was reflected first in the young members of the more privileged strata (the student revolt, the hippie "movement," and the dropout phenomenon) who had the best of what capitalism had to offer and didn't like it, and in black and other third world youth who knew most of what capitalism had to offer and determined to burn it down. Today, it effects, in one way or another, every part of the United States.

At the top, this phenomenon is expressed in the leadership crisis afflicting the ruling class. Capable of producing political leaders who are, at best, mediocrities, it is forced to rely on its past reputation and threatening postures. In relating to its allies abroad it resorts to bullying and blackmail (most clearly seen in the negotiations over the international monetary system), while at home it covers its lack of perspective with bluster and delusion. As the deterioration of the US political system continues apace, and the workers gather their forces, the impact of this crisis will increase significantly.

Nor surprisingly, the ruling class has so far taken a rather cautious approach to the new circumstances in which it finds itself. It is not only blinded by its own mythology of the past 20 years (the American Century, the End of Ideology, etc.), but is also surrounded by advisers confused by the present economic crisis, and the changed international situation. As a consequence, it has not yet drawn the full implications of the new period and, in its majority, prefers to deal with the immediate reality it sees before it and to leave the more deep-seated problems to time. Nixon's apparent self-assurance and the ostentatious "decisiveness" of the N.E.P. cannot hide what is known to most international bankers: the August 15 moves were a belated response to a financial crisis that has been maturing for years.

This should not blind us, however, to the fact that "our" capitalists have some good reasons to be hesitant. They still have some maneuvering room economically (at the expense of their allies and of the system's future stability), and more importantly, they must prepare for a frontal assault on the American working class, an assault that will certainly provoke a powerful response. The fact that the workers lack national leaders of stature is, for the capitalists, cause for only temporary relief.

## THE WORKING CLASS

The American working class, in spite of its political backwardness, is exceptionally militant. Throughout its history, its

struggles, even over relatively modest and narrow objectives, have been fought aggressively and with innovative tactics. A major factor behind this militancy has been the lack of stark class lines in the United States, such as characterize other capitalist societies. The dream of upward mobility has had a tremendous impact on the attitudes of American workers (especially the foreign-born and their children). That this dream has been an illusion for most has been masked by its fulfillment, in times of prosperity, for a few, while the promulgation of the myth of equality of opportunity has made continued working-class status a badge of inferiority. The US worker, while less class conscious than his or her European counterpart, is less likely to accept his or her "place" and very prone to invest struggles with the content of a fight for one's rights as an American. As a result, militant trade unionist consciousness has been a fairly constant factor in the development of the US labor movement, surviving many setbacks, including those of the late 1940's and the 1950's.

The McCarthy period had as its major accomplishment on the domestic front the smashing of the New Deal Coalition. This involved more than rooting the liberal proponents of the Coalition out of the government and weakening the Stalinists in the trade unions. It also meant the elimination or isolation of all the militant elements that might obstruct the shackling of the unions to the foreign and domestic policies of post-war capitalism. The emergence of the post-war boom coupled with the reactionary moods fostered by witch-hunts, however, served to conservatize much of the working class, while rising profits gave the employers more maneuvering room with respect to the wage demands of the unions. As a result, the ruling class was spared the task of attacking the unions head-on; it was enough to continue to hound the political elements in the shops and to entangle the unions in the legal nets of Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin. The decisive confrontation between American capitalism and the workers, long expected by revolutionaries, did not take place, and no real test of strength occurred. True enough, the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, the split in the CIO, and the isolation and demoralization of the militants were serious setbacks. Nevertheless, the working class was not defeated, and its self-confidence was only diminished, not destroyed. The 50's and 60's saw the working class fragmented geographically, divided along racial, sexual, and industrial lines,



ted for the most part to the Democratic Party, politically conservative as a whole, yet still highly militant.

The strike wave we have been witnessing for the past couple of years, the biggest since the immediate post-war period, has been an obvious manifestation of this militancy. The Post Office witnessed its first strike ever, West Coast Longshore and Telephone experienced their first strikes since the late forties, and many other sectors (electrical, trucking, aluminum, auto, coal, and rails, etc.) were also plagued by walkouts. Yet despite this show of strength, the workers remain profoundly reformist, unable to conceive of alternative ways of ordering society and, by and large, committed to capitalism. And what follows, they still have tremendous illusions concerning the ability and willingness of the trade union bureaucracy to lead.

The reformist faith, however, is not unshaken. The gradual deterioration of wages since the mid-60's, worsening working conditions, layoffs, and rotting social services are not evidence of permanent prosperity, and it is increasingly clear that the American Dream is over. The defeat of the attempts to subjugate the Vietnamese and the inability of the ruling class to prevent the proliferation of radical movements has fostered a distrust of, and dissatisfaction with, the government. Meanwhile, the failure of Nixon's first two economic "game plans" and the likely failure of Phase II as presently advertised, can only bring into sharp relief the crisis of leadership plaguing the ruling class. In this context increased social tension and frustrated aspirations can only undermine the basis for the present reformist consciousness.

So far, however, with the exception of black and other oppressed-minority workers, the working class has moved primarily around economic issues, that is, to defend its living standards against the threats of rising prices and taxes. Despite the fact that there has been some tendency away from wildcats and toward more organized strikes, the workers' reaction has been parochial and apolitical, with only a few exceptions.

The N.E.P. can transform these responses. In the first place, strikes begun before August 15, 1971, and continuing past the imposition of the wage-freeze became, de facto, anti-freeze strikes. This has not been lost on many workers, both strikers and non-strikers, as they watched to see what impact they had. In the second place, the N.E.P. represents an attack on collective bargaining itself. With wage settlements limited by what are in essence state decrees, the actual bargaining process, such as it is, threatens to become even less meaningful, as does the right to vote anything but "yes" on the proposed contracts. Collective bargaining, something the working class has fought long and hard for, will not be abrogated without a fight, especially since now, unlike the past, there is no popular war to serve as a smokescreen for such a move. Finally, the N.E.P. as presently outlined is incapable of solving the deep-rooted problems of US capitalism. A fundamentally more drastic approach is required, necessitating a direct attack on wage levels, the right to ratify contracts, and the right to strike itself. Nixon's original talk of a strike ban and his inwok-

ing of Taft-Hartley in the longshore strikes are warning of what is to come.

How soon the ruling class begins its offensive in earnest is open to question. As it stands now, a short, shallow upturn in the domestic economic situation will occur if the international monetary system can hold together for a while, in which case the ruling class will be given a respite. But even if this happens, there will be increased inflationary pressure, minor successes of the N.E.P. notwithstanding, while even slight stabilization of unemployment levels will increase the workers' willingness and ability to fight. The upshot of such a situation, and of the N.E.P. in general, will be to expose to whole layers of the working class the role of the state, and to focus increasing attention on the political arena.

Already, the struggles of public employees have given us a hint of what is likely to happen in the next period. Since World War II, the growth of employment in the US has been paced by the growth in the public sector, resulting in a fantastic growth in the size of this sector and in the weight of public employees in the working class. This has been reflected directly in the labor movement; unions of public employees, AFSCME, AFT, etc., have been some of the fastest growing in the post-war period. At the same time, public employees have been among the first to feel the encroachment of inflation and rising taxes on their standard of living. As a result, public employees, including teachers, sanitation and transportation workers, have responded forcefully in a series of militant strikes in major cities around the country.

Moreover, urban decay and the fiscal crisis of the state have placed the struggles of public employees right in the heart of capitalism's emerging crisis, while legislation outlawing or severely restricting their right to strike has forced them to take much of the brunt of the ruling class offensive. Nor surprisingly, their struggles and the state's response are beginning to forge an understanding of the need to coordinate the activity of different unions, and to go beyond the limits of bread and butter unionism. The near general strike in San Francisco two years ago, and the bridge tenders strike in New York last year which raised the idea of a general strike, are harbingers of future developments. It is quite likely that public employees will continue to play a vanguard role, through the intensity and frequency of their strikes, the formation of rank and file organizations, and their role in future political movements.

One effect of the recent changes in the level and character of the class struggle has been a growing political differentiation in the working class. Most obvious to us, and very important to our work in the next year or so, is the emergence of an increasingly distinct stratum of advanced workers. At the present time, this stratum is quite heterogeneous.

One sector, probably most concentrated in the major industrial areas where there is a tradition of trade unionism, consists of older militants. Some of these workers, having been in or close to revolutionary organizations in the past, are political, and a few still consider themselves socialists. Isolated during the McCarthy period, demoralized by the conservatism of the working class during the fifties and sixties, and often confused po-

litically, they have begun to respond to the new situation, sensing an openness on the part of their co-workers, and to move to reestablish contact with each other in different shops and unions. Other members of this group of older militants, while not political in any real sense of the term, have been active in union affairs for some time and are beginning to realize that the new period requires more in militancy and verve than the present union officialdom offers. From our experience, particularly in TURF and the United National Caucus on a national basis, and in some local caucuses among the laborers, rail, and steel workers, among others, it is this group, both the politicians and the others, that has taken the lead in the organization and leadership of many rank and file organizations.

Another section of relatively advanced militants is made up of younger workers. Some of these workers have actually participated in the activities of the radical movement of the sixties, while many have been influenced by the movement milieu. On the whole, these younger workers are perennial absentees, and often move from job to job. They are also, in spite of some political awareness and experience, essentially apolitical, see the union together with the bureaucracy as an agent of the system, and consequently do not understand the importance of struggling within the union. Most, however, are not actually anti-union, and some are ready to follow the lead of radicals who can pose rank and file struggle within the unions in the context of a general radical approach.

If present high levels of unemployment continue, which seems likely, we will find many of these younger workers holding on to their jobs for longer periods of time and searching for effective means of struggling against the increasingly oppressive conditions in which they find themselves. As real opposition groups, often organized by older workers, begin to emerge in major unions, these younger workers are likely to be attracted to them, gradually at first, more rapidly as they prove real. The fusion of the anger and militancy of the young workers and the experience of the older militants will be a crucial condition of the growth of the workers' movement.

A third sector of this emerging militant stratum which should be mentioned here consists of young members of oppressed minorities, mostly black and Latin, and also, in some areas, women. From an active participation in, or at the very least identification with, the Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Asian, and women's movements, many of these workers have developed a distinctly political, and often revolutionary self-conception, actual organizing experience, and an activist bent. In some locales, organized black and chicano groups exist in plants or on a regional basis. Their political level varies, from primitive apolitical separatism through militant trade unionism to revolutionary socialism of different degrees of sophistication.

There is some indication that a few of these groups are moving toward a relatively sophisticated class orientation. In some cases, this involves the recognition that the groups must take a lead in struggling against the op-

pression of all workers in their respective plants, while continuing to fight against their special oppression as blacks and Latins. The JOB (Justice, Opportunity, Betterment) group in Cincinnati, for example, now conceives of itself as fighting against the discrimination of blacks by both management and the union, for the upgrading of blacks, the militant pressing of grievances, etc., and in addition, is committed to a struggle to "get this union (the UAW) back to the organization it was intended to be" (from an Open Letter to the Workers by Louis Smith, JOB chairman, October, 1971). In other cases, the political struggles within the movement of which they are a part has moved them to conceive of themselves as the "class" wing of the movement as opposed to the "cultural-nationalist." The Labor Committee of El Partido de La Raza Unida (a committee loosely affiliated with the Party itself) sees itself as dealing primarily with organizing Chicano workers into unions and into caucuses within unions, but also includes workers of various ethnic groups and collaborates with a wide variety of leftist organizations. (There are indications that this may no longer be true.)

In work situations in which there are no organized groups, members of oppressed minorities are among the most militant, are often ready to lead shop floor movements on an unorganized basis, and in some cases, will follow the lead of militants of different national, racial, and sexual groups, if these individuals demonstrate their ability to struggle against rotten working conditions, abusive supervision, etc. (This is further evidence of the possibility of increased multi-racial/national/sexual shop floor action, probably most often on the initiative of blacks and Latins, in the relatively near future.)

Finally, there are the Vietnam War veterans. Many of the vets who do get jobs will be leaders of rank and file movements. Their justifiable bitterness at the way the country they have "served" has treated them and their cynicism acquired working for a corrupt military machine will make many of them quite militant. At the same time, their prestige and the fact that management will find it difficult to impugn their patriotism (i.e., to red-bait them) will tend to thrust them forward as spokesmen for the ranks. (If the veterans' movement can gather steam, and if a pro-working class wing can be built within it, the possibility of the vets playing a militant and political role in the rank and file movement will be greatly enhanced.)

In addition to the increasing coagulation of this layer of advanced workers, the next immediate period will see a number of other significant developments. Already, the formation of nationwide opposition groups in the IBT and the AFT, the still halting growth of already existing caucuses such as the United National Caucus, and the organization of local rank and file groups (taxi, telephone in New York, laborers in Los Angeles, steel in var-



ious places, etc.) point to the likelihood of the proliferation of rank and file organization.\*

Whether any of these groups can become permanent and significant forces in the labor movement or whether they can move beyond a commitment to militancy and the democratization of the unions remains to be seen. The growing desire to act and openness to radical ideas on the part of the ranks points to the potential. The reality of wage controls, even with loopholes, can only stimulate an already-existing dynamic as pressure for a wage offensive builds up over time, and the necessity of a coordinated response to a government-backed Pay Board becomes increasingly clear. At the same time, even public relations rhetoric against the controls on the part of Meany, Woodcock, et. al. will secure a new legitimacy to the demands and actions of the militants.

The totality of the N.E.P. has focused attention on the state, the trade union officialdom, and the relationship between the two, and this is not likely to change, even if the N.E.P. collapses. Active, knowledgeable militants can increase their prestige as they prove capable of explaining the latest wage-control related events, and of providing some direction to the struggles against the controls. In many cases, management, confused itself by the complexities of Phase II, will commit a variety of blunders, which will give experienced militants opportunities for building the struggle. The changed attitude toward the N.E.P. (originally favorable or indifferent, now increasingly hostile), on the part of most rank and files, increased leverage for the militants and the existence of known rank and file groups will combine to enhance the size, strength, and cohesion of the militant stratum.

The growing pressure of the rank and file against the secondary levels of the trade union leadership is likely to have as its manifestation a growing conflict between the local and regional officialdom, on the one hand, and the international leadership, those closest to the White House and Pay Board, on the other. While an actual open split will not likely be on the agenda until the level and breadth of rank and file organization increases significantly, this conflict, sometimes open, sometimes hidden, may provide an impetus to union reform campaigns on a local level, which in turn may help to bring broader layers of the rank and file into motion. Mean-

\*In this area, recent developments have revealed the inadequacies of some of our earlier predictions. The scenario of rank and file caucuses which would link up on a regional or industrial basis, when capable of intervening effectively around working conditions in individual shops, has proven inaccurate. Instead, relatively small groups of militants from a variety of workplaces (in most cases, from within one industry, in special cases, from disparate industries) acutely aware of their isolation and uneasy about the social crisis, have sought to join forces and have focused on their unions as the arenas in which to fight and build their groups. The resultant regional, and in some cases national groups, because of their advantages in pooling resources and providing protection, have in turn stimulated the organization of rank and file groups in individual workplaces.

while, the increased tensions and instability will be felt by both rank and files and the bureaucracy, and will also, in the context of the economic and political crises the next period holds in store, further the politicization of the class struggle.

In general, we should expect that the class struggle will continue to take on a certain dual aspect. On one level, the productivity drive, backed by the N.E.P., will continue to find its expression not in significant new capitalization, but in more speedup, stretchout, rising rate of industrial accidents, layoffs, and deteriorating working conditions generally. These conditions will provide stimulus to more or less spontaneous job actions, fertile soil for rank and file shop committees, and will probably become the central focus of the latter's activity. On another level, the direct attack on the wage levels of the workers indicates that the wage struggle, far from receding, will increase its intensity and take on increasingly menacing proportions. The specific "mix" of these and other elements will probably be determined by the pace of development of the economic crisis, a rapid decline having a dampening impact in the short run, a more gradual one acting as a stimulus, etc. Exact predictions are impossible to make, however, and we would do well to be prepared for all eventualities.

Taking all things together, however, the US working class is quite unprepared for the coming period. A tradition of trade union militancy and an emerging militant layer in the shops point only to the potential of a coherent response to the ruling class offensive. On the other hand, the present state of working class organization, consciousness, and leadership, is such that a number of important lessons will have to be learned relatively rapidly by leading sections of the workers if the class as a whole is not to find itself seriously set back.

At the most fundamental level, organization is limited. Out of a working force of 80 million, less than 20 million are organized. And in spite of the fact that organization of the unorganized is a regularly paraded goal of most union bureaucrats and one which if only partially accomplished would be to the advantage of the officialdom, it is unlikely that significant strides in extending trade unionism will be made in the immediate period. The unity of the labor movement, that is, the fact that most organized workers are in AFL-CIO affiliated unions and that no rival federations exist, is unfortunately not much of a compensating factor. With local union leadership weak and shop floor organization limited, uneven, and providing little check on the bureaucrats, labor unity has served primarily to strengthen the trade union apparatus vis a vis the rank and file. Moreover, the lack of political organization, even of the most primitive sort, a more or less inevitable reflection of limited rank and file organization, has prevented the dissemination of the kinds of political and organizational skills that would have enabled the rank and file to organize where the bureaucracy refused to do so.

Reflecting the low level and narrow extent of working class organization is the narrow, parochial consciousness of the class as a whole. Class

consciousness as such, that is, the recognition of the common interest of those who must sell their labor power to live and reproduce, exists in only a small, scattered layer of the workers. Amongst the others, a vague, semi-populist consciousness can be found, which is usually intermeshed with various prejudices regarding race, sex, nationality, religion, and skills. The divisions within the class along these lines, while having their causes in the workings of capitalism itself and encouraged by sections of the ruling class and their representatives to suit their needs, are also perpetuated by the trade union leadership, which for the most part has found its social base among the fairly steadily employed white male workers.

A direct reflection of the fragmentation of the working class and its limited outlook is the attitudes amongst the organized workers toward the trade union leadership. Conditioned to a period of relative stability and (up to 1965) rising real wages, organized workers on the whole tend to accept the viability of legal trade union practice and its personification in the bureaucracy. This is not to say that Meany, Fitzsimmons, Woodcock, etc., are viewed as clean, upright men with their members' interests at heart. US workers as a whole, and certainly those who have actually seen these fakers at work, are too cynical for that. Yet, they do believe, given their lack of confidence in their own ability to build and maintain viable and democratic organizations, that the officialdom are the best qualified to lead and coordinate the wage struggle. And of course, the lack of an existing alternative leadership can only reinforce this view in the minds of all but the most far-seeing workers.

Finally, the direct alliance between trade union bureaucrats and the Democratic Party, made possible by the small concessions in wage terms that a relatively stable economy could afford to grant, furthered the conservatism of the working class in the past quarter century. The depth of the resulting illusions in the Democratic Party as the "friends of labor" is astounding. Even class-conscious militants, with years of experience and a nominally socialist ideology, vote for the Democrats as the "lesser evil."

The top levels of the trade union hierarchy, the present leadership of the working class, is, as we have amply described in our literature, a corrupt, cynical and conservative bunch. The past 25 years of prosperity and relative class peace have enabled them to remove themselves almost completely from the rank and file, toward whom they are suspicious and condescending, and has made them fervent believers in the superiority and permanence of capitalism as a social system. While there are significant differences among them, such as for example the differences between Woodcock and Meany, they have, as a group, evolved a more or less conscious policy of demonstrating their usefulness to the ruling class by disciplining the ranks and limiting their struggles, in return for limited wage gains for the ranks and the glories of being "labor statesmen." Little beyond bluster can be expected from this group for, even if pressured by the ranks, their actual ability to organize and lead (let alone win) mass struggles is limited.

On the local level, the scene is somewhat different. The leadership here is closer to the shop floor and cannot help but be aware of the discontent and uneasiness in the ranks. Even more uneven than the upper reaches of the hierarchy, this stratum contributes some of its better elements to opposition groups in the unions (such as UNC and TURF). While no strategy should be based on this, it is possible that this layer, mediating the pressure from the rank and file, may prove to be the specific vehicle for a leftward motion on the part of the labor movement in the next year or so. On the whole, however, until rank and file organization emerges on a significant enough level to pose a threat to the bureaucracy, the apparatus as a whole will be responding slowly and half-heartedly to the present and coming ruling class attacks.

The post-war period has also left its distinct mark on the state of rank and file leadership. During the late forties and the fifties, many rank and file leaders were eliminated from the shops and removed from the unions. Others, faced with the Red Scare and the general conservative mood of the times, kept their political thoughts to themselves and lost contact with others of radical persuasion in other plants and with the organized left in general. Still others, not victims of McCarthyism in a direct sense, took staff positions in the unions, putting their valuable skills learned in years of struggle at the disposal of the bureaucracy and furthering the depletion of rank and file leadership resources. Although the 60's saw the appearance of a new rank and file movement and a leadership grounded in the shop floor struggle, the direct ties to the 30's, the political vision, the élan, and the skills developed in that period have, in large measure, been lost. Today, the rank and file leaders are politically inexperienced, and with the exception of a few, unsophisticated.

It is a truism that workers learn from their struggles. Yet the lessons learned in past struggles are not necessarily adequate to the situations which will be confronting the working class in the future. Years of relative success in securing some wage gains, pension and other fringe benefits have tended to reinforce certain habits, ideas, and modes of struggle which will not be appropriate to the coming period and to the ruling class attacks, the first stage of which we are now witnessing. The illusion that the old methods of struggle, better executed or slightly modified will still work is a particular danger and one which socialists must work ceaselessly to expose.

Extensive state intervention in the economy is now, unlike the early thirties, an accepted fact; anti-strike injunction and legislation designed to shackle the unions will not provoke the ire of well-intentioned liberals, and for the most part the workers will have to fight for their rights unaided. Meanwhile, state intervention itself, and in fact the increasing stratification of society as a whole, gives the ruling class greater flexibility and decisiveness in the prosecution of its offensive. Already, the existing antagonism between white and black workers has been exacerbated by the manipulation of various levels of the state bureaucracy to which many blacks are tied through the welfare system; patronage, etc. The growing



reserve army of the unemployed, presently unorganized and increasingly bitter, represents a potential scab-force recruiting ground which may be mobilized if there is a significant deterioration in the economic situation. Present forced work schemes, which require welfare recipients to take jobs at sub-subsistence pay in state run institutions (jobs which are presently unfilled because of hiring freezes) are a hint of what is to come. In this situation, the importance of organized rank and file action, the limitations of legal trade union methods, and the necessity for working class independent political action must be learned relatively rapidly if the energy of the strike wave and the head of steam presently being built up are not to be dissipated in isolated wildcats, defeated strikes, and intra-class conflict.

## THE LEFT

Needless to say, the '50's had a devastating effect on the US left as a whole and, of course, on the revolutionary socialist organizations. Almost every tie to the working class was broken and the organizations were reduced to shadows of what they had been.

The radical upsurge of the sixties among students and specially oppressed groups, while contributing to a more radical climate, an increased awareness of the realities of capitalist society, and a lively interest in radical and revolutionary ideas among certain sectors of the population, nevertheless left a disappointing legacy. An entire stratum of potential revolutionary socialist cadre went through radical politics very rapidly and with the demise of SDS in 1969 and the ensuing period, have disappeared from view. Some, attracted to terrorism, have been politically and in some cases physically destroyed by their experiences. Others, somewhat better politically than their Weatherman colleagues, also became impatient with their isolation from other sectors of the society, turned elsewhere, mostly to the third world, for their inspiration, and are now, to the degree that they are political at all, quite miseducated. Still others, in many cases mixed in with this latter group, managed to develop the elements of revolutionary socialism, and are now scattered

in various groups, collectives, and what not, throughout the country, confused, and disoriented, yet possible recruits for working class and nominally pro-working class tendencies.

Of the self-conceived Marxist organizations, the Communist Party is the most significant, and from our point of view the most dangerous. After experiencing a disastrous decline during the fifties and a slow and very unsteady growth in the sixties, the CP is now in a relatively advantageous position. Many of the veterans of the student movement who managed to learn something about Stalinism will be irrelevant in the seventies, while others will be drawn to the Party because it appears to be a real organization, with money, contacts, experience, and some "real workers." Many young workers, including blacks and latins, as they begin to move in a radical direction, will be attracted to the name, the tradition (the real one they will never learn) and the public figures of the organizations, while the CP's present relatively militant and ecumenical approach may win it a new, relatively broad periphery. In general, the present leadership vacuum in the working class will guarantee them at least a temporary increase in influence in the workers' movement.

The Trotskyist movement, while formally in its heyday in terms of the size of the Socialist Workers Party and the proliferation of sects bearing the Trotskyist mantle, is in bad shape. Its major tendency (the SWP), having abandoned all but the label of pro-working class and anti-Stalinist politics, continues on its merry way, training its rank and file to become bureaucrats, deprecate the working class, and build the influence and careers of liberal democrats. The sects, from the Workers League and Spartacists through the Labor Committee, the Socialist Labor Committee, Spark and the Vanguard Newsletter, are too ingrown and sectarian to move the working class in a good direction or to be much of a force of any kind.

On the whole, then, the non-Stalinist left is as poorly prepared for the coming period as is the working class. Not only can we not expect a revolutionary party to emerge from such a swamp, even by regroupment, but it would be foolhardy even to count on intelligent, but limited leadership in a few areas.

## THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE U.S. INTO AN ORGANIZATION BASED IN WORKERS' STRUGGLE

This U.S. is currently in the process of attempting to transform itself from a tendency of the student and intellectual radical movement of the 1960's (with historic roots in the workers' movement to be sure) into a revolutionary tendency of the workers' movement of the 1970's. The process is already well

under way, and given the objective difficulties in carrying out such a transformation, we are doing well. Nonetheless, the success of completing the transformation is in no way yet assured.

The key to our transformation is a successful industrialization program. The industrialization of individual I.S. members is only one part of this process. It helps lay the foundation for the more important aspect of our industrialization program: the industrialization of the organization.

By industrialization of the organization we mean a very simple thing: transforming the I.S. into an organization which is attractive to workers who are in the process of becoming revolutionaries; an organization whose primary focus of activity is political work directly with individual workers and workers' movements both in trade unions and on the shop floor and around issues which face the working class outside the point of production; an organization capable of giving guidance and direction and support to its members in their shop floor activities, in their caucus and union activities, and in other forms of political work within the working class; an organization whose main concern is politically influencing, educating, and training workers; and an organization attempting to build and guide broad workers' movements and organizations of struggle while at the same time attempting to begin the process of crystalizing a genuine revolutionary socialist tendency within the working class.

This process of industrialization of the organization can be considered successful at such time as we are routinely capable of winning workers to revolutionary socialist politics, of recruiting, training, and integrating into our organization indigenous members of the working class: black and white, and Latin, men and women, young and old, with and without family obligations.

In attempting to carry out this transformation, the focus of I.S. external political work should become activities which bring us into direct political contact with workers and workers' movements and organizations. While this does not preclude all work isolated to other strata, such activity should consume a smaller proportion of our organizational life and our resources.

Diminishing our activities in non-working class arenas is not intended to belittle the potential significance we ascribe to these arenas. It is likely that just like with the women's movement, the gay movement, the ecology movement, the anti-war movement, etc., they will continue to raise and popularize important ideas and struggles, often going into motion well before the working class and on issues more advanced than the ones that large numbers of workers are prepared to support, let alone move on. They will also continue to serve as the vehicle through which individual intellectuals and others will move toward socialist consciousness.

These movements will contribute to the development of a revolutionary party and may provide a good number of its eventual cadre. But this

will only occur if the basis of a revolutionary party is laid in the working class, and particularly among industrial workers, the most concentrated and economically powerful section of the class -- the portion of the working class which experiences the capitalist relations of production in their most clear and naked form. What occurs, politically, among industrial workers, will provide the actual basis and thoroughly color the actual development of the revolutionary party. It is in this sphere our politics can have decisive historical impact, and therefore, it is in this sphere that we should concentrate our forces.

A genuine revolutionary workers' party will contain individuals from all classes and maintain activity in all progressive arenas. But it will be based in the working class -- the working class will be its natural habitat, its center of gravity, its social milieu. But we cannot conceive of ourselves as a miniaturized version of that party. In the coming period we must concentrate and focus our energies on the working class because that is where the key task lies.

The following are goals we will attempt to work toward as we undertake the transformation of the organization:

(A) We will seriously attempt to find ways to make the day to day industrial and trade union activities of working comrades an integrated part of the political life of the I.S. branch. Full opportunities for the discussion of problems, experiences, and specific perspectives should be established. Our goal is to accumulate the experience and to create both the mechanisms and the atmosphere that will lead working comrades to desire to turn to the branch for help, guidance, and encouragement.

(B) We should establish the goal of attempting to train every member of the I.S., industrialized or not, to be capable of doing systematic political work with workers, and to be able to do contact work and to recruit workers to the organization. This will require that even our non-industrialized members become fully familiar, in a very concrete way, with one or more industrial situations. A socialist who understands the workings and dynamics of the class struggle only as an abstraction, is incapable of influencing non-political workers who, to begin with, only understand that struggle in terms of mundane and empirical specifics. Before we can help workers learn from their experiences, and to reach generalized conclusions, we must first become intimately familiar with the kinds of experiences they have. Nor are we in a position to propose immediate tactics, or even strategies, until we understand the correlations of forces and the likely range of consequences which flow from various proposed activities. While we do not demand that each of our members take industrial jobs, we must strive to establish a membership capable of sustained and stable activity.

(C) We should strive to eliminate the tendency toward erratic, unsystematic, and undisciplined political work which pervades the middle class movements in which many of our members were trained. Involvement of non-industrialized members in industrial work in no way diminishes the

centrality or importance of further industrialization. On the contrary, we expect such involvement will stimulate and aid that process. While there are often good reasons why an individual member may not work a steady job, we should strive toward the time when we can expect from such members a steadiness and regularity in political work at least on a par to that which is required to hold a job.

(D) Internal education, systematically carried out, is becoming qualitatively more necessary now than in the past. When we existed as a tendency of an intellectual milieu, that milieu itself exerted a pressure toward individual study and often encouraged the intellectual development of our members. Individuals felt the pressure to study up so as to be able to combat the ideas of competing sects or to take on ideas which were in vogue in the movement. Opponents who quoted Marx and Lenin made members want to learn Marx and Lenin in order to have answers.

At the same time, a sophisticated understanding of Marxist theory is even more central to activity in the working class. More important even than knowing how to combat false radical and revolutionary notions, our members will be required to more directly combat bourgeois ideology prevalent among workers, and to be able to pose the revolutionary Marxist alternative. We will find countless workers casting around for answers to their problems and open to socialist ideas. But while in the superheated student movement, one could often get a lot of mileage out of rhetoric and posturing, in the working class we will be required to understand our politics well enough to patiently explain them and to answer questions going to the heart of the differences between a bourgeois and a socialist world view.

Failure to systematically carry out Marxist education for all our members, and particularly for new working class recruits, will, over the long haul, transform the I.S. into an organization of industrial militants rather than revolutionary socialists. An educated and self confident revolutionary Marxist organization can embed itself in a development mass workers' movement, and can transform that movement, or at least sections of it. Without a Marxist training and self-confidence, the organization will be transformed by that mass movement.

The political education of our cadre must be viewed as a task of the organization on a level of importance equal to that of industrial intervention and arena work. Nor is education only for new members.

No truly Marxist revolutionary party will be built until a mature contemporary Marxist analysis is reestablished. Workers must be won to historical materialism – just as much as they must be won to a political program before they truly become revolutionary socialists. The party must understand the world in which it exists and be able to point out what trends and developments in bourgeois and Stalinist society are centrally important and which are ephemeral. It must be able to provide an intellectually satisfying explanation and framework in which to place the mass of apparently confusing and contradictory events in the modern world.

In short, as the corrupt old social orders begin falling apart at an accelerated pace, confusion increasingly becomes the dominant state of affairs. Only a scientific understanding of society, based on the need for a revolutionary social transformation, can give coherence to these seemingly confusing events, can give self-confidence to the growing party, and can lay the basis for self-confident and decisive action. While it is likely that we will fall far short of our theoretical tasks for an extended period to come, the knowledge of this likelihood cannot become an excuse for complacency. It must be recognized as a serious shortcoming and as an obstacle that will have to be overcome if we are to succeed.

While I.S. organizational and political activity must be increasingly focused around our working class work, our involvement in other movements though small in terms of our resources is critical for the healthy development of a revolutionary working class tendency.

Not only can we expect proportionately high recruitment from these activities, but also our involvement in these movements will raise important political questions within the organization. Political involvement in these movements will enhance our ability to play leadership roles in working class struggles and will help fight the tendency toward parochialism that would result from solely industrial work in this period. Further, this non-working class political work can often provide an excellent bridge for moving militant workers to a broader and more advanced consciousness. The organization as a whole has responsibility for developing program for our work in non-working class arenas and determining in which our limited resources will permit systematic activity.

It is the responsibility of the branches and the national organization to see that the primary focus of branch activity is our industrial work and to see that the "hot house" and "exciting" issues raised by non-working class work do not dominate branch life. Branches must be organized so that there is solid political and organizational support for industrialized members in their specific situation, but also must provide for broader political discussions involving members in different industrial arenas as well as non-industrial work.

## THE SOCIALIST PROGRAM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SOCIAL PRESENCE FOR THE I.S.

Scientific socialists, as opposed to reformists and other wishful thinkers, take as their point of departure, in developing a strategy and determining their tasks, the objective economic and social situation. An accurate assessment of our tasks requires not only a clear picture of where the working class is at today, but also a correct estimation of the gap between the state of preparedness (or unpreparedness) of the workers and the requirements of the situation that confronts them. This



has as its prerequisite a correct understanding of the economic and social conditions of the country (the health of the economy, relative strength of the contending forces, etc.) and of the world. Only by proceeding from this can we determine the tasks confronting the workers and begin to develop the means of moving the struggle toward accomplishing these.

For socialists, the process of the concretization and systemization of our view of the objective situation and the tasks confronting the workers is, in large measure, the elaboration of our program. Our program represents our politics; that is, it is the concise, abbreviated presentation of our analysis, advice, and calls to action. It is what should guide and give coherence to our work, while its content and how we implement it will increasingly be the standard by which we are judged by the advanced workers.

Up until now, however, we have contented ourselves with producing general analyses and more or less eclectic agglomerations of demands which we called "programs." While such an approach is reprehensible, it did not seriously impair our work in this past period, insofar as it reflected and paralleled an attitude toward programmatic ideas present in the "middle class" radical milieu in which we primarily functioned. Had we been more active in the working class, the effect of this method would have been somewhat more harmful. Yet, our programmatic heritage, e.g., our commitment to democratizing the unions, struggles over working conditions, etc., would have given us something to go on. The nature of the 1950's and 1960's was, in general, such as to minimize the importance of a unified, coherent program.

Characterized by a general economic expansion and, except for the past few years, a fairly steady increase in the standard of living of the workers in the advanced capitalist sector, the period brought forward a fragmented and relatively muted class struggle. There was no head-on assault on the workers' organizations, living standards, and working conditions. In this situation, mistakes could be made; that is, individual struggles might be lost without such defeats necessarily stopping the working class as a whole. At the same time, reformist ideology, a logical outgrowth of fragmented economic struggles in the context of generalized competition and a conservative political climate, was solidified among the workers. The very situation that allowed significant victories to be won without socialist leadership rendered the question of a socialist program for the working class largely an academic one.

The nature of the coming period changes this. Under circumstances in which no significant expansion of the productive forces of society will occur and therefore in which no systematic increase in the living standards is possible, the dangers of even small defeats becoming setbacks for the en-

tire class is greatly enhanced. Since the ruling class will now be forced to fight viciously where before it could afford to grant concessions, the first impact of this situation will be a growing awareness on the part of the workers that the old methods of struggle aren't working, that the ruling class is not playing by the "rules".

This situation creates the possibility (and the necessity) of linking socialist ideology with the working class upsurge. The job of socialists - to describe the characteristics of the new situation; to explain the context, significance, and limitations of day to day struggles; to show what is necessary to win these, to resist the capitalist offensive, and to move forward - will therefore be that much more important, and the role of socialists that much more central. As a result, the impact of the socialists' program, a central tool in the education of the advanced workers and a means by which through them we can reach and mobilize the less advanced workers, will also be increased.

The formulation of program is therefore not only relevant but necessary. Clearly, there is a gap between what a program says must be done and what can actually be accomplished given the available forces. However, insofar as the program is a tool to help overcome the backwardness of the workers, it is inevitable, given the present level of consciousness, etc., that such a gap be quite large. Yet, if we are serious about our tasks, we must tell the workers the truth. The existence of the gap, then, only stresses the necessity of another job, how to make the program comprehensible to the workers and encourage them to struggle for it.

The nature of the period we are entering determines the basis of our program and its unifying thread. The program must embody a strategy for the actual resolution of the social crisis in the interests of the working class. This does not mean that for every social problem facing society we supply a detailed proposal for its solution. What it does mean is that the program should contain a set of demands plus strategic tactical and organizational conceptions which, if implemented, will mean a resolution of the crisis in the interests of the working class.

Socialists understand that the only real and long term solution to the crisis of capitalism (real in the sense that the working class and all humanity doesn't pay dearly for it) is the institution of the rule of the working class. We recognize that, at bottom, the cause of the crisis is the conflict between the means of production and capitalist property relations, the result being an inability to develop the productive forces of society, not the least of which is the working class itself. Only the rule of the working class, which consciously subordinates production to its needs, can free the productive forces and permit their all-round development. (It is this that constitutes the essence of socialism's claim to superiority over capitalism, and makes our appeals for workers' control more than moral ones.)

If, however, inscribing the word "socialism" under a heading "solution to the social crisis" in a program were sufficient to unite the working class and send it on its way to power, our problems would be resolved; we

would not need a program, a newspaper, nor a revolutionary party. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Socialism can only have concrete meaning to the majority of workers when the class struggle has reached the point where the working class confronts the capitalist class on a broad range of fronts, economic, social, political, and de facto, poses itself as an alternative to the bourgeoisie. At present, and this is the "normal" state of affairs, the workers' political inexperience, conditions of life, extent and level of organization, the relatively conservative political climate, impact of bourgeois propaganda, etc., make it certain that only a small (yet increasing) number of exceptional individuals will understand what socialism is and accept it as a viable alternative. Moreover, there is no guarantee that even if faced with the severest manifestation of economic crisis the class will spontaneously reach the level of struggle necessary for the emergence of widespread socialist consciousness.

To help bridge this gulf between the essential tasks facing the workers and their reformist consciousness is the task of the socialist program. Socialists must pose (and where we can, build) as steps toward the solution of various aspects of the crisis, a series of struggles which in their totality, point in the direction of socialism. The importance of the programmatic presentation lies in the fact that, among the broader layers of the workers, it can facilitate a collection of struggles which point in a socialist direction, without demanding a prior commitment on their part to that goal, while to the advanced workers, the conception of socialism itself can be rendered more concrete.

## PROGRAM

The core of the program is the following:

- I. Control prices and profits, not wages
  - a. Wage increases without price increases
  - b. Nationalize basic industry under workers' control, without compensation
  - c. Nationalize the banks into one state bank under workers' control, without compensation
- II. Tax corporate and finance income
  - a. For a steeply graduated income tax -- for a confiscatory tax on incomes over \$50,000 annually
  - b. No tax on incomes under \$12,000
  - c. 100 percent tax on war profits

III. For a guaranteed annual job and wage for all -- End welfare and forced-work schemes

IV. Jobs for all -- 30 hours work for 40 hours pay (sliding scale of wages and hours)

- a. End speedup; no productivity deals; humanize working conditions through workers' control of production
- b. Open all jobs to women, blacks, and other oppressed groups
- c. Equal work for women, blacks, and other oppressed groups
- d. Equal pay for equal work
- e. Retirement at age 60 at a fully adequate income

V. Reconvert the arms economy to rebuild the cities and the environment -- For a \$100 billion annual public works program for low-cost housing, better schools, free child care and medical care, and mass transit.

VI. Immediate withdrawal of US troops from Vietnam and all foreign countries -- For the right of self-determination for all nations -- Against imperialism East and West

- a. End foreign "aid" -- the subsidy to foreign ruling classes
- b. No trade and tariff wars -- international cooperation among unions
- c. Full right of expropriation without compensation
- d. Independence for Puerto Rico

VII. For the liberation of Black people and other oppressed peoples -- For the liberation of women

- a. End all forms of racial, sexual, and ethnic discrimination in all aspects of life
- b. Smash discrimination and racist practices in the union movement
- c. For the independent organization of oppressed groups to further their struggles

VIII. Strengthen and defend the labor movement

- a. Organize the unorganized
- b. Defend the unions against all attacks -- corporate, legislative, and physical
- c. Rank and file control of the unions

IX. For full democratic rights

- a. No infringement on the right to strike
- b. Free all political prisoners
- c. End the police terror against the ghettos. For workers' defense guards to protect workers' organizations and the black community.

## **X. For an independent party of the working class. For a workers' government.**

The above program is directed primarily against the attack on the living conditions of the working class through rising prices and taxes, unemployment, the deterioration of the cities, and the attack on the workers' rights to strike and organize. It is also, by virtue of the position of the working class in society, a program for "society" as a whole; the demands and the struggles they entail are also in the interests of the vast majority of the people of the United States. As such it can serve as a means for rallying sections of all oppressed sectors to the banner of the workers' movement, and should, therefore, be the basis from which we elaborate program for all movements and sectors we are involved in.

Consequently the program will also be an important tool in accomplishing what will be an increasingly crucial task: developing a widespread reputation and social presence for the I.S. and its ideas. As the crisis develops, every sector of society will feel its impact, although in various ways, and will witness increasing ferment within its ranks. Yet, our limited resources means that our ability to capitalize directly on this ferment will be quite restricted. Outside of the labor movement where a concentrated (relatively) presence will enable us to win a name for ourselves on the basis of actual organizing, our direct presence will be sporadic at best. We must therefore reach the broadest possible layers of the population in more or less indirect ways.

Our newspaper is the most important vehicle for this work. Capable of reaching a wider audience than we can directly contact, the newspaper should convey, in popularized form, our positions on all the major questions confronting the working class, our prognosis concerning the nature of the period, an outline of the tasks before the workers, and a strategy for accomplishing these. In addition, the paper should carry regular features of a more analytical nature on basic political questions (the need for a revolutionary party, the nature of reformism and the Popular Front), various aspects of labor and socialist history, and the developments in the economy. Finally, we must take on, in a more systematic way than we have up until now, the ideologies that have, or are gaining, credence in the working class, from mainstream liberalism, the populisms of McGovern and Wallace, to Stalinism and the ramblings of Meir Kahane.

We must begin to distribute *Workers' Power* in a more systematic manner. First and foremost is distribution at worksites where I.S.'ers are working, workplaces where rank and file activity is manifest, key plants in a particular vicinity, strikes, and meetings of workers' organizations. But we cannot leave it there. We must also begin systematic distribution at demonstrations, conferences, working class high schools, community colleges, and increasingly important, unemployment offices.

Where we can we must organize demonstrations around important political events, strike support groups, and rank and file labor newspapers. While this type of work is no substitute for direct shop floor and union

work, it can help us to disseminate our ideas and make contacts among broad sectors of the population. Especially as unemployment worsens and it becomes increasingly difficult to industrialize our people, we must be able to utilize various indirect organizing tools to establish footholds in workplaces and among sectors with which we would otherwise have no contact.

Finally, through conferences, debates, forums, and our theoretical journal we must actively confront the various left tendencies. We are not so large that we can afford to ignore the other socialist groups (even those that are smaller than we are) while they recruit and miseducate potentially valuable cadre. While the Communist Party and Socialist Workers' Party should be our main targets, the other organizations should not be entirely overlooked; in this period, even they will experience varying degrees of growth and will influence some number of serious people.

While for the immediate period, the type of work described above will have limited concrete returns, its long run impact will be significant. Aside from contacting and recruiting some of the more advanced elements of the various strata, we cannot expect to prevent the short run growth of reformist and Stalinist organizations. We can, if we address ourselves to the relevant questions, establish ourselves as a known and serious tendency with which these latter must contend. As the struggle increases, significant numbers of workers will go through and become disillusioned with various forms of reformism, Stalinism, and sectarianism. A widespread social presence will enable us to establish ourselves as a meaningful alternative to the organizations they have rejected and to the demoralization that might, without our presence, take them out of politics.

## **THE RANK AND FILE REVOLT - THE KEY TO OUR TASKS**

Essential to the successful resistance to the capitalist offensive is a growing unity of the working class. As unemployment rises, urban decay continues apace, and living and working conditions deteriorate, the potential for intra-class conflict of all kinds increases. The growing reserve army of the unemployed represents a potential shock troop of the bourgeoisie against the struggles of the employed and organized sectors of the class, while racism and sexism, the chief obstacles to the development of class consciousness, will constitute decisive weapons of the ruling class in its efforts to pit one sector of the class against another.



Consequently, our work in the next year or two must prepare the basis for and initiate the unification of the working class. Class unity must become a central concept in our propaganda and must inform and guide our practical work. This does not mean that we are urging the oppressed to cease struggling for their just demands or that the struggle over working conditions should be scrapped. It means that these struggles and our work in building them must be seen in the context of this overriding concern and that this must be clear to all workers willing to listen and capable of understanding.

Our work directly addressing the question of class unity will, for the most part, be limited to propaganda: our newspaper, pamphlets, leaflets, etc., and our on-going personal contacts with workers in the shops, caucuses, and study classes. This is not only because of the limited resources at our disposal, but also because the class as a whole will not be receptive to the ideas. To be sure, there are individuals and clusters of individuals who are receptive and we should make every effort to reach them. Yet, the working class has few organizational means, few instrumentalities, to realize in practice the conception of united class struggle, and as a result, the ideas will remain for most, and for some time to come, abstractions.

Laying the basis for the unification of the class, however, is in fact what our present practical work must be addressed to. The struggles now occurring in the plants (and in the unions) of basic industry are training the potential leading sectors of the workers' movement. The sensitivity of their industries to the oscillations of the economy, the nature of their work and organization will continually place these sectors in the forefront of the class struggle. Their ability to resist the capitalist offensive will condition the will to struggle on the part of other sectors of the class, while the organizations they develop will provide the foundation for future broad organizations of the class. In fact their strike movement and shop floor fights constitute the central thrust of the class struggle today and it is only by building on this that the struggle can be broadened and elevated. Finally, it is primarily within this sector that the selection and development of the future vanguard layers of the class (the layer of advanced militants discussed above) is taking place.

As long as the revolutionary socialist left is too small and disorganized to constitute more than a few nuclei and have contact with a handful of plants, the more or less spontaneous development of the layer emerging in this sector will condition the growth and development of the working class as a whole. Since the struggles of all the oppressed, the unemployed, welfare recipients, ethnic minorities, women, gays, etc. can only be given coherence and its participants integrated into the workers' movement through the impact and leadership of this sector, the degree to which this layer is educated in the necessity of class solidarity and, through its strug-

gles, learns to draw in, and seek alliances with, other sectors, will in large measure determine the quantitative and qualitative growth of class unity in the future.

Given the present level of consciousness, organization, and leadership of the working class and the state of the left, including ourselves, the key to our tasks in the immediate period is this emerging layer of militants in the industrial sector. The left organization that can influence, attract, and implant itself in this group can have an impact on the class struggle in the next period far out of proportion to its size, while for the present, its potential as a transmission belt between us and the rest of the class must make it the object of our closest attention.

Our job is to organize these militants and train them to become a coherent, experienced and confident leadership cadre. As of now, however, they are a fragmented, incoherent, and unself-conscious grouping. Their disparate sections do not recognize their counterparts, and their varied talents (the trade union experience of the older workers, the political understanding of the blacks, for example) are often frittered away in isolated grouplets and struggles. In addition, they suffer from the same illusions and prejudices as the working class as a whole, although to a somewhat lesser degree and, also, they lack confidence in the ability of the workers to organize themselves into a self-conscious political force capable of solving the economic and social crisis and remodeling society on a democratic basis.

Our first job must be the organization of relatively broad, stable organizational forms. At present, given the level of the class struggle, solid organization must be built at the lowest and most basic level, on the shop floor. Since our literature has already dealt with this question in some depth, only a few points will be made here. We orient to the struggles in the shops not only because they provide us with contact with the only fairly consistent daily motion in the class, but also because the factory floor is an area in which actionable demands can be fought for and won, broad layers of the workers brought into struggle, while confidence is developed, a base for higher and more complex organizational forms built, and support for a broad struggle within the unions organized.

This latter struggle must not be seen apart from the actual struggle in the shops around working conditions. In some cases, the two facets will be virtually synonymous as the struggle for an effective steward system or over the grievance procedure. In other cases, they will be more distinct. In both cases, however, our work will be valuable to the degree that it builds stable, democratic rank and file organizations, stimulates joint struggle by, and eventually unites, workers of diverse ethnic, sex, and skill backgrounds, and in general develops political and organizational skills. Its political potential is bound up with its effects in making workers aware of political developments nationally and internationally and in developing their ability to react to them in a consistent and political manner.

In a sense then, for the immediate period, the question of working conditions, layoffs, and the struggle around them is the key to our factory

work. It is here that the question of the emerging crisis of capitalism can be made intelligible and, to some degree, actionable to every employed worker. It is here that the drive for productivity will most strongly be felt, while its connection with political developments around the NEP and economic policy in general can be made clear. We must be wary, however, of making a fetish of the in-plant struggles; their limitations must be clear. Their prosecution is only one aspect of the organization of the advanced workers, a means by which we can make contact with and recruit the political workers, and a bridge from a narrow to a broader consciousness.

The process of the actual politicization of the workers (with the exception of the few we can directly recruit and/or educate in study classes) occurs only to the degree that the struggle begins to move beyond the bounds of a single shop or union local, to areas previously considered to be the realm of politicians, experts, etc. Links made beyond the specific factory, warehouse, school, office, etc., to rank and file groups in other workplaces and unions can provide, at a certain level of struggle and organization, the basis for activity that borders on the political (in the strict sense of the term), that is, that begins to confront the ruling class as it is organized in employers associations, chambers of commerce, local state entities, etc.

It will be through this type of activity, involving workers from relatively diverse sectors, that will enable the workers to broaden their outlook and deepen their understanding of capitalism. In the absence of these ties and the struggles they make possible (industry-wide campaigns against layoffs, broad defense campaigns to force the rehiring of militants disciplined for job actions, city-wide propaganda campaigns against hiring freezes, public service cutbacks, and rising taxes, etc.), it will be difficult to counter conservative tendencies among the more backward workers, such as identification with the competitive needs of specific employers (Frigidaire workers in Dayton who agreed to forego wage increases to prevent the threatened closing of the plant), racial hostility, antagonism between skilled and unskilled, employed and unemployed.

At the present time and for the foreseeable future, the broadening of the rank and file movement will most likely occur via two forms: (1) the organization of national opposition groups in the unions and (2) the emergence of regional rank and file coalitions. Of the two, the former is the most likely mass (relatively) development, since the trade unions, the only existing mass organizations of the workers, will increasingly present themselves as the appropriate arena for struggle. On the other hand, the regional rank and file coalitions, while slower in developing, will become increasingly important as rank and file activity becomes prevalent in the more backward and unorganized sectors.

The struggle to transform the unions into militant organizations of the rank and file must of necessity take up the demands for the democratization of trade union life. At the same time, it cannot be organized on the basis of trade union democracy taken by itself. This latter would only be

viable if the position of the trade union officialdom (and their resultant ability to hold back struggle) were preserved solely by their violation of democratic procedure in general. In fact, their entrenchment has been based in large measure on the acquiescence on the part of the majority of the rank and file to the violation of the democratic rights of, and the violence directed at, the active militants, while this acquiescence in turn was based on the rank and file's acceptance, by and large, of the wage policy of the officialdom and their cynicism concerning the possibility of changing the situation.

Now, with the growing politicization the present period is engendering, the possibility of mass struggle against the bureaucracy is vastly increased. As long as the trade union hierarchy was capable of delivering on some of the demands of the rank and file, the militants could be isolated and defeated. Now that the post-war prosperity is gone, the ability of the bureaucracy to deliver wage gains will be severely limited, creating the potential for a mobilization of the mass of the rank and file, even with their low level of consciousness, against the bureaucrats and the type of unionism they stand for. Insofar as the workers will come to see the urgency of the struggle to democratize the unions because of their increasing awareness of the contrast between what needs to be done and what is being done, democratization must be placed in the context of a program that addresses not only the situation confronting the workers in the particular union, but also the general situation of the workers throughout the country.

At the same time, the conditions that will make real union oppositions possible will also lay the basis for the regional coalitions of rank and file groups, which can serve as centers of the rank and file revolt in a given area, offering advice, resources, and protection for the militants. Since, by and large, it will be the more political workers who will orient toward this type of grouping, it is essential that we be active in such groupings as they emerge. In addition, the actual organization of such groups, through regional rank and file newspapers and other vehicles, should be a top priority insofar as they will represent a relatively advanced and more political form of working class organization and constitute vehicles for organizing among broader sectors of the class. While in most cases these are not yet on the agenda, in some areas existing union opposition caucuses can begin now to organize such bodies; UNC or TURF-organized conferences on, say, the NEP, can move to establish Committees Against the Wage Controls, which through newsletters, forums, and other means, can begin to attract workers from other industries and unions, as well as the unemployed. We should be careful, however, to ensure that these groups consist of more than a handful of isolated militants, and members of socialist sects.

This process of broadening the rank and file revolt is not only necessary to the politicization of the workers, but will also be increasingly necessary to the building of the shop floor struggles. High levels of unemployment and heightened racial tensions in the class which a worsening



economic situation may bring will make strike-breaking and attempts at union-busting a certainty as the class struggle intensifies. Short of this, fears of dismissal on the part of the broad layers of the workers may render struggle on behalf of disciplined militants increasingly more difficult. In these circumstances, links among workers in other shops, unions, and industries may provide some protection for the rank and file leaders and for the rank and file struggle as a whole.

On another level, an outward-looking approach is necessary to the broadening and solidification of the rank and file movement at its most basic level. Insofar as the struggle proceeds unevenly from shop to shop, industry to industry, and region to region, it is crucial that the experience and skills gained by one group of workers through difficult struggles be available to other workers at a lower level of development. Various kinds of advice, material assistance, and encouragement will be an asset to workers building their organizations in different, and probably more difficult, times and places.

Finally, the joint activity of rank and file groups, and their organization into broader forms when this becomes practicable, is a necessary component of the development of the self-consciousness of the militants. Their role as the leadership of the entire working class must become clear to them. At first, that is, in the immediate future, this will only be seen in terms of the kind of example militant struggles in organized industries can set for other sectors of the class. Strikes that break the Pay Board's 5.5% guidelines, for example, can set the mark for the next strikes, while strikes such as that of the New York telephone workers can begin to demonstrate the need to go beyond the limits of legal trade unionism if real gains are to be won.

At a higher level of organization, the impact of raising demands that are manifestly in the interest of the entire working class and which begin to pose economic questions in political terms can be made clear. A struggle within the trade unions for smashing the NEP, and for a social program to solve the crisis in the interests of the working class, can be seen to have an impact on the consciousness of the broad layers of the workers. Eventually, as experience is accumulated, the organizations are solidified, the necessity of actually organizing and leading other sections of the working class, notably the unemployed, must be posed itself.

Meanwhile, as the crisis deepens, the increasing confusion on the part of the middle strata will lay the groundwork for raising the necessity of establishing the workers' movement as a political pole through widespread independent political campaigns around a class program, and other political means.

To sum up, the general thrust of our work in the next period must be the building of a broad-based rank and file movement, based primarily in the organized industrial sectors, with its feet planted firmly in rank and file factory committees. Eventually, this movement will encompass a network of various types of workers' organizations; work-place committees,

black, third world, women's caucuses, union caucuses, cross-union, community, and regional groups, etc., which can provide the leadership for the industrial and political activity of the broad masses of the workers, interpreting political developments and pointing out the implications of a fight to maintain real wages in a period of emerging crisis.

It would be an error, however, to assume that the intensification of the class struggle and the growth of the workers' movement will necessarily take place according to our calculations. There is no reason to believe that the movement will develop through distinct, evenly-spaced steps; first, factory groups emerge everywhere, then national rank and file oppositions spring up in the unions, a Labor Party is constructed, etc. On the contrary, the process will be very uneven, proceeding at different rates in different places, spurting ahead here, bogging down there. Many rank and file forms will appear and disintegrate; others, relatively established and stable, will prove themselves incapable of responding to the demands of the struggle, and too conservative to provide leadership to the more or less spontaneous upsurge. What must be kept in mind is the general direction we wish to move the struggle, that is, what tasks the movement must take up if it is not to be out-manuevered, demoralized, or isolated.

In the period we are entering, every strike becomes a political act, even if the participants are not aware of this themselves. In the face of economic stagnation and/or conjunctural crisis, the struggle of the workers to defend their living standards pits them against capitalism as a whole and hence against the entire ruling class as it is organized nationally in the state. This would be true even if Nixon had not made it official through the promulgation of the NEP. As it is, this fact means that the NEP (and wage controls in general, regardless of what they are called) will be the focal point of the class struggle in the US for some time to come, especially if Phase II gives way to a toughened Phase III after the elections. As a result, it will be the key element of the political scene in the US.

The significance of this must not be lost upon for it will be important to us in at least two ways:

(1) *It will provide the framework and give an impulse to the emergence of a rudimentary class consciousness among fairly broad sections of the working class, insofar as conflict over Pay Board decisions will tend to highlight what is common about the conditions of workers in different industries, regions, and unions, while the NEP itself explicitly counterposes wage level to profit margins.*

(2) *Because the NEP has made "economic" questions political, the basis is being laid for the heightened political consciousness of the rank and file; and the door is opened, within the labor movement, to a concrete and meaningful discussion of the necessity of independent political action.*

In fact, "political" and "class" consciousness on the part of the working class are not separate entities; they are different aspects of the total process of the development of the working class as a class-for-itself. The

history and tradition of the workers' movement in the US, however, suggest that, at least for the near future, this process will continue through the partial counterposition and interaction of a rudimentary, although growing, class awareness on the one hand, and politicization, in the general sense of the word, on the other.

The growth of this awareness is the necessary precondition for the actual unification of the working class, its organization into an independent political party. Such a party, whose cadres and active supporters would constitute the advanced elements of the working class, is our major strategic conception for the period. Uniting the militants on a distinctly political basis, drawing broad sectors of the less advanced elements into its campaigns, and providing relatively unified leadership and direction for mass struggles of varying types, the party would make possible united political struggle to resist all forms of wage controls, and pose the necessity of a move to the offensive on the part of the workers.

Whether this party will be a "pure" rank and file party, based exclusively on factory committees, a Labor Party called into being by, and based on, the trade unions, or a centrist "revolutionary" party cannot be predicted. More likely than not, it will be a hybrid formation, involving various forms of rank and file organizations, militant locals, a leftish International or two, plus a fair share of independent worker-socialists and socialist intellectuals. Whatever its form, such a party would constitute a tremendous step forward on the part of the workers, furthering their mobilization, self-organization, and political development.

One thing, however, is almost certain. The nature of the epoch and the tasks it sets before the workers' movement means that the kind of party we are envisioning will most likely be a relatively temporary formation. Either the class will move forward, educating itself and preparing for an eventual all-out assault on capitalism or it will be seriously set back or derailed. In the former case, the massive class battles and the political struggle for and within the workers' party will, over time, sift and steel the cadres of the revolutionary party. In the latter case, the failure of the working class to resist the offensives and counter-offensives of the ruling class will in all likelihood mean the destruction of the workers' party. Barring a repetition of the economic and political scenario of the post-war boom, the failure of the workers' movement to prepare and launch a struggle for political power will lead to the unleashing of a reactionary movement that will aim at the liquidation of all political and economic workers' organizations.

The preceding is a rough outline of our agitational tasks in the trade unions. They constitute, however, only one aspect of our work, insofar as the organization and training of the indigenous militants in the shop floor and union struggle are necessary but not sufficient conditions for the politicization of this stratum. No militant, however confident, well-trained, and respected by his or her co-workers in the shop, will be pre-

pared to provide adequate leadership unless he or she is at least somewhat aware of the general direction of events and has some conception of where present activity fits into a broader approach and strategy.

In the coming months, in which, as we have said, we will see an increasing openness to radical ideas among the workers, the importance of socialist propaganda must not be lost upon us. At the most obvious level, we must place our call for rank and file shop floor groups, national union caucuses, regional rank and file coalitions, etc. in the context of an explanation of the necessity of this type of activity not only to defend present living standards and working conditions, but also to lay the basis for resistance to the fiercer attacks to come and to warn the workers of the necessity to go over to the offensive.

At another level, socialist propaganda will enable us to reach, to a greater or lesser degree, workers who may not respond to our agitational efforts. The present uneven level of consciousness in the working class as a whole requires a somewhat broader appeal than what may grow out of our direct rank and file work. Many workers, for example, are asking broader questions about the nature of work, capitalism, culture, etc. than just working conditions, wage levels, etc., as important as these may be. A young white worker who thinks Wallace may be right may not respond to calls to defend the union he knows to be corrupt. Likewise, a black with experience in the Black Liberation Movement, who considers himself a revolutionary, will want to know what we are doing now has to do with liberating blacks and overthrowing capitalism. The fact that we would like to draw both of these into organized rank and file struggle suggests the necessity of a broad propagandistic approach.

While at the level of principle, revolutionary socialists are for working among all strata of the society, our present limitations in terms of size and other resources requires that we choose priorities carefully. In line with the general conception of our tasks, we should direct our socialist propaganda primarily to the advanced workers discussed above, while attempting to make the material comprehensible to the less advanced layers as much as possible. Our chief vehicle for this propaganda will be the I.S. press, *Workers' Power*, local or regional WP supplements where feasible, and I.S. leaflets, where they would be likely to be read by those we are trying to reach. As distinct from this, transitional propaganda, that is, leaflets, shop bulletins, and newspapers, will be, for the most part, the preserve of the broader rank and file groups we help to organize and/or are active in.

In line with the general labor perspective outlined above, our immediate tasks are the following:

1. *Our work in stimulating and organizing the rank and file struggle requires the continuation and intensification of our industrialization program.* That is not, however, a question of entering industry anywhere. While almost any industrial job can offer valuable experience, our politi-

cal priorities must be clear. In general, they are the organized, basic industries, particularly those with a history of militant struggle, plus certain sectors of public employment, sectors whose workers we expect will be in the vanguard of the workers' movement. Our specific industrialization targets are the following:

- a. Auto/UAW
- b. Transport/IBT
- c. Steel/USWA
- d. Telephone/CWA
- e. Public Employment/AFSCME
- f. Teaching/AFT

2. Immediately related to industrialization and a necessary complementary task is the colonization of areas which we expect will be the central areas of the workers' movement, such as, and in particular, the area of the Midwest bordering on the Great Lakes. Cities where we have branches or organizing committees are the best places to start: Chicago, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Cincinnati, with Chicago and Cleveland being the immediate priorities for the strengthening and building of branches. San Francisco and Northern New Jersey should also be noted as important for the branches in the respective areas.

3. Our industrial work will have limited impact if it does not result in building direct ties between ourselves and the militants, both in terms of recruiting and a more general dissemination of our ideas. To begin this work, we must produce, as rapidly as possible, a series of basic educational pamphlets for advanced workers. This series should include combinations and permutations of the following topics:

- a. *What Is Socialism* - the role of the working class, workers' councils, and the revolutionary party
- b. *The Trade Unions* - the importance of the trade union, the struggle within them, and limitations
- c. *Why We Need a Workers' Party* - the role of the two party system, the need for political action
- d. *Black Liberation*
- e. *Women's Liberation*
- f. *Capitalism*
- g. *Bureaucratic Collectivism and Stalinism*
- h. *Marxist Economics and the Crisis of Capitalism*

4. We must develop perspectives for systematic intervention in working class struggles from the "outside," such as strike support work, rank and file newspapers, etc.

## TOWARD A REVOLUTIONARY PARTY

The role of revolutionaries discussed above, that is, to introduce organization into the more or less spontaneous struggles of the working class, is the practical side of developing the consciousness of the workers. Insofar as organization is necessary to sustain a certain level of social practice (struggle) on the part of the working class, while this practice is necessary for the evolution of the workers' consciousness, it is the process of organization that is the precondition for, and in fact represents, the development of that evolving consciousness.

In the fulfillment of their role, the chief tool of revolutionaries is also organization, that is, their self-organization into a revolutionary party. The party, however, not only makes the revolutionaries' intervention possible. It is also the vehicle for the elaboration and testing of revolutionary theory, or in other words, it determines that their intervention itself will be conscious. Without the revolutionary party, then, the consciousness of the revolutionaries can never become a material force and the insurrection and seizure of power will not occur.

Our main goal short of the revolution itself is therefore the organization of a revolutionary party in the world and its section in the United States. In spite of the objective need, the present state of the working class makes the organization of such a party a difficult task. The agenda. The growing working class upsurge and the formation of a vanguard layer in the class, however, is laying the basis in reality for such a development.

At present, the I.S. does not conceive of itself as such a party. It recognizes that for an organization of revolutionaries to be a party, it must be able to attract and organize the vanguard layer of the working class, and be capable of leading significant sectors of the class under its own banner. Since this does not describe the I.S., we have put forward a more realistic self-assessment; the I.S. is a revolutionary tendency which will be part of the future revolutionary party, which will emerge as the class struggle deepens, etc., etc.

While this is a more serious conception than the self-glorification of the sects that call themselves "revolutionary parties," and is true as far as it goes, it does not go far enough, and as a result has had some negative consequences. In the first place, it has led to the view of the I.S. as a "caretaker" organization. To preserve and develop the revolutionary tradition was considered our legitimate job, but to train ourselves or organize

and lead the class struggle, to recruit revolutionary workers, and more generally to transform ourselves into a real revolutionary organization was considered romantic, or at least a job for the indefinite future.

It has also engendered the idea (in formal opposition to the "caretaker" conception) that beyond a relatively short term assessment of the nature of the period and the determination of our tasks, all else is phrase-mongering. Key tasks of a revolutionary party, the drawing up of a long range perspective and the elaboration of a program, tasks that must be begun now, were considered beyond our capabilities and concern. As a result, we did not develop those capabilities nor even express the concern.

Finally, the de facto implication behind our view of ourselves as simply a tendency of a future revolutionary party was that such a party might emerge more or less spontaneously. While we understood (correctly) that the forging of a revolutionary party is an historical process, we did not understand that this did not thereby relieve us of the task of determining more precisely how such a party would be built and what our role within this process should be.

The present state of the US left indicates that our present self-conception is too modest. Outside of ourselves there is no national left grouping that understands the essence of socialism or is moving in that direction. A myriad technocratic and "orthodox" conceptions abound, but a serious and concrete understanding of the socialist movement as the self-emancipation of the working class is rarely to be seen. At a time when an increasing number of independent socialists and radical collectives are talking about a working class orientation, the I.S. is the only group with a consistent revolutionary socialist position that is developing and implementing a proletarian strategy on a national level. The I.S. is, therefore, barring the emergence of a new revolutionary socialist organization or the fantastic growth and transformation of one or more of the socialist sects, the major nucleus around which the revolutionary party will develop.

To be sure, we are not the *only* nucleus. The more advanced of the radical collectives, the more serious elements in the socialist groups, and clusters of independent socialists scattered throughout the country will also through regroupments of various kinds be a part of the process as will groupings of revolutionaries directly from the working class, Black and Third World communities, etc. However, the present political landscape would suggest that these groupings will lack the ideological wherewithal to play a consistent role in this process. The I.S. must approach the building of a revolutionary party as that of a conscious task of revolutionary socialists in general and of the I.S. in particular.

Today, our work toward the formation of a revolutionary party means primarily the continued transformation of the I.S. into a cadre organization based in the working class; that is, an organization of theoreticians, leaders, and organizers that can intervene in the class struggle in a consistent, disciplined, and principled manner. At the present time, however, the I.S. is essentially an organization of relatively diverse groupings, chapters, and individuals held together by a common commitment to a fairly

broad program and a relatively loose organizational form. While we have had common experiences in the three years of our organizational existence, the process of developing a common political identity has hardly begun. We have not, for example, seriously come to grips with our traditions and past - central tenets of the Workers' Party and the Independent Socialist League are accepted by the organization, but have never been discussed in a systematic way by the majority of the membership, nor has there been a serious evaluation of the successes and failures of the Independent Socialist Clubs. Consequently, many of our newer members are unfamiliar with axiomatic conceptions, while the leadership, differing among themselves in regard to their evaluation of these ideas, has been a semi-coherent, poorly organized grouping.

To overcome this situation, we must begin the process of developing an actual perspective almost from scratch. Our tradition must be discussed, evaluated, and sifted; what is valuable retained and what is outdated and/or incorrect discarded, and we must evaluate the development of the I.S. Finally, we must begin a serious analysis of the present world situation and proceed with developing a strategy for building an international revolutionary party.

The development and implementation of such a perspective is the cornerstone of the development of cadre. Only when the organization as a whole understands what it wants to accomplish, where it wants to go, and how it expects to get there, can we expect that we can become cadre in more than the sense of being able to "get things done." The confidence, creativeness, and discipline that characterizes political cadre requires not only the knowledge of the rudiments of socialist theory and a grasp of our positions on various questions but also a full knowledge of our perspectives, their assumptions and method of elaboration.

It is in this context that discipline must be discussed. Discipline is not primarily an organizational characteristic, but rather a political process involving the interaction between a democratically elected leadership and a rank and file, both of which understand the importance of serious political debate on the one hand, and the necessity of the coherent implementation of majority decisions for the growth and development of a revolutionary organization. The content of discipline, then, does not consist in negative sanctions from the "center" but in the organization as a whole, including political minorities, voluntarily carrying out the decisions of the majority. The common understanding that only if a particular "line" is actually implemented can a real test of its validity be made is thus the basis for discipline, not rules nor ukases.

Discipline therefore requires a politically educated membership prepared to choose leaders, determine and implement perspectives in a serious and informed manner; a leadership, elected on the basis of its politics in general and its perspectives for the organization in particular, and enjoying the confidence of the membership; and a well-functioning network for the exchange of information, the facilitation of political debate, and

the implementation of our perspective. At the present time, however, we have virtually none of these and must proceed almost from scratch.

At present, the following concrete guidelines will advance this process:

#### A. *Industrial*

To carry on our industrialization perspective the incoming NAC should be asked to organize a new industrialization campaign which concentrates on spreading our existing industrial concentrations, particularly in Teamsters and steel where we have promising opportunities but few people actually industrialized; and, equally important, to increase the number of women industrialized in all the industries that the convention adopts as priorities. Our goal will be to nationally spread our existing priorities, so that the basis for strong national fractions can be laid. The NAC shall be expected to familiarize itself with, and discuss, our industrial work and the publications which we are involved in. The branches are expected to organize fractions and support for industrialized comrades, and to insure that their work and problems are brought into the focus of internal branch life. The NAC will attempt to organize the first, of what we hope to be regular, Active Workers Conferences, where industrialized comrades can meet to discuss experiences, problems, strategies, and programs for national work.

#### B. *Internal Education*

1. A National Education Department will be established to insure regular production of pamphlets, and reading lists; and to help branches to prepare and secure speakers for class series and educational conferences. All branches are expected to have an educational director in charge of on-going class series, and individual study assignments. The current summer school will be the first in a series of local and national cadre development schools;

2. We should actively encourage and provide resources for continuing discussions on current political developments (e.g., speakers, conferences, etc.);

3. We should proceed immediately to the publication of a theoretical journal to encourage serious theoretical work in a wide variety of areas.

#### C. *Coordination and Communication*

Our practical work cannot proceed in a disciplined way on the basis of the improvisation of isolated members and local fractions, but only through the continual exchange of information and ideas, and the coordination of the work of members in similar workplaces, unions, etc. The publication of internally-circulated bulletins comprising reports and perspectives from members active in national arenas would constitute an important step forward and would lay

the basis for the organization of national fractions as soon as this may be feasible.

In particular, each major trade union fraction in each branch should be writing at least semi-annual reports on their work and perspectives for internal distribution. The main function of these reports will be to give our trade union theory some reality, to see how the various conceptions on our functioning in the unions work out when tried in real situations. The reports will also give non-industrialized comrades some idea as to what is going on in the shops, and help to make the work of the industrialized comrades the central focus of the organization.

#### D. *Selection of Leadership*

In the past, the selection of our leading bodies has been on an ad hoc and semi-political basis. This is only one reflection of the lack of seriousness with which the organization approaches the question of its leadership in general, and other examples abound. The National Committee is almost a lame body: it meets sporadically, its meetings are rarely conscientiously prepared, each meeting usually involves the partial reconstitution of the Committee since many NC members do not attend meetings consistently, and the decisions of the Committee are implemented, if at all, in a careless, lackadaisical manner.

This must change. The Convention must provide the basis for the political selection of the National Committee and of the National Action Committee by the NC. In general, the rank and file must demand regular NC meetings, while the NC, in its turn, must take itself seriously, and elect a representative NAC that will implement its perspectives.

#### E. *Development of Program*

We must proceed with the development and clarification of our program. While it is understood that the development of program is a continuous process conditioning and conditioned by our practical work, it is essential that we be clear on the main areas in which definition of program is needed. For the sake of initiating this process, it is suggested that our program be conceived as divided (arbitrarily) into four general areas.



1. The programmatic bases for the specific rank and file groups we seek to organize and build;
2. The next steps to be taken by the working class as a whole, the tasks we wish to focus attention on immediately;
3. The program we project for movements of the specially oppressed;
4. Broad "macro" demands, the basics of which are presented in this paper, embodying a pro-working class solution to the crisis of capitalism.

Key to the transformation of the I.S. is establishing ourselves as a material force in the working class movement. This means above all the recruitment of indigenous working class militants, which requires systematic contact work. Without such work our actual growth will lag behind the potential that the growing politicization of the working class creates. We should therefore assign a high priority to it. We should urge each branch to select a responsible member to oversee contact work, to assign members to meet regularly with contacts on an individual (preferable) or group basis to discuss political questions, go over readings, offer advice on practical matters, etc. Study classes are often effective in familiarizing contacts with our politics and moving them toward us. We should therefore seize every opportunity to organize such classes on whatever basis is feasible (a group of contacts from one workplace, from a neighborhood, or on a more general basis).

On a broader level, local and regional conferences can be valuable tools in contact and recruitment, since they enable us to project and explain a relatively detailed outline of our politics and strategy. In general, we should work conscientiously toward making the life of the organization, particularly branch meetings, interesting and relevant to advanced workers.

In addition to the above, particular note should be made of the recruitment of Black and Third World militants. Up until now, the organization has made little or no effort to attract and recruit blacks, latins, and other third world people. The result is not surprising, and our present composition will not change by itself. Systematic work is even more necessary in this regard than the recruitment of white workers. In addition to increased coverage of events in black and latin communities and movements in *Workers' Power*, several concrete measures can be taken immediately. Each branch can establish a third world committee responsible for following developments in black, latin and other third world communities and movements, for organizing systematic distribution of *Workers' Power* at rallies, workplaces, schools, and in the communities themselves and for organizing work among the contacts we make.

Every branch is expected to establish a committee for black and third world recruitment. Contact work to be reported on and discussed at execs and branch meetings. Contacts are to be asked to take part in I.S.

and contacts and new members are to be assigned to comrades who will help them in discussing politics, going over their readings, and providing advice on their political problems and functioning.

Branches should also begin serious research and discussion of the struggles, past and present, of the black and third world communities in their areas, in order to familiarize ourselves with the problems of these communities and to enable us to talk to people on an informed and intelligent basis. Finally, forums directed in whole or in part to black and third world militants and publicized in black and third world communities will attract militants interested in what we have to say and open to our politics.

## I.

When the Berkeley Independent Socialist Club was formed in 1964, serious discussions were held on the nature of the organization we were forming, its tasks and perspectives, and the organizational conclusions that followed from that. In the intervening years we successfully met some of the new opportunities which were opened to us, and radically altered the conceptions that we held in 1964. However, that was always done piecemeal and pragmatically, in response to concrete situations.

Often new organizational demands were placed upon our original conceptions -- which could not bear the weight of them and broke down, but were not replaced by another set of systematic ideas on the nature of the I.S. The result is that today there is both vagueness, and sharply contradictory ideas in our ranks, on what we are attempting to accomplish organizationally. That, plus the changes in the famous "objective conditions," and in our own organization, requires a thoroughgoing rediscussion of organizational questions.

## II.

The nature of socialist organization is a political, not an administrative or narrowly conceived "organizational" question. The sort of organization a tendency builds is a function of its politics, a reflection of its goals and perspectives. In the revolutionary movement there is practically no other question which has been raised so often, in the attempt to find the precise organizational vehicle to serve the revolutionary goals we hold.

For our tendency, the central methodology used when approaching the "organizational question" has been to find and develop an organizational form which can be an instrument for revolutionary democratic socialism – an effective tool to serve our ends of a mass revolution from below and workers democracy – which fits our conception of the political period we are in, and our tasks including our organizational tasks in that period, and is calibrated to the real stage of development of our own organization.

A brief look at other forms of organization shows that for other political tendencies as well, organization is primarily a reflection of their political ends. To briefly cite a few:

1. *Liberal Organizations.* One of the indexes of the character of American liberalism is the fact that it has been unable to organize a permanent, mass membership organization, and has usually grouped itself on an elitist basis around personalities or "letterhead" organizations. Common Cause and Nader's Raiders are only recent examples of this theme. Liberal organizational form is the counterpart of liberal acceptance of this social system, and an emphasis on eradicating felt evils by placing better individuals in power.

2. *Social Democratic Organizations.* The typical social democratic organization is loose and amorphous, allowing for the greatest diversity of political views and an absence of discipline. This is usually only a camouflage for the fact that the leadership is a bureaucratic clique which makes the decisions for what are essentially electoral machines. Its conceptions of socialism from above, parliamentary reformism, makes its appeal essentially to a passive electoral basis, not a self-emancipating working class. In reality the social democratic parties accept capitalism and conceive of themselves as a pressure group in capitalist society based on the trade union bureaucracy and the labor aristocracy. As a result, social democratic organizations, even of the left variety, never organize fractions in the unions to overthrow the bureaucracy. Lack of discipline is no handicap for these parties that do not have revolutionary goals. In the American Socialist Party the absence of discipline meant that no matter what position the Party took, its public spokesman, Norman Thomas, was always free to present his own views, which in the public mind was seen as the SP view, even if it was the total opposite. The broadness of social democratic organization can only exist on the basis of reformism. Whenever a serious revolutionary tendency has developed in a social democratic party it has always been expelled – without exception by bureaucratic and anti-democratic means by these upholders of bourgeois "democracy".

3. *Stalinist Parties.* After 15 years of "de-stalinization" and "polycentrism" they still continue to be totalitarian parties controlled by apparatusniks. No matter what the rank and file wants, even when it gets militant and revolutionary minded as in France and Italy, the politics of the

apparatus, which is the real party, prevail. While the apparatus must tactically take into account rank and file sentiment, it is essentially independent of the ranks. The Stalinist parties are embryonic reflections of Stalinist society, in which the bureaucratic apparatus raises itself to an independent, autonomous existence as a class ruling over society.

4. *The Socialist Workers Party.* Although it gives lip service to workers democracy, calls for the right of free discussion and oppositional tendencies in socialist society, it is always quick to snuff out with surgical means any serious opposition which develops in its own ranks. Its concept of a monolithic party leads it to treat its own internal critics as traitors, and has led to at least ten significant splits in its brief history. Workers democracy is a nice but not necessary condition for a workers' state, the SWP holds, and the same is true of its internal regime. It is a party which politically reflects the degeneration of the Russian revolution, and organizationally reflects the monolithism of the Zinoviev Comintern in the period of its degeneration.

The organizational form that most of us believe represents the vehicle for proletarian revolution and workers democracy is that of the revolutionary party, based on the model of the Bolshevik and early Communist parties. This was proven not just by the success of the Russian revolution, but unfortunately by a long series of defeats – Germany in 1918, Austria in 1918, Hungary in 1919, Italy in 1920, Spain in the 1930's, etc. Since World War I there has been no lack of revolutionary situations. Spontaneous proletarian strivings for revolution in the 20th Century have been more frequent than that of any other class in history. However, in general, the failure of these revolutions we have analyzed as due to the lack of strong, uncompromising revolutionary parties, and the failure to build those parties prior to the spontaneous outbreak of working class rebellion and revolution. The working class under capitalism does not create forms for its economic rule, unlike the bourgeoisie which developed in the womb of feudal society. Rather, it creates institutions of workers democracy, unions, press, parties, etc. – of which the revolutionary party is the highest form and the necessary vehicle for working class self-emancipation.

The tasks of such a party is to group together the most advanced sections of the working class on the basis of uncompromising class struggle politics. It must join socialist consciousness to the spontaneous struggles of the working class, be the repository of the historical experiences of working class struggle, and the agency for raising the consciousness of the of the working class so that the working class is conscious of its historical mission and is qualitatively transformed so that it is capable of ruling society. Such a party must meet the centralization of capitals and of capital and the state with its own centralization. It must be tightly disciplined to maximize its strength in action against its powerful enemies. But tight discipline and centralization demands with it the strictest internal democracy to maintain the control of the ranks over the leadership and organization. Its voluntary discipline is based on a highly conscious membership which

represents the party and attempts to provide revolutionary leadership in the thousands of factories, mills, shops, and offices.

### III.

While most of the I.S. has accepted this conception of what a revolutionary party is, and of its necessity for a successful revolution, we have never fallen into the trap of deluding ourselves or pretending to the world that we are that party, not even in embryo form. Only an organization of tens of thousands, rooted in the working class, and commanding the allegiance of at least a significant section of the class, can make such a claim. While we are not the revolutionary party, we are a part of the process of creating that party. Our success or failure, are contributions to the pace of development of the creation of a revolutionary party. The weakness of groups like ours is responsible for the slow development of struggles, and often for their derailment into political dead ends.

We believe that we are the major nucleus of that future party and that our growth numerically and in political sophistication is one of the conditions for the development of a revolutionary party in the future. We believe it is our tendency which today is best performing the task of educating socialists in what are the necessary politics of a revolutionary workers party -- uncompromising defense of workers democracy, of joining revolutionary socialism to revolutionary democracy through a mass revolution from below. We attempt to maintain the traditions of revolutionary Marxism and apply them to the political and social problems of today. And it is our tendency which has most consistently championed an approach that is both revolutionary in direction and related to the current consciousness of broad oppositional sentiment.

Yet while the unspoken assumption of the I.S. has been that the role of our organization is to train a revolutionary socialist cadre, we have not in the past conceived of ourselves as a cadre organization, or even come to grips with the problem of how to train cadre. There is even uncertainty in our ranks as to what cadre, and a cadre organization, are.

Cadre is originally a military term which refers to the hard core, or skeleton of an army. It is the skeleton around which a mass army can be swiftly reconstructed in times of emergency, and also the permanent part of training units which exist to train new recruits to send out to other units. The use of the word cadre in the revolutionary movement is somewhat analogous. It refers to a hard core, skeleton organization which can successfully recruit, train, and assimilate large numbers in a revolutionary

period-- such as for example the Bolshevik Party did in 1917, going from 20-30,000 to 240,000 members in the months between February and October.

This hard core or cadre are people who are thoroughly educated in the politics and program of the organization, are capable of defending and fighting for its ideas in public, are serious and disciplined in their functioning because of their conscious acceptance and agreement with most of the organization's politics. They are devoted, even fanatical, in their loyalty to and attempt to build the organization which expresses their political consciousness because they recognize that they and their organization are crucial in both the immediate period and in the future revolutionary period. The function of a cadre organization is to train all of its members in such a spirit, to develop all of them into self-confident mass leaders.

Although agreement with the basic program of the organization is the cement that holds the cadre together, political differences and disagreements are not to be avoided, but in fact encouraged in developing a cadre organization which is democratic, and whose members are thoughtful, independent leaders capable of initiative. Their devotion is not based on blind obedience, but on the consciousness developed by a healthy internal life in which ideas are treated seriously and respectfully, even when forcefully fought against. It is only the worst sort of sect, and one which will not make a great contribution to the formation of a revolutionary party, which sees disagreements, large or small, as a threat to its existence and responds to any challenge to its ideas from its members by treating opposition as treason, or trying to personally or politically vilify and crush opposition.

The disagreements which develop in a healthy cadre organization must do so in a spirit and atmosphere that allows for fruitful joint collaboration. The cadre must recognize that they have a mutual responsibility to each other. They are a collective leadership group joined together by their common revolutionary ideas which far outshadow their disagreements. The effective development of the revolutionary movement they are building depends upon their assumption of collective leadership and disciplined activity.

In the past our organization often tended to rely upon the activity and initiative of a few leaders, and encouraged a subtle form of passivity in a membership which did not think of itself as "the cadre." If today it is possible to discuss transforming the I.S. into a cadre organization, it is because of the real, if small, advances we have made. Although we have just gone through a period which has been a disaster for the radical movement, we have moved to being more of a national organization, of a growing seriousness in our ranks, and a deepening spirit of political commitment on the recognition that we are not just going to be active for the next six months or year and then go on to other things, but that we are developing our lives around the idea that we are revolutionaries.

A big step in this direction has been the start of the industrialization of a part of our membership, which brings with it a new seriousness and re-



sponsibility to an organization which places such demands upon its members. We have also succeeded in fusing the bloc of tendencies which merged to form the I.S. in 1969. The I.S. is no longer half a dozen mutually suspicious different organizations, but one organization, with the desire in its ranks to belong to one organization. That process of development into a coherent political tendency is not over, and will not be accomplished until there is a stable, central political leadership and an educated cadre of mass leaders working on a national basis to implement a common political program. The speed and tempo at which we accomplish this has been given a new urgency by the new period which we are entering which has opened up new opportunities and placed new responsibilities and tests to our organization and the whole revolutionary movement.

#### IV.

In addition to our subjective desire that we were a larger and more well functioning organization, there are the objective requirements of the period in which we are entering. It is our conception that this new period will be one of a years' long attack on the working class.

The period we have entered is that of the end of the post-war boom, and the long term decline of US imperialism. The years of economic growth, substantial rise in the standard of living of the masses, the reaction of the Cold War, the seeming invincibility and strength of American imperialism and its ruling class were conservatizing dampeners on class struggle. Today those objective conditions are being undermined and the US has been opened up for radical politics and class struggle.

The political defeat in Vietnam has shaken the power of American imperialism and undermined confidence in the authority of the ruling class. While tied down in the quicksand of a land war in Asia, American power has also been declining in other parts of the world; in the Middle East, the Indian subcontinent, and the Mediterranean and Indian Oceans. Threats to control over these key international waterways, the highways of international commerce, control it would have in previous years of greater American strength led to the danger of war. Meanwhile in the advanced world, American goods have been declining in the struggle for the world market from the increased international competition of the rebuilt economies of Japan and Western Europe.

The post-war boom has been replaced in the advanced countries by increasing instability, stagnation, recession, and international monetary crisis. The threat of world depression is no longer discussed solely by the revolutionary left, but invades the ministerial chambers. The attempt to solve these difficulties by an attack on the standard of living of the working class, intensification of labor, and economic nationalism, has led to intensified class struggle in all of the advanced capitalist countries, and new international tensions and realignments.

With it has come a revival of the workers' movement internationally. The pace of development in the working class has not kept up with the enormous changes in world economic and politics. The conservative, bureaucratic character of the traditional workers' organizations, lag in consciousness, and the lack of credible alternative vehicles of struggle has produced a process of development in the working class which continues to be molecular and fragmented, but at times gives an explosive character to events.

While the period is not pre-revolutionary, the increasing instability in the West and East has in the last four years seen a rebirth of revolutionary ideas and, at times, motion in the working class. The class battles since 1968 in France, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Poland, and Bolivia are confirmation that the struggle for socialism is once more on the historical agenda. The spontaneous struggles of the workers have not yet led to new forms of organization, or revolutionary parties. But the objective basis for the latter is now being laid in sections of Western Europe.

In the United States, the economic crisis has already produced the New Economic Policy and Phase II. The wage freeze, dollar devaluation, economic nationalism, etc. have not been enough to solve America's economic crisis. Trade deficits, monetary instability, unemployment, the reduction of a large part of the population to the role of paupers on the welfare rolls persist. The shallow upturn in the economy has not been enough to alleviate the crisis. Continued recession and instability will lead to new attacks on the working class, to a Phase III of productivity drives, and attacks on the right to strike or to ratify contracts by the ranks.

The union bureaucracy, which accepts the assumptions and limits of capitalism, has already indicated its willingness to collaborate with productivity drives (steel, railroad, and dock contracts), economic nationalism (of which it has been a vanguard), and is even ideologically prepared to accept limitations on the right to strike and to further erode the power of the ranks.

None of the changes in the world should blind us, however, to the difficulties we face. American capitalism is still the most important, dominating power in world politics. Even with economic difficulties it still has enormous layers of fat from which to make concessions. It has the aid of a politically conservative and corrupted union bureaucracy in disciplining the working class. The working class remains without militant leadership or organizations. The revolutionary left is minuscule, in numbers and ideas, and continues to be isolated from the working class. Unemployment has had its impact in the last year, lowering the indexes of industrial militancy (strikes, wildcats, contract rejections, absenteeism, etc. have all declined), and stimulated a capitalist offensive to cut wages with threats of plant closures (Dayton Frigidaire, Wolverine Tube, and others).

Nonetheless within the working class oppositional moods and elements continue to develop. The class has suffered no major defeats, continues to

be combative, and elements of it (black, young workers, Viet vets) have felt the impact of the radical movements of the '60's. With the drive towards increased productivity and deteriorating working conditions, there will be a return to many of the shop floor revolts of the mid-'60's (Lords-town), now added to the wages movement of the last few years.

The working class continues to be politically backward (or unpolitical), and in the absence of leadership and organizational vehicles for opposition, the pace of working class motion is slow, molecular, and stilled isolated stirrings.

Within the working class there has been the growth of small numbers of militants, oppositional elements and groupings. The latter are all weak in numbers, program, strategy, or ability to engage in action or relate to shop floor discontent, and revolt. They are often fragmentary and transitory because of their weaknesses. Nonetheless the continuance of economic and racial unrest has continued the process of formation of union oppositional groups, however weak. In the last few years the growing numbers of oppositional groups has led to the start of the formation of national rank and file groups -- in auto, teamsters, miners, teachers. This process will probably soon be followed in steel, telephone, and AFSCME, where a significant number of local oppositions now exist. If this process continues and deepens, the national rank and file groups which develop may offer the possibility in the next period of providing the basis for a more political workers' movement, linking up above industry and towards engaging in independent working class political action.

But even though there is little politics in the working class today, and a virtual absence of organized socialists, the economic and political changes which have occurred in the world, and the impact that the black liberation movement and the New Left had on domestic politics and culture has given socialist and revolutionary ideas a new opening to individual militants and layers of young and black workers.

It is possible today to recruit workers to the socialist movement. The number will be small, but every potential working class leader recruited and educated today will have a ten-fold weight in a new period of working class upsurge. The radical organization which succeeds at this point in effectively taking part in the rank and file groups which are now forming, providing a thorough-going commitment to the struggle of the ranks, ideas, and program, and recruiting a cadre from it, will be the radical organization which will be most capable of playing a more leading role in the future. The elements of working class struggle which exist today for revolutionaries to take part in are not "too small," or "on too low a level," but indeed there is no radical organization existing which is capable of intervening and taking advantage of what is now going on.

It is these changes which have occurred in the period, and which are occurring within the working class, which require that we re-examine our own self-conception of the role of our organization in order to meet the tasks which now face us.

## V.

The original organizational form of the ISC in Berkeley and New York, and subsequent development into a loose confederation of clubs as the ISCA (Independent Socialist Clubs of America), was a reflection of both the period we were in (and even more so of the previous period we had just come out of) and the subjective factor as well, two small clubs separated from each other by a whole continent.

The period we had come out of had witnessed the enormous decline of the world Marxist movement. It can be narrowly conceived as the Cold War-McCarthy Era, or more broadly as the end reactionary product of what had been a prolonged period of counter-revolution when the European revolution failed, Fascism and Stalinism triumphed, and the workers' movement internationally declined and degenerated.

It was during this period, in the 1950's, that our predecessor, the ISL (Independent Socialist League), developed into a caretaker organization, with the perspective that socialism was off the historical agenda and our role was to keep revolutionary ideas alive during a period of reaction and working class quiescence. These conceptions continued to find expression in the ideas of the bare handful of survivors who survived the political demise of the ISL, and whose self-conception of their role was heavily impressed by the disintegration of our tendency. When it was reborn, in the 1960's, it was not because of a revival of working class activity and politics, but as a result of the student movement and New Left.

We responded to this development in a healthy and progressive fashion, attempting with our limited resources to take part in this new movement, and using the opportunity for a rebirth of our political tendency. This occurred because of the attitude which we adopted to this new, middle class radical movement; as supporters, defenders, and active participants in it, as its non-sectarian revolutionary wing. We did not counterpose ourselves to it, and its development, but at the same time we did not submerge our politics in it, but maintained them through our own independent organization and propaganda. Yet, as we changed our role and perspectives to meet this new opportunity, unconsciously and willy-nilly we were transformed into a tendency within the student-New Left movement.

Over 95 percent of our membership, and almost our entire leadership, was formed in this political milieu. Originating in this milieu has left a legacy. We too suffer from a lag in consciousness in our internal political life. Our methods of debate, our work habits, method of recruitment, and education and self-conception of our role were all generated in the student, radical intellectual milieu. Some of what we did and learned were appropriate for the sort of organization we were, and some of it was valuable experience for any revolutionary group. Much of it, however, is inappro-

priate to a group which wishes to base itself in the working class and to be a part of the process of working class self-emancipation. To fail to come to grips with our student origins, or to make a virtue out of what had been a necessity, will continue to retard the development of the I.S. as a revolutionary organization.

As a student organization based around the campuses and campus struggle, our internal life revolved around a common arena in which the entire branch could be engaged; even when all members were not direct participants they shared a common understanding of groups and struggles we were involved in. Our whole leadership could be thrown into any particular struggle, allowing us to play a disproportionate role, but also retarding the development of newer comrades. Internal education and contact work was done on an informal basis, with most of the branch being in political contact with each other on a daily basis. Full ideological discussion on all questions was common in competition with other political tendencies and currents. The loose and informal style we developed (and sloppy work habits), whether or not it was the best one, was not always an obstacle, but often an aid in penetrating the student milieu around us.

We tended to recruit people not through serious contact work, but by being a political pole of attraction in the New Left: its pro-working class, anti-Stalinist, anti-Democratic Party, militant, but unsectarian wing. Those who were attracted to our politics or activity were expected to naturally join at some point, and were pretty much left to find their own niche in the organization, or to drop out if they didn't.

We also tended to generate a brand of intellectual elitism which was in contradiction to our politics of socialism from below and workers' democracy. We tended to repeat the hierarchical nature of the university milieu and its educational process in which the senior faculty and some advanced graduate students talk and the undergraduates are passively "educated" and silently assimilate as they prepare themselves for climbing up the pole. We tended to rely upon a few heavies - an inbuilt danger of sect life - who dominated all discussion and intimidated a membership into believing that advanced study in Marxism and mass oratory were necessary prerequisites for taking part in the internal political life of the revolutionary movement.

The work habits we developed in this period were a reflection of a milieu whose political activity was expressed in explosions followed by lulls; mass mobilizations alternating with quiescence. The New Left jumped from issue to issue, constantly shifting its concerns. In this process it helped to revive revolutionary ideas and methods of struggle. While it was a positive experience, it has helped to mistrain us. We failed to develop systematic, steady work and work habits. Patient, unheroic, day to day work are the normal work habits of a working class organization. Yet, it is still difficult for us to instill them as the norm of the I.S., even if the crisis mentality of the student movement has dissolved. Coupled to the crisis mentality of the New Left was its "star" system, an elitist con-

ception where leadership revolved around mass speakers and decision making was largely confined to them, with the movement politically unorganized and atomized. While the I.S. never fell into this trap due to its democratic decision making, its mass movement work often tended to rely heavily on the work of its "stars."

To compound the problem our original, semi-caretaker perspective led us to the conception that practically no demands could be made upon our membership or leadership. Every individual was free to make their own decision on their degree of activity, involvement, and responsibility. Coupled to this "do your own thing" mentality, the organization was often maintained by the activity of a few leaders, a form of substitutionism. The result was that we did not develop a sense of collective responsibility, of a leadership which conceived of itself as a team with the necessity to develop each and every member as a conscious political person with a role and part in the organization.

The progress that the I.S. has made in overcoming these problems has occurred as we have moved from being a student based and oriented group, towards becoming a working class organization. But the process is still incomplete and there is great unevenness and lag in the organization. Old conceptions and new coexist in uneasy truce. Yet the progress we have made has given the I.S. its health, dynamic, and has been responsible for its growing seriousness both intellectually and organizationally. If we are to continue the job of transforming ourselves into a working class organization, an enormously difficult job, it requires a new self-conception of our role and our organizational methods.

Our role in this period is to help rebuild an active rank and file workers' movement and to develop within it a revolutionary socialist current. In taking part in labor struggles we want to help cohere militant organizations and recruit and train from this generation of worker militants a political leadership for the coming class struggles that are now opening up. In this process we hope to act as a nucleus for regrouping other radicals in the labor movement, and to develop the cadres of a future revolutionary workers' party. The first step in this process is actual involvement in the life and struggles of the working class, which we recognize requires the industrialization of a section of our organization.

Those who have, or are, going into industry conceive of revolutionary politics and organization as the center of their lives. They are industrializing in order to bring revolutionary consciousness and leadership to the working class in its struggles. They expect and should receive from the branches the same serious concern that we ask from them when we have tried to convince them of an industrial perspective. We have to expect the same responsibility from the rest of the organization in the daily routine of back-up work, whether it's selling the newspaper or the systematic discussion of what is the unheroic, daily details of factory and union life. To provide that support requires that the entire organization "go to school



in the working class," to use Trotsky's phrase. That all of us are expected to understand the details of industrial, union, and working class life and struggle. To do otherwise will only develop a situation in which the branch cannot discuss our industrial work, or discuss it in abstractions, and tries to make the industrial comrades follow the norms of student movement activity.

In the working class our arenas are fragmented, and based around our workplaces. To withstand the pressures of isolation and atomization we need strong fractions and well organized branch support for industrialized comrades. The slow pace of working class politics, and fragmented arenas has led in some branches to industrial work being frozen out of the branch life, particularly as it is easier for the organization to discuss arenas which everyone is familiar with (such as the anti-war movement) from our past in the student movement. Unless the life of our branches revolves around the problems and concerns in industry and the unions, our industrialization campaign and the politics which we base on it, will not be successful.

The fragmented character of industrial work means that every comrade engaging in it will be called upon to provide leadership in their workplaces and unions. Usually they will be among the most politically developed people in the situation and will have to take the responsibilities that entails. It means that the U.S. must train each and every one of them to be capable of providing the leadership the working class needs. We will be judged as we should be, by how well we perform that. We are required to take our ideas more seriously precisely because they are going to be put into practice at the risks of jobs and livelihood. Each and every comrade must be educated to play this role, which is also the best guarantee of our internal democracy -- a politically conscious membership.

The political ideas we will be fighting in the working class will not be those of sects who are competing for an already radicalized group, as was our experience in the student movement. We will be taking on the tougher question -- having to argue against the bourgeois worldview, religion, individualism, etc. Our own education will have to be more complete, dealing with questions of economics, philosophy, and so on, which were tended to be ignored in the New Left. Our contact work will be more of a long term affair than it was in the New Left, and consequently more systematic, more patient, and more complete. The lack of sharp ideological debate and competition in the factories requires that our intellectual stimulation, and theoretical development, more so than in the past, has to come from the internal life of the organization. Similarly, our press plays a role in disseminating our ideas that when we were a campus group which engaged in daily discussions with other tendencies.

The emphasis by the organization to reach the working class should not be an exclusive emphasis, but rather a paramount one. This means that heavy-handed or subtle organizational pressures should not be put on all members to become "industrialized." Members should not feel that they are shirking their "party or proletarian duty" if they are not industrialized.

While branch members should aid members in a union in all possible ways, they should not be put in a position of being second-class members who must subordinate all their activities or party role to that of exclusively aiding the "first class" industrialized members.

In the coming period, we shall continue to recruit students and intellectuals. It is highly unlikely that an *exclusive* emphasis on recruiting workers would be successful in the coming period, while it would mean missing opportunities to also recruit students and intellectuals.

None of the existing socialist groups is strong enough to act as a revolutionary party; nor can any, except the IS, act as the future nucleus for coalescing one. The existing socialist sects have neither the ideological nor the programmatic basis for a regroupment; nor do they hold common perspectives which would allow for collaboration in common activity. Their sectarian tendencies, particularly toward the working class and its struggles, have perpetuated their isolation from the class.

A regroupment of these tendencies is not a possibility in the foreseeable future, and will only occur as a result of profound changes in working class or international politics that force a reexamination of politics and practice. Only some great event -- the formation of a labor party, a CIO-type upsurge, an event on the order of the Russian October, or Hungarian revolution -- might unblock the sterility of the current socialist sects. Even the May 1968 strike in France did not produce the requisite pressure for unity of the French Trotskyist groups, let alone the other revolutionary tendencies.

Yet while a regroupment of the socialist tendencies is not possible in the immediate period, there is currently going on a small realignment of sorts in the left. With the growth of the economic crisis, and instability in capitalism and society, there has developed a small reflection in the left, in which the stability of many of the sects and their traditional approaches have been undermined. The decline of the student radical movement, and the first glimmerings of revival of working class struggle at home and internationally, have been reflected in the life of the socialist sects.

In the Socialist Workers Party, Progressive Labor, Workers League, Spartacist League, Revolutionary Union -- and in the IS as well -- there has been a molecular tendency to splits and fusions. In all of these groups there has been a sifting out of political tendencies as the change in period has put the ideas and practice of the socialist groups to the test of the new period in world politics. Although the process underway is confused and contradictory, it is a reflection of the general flux in society and will continue to become clearer as the general contours of the new period are more apparent.

In the SWP there has been a tendency to ignore the collapse of its "youth radicalization" perspective, and to dig in even further to the constantly retreating middle-class radical movement; at the same time loose oppositions and individuals calling for the return to a working class orientation have developed, and are drifting out and being forced out. In PL, there has been a see-saw in and out of the factories. The Workers League has been divesting itself of its trade unionists, and the Spartacists have simply taken their student sectarianism and tried to impose it upon their trade union work, junking their previous rank and file -- albeit sectarian -- approach in favor of a concept of forming "communist" caucuses for which no basis exists in the working class today -- thereby making it irrelevant whether they are in or out of the class: they act as outsiders. The RU has moved more and more in the direction of repeating the CP's practice, simply substituting Peking for Moscow in the appropriate CP line.

While the socialist sects have, except for their oppositions, used the test presented by the change in objective conditions to move further away from a working class, rank and file, militant and democratic approach, the IS has more and more become known for the fact that in addition to our distinctive ideological ideas on revolutionary socialism, we are the revolutionary group with an industrialization perspective, a rank and file approach, an orientation to shop-floor and working-conditions struggles, and to fighting within the unions.

It is our real work in the class which is opening for the IS the possibility of playing a role in regrouping working-class radicals. While this may be possible with some of the splits that will develop from the socialist sects, the main approach of the IS toward this regroupment process, and a major part of its activity in the next year, should be addressed to another layer of working-class radicals: the independent local groups, collectives, and underground papers with a working class or industrial orientation.

With the disintegration of SDS, a plethora of such groups developed, many of them out of the RYM II faction of SDS. Most of these groups were Maoist in their orientation, and therefore were formally further from us politically than the tendencies of the Trotskyist movement. Their Maoism, however, was always a shallow affair. It was this layer of radicals who were often the best that the New Left generation threw up in their revolutionary commitment, willingness to sacrifice, and solidarity with the working class and the struggles of the oppressed. Many of them were attracted to Maoism by its reputed revolutionary practice and alternative, not by its bureaucratic Stalinism. The reputed anti-imperialism of Maoism and the Cultural Revolution, or rather the reports of egalitarianism and popular control that were trumpeted by the Maoist and bourgeois press as the results of the Cultural Revolution, led a large part of this generation of radicals to the false and illusory "revolutionism" of Maoism. It is this group which is now in deep flux and which the IS must address itself to.

The recent moves of the Chinese in foreign policy (Pakistan, Ceylon, Sudan, and the willingness to cover for the United States in Vietnam in

return for American alliance and trade) are showing clearly that Maoism is not anti-imperialist, or the champion of "third world" revolution. The disappearance of Lin Biao, the restructuring of the Communist Party, and the reintroduction of "material incentives" are only the first steps in internal changes which are dispelling the illusions that since the Cultural Revolution China is no longer a bureaucratic class society. The distinctive ingredients of an independent Maoist ideology are being replaced by the traditional "peaceful coexistence" and bureaucratic ideas of the Moscow CP. The crisis of Maoist groups inside the US, which has broken out (with a resurgence of "Trotskyist" ideas among them), will continue to deepen in the next year as Chinese realities continue to dispel the illusions which brought this layer of radicals to Maoism.

Meanwhile it is this layer, not the Trotskyist groups, which has entered industry and the working class. Actual industrial work has cured some of those who survived of their original romanticism and sectarianism. These experiences inside the working class have given many of them a new appreciation for ideas of workers' control of the union, production, and the state. They have moved in the direction of revolutionary Marxist conceptions of self-emancipation of the working class, of the relationship between party and class, and of workers' democracy. Starting from very different traditions and assumptions from our own, they have moved, in however halting and confused a fashion, toward politics of which the IS is the major expression in this country.

The IS has recently begun to win a reputation among some of them for our industrialization and involvement in the rank and file movement, which in turn has further opened them to our view of proletarian socialism -- of revolution from below. While for the most part they do not yet share either our revolutionary politics or our approach to the trade unions, their practical work has tended to reduce differences and allow for mutually beneficial discussion and collaboration. Those among these groups for whom we were previously pariahs have come away with a new respect for us, but unfortunately most of these groups are only dimly aware of our existence, work, and politics.

As the only national revolutionary and anti-Stalinist group which has an orientation and involvement in the working class, the IS has an important role to play in regrouping these revolutionaries into a strong working class revolutionary organization. Our current work can act as a nucleus for our regrouping with some of these tendencies, collectives, and independent organizations. Although our own roots in the working class are still shallow, they are stronger nationally than any other tendency or organization with the exception of the Moscow (CP) or Peking (RU) Stalinists. In acting as a nucleus for these groups a significant part of our initial industrial cadre can be won. Failure to pay attention to this stratum of radicals has lost some of them to other socialist sects, when by rights they and the IS should be finding their roads to each other. We must educate our ranks both on Maoist China, and in the method to win over groups moving in

our direction but starting from such different assumptions.

In the coming year, the IS will make a part of its perspective a major effort to enter into dialogue and collaboration with these groups. We will try to establish an ongoing, vigorous intellectual debate with the Maoists, particularly the independent Maoist currents. We will seek joint discussions, debates, propose collaboration and united front work with them, with the perspective of recruitment and regroupment. We will explore the possibilities of holding joint educational conferences with them, of joint work in the unions, of the feasibility of holding a national conference for groups actually involved in industrial work, and of a joint news service for the "underground labor" press.