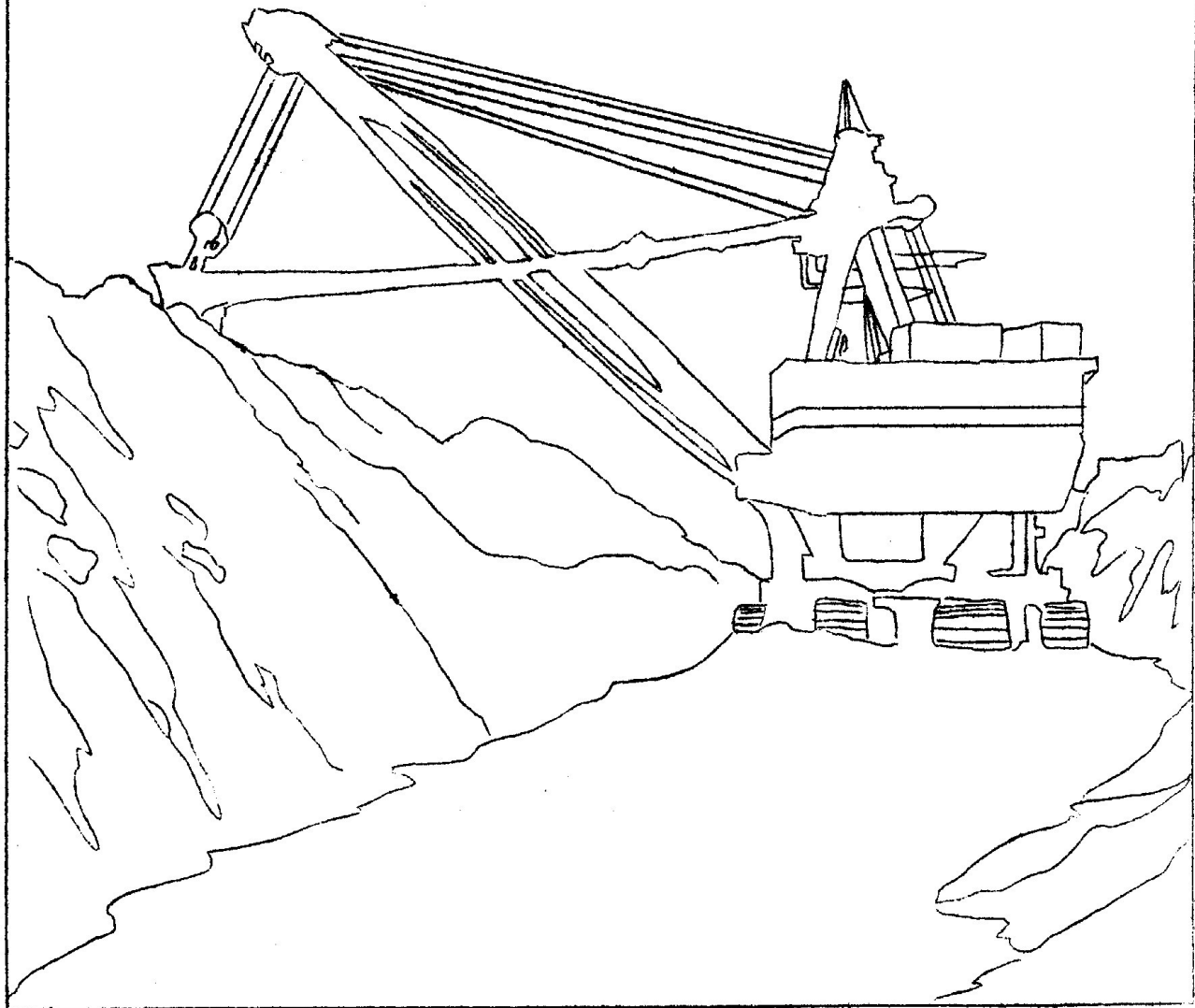


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## THE "MINORITY'S" POLITICAL MINE DISASTER

Brian M.

One can never be sure when the minority comrades vote for documents, amendments, etc., that they really don't agree with, whether our use of transitional program has really raised their consciousness, or whether it's just another maneuver. When the minority NAC members voted recently to accept the Mackenzie amendment to the Lynn Jones' MFD document, we fear it was the latter. That amendment was not put forward as some way to "bloc" with Lynn Jones, but in political counterposition to the conclusions of the Jones document and to the analysis of the Tabor document. It was, on this particular question (MFD), a "third camp position," so to speak. Not only did this step bring forth another brilliant display of minority tactics, but even the speculation that Mackenzie, and possibly others, had struck a deal with the devil. This brief document will try to deal with three problems: why the Mackenzie amendment was counterposed to the Jones section it replaced; why the minority was unprincipled to support the amendment; and why it is permissible for an adherent of the majority to use a minority document as the basis for amendment.

The section of the Jones document which was to be deleted and replaced deals with "progra" as the minority sees it. In particular, it quotes Engels to the effect that the German emigres in the U.S. in the 1880's were making a mistake by remaining aloof from the Knights of Labor and using their "dogma" as an excuse. Engels was right about the Germans, but the whole thing is rather beside the point. Actually a better quote would have been Marx's comment in 1875 that one real gain in the class struggle was worth a thousand programs. But that is still not the question. In Ron's document, the question was his political characterization of MFD and of the context in which we present program (struggle for revolutionary leadership, etc.); in the Jones document the problem is that there is no program. It is one thing to say that real gains in the class struggle are more important than programs, per se; it is quite another thing to leave it at that. Having said what he said, Marx went on to write the "Critique of the Gotha Program," which hardly indicates an indifference to the question. Jones, on the other hand, says simply that the miners should build "mass organizations in the coal fields" and "a labor party." These two disconnected slogans are supposed to gradually work up to the theoretical level. To put matters another way, Jones has no real program, on the one hand, and attempts to borrow an approach from Engels that was perhaps valid at that time, but which was being applied in an entirely different epoch - not to mentioned period.

On reading the two documents, Ron T. and Jones, I was struck by the fact that Ron T. argued for raising the slogan of nationalization under workers' control, while Jones argued against this. In fact, that seems to be the reason she regards Ron's program as ultimatic. In any case, she does not raise that slogan. In a monumental act of naivete, I perceived that to be a real political difference - both between T. and Jones, and Jones and myself. One can hardly accept the notion that,

given the debate and the nature of the documents, Jones or the NAC minority representatives simply overlooked this slogan. No, in fact, the use of this slogan implies a different approach. My reading of the final section of the Jones document was that it was more or less simple "tailism." My approach is different. It is one that demands of us leadership in struggle and, therefore, the need to lead programmatically as well as tactically. In fact, I see "program" for workers' struggles as including tactics, as well as demands, organizational conceptions, political conceptions, etc. My differences with Ron are too complex to go into here, but with Jones and the minority NAC members it is simple. They denied the applicability of transitional program in this period and they continue to write documents, make statements, etc. to prove their sincerity. At the same time, however, they vote for things they really don't agree with.

One example of this is that convention delegates of the minority voted for the Mackenzie labor document. Yet, this document contains at least two political conceptions that they consistently argue against. One is, of course, the question of transitional program. The other, is the notion that it is the unions that are our political arenas and not the shop floor. This does not deny the importance of shop floor struggle, but it does insist that our caucuses be viewed as rank and file union caucuses. Yet again and again we hear and read about "shop floor caucuses." We see the confusion this has produced vis a vis UNC and its leadership. This is a "tactical" question, but one with political consequences - it is not an "organizational" question. It ties in with strategy for a revolutionary party and an estimate of where political fissures are most likely to occur in the labor movement. If minority members can vote for this document, it is only because they don't view these questions as important - unless, of course, they just don't read documents carefully.

Similarly, for reasons I can't imagine, the minority changes its position on MFD. Having rejected nationalization, they now accept it. Their way of dealing with my bothersome habit of raising the notion of transitional program, is to put a statement in the NAC minutes saying they disagree with it, but agree with everything else. We are not even treated to an explanation of why they now favor the slogan of nationalization under workers' control. All of this implies a certain lack of seriousness about what we say to workers. After all, comrades, it makes a difference what we tell workers. Some day they just might listen - some places they already do. We are not just juggling slogans, comrades, we are dealing with the lives of miners. Their lives are precarious enough without us taking a flip position toward what we say to or about them.

Some majority comrades have responded to my amending a minority document as though it was treason - or even some move toward the minority. It was neither. I could have written a first section on MFD myself, but I found the Jones description of MFD to be suitable. That is all. But I want to make it clear that I regard correctness on labor -- or any other -- questions as above factional loyalty. If I feel that

majority comrades are making mistakes, in documents or practice, in labor matters I will say so. I consider anyone who subordinates their actual politics to factional considerations to be unprincipled. That is my objection to the way the minority NAC members behaved on my amendment. In fact, I am generally concerned about the way important questions are being handled in a factional manner. In the current factional atmosphere it is virtually impossible to test our practice in the labor movement. That is, people are afraid to raise criticisms of practice for fear they will be charged with factionalism. At the same time, some criticisms are factionally motivated. I don't pretend to have a solution to this problem, but I certainly don't intend to subordinate my view of issues to factional considerations.

Secondly, the majority is not a coherent political tendency, faction, or whatever. It is, in fact, a voting bloc with a variety of views on many questions. It is a justified goal to seek to build a coherent majority, but it is not justified to act as though one existed. It does no good, in building a cadre organization, to create myths, and then attempt to live by them. A number of us in NY asked that positions be considered within the majority before being generally put forth. We felt this would help build a genuine majority. The NAC majority has rejected this approach, and it now appears unlikely that such agreement can be achieved. All agreed, however, that it would have been a political mistake for the majority to act as a disciplined faction. Since all are agreed on this, there really should not have been such dismay at my amending a minority document - since this did not imply political agreement with them. As for the minority, it is my own opinion that they are scarcely more coherent than the majority. Certainly, their attempt to be disciplined is not justified. It is worth noting that the labor practice of various minority comrades is quite diverse.

## COMMENTS ON THE MFD DISCUSSION

Dave F.

I would like to add a couple of points to the discussion around the various documents put forward on the question of our analysis of and attitude toward the Miners For Democracy. I agree with the Mackenzie amendment to the Lynn Jones document and with his motivation. There are several points I think should be added, however, both to the political discussion and to what is emerging as a shadow debate over who really agrees with whom on this and other labor questions in the I.S. I feel it is important for me to put these points in writing, even if none of them are especially profound, since I didn't feel that the NAC discussion was satisfactory or that my own contribution to it helped to clarify matters very much.

The first thing that comrades should understand is that the view (which I, like Brian, find rather curious) that there were no political differences between Brian's amendment and the original Lynn Jones document <sup>was</sup> not held only by the "minority" (Transformation Caucus) comrades. The same view, i.e. that Mackenzie adopts essentially the minority's approach on the MFD issue, was expressed forcefully by the other three members of the NAC majority (Chris, Ron and Sy) as well. This rather surprising attitude on the part of Chris, Ron, and Sy flows from a mistaken set of assumptions about what is being discussed here, especially the idea that the use of transitional program for theminers' struggle is relevant only in the context of calling for revolutionary leadership in the trade unions. Thus, Brian's explanation of the difference between his amendment and Jones - to which I will add a couple of points of my own below - is not intended only for the benefit of the TC comrades but also for comrades in the majority who do not see where the differences in approach lie.

Secondly, I want to underscore the point that the question of which document one chooses to amend in such a discussion, even though important, should not be seen as the most burning issue of the day. It would be one thing if we were discussing convention documents, which determine the fundamental program, perspective and leadership for a substantial period of time. We have had in the past - both at the 1970 and 1972 conventions - unfortunate experiences where "amendments" were presented to basic convention documents which had the effect of destroying or fundamentally altering the political character of the document. In 1970 such a set of amendments (Big Red) was passed. In 1972 another set of amendments (Weber, Bradley) was defeated. The political development and growth of the I.S. has been harmed by this method of defining our perspectives, since the result is that the convention votes settle very little and leave most of the questions up for grabs indefinitely (as has been the case, in fact, from 1970 to the present).

It is a different question, however, when what is involved is not a convention decision on fundamental policy and perspective but rather a NAC discussion to establish a line on an immediate question

like the MFD or some other aspect of our labor work - a line which must be understood to represent an extension and implementation of overall perspectives. Here the task of the entire leadership is to attempt to function collectively, even given the existence of political differences which are known to everyone (without any attempt to suppress or smudge over these differences in the discussion itself). The goal of such a discussion is to produce the clearest and most accurate assessment of a concrete situation and the most effective and consistent interventionist political line to be tested in practice. This is true whether our involvement is direct, through industrialization, indirect (TURF) or restricted more or less to external propaganda (MFD) at a given point. In this context Brian's point that political correctness, especially on the question of the labor movement, must be above factional loyalty is absolutely crucial.

In my view the minority's vote in support of the Mackenzie amendment and statement on the MFD question was an attempt to act in such a responsible fashion. This attempt is unsuccessful and dys-functional, unfortunately, because of their lack of understaing (and, I am increasingly convinced, inability to understand) the relation between our conception of the use of transitional program and our actual concrete political work in the labor movement.

I should make a further point on this whole question of amending documents. Before Brian's amendment was written, I was intending to put forward some amendments of my own with the same political thrust - not to LJ's document, but to Ron's. If anyone thinks, however, that this would have produced a better, clearer, or more "principled" discussion or helped to clarify political lines between the majority and the minority, I assure them that the exact opposite is the case. The amendments I was preparing would have consisted of adding to Ron's document large chunks of LJ's description of the MFD and its leadership, plus amending piecemeal a whole series of Ron's statements and formulations. I would also have added one or two paragraphs of my own to explain the contradiction (not treated adequately by either RF or LJ) between the politics of the MFD - and for that matter the politics of most rank and file miners! - the logic of which leads to capitulation and defeat, and the dynamic of the class struggle in the mines in this period, which has a very different logic and direction in the context of a successful reform insurgency in the union. This, however, would have meant a relatively fragmented and piecemeal discussion probably resulting in an implicitly contradictory and ambiguous (both with respect to analysis and conclusions) document.

There is no way in the world that I could have produced a separate document of my own, having neither Lynn's extremely valuable first-hand knowledge of the miners' movement nor the general expertise that is needed to produce a decent political perspective on this question. What was needed, and what the Mackenzie amendment

was intended to offer, was a third point of view drawing from LJ's description of the MFD a set of political programmatic conclusions different from both RT and LJ and in particular orienting our propaganda toward arming rank and file militants with a program they could use in the struggles which they will be forced to lead. The reason for amending LJ's document was explained in Brian's motivation, i.e. his view (which I share) that Ron's whole description and analysis of the MFD (its so-called bureaucratic reform character) is distorted and forced into pigeon-hole categories by the way in which he attempts to pose our own role. Attempts by anyone to prove from this that Brian's method is "closer" to LJ than to RT on this question is an exercise in quasi-factional scholasticism. (Brian's amendment deleted the whole of LJ's perspective discussion. One does not usually amend a document with which one agrees politically by massive substitution).

Getting closer to the actual substance of the discussion, I don't think it is correct to say that the minority's support of the Mackenzie amendment was a maneuver or an attempt to form a "bloc." It simply reflects their belief that the use of transitional program in the amendment is a decorative phrase unconnected with the actual program or politics involved. This is entirely consistent with the entire approach of the TC toward the issue of program, and explains why (as Brian points out) they literally do not notice that their own document implicitly argues against nationalization under workers' control as part of our interventionist program, while Mackenzie argues for it. Indeed, if the program is not to be used in the process of "building a rank and file movement on the shop floor" - which from the minority's point of view it is not - it makes little difference whether or not any given point is included.

It is not quite accurate, however, to say that LJ and the minority have no program for the miners' struggle, although there certainly is none put forward in the Jones document. The heart of the minority's concrete approach to the MFD is a two-point agitational program: (i) build a democratic rank-and-file membership organization, and (ii) build a struggle around health and safety in the mines. Both of these are excellent agitational ideas - particularly given the probable plans of the MFD leadership to scuttle MFD as an organization altogether after the upcoming district elections - and might in fact be important in catalyzing the development of a political left wing among advanced miners. This, however, is where the difference in practice begin.

The key to Lynn's approach is the first two sentences of her discussion of "The Role of Revolutionaries": "It is a given that the problems of miners, like the problems of the working class as a whole, require a revolutionary solution - the dictatorship of the proletariat. No other solution, including nationalization of industry under workers' control, can insure the undisputed rule of the working class." In other words, nationalization under workers' control, as a propagandistic idea, has the same character as the

dictatorship of the proletariat. In line with the whole TC approach toward program in a non-revolutionary period (which for them is defined as any point in time at which the consciousness of masses of workers is not high enough to mobilize them around transitional demands), she views the key demands raised by Mackenzie to be perfectly unobjectionable as long as they are understood to be maximal propaganda (to use Joel's phrase), just like the dictatorship of the proletariat. The meaning of this, of course, is that the transitional demands which form the heart of Mackenzie's amendment - nationalization under workers' control, independent political action to force government action on health and safety and other issues - are not to be "counterposed to the movement" (this is the significance of LJ's quotation from Engels).

Now Jack and Joel, admirably enough, do not want to let a theoretical difference on transitional program stand in the way of reaching concrete political agreement on perspectives. There is a problem, however. In real life, they would not be for making the program demands of the Mackenzie amendment part of our immediate program in crystallizing a rank and file leadership. (A side note: I think it should be clear, although neither Ron nor the minority seem to understand it in this debate, that for advanced miners to move around these transitional demands would be a tremendous leap forward but would constitute something far, far short of "revolutionary leadership"). Under the minority's conception, transitional demands would remain as propagandistic abstractions - the proof of which is precisely the fact that they object to calling them transitional demands! Our actual work would be limited more or less to trying to exert pressure from below for the MFD to carry out their agitational demands mentioned above. This would be the very model of Jack and Joel's conception of "non-sectarianism" and "explaining the next step to the movement", but would be totally inadequate and ineffective. Among other things, without the use of key transitional demands we could not give any political content to the agitational demand for a democratic organization and thus would be incapable of organizing a layer of militants to fight for the formation of the organization.

This, in a nutshell, is why it is politically wrong and dysfunctional for the minority to support Mackenzie's amendment, the practical implementation of which they would denounce for "sectarianism" just as strongly as they currently denounce Ron's point of view.

Lack of time prevents me from going here into the remaining points I wanted to make regarding the differences I have with Ron's approach to this issue. I am in the process of preparing a separate document in response to Ron's "On the Transitional Program," in which I will try to discuss the use of program as a tool to intervene in the formation of working class consciousness (which Ron handles inadequately), and the role of program in our attempt to become a real live wing of the labor movement. Some of the differences over



the MFD may come into clearer focus in such a discussion. For the moment, I simply want to indicate that I am in agreement with large portions of Ron's document and most of his critique of Joel's conception. My differences with Ron lie in three areas: (i) some aspects of the relationship of program to consciousness; (ii) Ron's generally uncritical and one-sided reading of the Program of 1938; (iii) some aspects of Ron's critique of our functioning of the past, e.g. his crude blanket rejection of the Peace and Freedom Party conception (he is right with respect to the substitutionalist leadership role of the ISC during much of the PFP period, but this does not exhaust the whole question of our attitude toward independent political action on a radical but non-working class basis).

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REPLY TO BRIAN M. ON THE MFD  
Ron T.

Introduction. Brian Mackenzie's amendments to the Lynn Jones document on the Miners For Democracy and his accompanying Motivation are welcome as elaboration of one approach to this important question. The following is a reply to his Motivation, which is basically an attack on my document. Although he claims he did not find my programmatic section to be "so bad," he still chose to amend the Jones document. He also chose to make no comments on her perspective (the whole of which he deleted) nor on her article in WP which had some serious drawbacks. Since it is customary in an interventionist organization to seek agreement on the question of perspective and therefore to amend a document that puts forward a perspective closest to one's own, Mackenzie's decision to amend the Jones document suggests that there is more behind his disagreement than an analysis of the MFD.

I. Brian's Imagination.

Although Brian recognizes that I describe the MFD as "composed of elements" from the movement among the miners, and that it is my political conception of the MFD that he disagrees with, he still could not resist distorting things I wrote.

For example, I never describe the MFD as an "apparatus," as he claims on p.2 of his "Motivation." I said that it has an apparatus and that some young miners have been brought into it. Now, everybody admits that the MFD does not have a mass membership, that is, that it is not a membership organization; in fact, in its program it states that the MFD has no membership lists and no dues. Nevertheless, it functions, organized an extensive legal campaign in addition to the election campaign, has a coterie of lawyers, puts out a newspaper. What does one call the structure that enable it to do such things? I called it an apparatus, which is correct. I could have named it "machinery" but that would probably not have satisfied Brian.

Further, I never claimed that the MFD was an "alien" force. I stated that it "rode the wave of this unorganized movement of the younger miners. . ." The point is that the MFD as such, did not organize this movement. The MFD is not synonymous with this movement. The article in the Southern Patriot quoted in my document makes virtually the same point: "The reform movement was able to give leadership and a political outlook to this unorganized mass movement." I also stated quite clearly that the MFD was a coalition of various rank and file leaders, some reform minded elements of the UMW bureaucracy (there are not too many of these), with "some friends in high places in the liberal establishment." But the MFD basically grew out of Yablonski's campaign organization (Trbovich was Yablonski's campaign manager), attracted many militant miners, alienated others, and building on the general discontent and giving it expression, and with a carefully planned legal strategy, got itself elected. Nobody with any knowledge of the situation can claim that the mass of rank and file miners looked to and trusted the MFD as an organization of their own creation. They voted for it to beat Boyle.

Mackenzie's central assertion that I consider the MFD to be an "alien" force is a red-herring. Sociologically, the MFD is not "alien" to the miners' union. It is part of it and grew out of it. It is also not a pure spontaneous emanation (if any such thing exists) either, but this is beside the point. Our difference is not really over the sociological description, although Mackenzie chose to pose it this way. The question is what the MFD represents politically. Marxists have always argued that reformist leadership and reformism generally represent alien class politics in the labor movement. This is the logical deduction from a method that takes as its starting point the historical struggle of the working class for socialism. Only Marxism is the proletarian standpoint, every other ideology, current, etc. is alien, politically representing other classes or strata in society. With this in mind, we can state that politically, the MFD is an alien force, despite the fact that it may or may not represent the thinking of the "average" miner or may or may not be led by people who come out of the pits. Brian hopes that by arguing that I think the MFD is "alien" to the miners' struggle he can show that I really don't think the MFD victory was an important step forward for the miners' struggle.

Brian also accuses me of saying that the MFD provided the "basis for a 'safe way out' of some imaginary revolutionary situation that had the ruling class trembling." It is Brian's imagination that is at work here; nowhere do I state any such notion that a "revolutionary situation" was in the offing. What I did say was the following: "This movement coalesced under the leadership of the MFD and on the basis of its program. The ruling class, first its liberal wing and then (after the Yablonski murders and the inevitable outcry that developed when the culprits were caught and traced to Boyle) its more conservative wing saw the MFD as a relatively safe way out of an increasingly tense situation that might have resulted in an explosion in the future." (Emphasis added - RT)

Would Mackenzie deny that had the Boyle clique remained in office a possibly explosive situation would have developed in the future? The past period has seen nearly armed warfare in southeastern Kentucky in the early 60's, a rising ferment, the Black Lung movement, wildcats, mass demonstrations at the W.Va. state capital, the expansion of both production and employment (and the increase in confidence and combativeness that this usually brings), the breakaway of Yablonski (a loyal member of the UMW International Executive Board since 1942) and the murder of Yablonski and his family. Would Mackenzie argue that the impact of these developments, coming up against the death-grip with which Boyle held the union would not have resulted in a mass upsurge of substantial size? No "revolutionary situation," just a more or less disorganized mass strike movement that would have posed serious problems for the mineowners, the union bureaucrats, and the ruling class generally.

And the liberals, who are not dopes, have moved before to head off, or control similar developments by aiding and attempting to control reformist leaderships that emerged out of this kind of ferment. Wasn't this the motivation behind the efforts of Norris, Wagner, and the other sponsors of labor legislation in the 30's? Didn't they hope that by formalizing certain aspects of collective bargaining, granting the workers certain rights and establishing legal machinery they could eliminate certain disruptive and potentially explosive aspects of labor relations and win the cooperation of the bureaucrats (both liberal and conservative) who were strengthened by these procedures?

Nixon, who is less favorably disposed to reformist movements than are the liberals, however, needed some heavy prodding. Court suits, a wave of wildcat strikes, and a growing public outcry against Boyle finally convinced him "that Boyle was an embarrassment and useless in keeping the miners' struggle within acceptable bounds." (Original MFD document) Faced with the choice of Boyle and Miller, he knew which he had to support, even though he came to this conclusion grudgingly.

(I might add that there is evidence to indicate that the mine owners themselves began to realize that Boyle could not be counted on to discipline the rank and file. The latest issue of People's Appalachia (the periodical of the People's Appalachian Research Collective), no halfway supporters of the MFD, suggests this.)

If this is not true, why no outcry about the dangers of the MFD, why no red-baiting, and other elementary forms of ruling class concern? Student demonstrations have provoked more of a hostile response than did the MFD. Brian may not agree with my analysis of what did happen, but it is certainly not "the ruling class rushed to support the MFD" or that "the ruling class was cheering the MFD on." Brian's technique is to caricature my argument, to set up a series of straw men, and then with great, detached reasonableness, to demolish his own constructions.

## II. Who is Joseph Rauh?

On another level, Brian states that I misunderstand the role and significance of the MFD's liberal advisors and connections. Joseph Rauh, I am told, is not "hanging around as representative of the 'left-wing' of the capitalist class"; he only represents the Reuther/Woodcock wing of the labor bureaucrats. Yet, Mackenzie knows that Rauh is no minor campaign worker for George McGovern (there are plenty of those around the MFD) nor simply a lawyer hired by the labor bureaucrats: he knows he has capitalist politics, that he was formerly head of the Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) and has close ties to the Kennedy family and entourage. The ADA, organized to be the link between the Reuther wing of the bureaucracy and the New Deal / Fair Deal liberals, was his thing. He ran it for Hubert H. Humphrey. I mean, this man is prominent; people know where he's going and what he's doing; he's a leader of the Democratic Party in Washington. Does anyone think that leading

liberal politicians (who are paid to represent the liberal wing of the ruling class) did not know what he was doing in the MFD or didn't care? There he is. . . Mr. ADA (as he was always called). . . loitering around the labor department. . . panhandling on the street corners, . . selling pencils on the buses, . . arrested for vagrancy. . .

Rauh's whole history has been the cooptation of leftish movements; he was Humphrey's open agent in the attempt to pressure the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party into being nice at the huge blowup at the 1964 Democratic Party National Convention. I suppose that he was just a lawyer hired by Humphrey. Maybe the word "representative" is incorrect; a better one would have been "agent."

This role as representative of the liberal wing of the ruling class is not, as Brian seems to think, counterposed to the contention that Rauh represents the Reuther/Woodcock wing of the labor bureaucracy. In fact, since we have always argued that the labor bureaucrats are agents of the capitalist class within the labor movement, it should not take too much insight for us to realize that Rauh, who floats very freely in certain circles, is a representative of both the liberal bureaucrats and the liberal wing of the capitalist class. In fact, it is one of the specific functions of the DP liberals to be a link between the two. Rauh's efforts to recruit Miller et al. to Woodcock's and Reuther's politics dovetailed quite nicely with the liberals' general approach toward controlling the rank and file of the labor movement, through the liberal bureaucrats. Just a coincidence, huh?

### III. The MFD's program.

The real question, however, is not the MFD's origins nor its ties to, or dependence on, the liberals. It is its program, and it is our approach to this that is really at issue, not an analysis of the MFD alone.

Perhaps it is dangerous to use the word "bureaucratic" as an adjective to "program." Limiting my characterization of the MFD program to "reformist" might have made Brian happier, but my approach would have been the same. The fact is the MFD's program is bureaucratic as is any reformist program. This is not because of the origins of the MFD, not because of the personal motivations (which are not important) of Miller, Trbovich, and Patrick. The designation is based on an objective assessment of the MFD's program itself, its "limitations," and its relationship to the present state of capitalism. The MFD program implies that its goals can be won under capitalism, that they can be won without breaking its ties to the liberals, without a struggle against the state, and without encroaching upon private ownership of the mines. The program therefore represents a semi-radical, but still pro-capitalist current in the labor movement.

Rank and file control of the unions can only be won under a leadership that is prepared to fight to the end for the needs of the workers. Any leadership that accepts capitalism must be prepared to mediate between the needs of the rank and file and the needs of capital, which are, from a Marxist standpoint, counterposed. A leadership (even one that is very radical) that accepts capitalism will be naturally forced to discipline the workers, hold back, derail or channel the struggle, and therefore, to resort to bureaucratic methods, at such point where the workers' demands conflict with the needs of capital, that is, everywhere. Therefore the only program that can bring rank and file control is a revolutionary program, since any other program implies disciplining the workers in the interest of capital. A reformist program representing a present or potential bureaucratic grouping -- this is what the MFD's program now is.

Mackenzie argues in reply that the MFD program is very advanced and that any other program "being put forward in the unions, including any of our own" is utopian and misleading. Unfortunately, Brian is a bit confused about what the term utopian really means. It does not mean just "way out," achievable only in one's dreams, etc. It means an ideal goal posed outside of any historical context, disconnected from any scientific conception of historical development. The MFD program is utopian because it poses its goals without regard to what is necessary to win them. It promises rank and file control over the union without posing the necessity of struggle against the capitalist state (on the contrary - it thinks such rank and file control can be won by relying on the bourgeois state); it promises safe working conditions in the mines without posing the necessity to struggle against capitalist ownership and control or for that matter the need to build a mass organization merely to force the companies to live up to the Federal Mine Safety standards. It's leadership (Trbovich at the District 31 MFD Caucus meeting) talks about learning to mine coal in the interests of both the miners and the national security in light of the energy crisis. Their program is utopian, it is a list of promises, many of which are false.

The programs we put forward in the unions at any given time and place may or may not be our full program. But the connection between the programs we do put forward and our goal (socialism) should always be made clear. Moreover, the purpose of a program of transitional demands is to make the connection between the immediate demands and this goal as concrete as possible to pose the struggle for socialism as a struggle for a series of measures that together mean workers' control of production and a workers' state. In this way, the programs we put forward in the unions, no matter how "unrealistic" and "way out" they may sound, are not utopian in any sense of the word; they are placed firmly in the context of class struggle, leading to the smashing of the capitalist state and the establishment of a state of the workers. Of course, if we pose the programs for the unions in a reformist manner and hide the fact that we think that they cannot be won separate from the overall struggle for a workers' government, then we are putting forward utopian programs. It is only because nationalization of industry

under workers' control, a workers' government, socialism, etc., are in fact part of our program for the unions -- even if we do not put them forward agitationaly or for adoption by any particular caucus, and because we make this clear in our propaganda that the specific partial programs we may put forward are not utopian.

The MFD leadership accepts capitalism; that is, in fact, the crucial part of its program. It will therefore betray the rest of its program, its promises and, therefore the rank and file miners when the struggle begins to threaten the stability or the productivity of the industry. It is here that the bureaucratic and utopian nature of the MFD program has its origins. This eventuality can be seen quite clearly in the remarks of Trbovich addressed to the District 31 MFD caucus meeting, Saturday, February 24. One of the main themes of his 5 minute speech to the approximately 100 miners present was the fact that there have been too many wildcats, too many hours and wages lost; that because of the energy crisis, the UMW will have to learn how to mine coal safely in the interests of both the miners and the national security. What should we say about this in WP?

For those who prefer sociology, the MFD is bureaucratic in the narrow sense. It has no organized membership, there are no dues, voting strength at the District caucus meetings are based on size of the locals not on the size of MFD support in the locals, etc. Furthermore, it has publicly stated its intention to disband after the district elections. If they do this, it will leave Miller et al. in contact with no MFD as excess baggage. Do the miners control Miller, Trbovich, and Patrick, or the MFD generally? No, therefore the MFD and their control are bureaucratic. The fact that they are "advanced" bureaucrats is true but not the point for the moment.

#### IV. On the Question of Critical Support.

Central to Mackenzie's point of view is his conception of critical support. Although it may be unfair to fully characterize his position on the basis of his Motivation, I think there is enough there to open a discussion and provoke a fuller presentation. The key is the following sentence: "That is, although it is neither a rank and file organization nor a democratic organization, it is an organized embodiment of real class struggle based on a progressive program and as such a step forward in the struggle. Its election victory is still another step forward in spite of what we know the future holds in store for the MFD leaders. It is for these reasons we critically support the MFD and the new MFD leaders."

The Leninist attitude toward struggles led by reformists is not simply an analytical nor academic question. Nor do we support (however critical or uncritical) movement to cheer them on. Our attitude must be closely tied to political intervention of one variety or another. With this in mind, critical support is not a position for the record, but a tactic by which we attempt to win the rank and file of reformist movements to our point of view, i.e. to our program. In this sense,

critical support also represents one form of opposition to the reformist leaders of these movements that enable us to struggle side by side with the rank and file (or if we have no direct presence, to enable us to get their ear) and to expose the reformist leaders, in the process of the ranks' growing awareness and eventually struggle against these leaders. Our support for the steps forward of reformist movements is revolutionary only if we understand and make clear to the workers that, if they are to achieve their goals, a struggle against the present leadership, not with it, or through it, will be necessary. We do this in the context of pointing out how to move the struggle forward; we raise tactical and strategic ideas about how to mobilize the ranks against the companies, how to win better conditions, higher wages, etc.. We explain our point of view in as non-sectarian a manner as possible, and do not make our support conditional upon the ranks' agreement with us. But we do not spread illusions about the leadership or cover our criticisms in order to be "non-sectarian."

If Miller does manage to produce some tangible gains, this will be the result not so much of Miller's progressiveness, but rather of his response (in order to maintain control) to the pressure of a restive rank and file who are pushing for more than Miller et al. can deliver. In this context, one of our functions as revolutionaries is to identify the source of the "steps forward" of the movement as the result of the power of the rank and file, not the goodness of its current leaders.

The way forward for reformist movements, then, is not in a unilinear fashion, as the sum of the steps under reformist leadership, but a dialectical process involving an unceasing struggle against all reformist leadership. Our critical support to reformist leadership is, as Lenin described it in "Left-Wing Communism," support the way a rope supports a hanged man. We call upon the reformists to carry out their program. We point out methods how this can be done, and organize the workers to do so. We do this because we know that the reformist leaders will vacillate and betray, and therefore expose themselves before the masses. But we never hide the fact that we know this is what they will do. If we do not make this crystal clear, the workers will not see us as a better, more clear-sighted, honest and determined leadership, but will become demoralized and disillusioned.

With this approach I would give critical support to a reform movement with an even less advanced program than the MFD and perhaps to one wing of the bureaucracy over another, e.g. to Yablonski in his campaign against Boyle. Of course, critical support is only justified when the elements we are supporting are those who will become susceptible to being pressured by the rank and file. Otherwise the conception is a trick. Brian argues that my analysis of the MFD should preclude my giving it critical support. Since I do believe that the election of Miller et al. is an important victory, as I stated in my document,



Brian's arguments only indicate his confusion over what critical support really means. My analysis requires an approach of critical support as a means to further the struggle and expose the MFD leadership. If Brian doesn't see this, it is because he does not understand the Leninist notion of critical support.

Brian confuses the relationship between the MFD program with the consciousness of the miners. He argues that the MFD program is to the "left" of the consciousness of most miners. If this means that the MFD program is more radical than what most rank and filers would put forward today, it is true. But this is because they are cynical, they do not see a way to win what they really need. In fact, the actions of the miners are far to the left of Miller, et al.; those who wildcat are to the left of those leaders who argue for stopping the wildcats in the interests of the national security, those who want an on-going mass organization of rank and file miners are more to the left of the MFD leadership that wants to dissolve the MFD after the district elections. What Brian is actually saying is that the ranks did not formulate a crystallized program to the left of the formal program (remerber, they will not carry it out) of the MFD. But this is not news and no reason to refrain from trying to expose the MFD leadership. Mackenzie's approach implies that we pose our program as the logical extension of the program of the MFD, that is, what is needed to make it "complete." But our program for the miners is no more the "logical extension" of the program of the MFD than is our program for the international working class the "logical extension" of the program of the reformists.

As Marxists, we know that the dynamic of a struggle for the miners' real needs means going far beyond the program of their reformist leaders. Hence we start from the needs of the miners (in the context of the needs of the international working class and all the oppressed) and put forward a program that meets these needs. This program is in fact counterposed to the program of the MFD. But just saying this is not sufficient; instead we want to utilize the miners' own experiences to convince them of this fact. We therefore call on the MFD to fulfill its promises and we try to organize the miners to force them to do so. The exposure of the MFD leadership and its program will only occur if we have put our program forward as an alternative and have patiently explained why the MFD had to betray its program, why the struggle for the miners' needs requires a break with the capitalist class, a struggle against the state, and a struggle to expropriate the mineowners and place the mines under the control of the workers. It is precisely because the MFD program is radical that we must put forward our program very clearly and raise our criticisms in as precise a manner as possible. Unless we do this, we will be incapable of winning any sizable segment of the rank and file to us. If we wait until the ranks catch up with the MFD before we attempt to expose it, we will find ourselves far behind the rank and file when the struggle takes a large leap forward. The notion that we do not say what we expect will happen to the MFD, or that the MFD will expose themselves without constant criticism is a dangerous illusion and a manipulative conception.

A methodology that bases one's approach on the fact that its program is to the "left" of the rank and file will lead one astray very quickly. Mackenzie ought to know this. In the late forties, the Workers Party/Independent Socialist League (WP/ISL) started out critically supporting Walter Reuther in his struggle with the Stalinist-backed leadership in the UAW. He was a bureaucrat and an officer in the union, but he had a militant program, and after he added some extremely radical demands (30 for 40, open the books, wage increases without price increase, for example) at the time of the 1946 GM strike, his program seemed quite a bit to the left of the average rank and file. When the WP/ISL first broached the critical support policy, it was far more critical of Reuther than Mackenzie is of the MFD. It openly stated that a revolutionary leadership was necessary as an alternative to Reuther, that they were not Reutherites, that Reuther would not carry out his program. The WP/ISL because of its Stalinophobia, among other things, quickly lost sight of the fact that the reason it was critically supporting Reuther was to expose him, and actually began supporting him. And with the fifties and the conservatization of the working class that this brought (Reuther had a little hand in this), the ISL continued to support Reuther, holding him up as a "progressive" union leader (a socialist even) because he had a "left" program, i.e. because he was to the "left of the workers." The ISL forgot that it is the task of all revolutionaries to expose all reformist leadership. It came to believe that one could only begin actively criticizing and exposing him when the consciousness of the ranks was about to move "beyond" Reuther's program.

Isn't this Mackenzie's method? Doesn't he argue that it is sectarian to pose the need for an alternative to the MFD, because the MFD is to the "left" of the rank and file? Isn't there the implication that even though we know the MFD leaders will sell out we don't warn the workers of this, we don't make the essential point clear until the workers are about to go beyond the program of the MFD? Historically, this method has been called "tailism" and always leads to apologia for reformism as it did with Shachtman and the ISL.

#### V. Revolutionary leadership.

If we, as revolutionaries, believe that reformist leadership will betray its own promises, that is, the program it runs on, we are in fact calling for an alternative, a new leadership. If we believe that nationalization of the mines under the control of the miners is necessary to ensure safe mines, and we believe that a reformist leadership will not fight for this demand (at best they may fight for bourgeois nationalization), we are in fact calling for a leadership that will not be bound by a loyalty to capitalist property relations. Is this another set of reformist leaders? No, it is a revolutionary leadership. Do we keep this necessary deduction of our approach a secret because it is too "advanced" or because it sounds "sectarian"? Given our present size, the level of the class struggle, the size of the revolutionary element of the class (tiny), we cannot and do not put forward winning of a revolutionary leadership as an immediate possibility, nor can we put ourselves forward as that leadership.

On the other hand we do wish to make it clear that we think such a leadership is necessary "to carry the struggle through to completion." This is obviously a task of our propaganda. In fact, this propagandistic statement of the necessity of revolutionary leadership as the alternative to the reformists is part of the policy of critical support. Why else do we criticize reformist leadership, simply because they do not go "far enough"? because they are not militant enough? From a revolutionary point of view, a policy of critical support is a tactic in the struggle for a revolutionary leadership; it is one way we try to win the advanced workers to this important concept.

It is significant that Brian objects to mentioning the notion of revolutionary leadership in my document. If he thinks the idea is a truism, a "timeless statement," why hasn't he ever argued for putting forward this idea in our press? I prefer trying to make the concept as concrete as possible in the context of a real struggle, but if he wants to put the notion forward "in general," that is at least an improvement over not saying it at all. In fact, Brian is not for putting forward the concept in our press other than just as another position for the record, as in our convention documents. But the logic of his position has some bad consequences. He argues that we can't say that revolutionary leadership is "what's really needed when we know damn well (how emphatic) that neither us nor anyone else can carry it through." Why not? We say a revolution is needed as an alternative to this society when we know that we can't carry this through right now. We call for a revolutionary party as an alternative to all reformist parties, even though we can't create this party today, or even tomorrow. Since we can't form the revolutionary party tomorrow, do we give up and call for a reformist party? We might give such a party, if it were based on the labor movement, critical support, while still making it clear that a revolutionary party (a revolutionary leadership of the class) is needed as opposed to the reformists. Why are these so different? In fact propagandistically advocating revolutionary leadership is another way, a more concrete way, of propagandistically advocating a revolutionary party.

The real question here is: Do we tell the truth to the workers? I say revolutionary leadership is necessary. Brian says it is necessary (although only in a "timeless" sort of way). Everybody says it's necessary. Why isn't everybody for saying this to the workers?

Actually, Brian doubts "that Ron would defend the notion that this is a period in which the struggle for revolutionary leadership is an immediate task." I certainly do not believe that the IS, or any other revolutionary group, can put themselves forward as immediate contenders for power in the unions today. But this isn't news, because I never said I did. I do believe that every comrade and every worker we can reach with our propaganda should know that what we are doing in the unions is struggling to build a revolutionary leadership, in the sense I describe above. The program, ideas, and purpose of the IS is to build a revolutionary leadership as an alternative to the present cliques of reactionary, "left", and potential bureaucrats.

We believe this is the only way forward, the only answer. If we say this to our members, why can't we say it to the workers? Not many will accept it? True; that's what makes it a task of propoganda. But it is no different than many other things we call for and which most workers will see as utopian, crazy, stupid, and unrealistic. Perhaps we should call ourselves simply "the Militant Trade Unionists" so as not to scare people. Styling ourselves revolutionary socialists but not proclaiming our intention and task to fight for revolutionary leadership is misleading and opportunistic.

In the same way of arguing, Brian contends that I am putting forward the notion that a revolutionary party can be built simply be accreting to the IS. But no where do I say this. I put forward a tasks and perspectives document last year that described our tasks vis a vis organizing and training the advanced layer of workers, and described this layer as the future cadres of the revolutionary party. I still stand by this idea. I also argued that the task of building a revolutionary party must be approached consciously and actively, instead of talking about the building of such a party as the task for some indefinite point in the future, or as the necessary result of the inexorable historical process. Consequently, I do not counterpose building the IS either to building the revolutionary party or to our work in the trade unions. What we are doing is building a revolutionary party. Unfortunately, Brian appears to accept the notion that a strategy of building the party through fusing with the advanced layer of the working class means that we do not need an aggressive propogandistic intervention addressed to the need for revolutionary leadership of the trade unions and a revolutionary party. I do not share this conception; we are obligated to help this advanced layer reach those conclusions. Do we refrain from playing a leadership role (even an educational one) in this process just because we are small?

At the bottom of Mackenzie's conception is a false dichotomy between program and leadership. A program is formulated by a leadership and represents that leadership. When we put forward a program for the miners, we are in fact posing the question of an alternative leadership. To pose the demand for the nationalization under the control of the miners means that we are calling for a leadership that will lead the struggle for this. Do we think a reformist leadership will do this; or the rank and file as an unorganized mass without leadership? The fact is the call for nationalization of the mines under workers' control must be coupled with the call for a leadership that does not accept the limits of capitalist property relations, that is, a revolutionary leadership. To raise the nationalization slogan, without calling for such a leadership is misleading, utopian and manipulative. The call for a demand requires a call for measures to effectuate it; a program implies a leadership that will carry this out. Those who wish to make this explicit will sound like the following:

MINER: You say nationalization of the miners under workers' control is necessary?

SOCIALIST: Yes! I'm for it!

MINER: I gather from what you've said that you think Miller might not lead us in that struggle. What kind of leadership would? What kind of leadership do you think we need?

SOCIALIST: I don't really want to answer that question at this time ahh, because it's timeless. Ahh, that means that, well. . .the answer is in limbo. . .

Mackenzie's errors concerning the question of revolutionary leadership are based in his misconception of the Transitional Program. Brian implies that Trotsky put forward the notion that the 4th Internationalist groupings should immediately contend for power in the unions. Trotsky certainly considered the struggle for revolutionary leadership as crucial, essential and an immediate necessity. But to believe that he thought that they could actually fight for power in 1938 is a bit off the mark. Obviously, all the demands and slogans of the Transitional Program could not have won the support of the mass of the workers in a single day, nor did Trotsky think so. They were an urgent necessity; they are today.

Believing that he is saying something significant, Brian says: "The purpose of the Transitional Program was, of course (?) to bring the more backward masses under the leadership of the revolutionaries in the struggle with the ruling class. In reality, the 1938 Transitional Program was largely beyond the backward masses and more at the level of the advanced, although not revolutionary militants." (How could Trotsky have been so dumb?) But the "purpose" of the Transitional Program was to be a program, the program of the 4th International. It wasn't meant to do this or that thing, in particular, except to put forward the ideas, goals and strategy of the 4th International, of the fight for socialism. It could be used for many things; training cadre, recruiting to the national sections, educating the advanced workers, mobilizing the more backward workers, etc. The idea that the specific purpose of the program in 1938 was to bring the more backward masses immediately under the leadership of the revolutionaries is absurd. The purpose of the Transitional Program was to organize the working class to struggle for socialism. Trotsky knew that this did not happen overnight: to win the more backward masses, one had to win the advanced workers, and to win the advanced workers, one had to build the 4th Internationalist groups, etc. At the time the Transitional Program was written Trotsky knew and stated that the backward workers could not even understand the Program: "This program is a scientific program. It is based on an objective analysis of the objective situation. It cannot be understood by the workers as a whole. It would be good if the vanguard would understand it in the next period and that they would turn and

and say to the workers, 'You must save yourselves from fascism.' "  
 (Trotsky, Writings, 38-39, p. 50.

Later on, when asked if he thought the SWP had the experienced cadres to carry this program into the unions, Trotsky replied:

Our party is a party of the American working class. You must remember that a powerful proletarian movement not to speak of a powerful proletarian revolution has not occurred in the United States. . . It is possible that the American workers who are patriotic, whose standard of living is high will have rebellions and strikes. On one side Hague, the other Lewis. That can last for a long period, years and years (my emphasis - RT) and during this time our people will steel themselves, become more sure of themselves. . .

Writings 38-39, p. 52

Does this sound as if Trotsky thought "that working class consciousness (was) high enough for (the SWP) to directly take on the reformist leadership in a contest for power" at that time? Obviously not. Did this mean that Trotsky urged the SWP to renounce the struggle for revolutionary leadership? Of course not. He understood that the struggle for revolutionary leadership in the unions was carried out with the resources at one's disposal; a propaganda group must rely primarily on propaganda. The struggle for revolutionary leadership is a process, a process that begins with propaganda.

As long as one believes that Trotsky thought that the tasks of the Transitional Epoch could be done in a day, that he thought that the tiny 4th International groups were ready to go out and mobilize the backward masses without first winning the vanguard, to contend for organizational leadership in the unions before building fractions in the unions, it is almost certain that one cannot have the slightest idea of what Trotsky meant, or what is the significance of the Transitional Program and its relationship to our present work.

#### Conclusion

Mackenzie says "What seems to be happening is a redefinition, by Ron and others, of those 'advanced strata' of the class we are supposed to be relating to." I have redefined nothing. I have, however, come to the conclusion that in our eagerness to transform ourselves into a large group and to play an active role in the labor movement, we are attempting to skip over the militantly politicized workers. This leads to downplaying the role of propaganda, simplyfying our political conceptions, hesitating to put forward our more advanced ideas, hiding our criticisms of reformist leaders. This is what the Lynn Jones article and document do in regard to the Mine Workers, John L. Lewis and the MFD. Brian's amendment to her document means that he accepts the same approach - that we don't say what we mean.

In order to prepare the most advanced workers to relate to, organize and lead the less advanced workers, we must first be able to tell them what our ideas are, what we think is necessary. This certainly involves ideas on how to advance the struggle in the absence of revolutionary leadership or a revolutionary group prepared to contend for power in the unions in the near future, but not to the exclusion of propaganda about the need for a revolutionary party and for revolutionary leadership of the unions. It is necessary to put forward short and long term tasks; this involves an active relationship with the class in which we learn from the workers' struggle and constantly refine our ideas. Mackenzie's objection to a propagandistic statement of the need for revolutionary leadership raise in the context of a struggle where this notion can be raised in more than a thoroughly abstract or "timeless" way really means that he is at least confused about serious propaganda about the longer range - and central - tasks. His statement that "as sort of a timeless statement" the call for revolutionary leadership is "obviously true" is merely a cover. The need for revolutionary leadership of the unions is no more "timeless" than our call for a labor party, a revolutionary party, and many other ideas that appear - or should appear - in Workers Power. In fact, Brian objects to the call for revolutionary leadership because it sounds pretentious, sectarian, and unreasonable. It is however no more pretentious and unreasonable that we, 350 people, are right, and that 200 million are wrong, that socialism is necessary. We must state the truth and act on it. We say what we believe, what we are up to, what we intend to do. We do not build ourselves on the basis of phoney public relations images. Most miners and other workers will find our statement about the need for revolutionary leadership no more sectarian, absurd, and pretentious than our crazy notion that workers can control industry, and rule themselves and society.

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