

Taplin ✓

SWP

**discussion
bulletin**

Volume 25, No. 7



Published by

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

116 UNIVERSITY PLACE •
NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK



THE "TRIPLE REVOLUTION"
By John Becker

ON WORK IN THE UNIONS
By Frank Lovell

ON SELF-DEFENSE AND THE PC DRAFT RESOLUTION
By Evelyn Sell



30c



THE TRIPLE REVOLUTION

by John Becker

(I am submitting the following for consideration concerning our attitude toward the Triple Revolution Document and as a possible basis for an article in the magazine.)

The publication of the Triple Revolution document, last year, gave rise to an animated discussion on the future of the American economy and stimulated a series of exchanges in such magazines as Monthly Review and Liberation, as well as Triple Revolution study groups on several campuses across the nation.

Given the attention that the document has received, it is important that an attempt be made to present a Marxist critique of it. In doing so, it will be necessary to examine the document as a piece of social analysis, as a programmatic guide to action, and as a reflection of the outlook represented by its signers.

We should begin by summarizing the main line of argument of the document. It states that the world is at a historic juncture marked by the effects of three interrelated revolutions: the Cybernetic Revolution, resulting from the combination of electronic computers and automated machinery; the Weaponry Revolution, which has made war outmoded as a means of settling international disputes; and the Human Rights Revolution, of which the Negro movement is one manifestation. It concentrates upon the first of these, the Cybernetic Revolution.

The document goes on to say that we live in an "industrial system" of scarcity as opposed to a future "cybernated system" of abundance and that because we live in an industrial system the distribution of income is based upon holding a job which it terms the "job-incomes link." It states that this system is breaking down under the impact of cybernation, which is rapidly raising productivity, enlarging unemployment, and causing production to outstrip effective demand.

It continues that the effect of cybernation will grow progressively more serious with an ever larger mass of unemployed living in poverty. It calls instead for a recognition of the need for change, for planned introduction of cybernation, and for a guaranteed annual income as a constitutional right of each citizen whether employed or not.

It then proposes a program for the transitional period of massive public works, housing projects, educational outlays, power projects, rapid transit

systems, tax changes, increased union activity, and governmental regulation of the introduction of cybernation.

The first point to be noted is the extremely meager attempt at any social or economic analysis. The document presents no analysis of the structure and functioning of American capitalism, of class relations as they exist within American society, or of the social and political institutions on which this system is based. It presents no analysis on the basis of which we could outline the direction of development of American capitalism, could understand the forces compelling radical change within our social structure, or which would enable us to point to a perspective of organization and action around which an effective movement could be built. Even in dealing solely with the present economic situation, the document gives us nothing that would make it possible to examine the current cycle and the directions in which it may develop.

What it does do is to take the single isolated fact of cybernation, state that it will become increasingly more important, that the number of unemployed will grow, that the number of new jobs created will decline, that an ever larger number of people will be forced to exist at a subsistence level, and that this will demonstrate that the "jobs-income link" has broken down. The point is not that unemployment will not grow, it will, although the current rate of unemployment is far smaller than it has been for years, but that the document presents no analysis which would enable us to see the real social conditions out of which mass unemployment would spring, what it would signify, and what program would be necessary to cope with the general crisis maturing at such a point.

The document takes the simple fact of cybernation, ignores the entire concrete social context into which it is being introduced, projects a unilineal trend of mounting unemployment, and ends by saying that something must be done by the government to remedy it all. The concrete social context which it ignores is far more important than the fact of cybernation itself. That social context goes far deeper than the "jobs-income link" which the document discusses and objects to.

Cybernation is being introduced into the national and international framework of American capitalism. Into a system where the means of production and the social product are owned by a small, wealthy, and powerful ruling class. A system where goods and services are produced, not for their social usefulness, but for private profit. Where the major economic decisions controlling investment and the direction of production are privately determined by that miniscule minority which owns the resources of this country.

It is a system where the major areas of the economy are totally dominated by corporate monopolies whose directing staffs are organically linked with the military and civil bureaucracies of the federal government. A system based not only on the exploitation of the majority of the American people by a small ruling minority which feeds upon the wealth produced by that great majority. Based not only on the added economic, social, and political exploitation of the Negro people. But a system based on an international network of foreign holdings and military dictatorships. A system based on the super-exploitation of the workers and peasants of the underdeveloped nations whose wealth is extorted by the corporations that own and rule America. An international empire of plunder ruled by a handful of financial giants, backed day and night by the threat of death at the hands of American marines or local mercenaries.

The Triple Revolution document totally ignores the classes that make up American society, the form of ownership of the means of production, and the real interests that lie at the base of American imperialism as a system. The signers of the document concentrate upon the entirely secondary question of the distribution of part of the national income through wages, since they have seen the government prepared, when forced, to grant a limited redistribution of income through welfare spending and public works. They hope that in limiting themselves to this one secondary area and in ignoring the nature of the system as a whole they will be able to win a few concessions.

Even in dealing with the present economic cycle the document does no more than state that cybernation will cause a growing gap between the volume of production and the effective demand generated by the market. Limiting itself to that single, observation, it is unable to deal with the causes of the boom and rise in employment which have occurred since the appearance of the document or with the causes of the inevitable downturn when it comes.

Because it does not examine the basic features of our economy as a capitalist economy, the document presents us with a one-sided and false explanation of the coming crisis faced by American capitalism.

Cybernation, in and of itself, explains nothing. The fundamental movement of the capitalist economic cycle is determined by many factors: the general rate of profit, the relative rates of profit in the capital goods industries and the consumption goods industries, the relative rates of production and investment in these two spheres, the rate of savings vis-a-vis the rate of investment, the level and activity of private debts, the general level of wages, the level of unemployment, the degree of organization and consciousness of the working class, the availability of cheap raw materials from the

underdeveloped countries, the availability of safe areas of foreign investment bringing in a higher rate of profit than domestic investment, the relative competitive position of key American industries on the world market, the general balance of trade, the gold flow, the handling of the public debt, and the whole role of government in tax, redistribution, and spending policies.

All of these have an important effect on the concrete development of the economic cycle. Of these, only some are subject to conscious control in a capitalist economy. The others develop, subject to the basic economic laws of the system, and determine its evolution.

These factors are the determinants which will vitally affect the impact of cybernation at any given point in the cycle. Cybernation helps to create a pool of unemployed labor. Up to a point this is not a sign of any weakness in the system as a capitalist system, but an indispensable part of the functioning of the economy insofar as it helps keep in check wage rates. Cybernation introduced at one point in the cycle, helping to stimulate a rapid expansion of investment and production in the capital goods industries can stimulate a general economic rise far outweighing the effect it has in displacing a number of workers in the areas where it is applied. Introduced at another point, in reaction to a fall in the rate of profit and a serious downturn in investment rates, cybernation can accelerate and deepen an economic crisis. The general laws of a capitalist economy and not the simple technological fact of cybernation alone determine its effect upon the economy.

The weakness of the Triple Revolution document goes farther than the fact that it obscures rather than uncovers the economic structure of American imperialism. Concentrating upon a purely secondary phenomenon as the possibility of expanded redistribution of income by the federal government, it accepts an orientation toward American political institutions which totally vitiates any positive aspects there might be to the specific demands it raises.

The document speaks of the "industrial system" of scarcity, instead of looking at the real relations of American capitalism. Instead of examining the real content of American political institutions, the document repeatedly refers to the need for a quote "new consensus." As if the present system were the result of a consensus, old or otherwise. As if the present system were the result of a consensus where the majority agreed to work while the minority agreed to control and feed upon the wealth produced by the majority. A consensus where the Negro people agreed to be lynched and discriminated against while the white agreed to lynch and discriminate. A consensus where the colonial masses agreed to starve while the imperialist centers agreed to drown in plundered wealth.

It sums up its political philosophy in the following terms: "Public

philosophy for the transition... centers on an understanding that governments are instituted among men for the purpose of making possible life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness and that government should be a creative and positive instrument toward these ends." This is false to the very core.

The political state -- elected officials, police, army, and state bureaucracy -- does not exist suspended in space nor does it exist in the pleasant world conjured by a liberal's modest imagination. No matter what its specific form, the state exists within, rises out of, and defends in turn, a given historical system of economic and social relations. The state exists to preserve and extend the economic system corresponding to the rule of the dominant class at that period in time.

The ancient slave states existed to preserve and extend the system of slavery that lay at their base. Feudal states arose to defend and extend a system of personal bondage and landed wealth. Capitalist states exist today to preserve and extend private ownership of the means of production, free enterprise, and foreign investments, which form the basis of their entire social structure. The fact that the state performs additional functions as well or that it can be forced to grant concessions to other social classes does not change the basic fact that it represents the rule by force of the dominant class in society.

It takes very little reflection to see that the government of South Vietnam represents American imperialism and its local puppets rather than the "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" of the Vietnamese peasantry or that Washington represents the white power structure rather than the liberty of the Negro people.

What we are saying is simply this: the view of government as an impartial arbitrator of the contending forces in society, which resolves conflicts in the general interests of all, is totally false. Government represents the basic interests of the ruling class, as reflected through existing political institutions, under the impact of differences within the ruling class, and under pressure from the other class in society. This is not to deny the complex laws under which political institutions develop, rather it shows the basic frame within which these specific laws unfold and without which any political analysis is condemned to sterility at best.

Lacking an analysis of American capitalism, lacking an understanding of changing class relations nationally and internationally, and lacking a perception of the potential role of the American working class, the Negro people, the colonial revolution, and the states moving toward socialism, the signers of the Triple Revolution Document are able to present solely a liberal answer to what few questions they raise.

Viewing the present system as an error resulting, presumably, from a bad old consensus which they wish to replace with a good new consensus. Regarding the state as a benign father figure, harsh and mistaken at times, but basically working in the interests of all his children. The signers seek to convince the ruling class that a crisis is coming which will force them to mend their ways and institute a few reforms if they wish to maintain their rule without drastic upheaval.

The document calls for a new consensus. Robert Theobald, a major author of it, expresses the same philosophy when he comments in Liberation magazine on the Negro movement that "The Negroes will either receive their rights or they will fight for them. This latter alternative is unthinkable; the white power structure must therefore take steps to understand the deeply moral nature of the Negro demands and find ways to make rapid and meaningful progress."

This brings us to a central point in our critique of the Triple Revolution. The document represents a plea to the ruling class to institute a few reforms before it is too late, it does not represent an analysis on the basis of which is developed a program of struggle for radical students, the Negro people, and the working class.

The error does not lie in demanding reforms. Any true revolutionary must struggle for genuine reforms. It lies in the fact that the document does not show who must organize to win real reforms, against whom we must struggle, and what steps we must take to build a meaningful movement.

There exists a crucial relationship between the fight for genuine reforms within the system and the movement toward the final overthrow of the system itself. This relationship has two sides which are equally important for any revolutionary.

On the one hand, the mounting forces that come into action during any period of serious crisis do so not on the basis of some abstract understanding of the need to overturn the system. They do so in the process of a concrete struggle for certain limited immediate goals, certain immediate demands, linked to the needs and interests that propelled them into action. They oppose the war in Vietnam; demand the right to vote; seek jobs; demand social equality; attempt to organize a labor union.

The very process of organization and struggle around immediate demands has two important effects: 1) it helps move the relation of forces away from the ruling class, puts that class under pressure, and limits the range of actions they feel confident in undertaking nationally or internationally, and 2) it prepares, organizes, mobilizes, and educates the forces that must form the basis for the next stage in the struggle. It prepares further

struggles on a higher level, with broader forces, and deeper effect. Compare the first faltering actions of the civil rights movement in the mid-fifties with the depth which the Negro movement is threatening to assume. Compare the first timid pro-administration peace actions of a few years ago with the March on Washington, the Berkeley teach-in, and the rising protest against the war in Vietnam.

The other side of the relationship is equally essential. Without a Marxist analysis of society. Without a clear understanding of the nature of the struggle, the forms it will assume, the direction in which it must move if the overthrow of American imperialism is to be possible, a simple movement of reform alone will be turned against itself and will inevitably result in a new solidification of the power of the ruling class. At each stage of the broad fight for reforms the revolutionary must educate a growing number of serious participants as to the logical development of the struggle, the real nature of the system, and the need for a revolution if any lasting and fundamental successes are to be won.

He must raise issues, slogans, demands, and forms of organization that deepen the struggle for those already in motion and which will bring ever more significant forces into play. He must prepare the conscious forces capable of leading every aspect of the fight for immediate demands and capable of transforming that fight, at the proper moment, into a general onslaught against the system as a whole.

At each juncture he must aim directly toward strengthening the independent organization and consciousness of radical students, the Negro people, and the working class, while preparing the revolutionaries capable of carrying the fight on to the next higher stage and, in time, to the overturn of the system as a whole.

The question, then, is not the demand for reforms but how it is raised. Does the document attempt to spread illusions concerning the real nature of American imperialism and attempt to undermine the basis for any serious struggle against it by hiding the real role of the state and by a utopian demand that the ruling class reform itself? Or does it clearly expose the real nature of the system? Does it point to the forces that must become the basis for any real movement for change and does it develop a program for them? Does it present anything that would help the successful organization of radical youth, the Negro people, and the working class? The answer unfortunately is clear. In and of itself the document can only mislead those who may be moving in a correct direction on their own.

Under a clear and serious criticism, however, some who may have sought in the Triple Revolution document an analysis of the ills of American

society can be won over to a correct analysis and program of action. This can be accomplished, however, only through a clear and direct confrontation with the liberal illusions which form the substance of the Triple Revolution document.

The basis for any successful movement for freedom, peace, and economic welfare can be laid only on a correct analysis of the nature of American capitalism. The real social and economic relations which underlie this system must be exposed. The nature and role of the Democratic and Republican parties must be unmasked. We must demonstrate how the very structure, ties, financing, and ideology of these parties inevitably makes them expressions of the interests of the ruling class.

We must point out that as long as a majority of radical students support Johnson as the lesser evil, as long as a majority of Negro activists are railroaded by their reactionary middle class leadership into politically supporting at the polls the very same system of racism they are fighting against in action, as long as the labor movement continues to be ruled by a reactionary bureaucracy, tied hand and foot to the Democratic Party machine -- no real progress can be made.

It is not enough to take part in limited direct actions for civil rights, against the war in Vietnam, for economic welfare. These must all be generalized into a broader, deeper struggle which can be clearly seen as pitting the fundamental interests of the American working class, the Negro people, the colonial masses, and the workers of the socialist bloc, against the interests of the western capitalist class, their colonial agents, their political and military representatives, and their middle class allies.

What must be seen here is not simply the world as it exists at this single moment but as it is changing through time. Classes and strata must be estimated on the basis of their position and structure within the system and in terms of their reaction to any serious crisis faced by American capitalism in the future.

The revolutionary potential of the Negro people and the colonial nations is obvious today. Not too long ago this potential would have been unconditionally denied by those very would-be radicals who, today, rule out any revolutionary role for the American working class.

A large section of the American working class today is prosperous, apathetic, and conservative. This is the result of America's victory in World War II, the post war booms, the rapid expansion of the American empire, the general reaction of the fifties, and the default of the principal labor and radical leaderships during the entire period.

The revolutionary potential of the American working class obviously does not flow from those negative features that currently dominate it. It flows from the position of the working class in capitalist society, its structure, and its fundamental long term interests.

The working class produces the wealth owned and fed upon by the ruling class. It finds this tolerable during a period of boom but moves into sharp action when, in a crisis, the system threatens to wipe out the living standards that the working class has won over a period of years. The working class is organized and disciplined at the point of production with the industrial working class itself formed into giant armies capable of moving into action as a single unit. There are plants employing work forces the size of army divisions - they have moved into action in the past and will do so again in the future.

The long term interests of the working class are opposed to those of the ruling class. As the American empire continues to crumble, as the colonial revolution mounts higher, as the Negro people move into sharper action, and above all, as a serious economic crisis begins to appear threatening to wipe out the past gains of the working class as it forces the capitalist to attack wages and working conditions in an attempt to cut costs and maintain their profits - under these concrete conditions the entire attitude and role of the American working class will be transformed.

Such a broad conception of the international class struggle as it exists today clearly points to the central question for any serious revolutionary or even for someone simply interested in winning real reforms -- namely, at each stage of the struggle everything possible must be done to encourage, mobilize, extend, and strengthen the independent economic, social, and political organization of the working class and the Negro people. Without it nothing meaningful can be accomplished. Through it a real struggle can be waged for substantial reforms today, a struggle mobilizing and educating the forces necessary for a real attack against the system itself.

Essential for the successful development and application of such a thorough-going Marxist analysis, for the continual pressing of independent direct and political action, and for the development of a real program of struggle, is the development of a revolutionary organization consistently upholding the historic interests of the working class and the Negro people - organizations such as the party and the youth.

These then are the criteria to be used in discussing any attempt at social analysis and programmatic action such as the Triple Revolution document:

- 1) Does it expose and clarify the real economic, social, and

political relations of American capitalism or does it obscure them?

2) Does it point directly to the need for independent organization and action on the part of radical students, the Negro people, and the working class, or does it hide or deny that need?

3) Does it present a serious program around which it is possible to organize?

4) Does it perceive the need for a revolutionary overthrow of American capitalism and the need for a revolutionary party to undertake that task?

5) What objective role is being played by the tendency or tendencies whose views are represented?

6) Which direction are they moving in and what stage in their development do these views represent?

A Negro youth overcoming the lies and pressures of this society and joining a civil rights group to fight for his freedom is moving in the right direction. A student overcoming the apathy around him and joining a committee to oppose the war in Vietnam is moving in the right direction. A nationalist seeking to expose the role of American imperialism in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, and to break completely with the white power structure - a student comparing the benefits of planned production to the waste and anarchy of capitalist relations - these are moving in the right direction.

The duty of revolutionaries toward these fresh new forces just beginning to take their first steps against American capitalism is clear. Serious revolutionaries must join with and work side by side with militant students and Negro youth in direct actions. At each juncture they must draw the lessons of the struggle, expose the nature of the common enemy, and point the way to a program of demands and organization capable of serious action. These movements of direct actions must be built, as must the first forms of independent political action, as must the revolutionary party itself.

In acting so, we are not in any contradiction with anything that is healthy or progressive in these new movements. We express and support their current struggles and we represent the logic of their development. It is otherwise with those liberals and would-be radicals who seek to divert every movement of protest that develops into a backhanded support

of the present system. Who seek to force us into supporting at the ballot box the very forces we have been fighting on the picket line. Who seek to obscure and hide the real nature of the present system, who seek to use radical phrases and, in some cases, radical actions as a means of attracting those who are beginning to move away from support to the system and to win them back through "working in the Democratic party" or through opposing politics altogether.

The final point to be made will now be clear. The document is not the first faltering expression of a new movement that is just developing and which must be encouraged in every way possible. It does not represent a stage in a movement toward a more thorough-going analysis on the part of its signers. Rather it represents the attempt of a wide spectrum of liberals and would-be radicals to develop a critique capable of keeping within check the rising movements they come in contact with. A critique presented by those who wish to reform the system without disturbing it, who feel that they can rely upon the ruling class to satisfy their demands, and who are either in the Democratic party or who have abandoned political organization altogether.

As such, the Triple Revolution document must be confronted directly; its distortions, omissions, and illusions replaced by a correct social analysis; its humble petition to the ruling class superceded by a program of organization and action. At the same time, if, inadvertantly, the Triple Revolution document has stimulated a small layer of students interested in seriously examining social questions, we must seek them out, work with them, and attempt to win them over to a correct program on which they can base their sincere desire to struggle for a better world.

June 13, 1965

ON WORK IN THE UNIONS
By Frank Lovell

Sometimes we reach complete agreement on resolutions and find after we have adopted them that there is disagreement about what to do. The field of trade union work has long been plagued with such misunderstandings and disagreements, largely because we have failed to say clearly what the limits of our work in this field are under existing circumstances and what must be done to prepare for a more favorable turn of events.

The section titled "Trade Union Trends" in the political resolution -- The Next Phase of American Politics (DB Vol. 25 No. 2) -- accurately describes what is happening in the union and outlines briefly a program of action for us to follow.

My purpose in calling attention to our trade union work is to seek agreement now on what we ought to do after the convention, and also come to an understanding about what should not be done.

First we must take special note of the changing composition of the unions in the mass production industries. I don't have any statistics on the average age level of union membership for the past decade. But those of us working in the shops could not help but notice four or five years ago that the work was being done by old men, union meetings were attended mostly by veterans of yesterday's strike struggles, and the small caucus meetings often looked like pensioners' gatherings. This has changed. Within the past three or four years it appears as if a whole new generation of workers has come into the plants and shops. Many of the old men are gone. Union meetings are held less frequently because it is harder to get a quorum. (Please take note of this and correct me if I am wrong.) Nothing remains of the old caucus formations except the traditional names and occasional informal meetings of office-seekers at election time. (This is significant because we would expect an increased interest in union politics with the influx of new blood in the movement. I will return to this problem which relates to the bureaucratic structure of the unions.)

A second important change for us to study and understand is the tight grip of government upon the whole union structure. Trotsky foresaw and wrote about this development. "There is one common feature in the development, or more exactly the degeneration, of modern trade union organizations in the entire world: it is their drawing closely to and

growing together with the state power." (Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay)

Twenty-five years ago Trotsky warned: "In the United States the Department of Labor with its leftist bureaucracy has as its task the subordination of the trade union movement to the democratic state and it must be said that this task has up to now been solved with some success." Today, a quarter of a century later, this statement needs slight amendment. Since enactment of the Taft-Hartley law (1947) and the Kennedy-Landrum-Griffin law (1960), we must say that subordination of the union movement to government control has succeeded. The unions have not been smashed, but they are effectively controlled. The fate of the Teamsters Union testifies to this fact. And in another respect the way the Labor Department moved in to adjudicate the differences between the bureaucrats and reverse the election outcome of the International Union of Electrical Workers demonstrates the degree of control over the unions.

Union members don't understand yet what has happened to their unions, but they know beyond doubt that they have very little to say about what is done for them and to them. They may not know where the important decisions are made or by whom, but one thing they are sure of is that such decisions are not made at union meetings or by the union membership. In the shops these days "the Union" is always referred to as an entity separate and apart from the workers. In most localized disputes, especially those of a minor nature, there are always three parties: the Worker, Management, and the Union. In major decisions such as national contract negotiations, there are also three parties but with a substitution: Government, Management, and the Union. Here the worker sits on the sidelines, not allowed even to watch the moves. But the general impression among most workers who try to figure out what is going on is that "the Union" may take the initiative, but Management and Government have the final decision. This impression is fostered by the union bureaucracy.

Now comes a third problem for us. What about the bureaucracy? who is it? what does it represent? how does it perpetuate itself? how will it be affected by changes in the economy, in politics, in the composition of union membership and the changing mood of workers toward it?

Here again Trotsky is helpful.

"In the eyes of the bureaucracy of the trade union movement the chief task lies in 'freeing' the state from the em-

brace of capitalism, in weakening its dependence of trusts, in pulling it over to their side.

"This position is in complete harmony with the social position of the labor aristocracy (emphasis added), and the labor bureaucracy who fight for a crumb in the share of super profits of imperialist capitalism.

"The labor bureaucrats do their level best in words and deeds to demonstrate to the 'democratic' state how reliable and indispensable they are in peace-time and especially in time of war."

We have seen all these characteristics of the labor bureaucracy displayed. In this country union officials -- without exception -- openly embrace capitalism and instead of attempting to "free" the government "from the embrace of capitalism" are busy pressuring various government agencies in a vain effort to make capitalism work more equitably. Theirs is the most blatant voice in support of the government's wars on colonial peoples. Meany has long been infamous in this respect. But most recently even he was outdone by Reuther who put the UAW executive board on record in support of the Johnson Administration's barbaric policy in Vietnam. And the timing of this action by Reuther was significant, just when the student march on Washington was being organized and widespread opposition was developing against Johnson on his war policy.

This bureaucracy is by no means limited to Meany and Reuther. They are only its most prominent spokesmen at the moment. It includes the whole trade union officialdom -- tens of thousands -- and extends down into the lowest layers of union functionaries and part-time representatives. We used to make a distinction between the top union bureaucrats and the secondary leadership, recognizing in the secondary leaders a greater degree of militancy resulting from their closer association with the rank and file. But that particular distinction has all but disappeared today. It is hard now to find a dissenter in any union capacity. And if you find one such committeeman in a shop here or there it is a safe bet he won't last long. He will be hemmed in by the combined efforts of management and an international staff representative assigned to his area. And if they don't succeed in silencing him, he will find himself the victim of a frame up and either kicked out of the shop or defeated in the next election. This is the story of militant UAW committeemen and shop stewards over the past fifteen years. And the result is a bunch of self-seekers and petty bureaucrats on the local level completely subservient to plant management and top union brass.

We always said that the union bureaucracy drew its support from the skilled workers, the labor aristocracy, and at one time it was thought that the industrial form of organization which unites the most poorly paid workers would undercut the main base of the bureaucrats and subject them to the pressure of the unskilled and underpaid. But the development of the union movement to date hasn't worked out in exactly this way. On the contrary, the bureaucracy which always sought to identify itself as "the Union" now is in fact identified as such by the mass of union members who find it extremely difficult if not impossible to make their needs and wishes felt through the organizational structure of the unions.

One of the reasons the bureaucrats have been able to divorce themselves from the rank and file and free themselves from the controls of an aroused membership -- especially in the big industrial unions -- is the discrepancy between union wages and conditions for those who are organized in the basic industries and the very low wages and intolerable conditions for the vast mass of unorganized workers. Some comrades have observed that these better-off union workers constitute a kind of labor aristocracy.

It is true that higher wages in such basic industries as Auto, Steel, Rubber, some sectors of Transportation, have served to set this large body of workers apart from the rest of the class. This accounts in large measure for the very strict "chain of command" system the bureaucracy has been able to set up in the union structure (quite aside from its collaboration with management and direct intervention in union affairs by government agencies). But this is a condition that can prevail only so long as prosperity endures and labor management cooperation remains the policy of Big Industry.

Even now the failure of "the Union" to represent the interests (and often the most pressing needs) of the workers it is supposed to represent gives rise to sharp and bitter criticism by members. Often this takes the form of hostility to the union, especially among Negro workers. An example of this is a letter from a member of Flint UAW local 659, the "Confederate local." He wrote in the Detroit Free Press (June 14, 1965) urging retention of section 14-B in the Taft-Hartley law.

Among the reasons he gave is the following:

"Recently 90-odd workers at the V-8 engine plant collected several hundred dollars to help finance the defense of the Ku Klux Klansmen accused of killing Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, the wife of a teamster official.

"Concern for Dixie members is so strong I was told certain articles which I tried to get in our union publication couldn't be printed because 'there are a lot of members from the South and their feelings might be hurt.'

"The committeeman I would have to call if I had a run-in with management is this same editor."

The conclusion: "I consider my bargaining agent one of my worst enemies and I dread the thought of Congress allowing this local to put a tighter stranglehold on me."

There are millions of rank and file unionists today who have a grievance of one kind or another against "the Union," and it will require a shake-up in the economic and political situation in this country before these grievances are diverted into union channels in the form of rank and file committees to save the unions and drive out the self-seekers and pie-cards and bureaucrats of all kinds, big and small.

This brings us now to the most important question of all: what must we do? And the converse, what ought we to avoid?

Trotsky armed us with some slogans for freeing the trade unions from the deadly embrace of the state apparatus. The first of these is "Complete and unconditional independence of the Trade Unions in relation to the capitalist state."

Then he explained, "This means a struggle to turn the trade unions into the organs of the broad exploited masses and not the organs of a labor aristocracy."

The second slogan: "Trade Union Democracy."

I have always understood in this respect that the transitional program was meant as a guide to struggle for the independence of the unions and then as a means for the unions to become organs of state power.

Trotsky concluded his thoughts on the trade unions with the reminder that nothing is possible without the determined party that aims to take state power in the name of the working class. "Democratic unions in the old sense of the term, bodies where in the framework of one and the same mass organization different tendencies struggled more or less freely, can no longer exist. Just as it is impossible to bring back the bourgeois-democratic state, so it is impossible to bring back the old workers democracy.

"The fate of the one reflects the fate of the other. As

a matter of fact, the independence of trade unions in the class sense, in their relations to the bourgeois state can, in present conditions, be assured only by a completely revolutionary leadership, that is, the leadership of the Fourth International."

After writing this, Trotsky added the following note: "This leadership, naturally, must and can be rational and assure the unions the maximum of democracy conceivable under the present concrete conditions. But without the political leadership of the Fourth International the independence of the trade unions is impossible."

The emphasis here is on the political program and the organization necessary to carry out that program. This is the key to our work in the unions. However closely we examine these unions today and seek a program to overcome their faults, we will in the end discover that what is wrong with them is their politics and that is what must be changed.

There are some important changes going on over which we have no control. One of these I mentioned at the outset is the changing composition of the union membership, younger workers now entering the factories. We can expect and plan for more changes, more of a shake-out, more dislocations in industry. I expect there will be some rather drastic changes in the organizational forms of the union movement. Some of the existing unions may be wiped out. New, unaffiliated unions can be organized. Efforts are already made in this direction now in Mississippi. Within the unions old forms of organization will surely be revived, such as rank and file shop committees. There is a vast number of possibilities... given some shifts in the present political structure, or an economic decline, or a sharp set-back on the war fronts, or a combination of these. We must not think that the unions as we see them now have always been like this or that they will remain forever so. There are changes in store which we cannot hope to anticipate, and ought not at this stage to worry about.

Our task is to gather some troops in the unions and thus be in a position to take advantage of all favorable developments as they unfold. Right now we ought to center our attention upon the young workers entering industry. If we pay attention to them and bring some of them around to the regular forums and introduce them to the paper and literature of the Socialist Workers Party, we might recruit some of them and that will be our guarantee of the future in the union movement.

At the last plenum of the party the idea of a general wage increase to meet the needs of the young workers -- and the unskilled -- was introduced. Our draft resolution now expands this idea to include transitional slogans suited to present needs of the unions and the working class: 30 for 40; public works at union wages; government operation of idle plants under workers control; organization of the unemployed; union democracy; escalator wage clauses in all contracts; full support of Freedom Now movement (Pg. 13, para. 2).

This is what we must say in the union when we talk about union politics. But we must understand that at the present time this is all part of our propaganda arsenal. We are saying what ought to be; and in saying this, and patiently explaining it in some detail, we are trying to gather the force that will do it. But I doubt if any sizeable left-wing caucus will be organized on the basis of this program -- or any significant part of it -- in the next year or two.

Most likely we will experience growing opposition to bureaucratic practices, possibly some deeper splits within the bureaucracy than that represented by Able in the fight against McDonald. But in such clique fights and power struggles the genuine militants are not drawn in very deeply because of the mutual distrust between them and the bureaucrats who organize the caucuses.

We must continue to participate in the life of the union to whatever extent possible and useful. Our support of Able and especially the denunciation of McDonald and all that he stood for is necessary, otherwise we assume an SLP-type posture. We must work always to overcome the wide-spread notion that the workers can't intervene effectively in the affairs of their own class organizations, and that the unions can't be transformed and won't change. They are changing, and bigger changes are coming. The workers like to see the pie-cards get what is really due them, and whenever they get a chance they will usually vote the office-holders out. This in itself is good, but not good enough. We have to explain what else is needed. Not only in terms of a narrow "union program" to meet the particular situation (most often such "programs" are unsatisfactory and unconvincing), but in political terms that reveal the social pressures at work today, what the unions are and what they can become, how the government operates against the interests of the workers and how this can be changed. In the course of this kind of work -- properly called "contact work," I think -- we should find some recruits. In this respect it will be useful to learn what measure of success we have had from the recent experience in the Steel Union.

In our daily work it is helpful to bear in mind that many young workers are not primarily interested in shop problems or union politics. The war, poverty, civil rights struggles, education, corruption in high places, all this is often of greater concern than "the Union." We will find that workers recruited in the factories sometimes have no knowledge of union politics, and will first learn about the importance of the union movement from us. Such recruits as we can win now may very well become the organizers and leaders of new class struggle actions.

We surely have many young comrades in industry already, most of them members of unions. Here it is more difficult for them to make contacts and recruit to the youth or the party than if they were on campus. But it can be done, especially if the party pays some attention to this urgent need.

I think we should take this as our beginning. Make some recruits! If we concentrate on this, it will turn the attention of our union members in the right direction -- toward those workers who are interested in what we have to say. In any event, it beats hanging around with the hangers-on of the bureaucrats or currying favor with the union politicians who are "out" in the mistaken notion that they will somehow be better if elected than those who are "in." Such efforts have all proved futile because none of the existing caucuses have different political programs. When a new set of union officers defeats the old incumbents, they simply pick up where their predecessors left off. The workers see new faces around, but they get the same old dodge. This is what we don't want to be associated with. We don't want to appear as "union politicians." If we turn our backs on this kind of "union work," we ought to be able to recruit some young militants.

-- July 17, 1965.

ON SELF-DEFENCE AND THE PC DRAFT RESOLUTION

By Evelyn Sell

For many years and in many ways the party has supported the right of Negroes to defend themselves from racist terror. For example, thirteen years ago in the January-February 1952 Fourth International, there appeared an article by George Breitman entitled "The Bomb-Murder of Harry T. Moore: New Dangers and New Tasks Facing the Negro Struggle." The article describes the "new forms" of lynching and discusses how various labor, civil rights and government bodies have reacted to the bombings, burnings, shootings, etc. "Farrell Dobbs, National Chairman and presidential candidate of the SWP, wrote a letter to the NAACP, AFL and CIO and 22 other powerful national organizations scheduled to meet in Washington on Feb. 17-18 to lobby for a change in Senate rules that make it possible to filibuster all civil rights legislation to death. Speaking on behalf of the SWP, Dobbs urged them to revise the plans for their conference -- to turn it into a broader affair, to summon a mass march on Washington by tens of thousands instead of staging a lobby with a few hundred polite representatives; to call mass meetings and demonstrations in cities all over the country at the same time; to endorse the proposal for a nationwide work stoppage; and to support the idea of forming defense guards to protect lives and homes and liberties which the authorities have failed to protect." (pg. 7) (My emphasis)

In the years that followed, the party has publicized and supported the stands on self-defense of Negroes taken by Robert F. Williams and Malcolm X. The Fall 1963 International Socialist Review printed the Freedom Now resolution adopted by the 1963 convention. On page 105 one reads: "The most radical tendencies with a social or political orientation have been inspired by the example of the Monroe, N. C., movement headed by Robert F. Williams. Monroe has made valuable contributions to the theory and practice of self-defense." The current P.C. Draft Resolution on "The Freedom Now Movement in 1965" states on pages 6-7: "While he was still with the Black Muslims, Malcolm X put forward the following important propositions . . . Negroes must defend themselves by all means when attacked by racists."

In the same Draft Resolution, section VI discusses "Organizing the Black Ghetto" and lists among the necessary tasks and demands: "The ghetto dwellers need defense against the police and their brutality. This requires throwing off the rule of police violence and organizing defense against both the police and random criminals." The only other mention of self-defense in the Draft Resolution once again concentrates on the ghetto dwellers and the cops. Page 3 carries

a list of "The most outstanding features of these last two years . . ." In point (b) of this listing: ". . . the defensive moves against the cops and other hated elements in the ghettos . . ."

In light of our long attention to the question of self-defense and the national publicity which revealed a spreading of self-defense formations in the south over the past year, I found it surprising to see no specific mention of such current events in the Draft Resolution. Of necessity, the Draft Resolution cannot include everything under the sun or we would spend all of our time reading this one bulletin. However, it does seem to me that the scope and vigor and effects of the past year's activities in regard to self-defense in southern communities warrants some specific mention in a party resolution on the Freedom Now struggle.

Even if capitalist-controlled news media are exaggerating the numbers involved in self-defense groups, there is sufficient evidence, I believe, to state that defense guards are more widespread, more formally organized and more of a problem for southern racists and administration "peace-makers" than has occurred to date in the Freedom Now struggle. The Deacons of Defense and Justice, originating in Louisiana, has been the most publicized of these defense guards (see 1965 Militant articles of 4/1, 4/19, 4/26, 6/14, 6/23). The Militant has reported other self-defense activities within the past eight months. The 11/23/64 issue reports on defense activities in Mileston, Mississippi, and quotes a civil rights worker who said, "Every night, Negro volunteers come and guard the building. They are armed with shotguns and one carries a tommy-gun." The 11/30/64 issue reports about Mississippi unionists arming against Klan terror. The 3/22/65 issue carries an article by Joel Britton which describes how defense guards were organized in McComb, Miss. "Civil rights-workers told me," Britton writes, "that such organized self-defense had been initiated in many communities in Mississippi in response to bombings and shootings by white-supremacists. Almost invariably the self-defense is proposed and organized by members of the local Negro communities."

The defense guards have protected Negro and civil rights workers lives. They have alarmed the "forces of law and order" and politicians from the local to the national level. They have done even more. The defense guards have educated many civil rights field workers about the facts of life of the Freedom Now struggle; the defense guards have quietly been pulling the rug out from under Turn-The-Other-Cheek King. The recent King blast against CORE is indicative of what has been going on inside the civil rights movement.

King denounces CORE because it allows the Deacons to defend its field workers in the south. Richard Haley, southern director of CORE explained in a 6/6/65 New York Times interview, "The deacons made the difference between safety and bad health last summer for CORE workers in Jonesboro . . . I still have to believe in my own mind that nonviolence is more effective than even the deacons. But I couldn't say to Earnest Thomas, 'I want you to lay aside any protection you have and go along with my policy.' In fact, it is likely that if any situation arises, I would be kind of happy to go along with his." King rightly accuses CORE of contradicting its own position on non-violence; events themselves have pushed CORE into the contradiction and have upset the ideological apple cart to some extent.

Just how deep is King's control over the southern Negro masses? How much longer will he be able to deliver the goods to Johnson? During the events in Selma, for example, King stated, "We have no alternative but to leave our opponents glutted with their own barbarity." (World Outlook, 4/2/65.) Obviously, the Deacons and many other Negroes have another alternative! During the Selma crisis King worked feverishly to contain the Negro community, harranguing them in speech after speech with such promises as: "We are going to suffer more. But we must let them know if they beat one Negro, they will have to beat 100 or 1,000." (World Outlook again.) But Earnest Thomas, vice-president and full-time organizer of the Deacons, told CORE's convention that the Deacons were needed "to let the Klan know that the Negro as a whole is not non-violent." (Michigan Chronicle, 7/17/65.)

Let me repeat: it seems to me that the scope and vigor and effects of the past year's defense guard formations warrant some specific mention in the resolution. In fact, I think it deserves to be listed under "The most outstanding features of these last two years."

-- July 20, 1965