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# FISCAL CRISIS AND THE NEED FOR A SELECTIVE COLONIZATION OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR

by Jack Rasmus, San Francisco Branch

July 28, 1975

As noted in the initial paragraphs of the Draft Resolution, the postwar long-term economic boom peaked in the late sixties and the period since then has been characterized by a new long wave of relative stagnation, heightened inflation, and increasing interimperialist competition. More specifically, both the stagnation (falling industrial rates of growth, declines in real production, rising unemployment) and heightened inflation are themselves the inevitable byproducts of the increasing interimperialist competition while, in turn, this competition is the direct result of falling rates of profit and the decline in the rate of expansion of world markets so critically needed to absorb the increased output of capitalist production. To put it yet another way, it can be said that the general crisis of the US economy is both integrally and dialectically related to a broader world economic crisis of capitalism. It is a crisis within a crisis—both determined by and determining the nature of that broader crisis while exercising to a certain degree as well a dynamic of its own.

In a similar fashion it can be said that within the overall crisis of the US economy today there exists yet a more specific crisis which is integrally and dialectically related to the more general crisis of the US economy as a whole. This crisis within the general crisis of the US economy today is the accelerating fiscal crisis of federal, state and municipal governments.

## The Objective Preconditions.

The two most visible aspects of this growing fiscal crisis are a mounting burden of *taxation* for workers and the middle classes amidst a general attack on and *cutbacks in various social services* so critically needed by the poorest layers of the working class.

At the federal level of government this dual attack has assumed the form, on the one hand, of the continuing shift of the burden of federal taxation away from corporations and the rich onto the backs of workers and, on the other, of mounting cutbacks in federally-funded social programs.

For example, statistics clearly show that the percentage of total federal tax revenues contributed by the corporate income tax has fallen from 22.8% (\$33.9 bil.) in 1967 to only 13.8% (\$38.5 bil.) in 1975. At the same time payroll taxes on workers incomes—a tax which numerous studies have proven workers pay in full in one way or another—

increased as a percentage of total federal revenues from 22.4% (\$33.4 bil.) in 1967 to 30.9% (\$86.2 bil.) in 1975.

Similarly, while the percentage of total federal income tax has remained relatively constant (i.e. 40-45%) over these years—*within* this only apparent lack of change in the federal income tax a shift has also taken place whereby workers have had to pay a greater share of this tax as inflation has raised their money (but not 'real') incomes and consequently shifted them into higher tax brackets while 'capital gains' and other tax loopholes have at the same time continued to proliferate for the rich!

The above estimates for 1975, moreover, are only 'early' estimates developed in January of this year. (All data on taxes are taken and calculated from the *Economic Report of the President, 1975*). Since then the investment tax credit was significantly raised last spring for many corporations, lowering the percentage contribution of the corporate tax to total federal tax revenues even more, while the paltry \$200 tax rebate to consumers has already been absorbed several times over by the oil companies' recent wave of fuel price hikes. As Ralph Nader recently estimated in a TV debate with John Swearingen, Chairman of a Standard Oil affiliate, the fuel price hikes which have already taken effect (i.e. excluding those yet to occur in the remainder of this year) will result in a \$900 increase in the cost of living for the average consumer this year as these higher fuel prices work their way through various sectors of the economy in a 'ripple' effect.

Finally, this charade of 'tax reform' which occurred last spring promises to be followed by an even more disappointing encore this fall when additional tax legislation is passed with still added write-offs for corporations and the rich while workers are once again given 'rebates' with which to pay to the giant oil companies and other monopolies for still higher gas prices, food, utilities, and so forth. This repeat performance will thus result in an even greater shift in the relative burden of federal taxation. Marx's ringing declaration that "tax struggle is class struggle" promises to echo resoundingly in the ears of more and more workers and their allies in the months and years ahead!

For those layers of the working class too poor to be milked by the IRS, Uncle Sam Scrooge has even better things in store in the form of widespread cutbacks in various income support programs. Specific areas under consideration here were perhaps best indicated in the

recent retirement speech of former HEW Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who laid special emphasis on the need to eliminate the present food stamp program.

Without going into details, this fiscal crisis at the federal level is compounded and even more intensified at the state and local government levels. Here the shifting tax burden assumes only a different form, focusing primarily on property and sales taxes. Also, as the fiscal crisis deepens at this level there will be a proliferation of state and even municipal income taxes. Tax revolts will be on the agenda. For example, in San Francisco recently local citizen tax committees have formed, holding initial meetings of over 1,000, in protest over an increase in residential property assessments averaging 30-100% amidst little change and even declines in the assessments of newly-built multimillion dollar downtown corporate skyscrapers. Meanwhile, on the spending side of the ledger, education and housing have been particularly hard hit at the local government level and will likely continue to be so. The former due to problems of financing out of local tax and bond revenues, and the latter due to a conscious policy at the federal level to divert investible funds on a long-term basis out of the housing market and into basic industry to finance capital expansion projects.

There are several reasons for the generally more intensified problem at the local government level. First, unlike the federal government, local government doesn't control a central banking network through which it can raise revenue simply by printing currency. Instead, it must either raise taxes, float bonds, borrow from banks, or beg for more general revenue sharing from the federal government. However, options with regard to the first several of these alternatives are growing increasingly slim: banks and financial institutions tend not to look kindly on local governments that do not do their bidding with regard to property tax assessments—which means reducing the corporate share at the expense of residential property owners. On the other hand, the shift in the local property tax burden is also rapidly passing the point of "no resistance". Increased federal revenue sharing is technically one way out. But the problem here is that local governments are now in need of vastly greater sums of money than when the revenue sharing program began, and this need occurs in a period of record and still accelerating budget deficits at the federal level which make the federal government less likely or able to provide these increased sums. Given this dilemma, banks and financial institutions are increasingly becoming the primary source to which local governments must turn for financing, which puts them in a position more and more to dictate the policies of local governments in exchange for their loans. Consequently, one of their increasingly favorite demands on local government is "If you want our money cut costs or raise residential taxes." Where the latter is chosen the outcome is the rise of citizens' tax committees, as in San Francisco. Where the emphasis is put on the side of cost-cutting the outcome ranges from the increased use of 'temporary' workers (who lack fringe benefits and get lower wages), to wage freezes, to outright wage cuts, mass layoffs or all of these—as in New York City.

But perhaps the most important point of all this, however, is that the above trends, pressures, and dilemmas must and will *progressively worsen*. And this because of the unique, dual character of the fiscal crisis and the

nature of its relationship to the capitalist business cycle.

As the Draft Resolution notes, we are in a longterm cycle of decline of capitalism. Within this long cycle there are a possible number of short-term cycles of 3-5 years. At times inflation will surge and ebb, depending upon the stage of the short-term cycle. So will unemployment as well. That is, during the expansionary periods of these short-term cycles inflation will tend to accelerate over what it was during the previous bust period. In contrast, unemployment will tend to accelerate during the bust period and ebb during the expansionary period that follows. So far there is of course nothing especially new in this. But what is new is that the shorter these short-term cycles tend to become, and the trend is unmistakably in the direction of progressively shorter and more frequent cycles, the more that the peak periods of inflation and unemployment will increasingly tend to overlap—as they did causing the 'stagflation' of the 1970 recession and subsequently even more severely causing the 'slumpflation' of 1974.

This then constitutes the one side of the dual nature of the fiscal crisis. Since a fiscal crisis is basically a crisis of declining revenues and rising costs/expenditures by government, as unemployment rises tax revenues decline while as inflation rises so do the costs of government. When they overlap the pressures become even more intense. This forces government at the federal level to create deficits in the short-run to make up for the declining revenues, all of which only has the effect of accelerating inflation and raising costs in the longer run. In short, the first characteristic of the fiscal crisis is that it is *doubly affected by the short-term business cycle*. Both inflation and unemployment have a significant impact on it; the former through the medium of rising costs and the latter through falling revenues.

The second side of the dual nature of the fiscal crisis is that while it is doubly affected by the short-term cycle, it nevertheless does *not* itself behave in a cyclical fashion. Instead, the *fiscal crisis is characterized by a steady and progressive deterioration rather than a cyclical movement*.

One reason for this has already been mentioned: namely, the fact that as the short-term cycles tend to shorten and increase in frequency, inflation and unemployment tend increasingly to overlap. Yet another reason, however, is that with each short-term cycle it appears the base levels of both inflation and unemployment are also rising.

To cite some examples of this latter fact: during the 1960-61 recession (i.e. before the present long-run downturn began) the rate of increase of consumer prices was essentially *zero*. This rate rose to 6% by 1970. It then fell back during the 1970-71 recession—but only to 4% rather than zero! During the 1972-74 short-term expansion consumer prices then rose to 12.5%. Under the impact of the present recession they have declined to 'only' around 7-8% and will certainly rise *beyond 12.5%* in the next boom period. Thus, the base-level upon which inflation accelerates with the expansion period of each subsequent short-term cycle is rising! A similar development has been occurring with base-levels of unemployment as well. During the boom period of the late sixties unemployment fell to around 3.5%, rising to around 6% in 1971, declining to only around 4.8% in the record expansion of 1972-74, and accelerating now during the present recession to almost 10%. Meanwhile, economists and government

officials predict a decline in the unemployment rate during the next short-term expansion to a rate of no less than 7-8%!

The trend is thus unmistakably clear: base levels of both unemployment and inflation are rising more or less simultaneously while, as the short-term cycles get shorter and more frequent, unemployment and inflation are tending increasingly to overlap. The implications of these trends for the already steadily growing fiscal crisis are significant: *The fiscal crisis can only progressively continue to deteriorate.* The banks and financial institutions will consequently continue to gain a tighter grip and control of local government finances and their programs and policies as well. Local politicians will increasingly abandon the interests of workers to do their bidding, and the relationship between them and these corporations will become increasingly clear to see. "Higher property/sales taxes or fewer jobs" will be their slogans. The implications of all this for workers in the public sector, and local government in particular, are clear: wage freezes and wage cuts, loss of previously negotiated fringe benefits, deteriorating working conditions, and the loss of any semblance of job security. Most important, however, as the fiscal crisis tends to steadily and progressively deteriorate, so too will the above pressures on public workers tend to steadily and progressively intensify.

The last several months have shown that public workers are not willing to stand idly by and watch their jobs and standard of living taken away from them. Of the march on Washington for jobs last spring, public workers comprised a significantly greater percentage of those participating than their percentage of the workforce in general. Many state, county and city workers in various areas of the country have struck for the first time in recent months in response to the present offensive against them. Even in New York, where the most vicious and well-coordinated attack has taken place, public workers have nevertheless shown a willingness to fight—being held back only by the lack of courage and conviction of their leadership or the ties of union officials to the Democratic party.

These recent clear indications of combativity on the part of public workers are no accident or coincidence. They are rooted not only in the objective conditions outlined above—conditions which promise to become steadily and progressively worse—but also in the *composition* of the workforce in the public sector and other important subjective factors.

The Draft Resolution devotes an entire section on how changes in the structure of US capitalism "has produced major alterations in the composition and placement of the class" by bringing millions of women and youth into the workforce. It points out how the great percentage of women have ended up in the fastest growing sectors, in particular the public sector. Similarly, the Resolution notes that blacks make up a disproportionately large percentage of low-paid workers in the public sector. Moreover, the rapid expansion of the public sector, "the significant concentration of Blacks and women in these sectors, and the fact that these are also the most rapidly growing sectors of union organization are all interrelated phenomena".

Having been a union organizer in the public sector I can attest from first hand experience that the majority of public workers, particularly at the county and city levels, are indeed either women, Black, youth, or some combina-

tion of the three: workers in social services tend to be overwhelmingly women and young. The service end of local government hospitals tend to be overwhelmingly Black, with technical staff women and youth with college backgrounds. Custodians, groundskeepers, sanitation, municipal utilities, and road maintenance tend to be both young and from minority backgrounds. Clerical and office staff, mostly women but with significant minority concentration as well.

What is important to note, however, is not only that the significant concentration of Blacks and women in the public sector and the rapid growth of unionization are interrelated phenomena, but that this significant concentration has been probably the most important factor responsible for that rapid unionization. Blacks, women and youth have been the driving force for unionizing the public sector, a development which is still hardly a decade old. It is no coincidence the big push for unionizing the public sector also began around 1964-66. That is, about the time the civil rights movement got off the ground.

During the last ten years, as a result of this drive to unionize, public workers have been able to move from definitely second-class citizens in the workforce to achieve wages and benefits comparable to many workers in the private sector. Thus, it is not likely that Blacks, women and youth—those who have spearheaded the drive for unionization and achieved significant gains in recent years—will stand by and watch their recently formed unions destroyed, their hard-won contracts torn up, their wages and benefits reduced, and their jobs taken away without a fight. The gains they made and the price they had to pay are still too fresh in their minds. Just as they have in the recent past fought to establish their unions and better wages and conditions, they will also fight to maintain them. Events in recent months illustrate this. It is precisely because of the composition of the workforce in the public sector and the significant gains public workers have fought for and achieved in the last few years that they can be expected to be among the most combative in the months ahead.

*In short, because of the nature of the objective conditions now bearing down on public workers and the likelihood these conditions will continue to progressively worsen; because of the present composition of the workforce in the public sector which is characterized by a significant concentration of Blacks, women and youth; because of the gains public workers have made in their drive for unionization in recent years; and because of the recent signs of combativity on their part which is a direct reflection of those conditions, composition and gains—the question of a selective colonization of the public sector by the party should be seriously considered at the upcoming convention.*

## **The Strategic Character of the Public Sector**

Another factor supporting this recommendation deserves attention as well. It is the strategic nature of the public sector for the party's work in the period ahead.

For one thing, as the Draft Resolution points out, the rapid unionization of public employees in the last decade "has brought into the labor movement significant new forces whose every struggle with the boss is a struggle not only against the government but against the two political parties supported by the labor bureaucracy". A stronger

party base in the public sector in the period ahead would thus allow us to do more intensive and direct propaganda work with a sector of the class which probably holds fewer illusions about the nature and role of the two major parties than most other sectors. If a poll could be taken it would probably show that a greater percentage of public workers mistrust the two major capitalist parties than workers in other industries. This would be no coincidence, of course, since when public workers are forced to fight their employer they get to see more clearly the treachery of the local Democrats and liberal politicians who are, in effect, their bosses as well as elected public officials. In talking to strikers on picket lines in a recent strike of county workers in California I was personally impressed by the nearly unanimous resentment felt for local county politicians of the two major parties who opposed their strike and attempted to grandstand for re-election purposes at the expense of the strikers and their families. And when expressed in conversations I had with them, this resentment for local politicians was frequently associated with a general condemnation of the Democrat and Republican parties as well.

The public sector is also strategic for party work for other reasons. For one thing, to public employees the choice of "higher taxes or cutbacks in spending" often means the choice between a job or not. Public workers are thus the most likely of all sectors of the class to take the initiative against capitalist attempts to raise local taxes in an effort to establish friends and allies in the community upset over these tax hikes. If there is to be an alliance between workers and certain sectors of the middle class over this particular issue of taxes, public workers and their unions are among the most likely and natural to initiate and establish this alliance. Early indications of public workers and their unions taking a progressive stand (i.e., against the corporations) on the tax issue and in support of local citizens tax reform committees have already begun to materialize in California and elsewhere. A greater party influence among workers and unions in the public sector could be invaluable towards establishing and developing an alliance between workers and middle class elements on this tax issue.

To a similar extent the fight for better housing and against cutbacks in education offers greater potential material gains for public workers than most other sectors of the class. It means not only much needed improvements in these areas for them, but often more jobs as well. Under the proper leadership and influence public workers and their unions could play a critically important role in local community efforts and coalitions to improve conditions in housing and education. What holds them back at present from becoming the natural allies of community groups and coalitions on these issues is only the narrow-minded attitudes of their union leadership.

Finally, given the especially widespread resentment against the capitalist parties among many public workers, as well as their critical position in relation to local issues of taxes, housing and education, the implications for local party election campaigns should be apparent. A receptivity towards our campaigns, candidates and program should be as great or greater among public workers as any other sector of the class. As comrade Camejo pointed out in a recent *Militant* article, workers he speaks to on street corners in the course of campaigning react mistrustfully sometimes until he clarifies the fact he is a socialist, at

which point their interest in what he has to say often increases. Comrade Camejo in the future might casually inquire in the course of conversations with people who react in the above manner as to what type of work they do. It is likely his unofficial poll might reveal a disproportionately large percentage of public workers among those who display such a reaction and positive response to his campaign.

### What Is Meant By 'Selective' Colonization?

Selective colonization does *not* mean a massive shift of party members into public employment. It does *not* mean a thoughtless rush to take comrades off their present jobs and assignments and throw them into the public sector. It means a well thought out approach to the question. It may not always even be objectively possible to get people into public employment. But there is no way of knowing until it is tried. In certain geographical areas there may not be that much 'movement' of the class in the public sector. In others there may be a great deal. The opportunities will certainly be uneven. Each branch must therefore survey its own situation, assess its needs, tasks, and the relative opportunities for such colonization.

On the other hand, wherever there is motion among public workers or in this sector the branches should *strongly* encourage comrades in between jobs, without jobs, fed up with their present jobs, or about to leave school, to seek employment in this sector as their first priority. In addition, comrades in nonunion jobs or jobs where there is clearly little or no opportunity for contact work should also be urged to seek employment in the public sector.

A good example where there are ample opportunities for selective colonization of the public sector is San Francisco. Here, community groups and committees have formed to fight cutbacks in education and rising property taxes. Public workers have shown their willingness to fight in recent strikes and the workers and their unions have successfully defeated ballot measures aimed at taking away their strike gains. Here, the largest public workers union in the city has recently been thrown into receivership by its International—thus bringing to the fore the question of democracy in the union and giving rise to rank and file groups within the union organizing around the question, as well as giving birth to a movement to set up a rival independent public employee union in competition with the 'old' union. In addition, a campaign by the local chamber of commerce in concert with local city politicians continues to build against the public workers of the city, aiming no doubt at an eventual showdown at the time of contract negotiations next year.

In conclusion, it should be said that encouraging and urging comrades to take jobs in the public sector will probably end up as informal and half-hearted efforts at the branch level without the formal stamp of *priority* given by the convention and leadership of the party. What is not needed is 'a lot of smoke and no fire' regarding this question of selective colonization of the public sector. What is needed is to recognize that there are significant developments in the public sector taking place which call for a serious and hard consideration of a policy of selective colonization of this strategic sector. The motion is there. Public workers have shown a willingness to fight even if

their leaders have not. This combativity is a reflection of the composition of the workforce in the sector, of the gains they have recently made, and the objective economic conditions which will steadily deteriorate as the fiscal crisis progressively worsens. The public sector is not just

another industry at present. It may well prove over the next year to be the major battleground in the fight against capitalist efforts to drive down the standard of living of American workers. We in the party should be there to help lead that fight—from the 'inside' as well as from 'without'!

## **A History and Analysis of the Human Rights Party of Michigan.**

**by Marti Pettit, Detroit Branch**

The following is based on an educational given by myself to the Detroit branch of the Socialist Workers Party in the fall of 1974. It is updated and offered here in the hopes that it will be helpful to comrades dealing with the Human Rights Party, or similar Peace-and-Freedom type formations as they arise.

### **HISTORY**

The state-wide Human Rights Party, which is the strongest local affiliate of the People's Party nationally, was formed in 1971 by a few leading members of the Democratic Party who dropped out of it because of disagreements on various issues. After a series of meetings in the spring of 1971, these leaders and others (about 50 of them, all white, average age 30-35), called for the formation of the Human Rights Party and began petitioning to get the party on the ballot, which they were successful in doing by late fall of the year.

The Ann Arbor Human Rights Party, which I will concentrate on as I am the most familiar with it, and it is the strongest of the state-wide parties, was preceded in Ann Arbor by the Voice Party and the Radical Independent Party. The Voice Party had existed from 1962-1966, and was composed of campus academic types, and involved in the beginnings of the antiwar movement, and civil rights movement: Kresge picket lines in 1961, and voter registration drives in the South in 1965.

In the late sixties and early seventies, there was no "left" party in Ann Arbor, but there was a great deal of political activity on campus; a student control of the university movement (focused around a student bookstore strike), the BAM (Black Action Movement) strikes in 1971 for 10 percent Black enrollment by 1973, and antiwar actions of 10-15,000. There was also a year-and-a-half long tenant strike led by the International Socialists (IS). Many of these activists were the core of the HRP.

The Radical Independent Party was started in October 1970, and by early 1971 there was a core of 20 people involved: university activists, student government people, Tenants Union activists, Anarchists, Lesbian feminists, IS'ers, etc. They waged an unsuccessful write-in campaign for city council and mayor, and got 27 votes for mayor, and 120 for city council.

By the summer of 1971, RIP was tired of write-in campaigns, and decided to check out the new Human Rights Party who was then petitioning to get on the ballot. By August, RIP was coming to state-wide HRP meetings to discuss a merger. This was consummated, and the new party was called the "RIP/HRP" for awhile, then the "RIP" was dropped.

There had been some organized movement in the Black Community in the late '60's which the RIP did not orient itself to. By the fall of '71 there were three perceptible trends in the "white university community:" the left Democrats, the HRP, and Rainbow People's Party.

The Rainbow People's Party was doing community organizing under the leadership of John Sinclair. It began to work closely with the HRP for a "Free John Sinclair" rally (he had been imprisoned for possession of two marijuana joints), which was successful: Sinclair was released two days later. The Rainbow People's Party and HRP also formed an electoral coalition, with the Rainbow People's Party only backing their own candidates for city council. Two of the HRP candidates won in the student wards.

Once on the city council, what did the HRP do? They proposed legislation that included consumer action legislation, antiscab legislation, and "community control" of the police, all of which were voted down. They were successful in passing a \$5.00 fine on marijuana possession.

In late August of 1972, the "Left Radical Caucus" was formed secretly within HRP, which said the HRP was not "socialist enough." The HRP has no provision for the formation of tendencies or factions, so that the coordinator did not even know about them. They became public as the "Chocolate Almond Pistachio Caucus." At the same time there was discussion about whether or not to support McGovern, or place Benjamin Spock, the candidate of the People's Party, which the HRP was affiliated with nationally, on the ballot in Michigan. The Rainbow People's Party wanted to support McGovern. The HRP decided not to place Spock on the ballot because it would jeopardize their chances of staying on the ballot for the next year (the top person on the ballot had to get 15,000 votes: about 3-5 percent of the votes of the winning candidate. Without Spock, the top person was Barbara Halpert, running for U.S. Senate, who was able to do this.)

Next was a fight about who to run for mayor and city

council among the various groupings within the HRP: the Rainbow People's Party, the Chocolate Almond Pistachio Caucus, and the newly emerged Militant Middle Caucus, soon to be dubbed the Marshmallow Caucus. The Marshmallow Caucus won, but the other two caucuses refused to work on the campaign.

In the fall of 1973 HRP had the idea of initiating various ballot proposals to try to get people out to the ballot box. A new \$5.00 marijuana fine was placed on the ballot and passed (the previous law passed by the city council having been subsequently defeated by a Republican administration). A rent control law was also placed on the ballot, but was defeated.

Also in the fall of 1973 the HRP was successful in recruiting a good deal of the active and radical gay community in Ann Arbor to its party. In the city council in the spring of 1974, HRP candidate Kathy Kozachenko, running openly as a Lesbian, won a seat on City Council.

Several things stand out about the HRP from this brief history alone. Its composition is primarily students and ex-students, or young professionals, and is nearly 100 percent white. Its program as seen through the major campaign issues and legislation proposed is one of petty reforms of capitalism. Its major focus from the beginning has been marijuana law reform. Its base is local, and very little attention is paid to national and international issues.

## HRP AND THE DEMOCRATS

The HRP is currently evolving in a rightward direction, which can be demonstrated through its relationship with the Democratic Party. The HRP has given back-handed support to the Democrats.

In Ann Arbor in 1974, a system called Preferential Voting was initiated by the HRP and passed. This provides for voters to exercise both a first and second choice when they vote. When the ballots are counted, if no candidate receives over 50 percent of the votes counting the first choices, the last-placed candidate is eliminated and his/her second choice votes are re-distributed to the other candidates. HRP came up with this scheme because it was under pressure from Democrats for "splitting the vote" and causing Republican victories. Instead of countering this by explaining that neither the Democrats nor Republicans had answers to the problems plaguing capitalism, and advocating a strong movement outside both parties, they capitulated to the pressure by providing people with an avenue for voting HRP and still getting a Democrat in Office.

HRP'ers were more or less open about the purpose of Preferential Voting while they were petitioning for it, but the proof of their intent can be seen in the results of P-V in practice.

P-V was used in the Ann Arbor city elections in the spring of 1975. In these elections, no candidate got over 50 percent of the vote counting first choice votes, although the Republican incumbent, James Stevenson, was close, with over 48 percent of the vote. So the HRP candidate, Carol Ernst, was eliminated from the race, and her second-choice votes were re-distributed. It turned out that about 98 percent of those who had supported Ernst as their first choice voted Democratic for second choice. This resulted in so many votes that the Democratic candidate, Al Wheeler, a Black doctor, won the race. It was these second-place votes, then, that elected the Democrat. This has caused

dissension within the HRP, since one of the main attractions of the HRP to young radicals has been its rejection of the Democratic Party. As one HRP member said, "If you're going to vote Democratic second choice, you might as well vote for them first choice and save yourselves the trouble."

This cozy relationship with the Democratic Party has worked both ways. A paid political ad in the Detroit Free Press on November 5, 1974 featured headlines: "FERENCY FOR GOVERNOR. THE ONLY TRUE DEMOCRAT. FORMER DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR. FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY." In the body of the ad we are informed: "Ferency is running for governor on the Human Rights Party ticket but is a former Democratic state chairman and the party's 1966 candidate for governor." The ad was paid for by the "Labor Democrats for Zolton A. Ferency," which, however, did not seem to represent any major section of the Democratic Party.

In Ann Arbor the HRP has been faced with an interesting problem since the April city council elections. They have been offered at least two donations of from \$50-100 from local city merchants, who see the HRP supporting particular local issues of benefit to them. Both donations were turned down after a debate within the HRP. But the dynamics of heavy involvement in local issues (including such things as liquor licenses and placement of traffic lights) to the exclusion of larger national and international issues, plus the electoral strategy of winning in elections as the way to bring about change (combined with the HRP's rejection of Marxist theory and lack of a coherent program) are propelling the HRP along a more and more conservative course.

## PROGRAM OF THE HRP

The written program of the HRP has many demands that are similar to our own. Some examples are: "All workers, including public employees have the right to strike." "Free child care facilities, paid for by the companies, ought to be available for workers' children and be controlled by those who use them." "The State of Michigan ought to repeal all of its abortion laws." "As a step toward disarmament the U.S. ought to withdraw immediately, unconditionally, and unilaterally all U.S. and U.S. supported forces from all foreign countries and cease all military involvement in foreign countries." "The CIA must be abolished," etc.

There are some important disagreements we have with other parts of the HRP's written program, such as the fact that they do not support passage of the ERA (they aren't against it per se but there are disagreements within the party and no position was taken in the platform.) Also, they do not support the formation of an independent Black or Labor party. The HRP thinks that it would take too much work in petitioning, etc., for a Black or Labor party to get on the ballot, so Blacks and workers should just use the HRP. This also gives an indication of their lack of trust or interest in the independent dynamic of these movements.

The HRP also has a completely wrong view of the police. They count the police as one of the forces "serving and protecting" the community, and call only for its "control" by the community, not its dismantlement. They also call for the creation of all-women "rape-units." Since HRP has

been on City Council, they have been instrumental in getting more money allocated for the police department to hire women cops.

But the real heart of the HRP program and strategy is not to be found codified in their written platform. Just as the real heart of the SWP program is to be found in our entire history of uncompromising class struggle, the heart and soul of the HRP program is its rejection of the working class as the only class with the social weight and numerical size to make the American revolution, and a pre-occupation with changing "interpersonal relationships" as opposed to changing the fundamental institutions of capitalism.

## **FUTURE OF THE HRP**

The HRP has never been as strong and numerous as they were in 1971 when they won two seats on the city council in Ann Arbor. Internal contradictions in the party and changing events in the radicalization in the country as a whole make the future for the HRP very shaky.

Not having been founded on a consistent theory or strategy of revolution, members of the HRP can hold to whatever views they want to. These range from some that admit that a socialist revolution will be necessary in this country to those who think that all that is needed is to replace those currently in office with "better" people. Without a solid revolutionary strategy, the HRP vacillates between a liberal, or reformist, and an ultra-left position. HRP members can one day be petitioning to get Preferential Voting on the ballot to elect Democrats, and the next day be advocating "trashing" or disrupting the meeting of a political speaker they disagree with. In my opinion, splits and disagreements concerning differences on strategy are bound to continue.

The localism and petty-bourgeois class base of the party will also cause it more and more problems as the radicalization affects not just students, but the working class as well. The HRP's attitude toward the April 26 March for Jobs on Washington, for example, confirms this. Mostly the party ignored the demonstration, but one leading member told me that his attitude was that these

were just the spoiled, affluent, conservative workers (for whom the HRP has no hope), who were demonstrating because they were finding it hard to make payments on that second car or snow-mobile. Their "affluence" he called "anti-human."

In general the HRP sees the radicalization as dying out and not as growing and deepening. From their point of view, there was a student movement in the '60's and early '70's that managed to hang-on in Ann Arbor, Berkeley and a few other places, but is finally dying out. The HRP sees an increasingly low voter turn-out not as a good sign of the general disillusionment with both capitalist parties and electoral politics but as a catastrophe: the erosion of their student base by the "end" of the radicalization.

In the future I think that the weaknesses of the HRP are going to be brought sharply to the fore: their petty bourgeois social base, lack of revolutionary strategy and theory, and localism, and that these are going to cause no end of mistaken orientations, disagreements, and probably splits and loss in membership as well.

## **OUR ORIENTATION TO THE HRP**

At this point, to my knowledge, there are no members of the HRP who have developed on their own, inside the HRP, into Revolutionary Socialists. However, the HRP has many bright, political, radical, and highly capable people who can perhaps be convinced through discussion and their own experience within the HRP and through participation in common activity with our movement that revolutionary socialism would be a better road to follow. Our attitude has been friendly and collaborative in the many areas where we can do work together. We have sought out the HRP as the strongest local political force in Ann Arbor to form united fronts around many issues from the United Farmworkers to Boston antiracist work. The cutting edge of our discussions with the HRP has been on the type of party that is needed, and on getting them involved in common activities around local, national and international events. At the same time we have opposed them in elections, debating them where possible, as we did in my campaign for U.S. Congress in 1974.

## **ON OUR TRADE UNION WORK**

**by Steve Beumer, Detroit Branch**

**July 24, 1975**

### **Introduction**

This document will attempt to be an early contribution on some of the concrete aspects and expanding opportunities in the party's trade union work. The political perspective is best currently expressed by three recent contributions which I will use as the starting point:

- 1) "New Moods in the Working Class" by Carol Lipman
- 2) Tasks and Perspectives Report at the May Plenum by Barry Sheppard

- 3) The Decline of American Capitalism: Prospects For A Socialist Revolution, National Committee Draft Resolution

Taking some of the major points made in these contributions I will emphasize and expand on the areas that through my own experience in the trade union movement I think are the most important. The last section will deal somewhat with the problems and strengths we face in meeting these new challenges in the class struggle. My experience has been in the International Union of Electrical Workers (I.U.E.) while employed by the Whirl-



pool Corporation to do production line work. I was laid off there, but currently am an active member of Division 26 of the Amalgamated Transit Union (A.T.U.) which represents bus operators for the City of Detroit's Department of Transportation, for which I work full time.

### **New Opportunities in the Union Movement**

The perspectives of what lies ahead for the labor movement in the documents previously referred to offers us unparalleled opportunities than the party has seen in the last several decades. For a large number of comrades, doing a significant amount of work in the trade unions and in the broader working class is a new area of work. Like any other area of work that will be taking up an increasing amount of time and number of comrades, we must carefully consider all the aspects of our participation to make it the most effective possible.

I will be focusing mainly on my experience in the Amalgamated Transit Union, because, to a certain extent, I have witnessed in the last year and a half the evolution that we have been discussing. The ATU, which represents most bus operators in the United States and Canada, is the major union representing transit workers. This includes many urban transit systems (none of which deserve to be called mass) Greyhound, Continental, Trailways, Garyline systems, many smaller charter companies and an increasing number of school bus drivers. Internationally the ATU is almost 50 percent Black, and this percentage in the union includes all the Greyhound drivers which remain largely white. This percentage certainly speaks for itself about the composition of urban bus operators. In my local, Division 26, this is reflected by the percentage of Black operators, roughly 90 percent.

Division 26 has not had a record of militant struggles and activity. The major struggle that has any sort of continuity in the minds of operators, and this is restricted to mainly older operators, was a month and a half long strike during the mid-fifties. A dampening effect on our particular local was probably due to the fact that the headquarters of the International used to be located in Detroit. (It is now in Washington, D.C.). The ATU as a whole is also still constricted by the leftover policy and structure of craft unionism from the old AF of L.

Despite these shortcomings the foundation is being laid by the increasing radicalization of the working class to move the ATU into action and take advantage of the tremendous power that it holds in this key industry, transportation. The actions taken by Division 26 through our initiation and active participation will help accelerate this process and undoubtedly, with Detroit being an important local in the ATU, will tend to have an effect on the union internationally.

The first proposal that we initiated in the union of any real importance was around solidarity with the United Mine Workers (U.M.W.) last year. I had been discussing with the branch organizer and the trade union director ways that we could increase our participation in the local and see how far we could get the union involved in broader social struggles and militant labor activity.

I drew up a resolution that was modeled after the resolution passed by Local 4 of the Painters Union in San Francisco. (It was reprinted in the *Militant*). Well before the membership meeting I talked to the president of the

local about reading the resolution. He was agreeable and said that a point would be put on the agenda for the resolution. But before this membership meeting was held, a nationwide strike by Greyhound operators began. I called up the president and explained the importance of extending solidarity to our brothers and sisters in the ATU that had been forced out on strike. I emphasized the importance of doing something immediately and definitely before the membership meeting. As a result he walked the picket line that was set up at the terminal in Detroit and pledged Division 26's full support.

At the membership meeting both the local's president and I were surprised at the reaction of the other operators. But we were surprised for different reasons and so began the end of his willingness to provide cooperation around involving the local in social struggles. It is not necessary to go into all the details of the meeting but two important stands were taken:

1) Solidarity was extended to striking Greyhound operators and what began as a motion for money for coffee and donuts for the strikers turned into an old time auction as each operator tried to out yell the other in upping the money.

2) I prefaced reading the resolution supporting the UMW with comments about the state of the economy and the role of unions in fighting these attacks. This was greeted with a standing ovation.

I would venture to say that this was the most political meeting held in many decades of Division 26.

This initial feeler provided us with an important answer: that a militant spirit was lying untapped in the ranks of this local and that future active participation was warranted. This was an important first step in beginning to work in a trade union local that either we have not participated in before or that hadn't had a recent history of militancy. And even though there are still many cases where comrades will find it not advantageous to do extensive work within their particular local, individual discussions and sales of the *Militant* should always be a part of any comrades membership in a trade union, no matter how backward it may seem on the surface.

This was the first significant activity that we were involved in with Division 26. It laid the basis for us to begin to initiate discussions around a broad range of activities and to begin regular activity in the local. One of these was an important issue facing all Michigan public employees, binding arbitration. This drive by the employers to force binding arbitration on public employee unions made the teacher's unions, the Michigan Federation of Teachers (M.F.T.) and the Michigan Education Association (M.E.A.) their primary target of attack. (See SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 33, No. 9 contribution by Paula Rogers and past articles in the *Militant* on Detroit teachers).

The sharpest attacks on the teacher's unions occurred last fall in the Crestwood school district in which the Board of Education attempted to smash the Crestwood Education Association (C.E.A.). Once again we were able to help move Division 26 into taking a stand solidarizing with the CEA and providing participation from Division 26 on the picket lines. This brings me up to the most significant work we have participated in to date—our work around the May 17 March in Boston.

Our Boston work in Detroit included several different unions where comrades are active and particularly

reaching out to their Black members. Work in this area was limited only by the number of comrades we had in trade unions. Every comrade made it a top priority to introduce a resolution endorsing the march in their local. We got eight endorsements to the action just through the initiative of our comrades in different unions.

Several comrades that work at a large hospital were able to do Boston work even though the hospital was only recently organized by the Service Employees International Union (S.E.I.U.) and our work remained mostly on a one to one basis. The two party comrades and one YSA comrade that work there were able to sell buttons, pass out leaflets, and get into many good discussions around the issues in Boston. The YSA comrade sold over 25 buttons to his co-workers.

Although most of our work centered around introducing resolutions, we were able to do further work in Local 4002 of the Communications Workers of America (C.W.A.). Like my local it is comprised largely of Blacks, roughly 75 percent, and the president is a Black woman. A resolution was put forward endorsing the march and providing for a bus for CWA members to go to Boston on. This passed the Executive Board and at the next general membership meeting, a leaflet was issued advertising the march and urging participation. Our comrade was listed to see for more information. But because of the lack of seriousness on the part of the union leadership in building the march, they were able to get out of sending a bus because of a low response from the membership. One of the most important gains however was the establishment of our comrade as a union militant and activist in broader social struggles.

Our work in Division 26 encompassed the most extensive work we did around Boston in any union in Detroit. We started out by introducing a strongly worded resolution at the general membership meeting along with asking for a large donation. The president had stated beforehand that he was opposed to the resolution for various reactionary reasons. Because of this I underestimated what his response would be to the resolution in the meeting and how the membership would react. Because of this we lost the large donation and only later got a token sum. He chose not to oppose the resolution outright, which would have further tarnished his already battered image from the attacks by city hall and the continuing threats of layoffs, and instead maneuvered to have the money taken out. Later in the meeting a motion was made by an older member who has been in leadership positions (Vice President and Executive Board) for nearly two decades (his wife is also on the Executive Board of the Detroit NAACP), to provide expense money for me to go as a representative of Division 26. This along with the resolution was finally passed unanimously.

With the interest shown at the union meeting and from our past experience it was apparent that we could do something else around Boston before the march. Several ideas were discussed between the organizer, the trade union director, Boston work director, and myself. We finally decided to focus on getting a literature table set up inside the garage under union sponsorship. At the previous membership meeting another operator indicated that he already knew of the march and was planning to go. He also indicated that he was interested in doing something further to build the march. (His involvement in Boston work enabled me to have some very extensive discussions with him about many issues including Boston,

where he agrees with our analysis. He has since bought several issues of the *Militant* and the *Young Socialist* along with several Pathfinder pamphlets. This is one example of why it is important that we be in these positions, as questions arise in the minds of radicalizing workers we can provide the answers.) After approaching him with the idea he was very agreeable so we approached the union leadership. They agreed and after several meetings between the union and management we were given approval for a table to be up between 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. on the Wednesday before the march. This was prime time since most operators work swing shifts and are usually in the garage.

The response we received was excellent. We sold one bus ticket, nearly 50 buttons, and passed out several hundred leaflets and NSCAR "Student Mobilizers." The discussions we had were the high point and showed the many positions on busing that exist among Black workers. But with only a couple of exceptions every Black operator supported the demonstration, agreed with the demands in the context of Boston, and agreed with the concept of mass action to answer the racists. Notably there were several white operators who also agreed with the march and its goals and a couple proudly wore NSCAR buttons on their uniforms. Certainly from this experience one may conclude that the rich lessons of the civil rights and antiwar movements were not totally lost, but have been accepted by many workers as a weapon against the employers.

Our ability to be present at the work place and take full advantage of these situations as they arise is crucial. Simply being present and offering our solution to the problems of working people can help influence the thinking of many workers and gain us new followers. During and after the march I was able to explain to my co-workers the truth about the issues in Boston, propose a strategy to fight the racists, and explain the significance of the march.

On the Monday following the march I was provided with many opportunities to explain the success of the march. No less than a dozen operators came up to me and wanted to know how the march went and what I thought about it. Many had previously had somewhat of a feeling of hopelessness about the possibilities of the busing plan in Detroit but correctly felt that if the racists were defeated in Boston then Detroit stood a far better chance of succeeding. And many had the feeling that the racists could not be taken on at all, but were greatly lifted by the success of the march and felt it was a victory.

## Students

The political resolution takes up most of the important points concerning students and their relation to the current radicalization. However, I want to emphasize and add a few points that relate to my experience with public employees in general.

In the last several years we have seen a growing militancy among public employees and their unions. The increasing proletarianization of Americans is one of the reasons for this, but specifically the public workers sector because of the large number of former students that are entering this sector of the work force. I am not basing this on any survey or study done, but purely on my own observations. One of the reasons this sector has been particularly attractive in the past to someone who has

either graduated or had some college was the relatively high availability of jobs, a history of job security unlike some major industries, and a fairly high pay scale with many attractive fringe benefits. I have also found that many workers in this sector are still attending school.

Many of the younger bus operators attend college part time. Many of them attend the Wayne County Community College system which is a relatively inexpensive, liberal arts school aimed at attracting workers who want to go back to college on a part time basis. There are WCCC centers around the city with the overwhelming number of its students being Black and many full time workers. We have always made these places a high priority for our propaganda and they have steadily remained one of the highest sales locations for the *Militant* and *Young Socialist* in Detroit.

One of the important points that seems to come through on all of this is that many of these young workers went through some of the radicalization of the '60s on campus and are affected now by the more radical atmosphere on campus. And these ideas do not stay behind in the classroom but stay with them at the work place. Some cynics contend that you might be able to get some students to march against the war, or boycott lettuce, or help defend a victim of government repression, but after they are out of school and get a job that they begin to "mellow" and grow "older and wiser." I think this is a lot of bunk. It is just a little out of touch with reality to think that the concepts and ideas that these people gained while they were students will just vanish. And particularly now in the face of the attacks in the public workers sector aimed at the standard of living of these workers many will be more inclined to giving much more serious consideration to what those "campus radicals" were saying about the government and the lack of any kind of control or security in ones' life. We have already seen the fruits of this in Baltimore, Los Angeles and San Francisco. And because of this comrades who are looking for jobs should keep the public employee sector high on their list.

## Approach

As attitudes and moods change within the working class our approach must also change. The *Tasks and Perspectives Report* from the May Plenum was a step towards orienting comrades to new openings in the working class and the trade union movement. I would like to offer some specific suggestions in areas that are of prime importance to our taking complete advantage of these new openings.

### I. Education

The working class has undergone considerable change in the last few years, questioning many institutions of bourgeois democracy. Despite this there still remains massive illusions and confusion about what is exactly wrong with this society and how to go about changing it. But a growing number are becoming open and even accepting many of the proposals we pose as a socialist alternative to the ills of capitalism.

My fellow union members, in both the IUE and the ATU, were open to socialist proposals. Although many didn't completely agree with every point, only a handful didn't listen and at least give my ideas serious consideration. There are very few members of Division 26 that today would not admit that this society has many serious problems, least of all racism. Many will accept the idea

that only bold and radical proposals will be able to solve these problems. This is where the method of the Transitional Program comes in.

For example, the case of binding arbitration that all public employees in Michigan are now faced with. The unions first took a position in favor of this serious attack on the rights of collective bargaining and later many took a more unfavorable stand but continued to do nothing. Both of the teacher's unions, the MFT and the MEA now have formal positions opposing binding arbitration but are still hoping to work out some secret compromise legislation.

The most fundamental question in this dispute is the role of the courts. Naturally those unions that have taken a position opposed to binding arbitration have not taken that position from a class struggle viewpoint. Instead they have reasoned out why binding arbitration will infringe on their narrow interests. My fellow Division 26 members, including the entire elected leadership, are almost unanimously in favor of binding arbitration. I have consistently argued against binding arbitration pointing to the role the courts play in the working class. Some success has been made in the last year by my arguments and from using material put out by the MFT. The two delegates to our international convention this fall were both long time activists in the union. (One put the motion on the floor for money to go to Boston that was mentioned earlier). They both had originally favored binding arbitration but due to some extent through my many discussions with them they have both reversed their positions and will be attending the convention opposing binding arbitration and opposing the elected leadership from Division 26 that will be attending who still favor it. They are also both readers of the *Militant*.

So despite a growing distrust of the government and its institutions, many illusions are still ingrained in the minds of workers. Participating and pushing the education of the working class of the hows and whys of the class struggle is an extremely important long term task. I have found that once you can convince a worker of some of the fundamental ideas of a class struggle perspective then it is down hill from there on.

In Detroit we have utilized every opportunity that we are able to take advantage of. Besides the exceptional opportunities that come along there are several general tools that can be used all the time. First is the *Militant*. It can't be emphasized enough the importance of using the *Militant* at the work place not only as an educational tool, but to meet fellow workers, and to intervene in discussions among your co-workers. Single sales are also a complement to subscriptions. The pre-paid sub cards are especially convenient for working comrades since they can be easily carried in your pocket and your co-workers will be impressed by the professional appearance and convenience that they provide.

Second is our election campaign. Especially with our "Bill of Rights for Working People" we are provided with an excellent tool to introduce our ideas to our co-workers. I have found that many times the discussions that my co-workers will be engaged in will pertain in some way to a point taken up in the "Bill of Rights for Working People." It is especially easy to just hand someone a copy since it is free and follow up later. Doing this has led to *Militant* sales later on and further discussions.

Third is Pathfinder literature. Pathfinder has a growing number of pamphlets on topical issues that are easily brought to work. Where possible it is most desirable to attempt to bring a co-worker by the bookstore and introduce them to the wide range of books in stock. Two books that I have found especially good to introduce newly radicalizing workers to is the series on the Teamsters by Farrell Dobbs and James Cannon's *America's Road to Socialism*.

Many branches are establishing regular contact classes. In Detroit we completed a successful series oriented to working people in the spring which brought several workers who were interested in our ideas closer and we are currently having another series this summer which promises to be even more successful. These classes provide a more relaxed setting for new contacts and increases the chances that they will get the questions answered that they have.

The last point I want to make on education concerns our internal education. I feel a major vehicle for this should be the *Party Builders*. As we begin to get our feet wet in the labor movement we are going to face many new and different challenges. We should share these with all comrades so that everyone can learn from their success or failure. This radicalization of the working class promises to be quite different from that of the '30s. The reprinting of the steel workers and building trades workshops from last year's Oberlin conference in the *Party Builder* was quite useful. The experiences the comrades shared and discussed are what we need more of. I am only afraid that we have already missed some valuable lessons from experiences that comrades have already had as this radicalization begins to unfold. We should begin by establishing the *Party Builder* as a regular publication featuring contributions not only on trade union work, but all aspects of party building.

Another angle of our internal education is the discovery of our own history and our involvement in the labor movement. Most comrades are aware of the more prominent examples such as our leadership in the Teamsters Union, but are not aware that despite our small size we have played a consistent role in the labor movement and in some cases have some influence on the policies of the trade unions.

Many comrades look at the book *Speeches to the Party* as a record of the struggle with the Cochranites, but it also contains an excellent guide to work in the unions. Another example is our involvement in the ASR (American Safety Razor) and Square D strikes in Detroit during the peak of the witch-hunt. These important chapters of the party's history should not be left as only memories of older comrades.

However, in light of the current financial strain some of these being published may not be realistic in the near future. But as the situation improves we should begin publishing this rich history of the party either in books or educational bulletins.

## II. Recruitment

In the "Tasks and Perspectives Report" a new perspective was outlined in our recruitment to the party. With a growing number of workers that are contacts of the party, as is the case in Detroit, we must pay careful attention to this area to maximize our gains. The political resolution states that one of the two central tasks facing us is the accumulation of cadre.

There are several things that can be done and are already being done by branches and individual comrades. In several cities, including Detroit, recruitment directors have been assigned. Having a recruitment director is paramount to effectively organize the work with contacts as they come around. This will also prevent names and addresses from laying around the hall collecting dust when these contacts should be getting some kind of attention. The recruitment director would also centralize this work and prevent overlap and a lot of needless shuffling of contacts.

Earlier under the section on education I discussed the role of contact classes and once again they come up as an effective tool to reach these new contacts. In branches that have a fair number of trade union contacts, a class series discussing specifically the issues facing the labor movement might be tried. A class series was held along these lines in the Bay Area, but I did not hear the results. The *Party Builder* would be a good place to hear of the results of this series.

Comrades may also find other tools to help in recruitment. I have found that keeping a 3x5 index card file with all of my contacts is extremely helpful in my work with contacts. Each person that I think can be considered a contact has a card. Mostly they are my co-workers, but I have different sections for people I meet elsewhere. Every time they buy a sub, come to a class, or some other event, I make a note of it on the card. Also during our discussions they may raise certain points or have a particular question that I will note on their card. This helps in keeping your contacts in order and not getting them confused. It also helps when you need to contact them for upcoming events such as a campaign rally to make a special effort to get them to attend.

A last point that I feel is very important to recruitment is how our opportunities are divided between new opportunities in the trade unions and the working class and our past assignments and responsibilities. Comrades will find that as they spend more time with co-workers that there will be less time for past responsibilities. The reason that the time spent with co-workers in what may seem an informal manner will take precedence over past responsibilities is the importance we place on recruitment and the gains we can make in presenting a socialist alternative to as many workers as we can reach. I don't think that any comrade is so naive to think that workers are going to automatically come to us. Quite the contrary. One of the biggest historical road blocks to revolution has been the crisis of leadership in the working class. Our day to day work also necessarily includes fighting for the allegiance of the working class against the various Stalinists and other tendencies that are competing for the leadership of the working class.

We are in a far superior position than ever before to gain that leadership within the working class. But this task is easier said than done, so every comrade must take every opportunity by the horns and root themselves in the working class and maximize the number of workers that make up our cadre. Although some comrades may find it amusing, parties and other social functions workers attend can be an excellent place to do political work. In these situations many workers are more relaxed and it is easier to get into discussions about various issues. It also serves a purpose to attend these functions to dispel that inevitable charge of "outsider" by making oneself more a

part of the particular union we're in. There are also such functions as classes specifically for workers. For example, Wayne State University in Detroit co-sponsors with the AFL-CIO the Labor Studies Center. Classes are given on various topics of interest to workers and they only cost \$5.00, usually picked up by the local union. Many trade union activists attend these classes and it is an excellent place to meet other workers and get into discussions. I attended one last fall and was able to sell two *Militant* subs to two laidoff Black women auto workers from UAW Local 7 at Chrysler Jefferson. Each area and each comrade will have to evaluate their situation to decide on the most advantageous situations.

We must be there first with our program to present to these radicalizing workers. As with the student movement in the '60s when we were able to recruit a large number of the radicalizing youth and leave many of the other tendencies behind, we must reach the largest number of workers and recruit them. It is much more difficult to reach a worker after they have been poisoned by Social Democratic or Stalinist ideas. I think it was Cannon that once said any one new militant workers as a recruit was worth any ten reeducated Stalinists.

### **Our Relation to the Working Class**

This last section will depart somewhat from the rest of this document and take up some of the questions that the party faces in meeting the full challenge of these opportunities. The key to implementing the perspectives outlined by the National Committee will be borne out in the actual day to day work of comrades. Of course we are faced with this in every area of work and particularly when we decide to participate in a situation that is just developing. This was true in our Boston work where the party leadership correctly recognized an opening and comrades threw themselves into this area of work. But an orientation of this magnitude requires a totally serious approach on the part of every single comrade in the party.

For decades, as the working class lay dormant, our activity has been mainly among the various allies of the working class, particularly the student movement. During that period, the orientation we took was the only correct one that related to the real political situation in America. It would also have been an abdication as revolutionaries not to participate in and lead these evolving struggles. There were some attitudes that were drawbacks to work in the student movement that linger today. They resulted from the volunteerism of the work in the mass movement period.

But as the working class continued to lay dormant, with few openings, our work remained largely within the student milieu. Some of these attitudes tended to remain submerged and had not been given a chance to surface. However with the growing radicalization they are beginning to surface. Although they are not serious at this point, it facilitates work that lies ahead of us to examine them.

During the period of the antiwar movement the nature of our work demanded certain life styles of comrades. Most comrades remained relatively unattached to a job, home, or even one city. As we would gear up for an action, many times comrades would go on full time working in the antiwar offices or in some way to build the action. This

required a certain amount of instability in comrades' lives, some times even calling for a comrade to move to a different city on short notice. During this period, this was necessary and the dedication and sacrifice made by many comrades was critical in making the antiwar movement a success in this country. The jobs that many comrades took during this period can probably most correctly be described as "shit jobs." These types of jobs are generally better for the flexible hours needed and if a comrade were to move or go on full time, little was lost by quitting.

A reevaluation is needed at this time concerning many jobs that comrades hold and how they relate to the current openings in the working class. We are faced with a situation where political gains and recruitment are possible at many work places. I have already outlined many of the experiences I have had and this is not an isolated case. Already direct recruitment of workers has occurred in Detroit as well as other branches. I'm sure during this coming period as we see workers begin to radicalize, the first signs of change are clearly coming through. One is the lack of anti-communist hysteria. Although only a small handful are now willing to accept most of our program, many will accept part of it or give serious consideration to a socialist alternative, but only if we are at the work place and rooted in the working class can we maximize these openings. Now is the time to leave the practices of the past which have become outdated because of changing circumstances and move forward in meeting the new challenges of the working class.

I would like to end this section with some remarks on the direction which we can start this process. When a comrade goes job hunting certain political considerations should be made to where you try to get a job. In each city there are certain key industries that it would be important for the political life of that city to have comrades employed. Of course such considerations as the high rate of unemployment are factors to take into consideration, but even if a comrade is forced to take a temporary job, continuing to fill out applications and go to job interviews will increase your chance of getting into one of those positions later. And despite the attacks on affirmative action programs, many are still in effect which make it somewhat easier for Black, Latino, and women comrades to get into these desirable positions.

There are also other considerations to give to the job question than their political worth. Particularly in jobs that are organized by a trade union the pay scale and number of benefits is drastically increased. The higher pay scales improve branch finances rather nicely, already proven in Detroit.

There are also certain considerations that comrades should give about their relation to their job. Being a part of the working class is a long term proposition. And comrades that are in good work positions must take this attitude. The attitude that co-workers take to comrades is very important and can weigh heavily on the success of our participation at the work place and in trade unions. One of the two most important confidences that must be gained by comrades is trust and respect. Generally good common sense is the best guide here, but trust and respect must be cultivated every step of the way. Such things as extensive absenteeism and not carrying your share of the work load will tend to create artificial barriers between you and your co-workers that will impede a comrade's political work.

The relation of a comrade to the boss or foreman is also an important consideration. Especially if a comrade is very open about their politics at work, I have found that keeping your nose clean and avoiding the boss as much as possible is a good policy to follow. The less your paths cross, the less likely the boss will go out of his or her way to victimize you in some way. Unnecessary and isolated outbursts at the boss, comrades should know, serve no meaningful purpose, but only give the boss an extra

handle to victimize comrades.

The perspectives that have been outlined for the direction of the party in the coming period are exciting and serve notice that American capitalism is entering its final stages. I hope this document will help stimulate further discussion on how we are to implement the tasks that lay before us. It is certainly not the final word on this subject. We must begin now to consider how we can root the party deeper into the working class taking all the features of the class into consideration.

## WHY THE REJECTION OF ANTIGAY PREJUDICE IS A POLITICAL QUESTION, NOT A SCIENTIFIC OR CULTURAL ONE

By Steve Beren, Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

July 30, 1975

There are two aspects to our political position on gay liberation. One part is our support to the democratic rights of gays. This is not in dispute. The second part is rejection of bourgeois prejudice against gay people and homosexuality.

This second point was raised in Point 2 of the memorandum, not as a scientific or cultural question, but as *part* of our political position.

Some comrades object that our political position is, or should be, limited to the question of democratic rights. But as Comrade Sheppard makes clear:

"The party adopts *political* positions to guide its work. The memorandum makes clear what our political position is in regard to the oppression of gay people. I repeat, this *political* position includes rejection of all 'theories' that are utilized to justify that oppression." (*Major Flaws in the Thorstad-Green Resolution, "For An Intervention Into The Gay Liberation Movement,"* Vol. 31, No. 34, p. 9, emphasis in original)

I agree with Comrade Sheppard that the need to reject bourgeois prejudice is a political question. For one thing, such prejudices are used not only to oppress gays, but also as *part* of the broader ideology of the ruling class aimed at dividing the working class.

But the political position of the memorandum on this point is contradictory and inadequate. While supporters of the *Draft Resolution on Gay Liberation* believe that the theory that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality is a prominent example of bourgeois antigay prejudice, supporters of the memorandum believe that this is not necessarily so, or at least that it is "difficult to ascertain" whether such a "value judgment" should be categorically labeled as "bourgeois prejudice."

As the memorandum states: "Especially concerning homosexuality, little is known, and it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice. . . ." (Vol. 31, No. 3, p. 8)

Thus the difference lies not over the need to reject antigay prejudice, but over precisely what constitutes such prejudice.

Comrade Sheppard writes:

". . . [Another] possibility is to assert that if there was no oppression of homosexuals, *and no prejudice against homosexual acts*, then homosexuality would be looked upon by humanity as not inferior to heterosexuality. *There is no evidence to make such an assertion.* We do not know, in a society free of distortions of sexuality and free of prejudice, . . . which preference would have the majority, or if in the case that such differentiations ceased to exist, that people will not prefer, for example, heterosexual contacts over homosexual contacts." (p. 10, emphasis added)

Here Comrade Sheppard is confusing the question of individual choice or preference (i.e., preferring heterosexual contacts over homosexual contacts) with the question of antigay prejudice (i.e., looking upon homosexuality as inferior to heterosexuality).

Sheppard is *right* to state that we do not know whether a society "free of prejudice" would have a gay or straight majority, or perhaps even that everyone would be bisexual. Nor does it matter, since this has nothing to do with our *political* position of rejecting bourgeois prejudice against gays.

But he is *wrong* to state that even if there were "no prejudice against homosexual acts" that humanity might continue to look upon homosexuality as inferior to heterosexuality.

In my opinion, a society "free of prejudice" *by definition* will be a society free of the prejudiced view that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality (regardless of the relative proportion of gays, straights, bisexuals, celibates, etc. in the population). To say that in a society "free of prejudice" heterosexuals might continue to look upon homosexuality as inferior to heterosexuality is an obvious contradiction, unless "looking upon homosexuality as inferior" is held to be *something other than prejudice*.

Perhaps Comrade Sheppard and others believe that "looking upon homosexuality as inferior" is no different than "preferring heterosexual contacts." But this is obviously wrong. For an individual to have a particular sexual orientation is quite different than looking upon other sexual orientations as inferior. For example, among

those who personally prefer heterosexuality, there are those who view homosexuality as inferior, and there are those who view homosexuality as completely equal to heterosexuality. To be heterosexual is a *personal matter*, but to extend that choice into the judgement or view that homosexuality is inferior is *prejudice*. It is important to make this distinction.

I believe that the SWP must reject the notion that homosexuality is an illness, perversion, crime, sin, or that it is in any other way inferior to heterosexuality. Beyond that, of course, I believe that our party's position should be that sexual orientation is strictly a matter of individual orientation or choice. We are absolutely opposed to anyone interfering with freedom of orientation or choice, and therefore we support the democratic demands of the gay liberation movement.

In turn, this *political* position of support to the democratic rights of gays *logically includes* the rejection of all bourgeois antigay prejudice, such as the view that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality. This is where the *political* position of the memorandum becomes inadequate.

To view homosexuality as "inferior" is a *bourgeois prejudice*. This idea did not just pop into the heads of heterosexuals one day. No—such antigay prejudice is rooted in the repression of homosexuality and the enforcement of the heterosexual norm.

The memorandum's rejection of bourgeois prejudice is well-meant and honestly intended, *but does not go far enough*. It falls short of rejecting the view that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality.

This is made crystal clear by Comrade Sheppard:

"The Thorstad-Green resolution insists that the party must take the position that 'homosexuality is not inferior to heterosexuality,' as is made abundantly (sic) clear in the document "Where the National Committee Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement Goes Wrong," signed by the Comrades Thorstad and Green and others. . . .

"[A possible interpretation of the 'gay is good' slogan], *on which the memorandum takes no position*, but which is embraced by the Thorstad-Green resolution, is that 'gayness or homosexuality is just as good as heterosexuality.' . . . (p. 9, emphasis added)

"Those comrades . . . are in reality proposing that the party begin to become something other than a political organization. They would have us become a proponent of 'gayness is good'—which falls outside of our political purpose." (p. 10)

And as Comrade Lee Smith more recently claims: "Even

the truncated quotes from Comrade Sheppard used by Beren in his article make a good case against the party's taking a position on whether homosexuality is as good as, better than, or inferior to heterosexuality." (*On Beating a Dead Horse: A Reply to Comrades Beren and Knoll*, Vol. 33, No. 7, p. 15)

But the issue before the party is not a scientific or cultural one, nor is it a matter of personal choice. It is a political question. We are a *political* party, and must have a correct *political* understanding of gay pride and bourgeois antigay prejudice.

Gay pride reflects the striving of gay people to have homosexuality accepted, regarded, and treated on an equal basis with heterosexuality. On the other hand, antigay prejudice is represented by and reflected in the view that homosexuality should be "recognized" as inferior, and that therefore it should be regarded and treated as inferior.

What memorandum supporters call "taking a scientific stand on the nature or value of homosexuality," and what supporters of the *Draft Resolution on Gay Liberation* call "having a correct political understanding of gay pride," is absolutely a political question:

Gays are proudly and angrily saying that *homosexuality is not inferior*. Gays will no longer passively allow themselves to be discriminated against. They are fighting against job discrimination, for equal educational opportunities, for fair housing, for an end to legal and illegal persecution. It is a fight for liberation in every sphere.

It is absolutely correct that we do not want to discuss and take a position on the relative merits of different sexual preferences, but *as materialists* we can reject all forms of prejudice against homosexuality and *accept it as a natural human variant* like we accept heterosexuality as a natural human variant. It is our *political duty* to take a *political* position that recognizes the equality of gays and non-gays *in all respects*. We support gay pride *as an affirmation that homosexuality is not inferior to heterosexuality*, but a *natural human phenomenon* that does not detract from human rights.

The Socialist Workers Party must reject the view that homosexuality is inferior to heterosexuality.

## Appendix

1) We urge the convention to amend the NC Draft Political Resolution to incorporate the general line of the Draft Resolution on Gay Liberation.

2) We urge a vote for the general line of the NC Draft Political Resolution whether or not such an amendment is adopted.

# TOWARD A REEVALUATION OF THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

by Rita Shaw, Seattle Branch

August 1, 1975

While there is no new resolution on the feminist movement for discussion at this convention, there were, in 1973, lengthy written contributions evaluating our participation in the abortion movement, answering the sectarianism of the political minority, and spelling out tasks and areas of involvement for the coming period. Currently, an impressive section in the National Committee Draft Political Resolution summarizes and reaffirms our basic political analysis as well as the importance of this movement and of its demands by such statements as, "the struggle for women's liberation poses the problem of the total reorganization of society from its smallest repressive unit (the family) to its largest (the state). It demands a thoroughgoing reorganization of its productive and reproductive institutions in order to maximize social welfare for all" (page 11).

Recognized in this section of the resolution are the deep effects on all aspects of society that feminist demands have made, and how women's struggles "toward their emancipation are one of the clearest indications of the depth of the current social crisis and radicalization" (page 12).

The fact that social struggles—the fight for human rights—were the primary motivation for the radicalization of the last decade is an important one. Those demands for human and democratic rights will not, I believe, fall by the wayside in the coming period of economic crisis; rather, they will heighten the struggle for the commitment to a basic change in society.

Feminist demands, because they are inherently critical of the total nature of capitalist society; and women, because they are intrinsically a large section of the working class, will be important factors in the coming period.

The interrelationship between transitional democratic feminist demands, women as workers, and the working class as a whole are well recognized in our political documents.

I do believe, though, that there has been and still is an imbalance in the prioritization of our work with and within the women's movement. Since the last convention, we have not "seen" or recognized adequately what is in effect an active, growing politically developing movement. The 1973 document evaluating our work in the abortion movement stated that a greater degree of branch leadership was necessary to make political decisions about how to intervene, and pointed to many areas of possible work locally. I think on the average, not as much was done as we could or should have done.

The explanation commonly given of why we have not actively continued to work in this area, that there is a "lull in mass activity in the women's liberation movement," describes only a limited aspect of this activity, primarily nationally organized mass demonstrations. The practical necessity of assignment of our limited physical resources is based on our evaluation of the social and political relevancy of a movement as a fighting force in the

working class struggle for power and on our projection of what both short (especially recruitment of cadre) and long term gains are to be made.

The fact is that the fight for democratic rights for women is alive and well and having an increasingly radicalizing impact upon all aspects and sectors of our society in a much more rapid and far-reaching way, and in a shorter historical time span, than has any other oppressed group. This is especially true of women themselves, many of whom would never identify themselves as feminists or "Women's Libbers" but would not easily give up or be pushed back from what they now accept as their basic rights.

There are on the scene today, groups within the broad category of the Women's Movement that we should be working with politically, because they contain thousands of women actively committed to working class and feminist demands, seeking to effectively fight for them.

There has been also the fairly rapid growth in size and effectiveness of the National Organization for Women. It plays an increasingly active political role around key feminist demands. It is an organization that on the national level has defined through its resolutions the struggle to do away with all aspects of sexism in the society and has identified this with the struggles of oppressed nationalities and other groups against a common enemy. The enemy, though, has not been as clearly identified, except for the recent formation of a National N.O.W. Task Force on the "Implications of Feminism for the American Economic System." The purpose of this task force as stated is in part "to stimulate debate within N.O.W. on whether or not feminist values and goals are compatible with the assumptions and structures of a capitalist economy such as our own. This question is of fundamental importance for the feminist movement and has ramifications for all of our actions and projects. For example, our most basic demand—equal pay for equal work—would cost \$121 million per year to implement using the most narrow definition of equal work. Who will pay for that? Who is benefiting from our exploitation? Can we get industry and government to 'fork up' that kind of money via court action and the EEOC? If not, what should our strategy be?"

I propose no resolution or amendment to our political evaluations on this question—none are necessary in my opinion—but I do propose a more thoroughgoing discussion and evaluation, both at Oberlin and in the branches afterward, of our tactical application of our political resolutions to the women's movement.

I do think tactical adjustments need to be made, and that a higher prioritization of work in the women's movement is in order, due not only to the important social and political nature of feminist demands, but primarily because, as our political resolution states on page 21, "The proletarian orientation means concerted, systematic work to root the party in all sectors of the mass movement and to recruit the most capable cadres to the party. It means



work in labor organizations, in industry and among the unemployed, in the political organizations of the oppressed minorities, in the struggles for women's liberation, and in the student movement;" there are currently political opportunities in the women's movement from which both we and the women's movement would benefit by our effective intervention. It is important to now consider our tactics, for otherwise we are missing essential political opportunities to further the class struggle.

Whether due to realistic necessity or chance, the party has been remiss, I believe, in our commitment of forces to work within and with the women's movement. I maintain that the women's movement is an extant, viable, radicalizing, politicizing, independent movement, potentially at the very least both our ally and spur to the labor movement, whose value our tactics do not underrate. But in reality and practice, our party has been remiss in supporting the further development of the feminist movement and its transitional demands.

I believe that concomitantly our press has been inadequate in publicly identifying and supporting diverse activities of the women's movement, that it has not reported on a sufficiently wide range of feminist research, surveys, literature or new views of traditional academic subjects, either supportively by drawing conclusions from them as to the potentially revolutionary character of ideas expressed, or critically, in reporting deficiencies of that nature.

The following is an attempt to briefly summarize my thoughts and observations on some of our work of the past two years, on what is happening now in the women's movement generally, on what we should and could be doing in relation to it, and on some concepts presented in our party that need clarification.

## The Abortion Movement

In 1971, with our resolution "Towards a Mass Feminist Movement," we correctly specified the central political importance of the abortion fight, and turned our activity at that time to helping build a movement to take on that battle in an effective political manner. Our helping to build WONAAC and the positive role it played was evaluated at length by Betsey Stone and Mary-Alice Waters in the 1973 discussion bulletin, "The Abortion Struggle: What We Accomplished, Where Should We Go from Here?" There are two points about the issue of abortion and our work in it I would like to raise.

1. While the discussion article takes up in detail various obstacles to WONAAC's development as we had projected and points out factors such as intense red-baiting and resistance to mass-action strategy from within the women's movement, the strength and effectiveness of the anti-abortion forces, the pressures of the 1972 election campaign and lesser-evil politics to subordinate the abortion fight and the effects of a general downturn in the antiwar movements and radical activities on campuses, it did not discuss or evaluate our own cadres' functioning. I think it is important to discuss, even briefly at this late date, what may have been errors in tactics as to some of the methods and attitudes our comrades utilized in building WONAAC, in order to learn from them. For instance: WONAAC in many areas of the country was never able to effectively include in the active day-to-day participation very many

independent women or other women's organizations. Given all of the above obstacles, I question whether there is not another factor perhaps involved. And that is that sometimes our comrades acted overzealously to insure that the program of WONAAC should reflect totally our political line, immediately, rather than taking at times a softer and perhaps slower approach. The latter method, given the historical timing and circumstances of the movement, could have had the potential of drawing in greater numbers of independents who through involvement and activities arrive at the same political conclusions as ours, seemingly on their own, and then become a part of an active political feminist movement, or possibly also a part of the revolutionary socialist movement.

Questions such as this, pertaining as it does to the flexibility of our tactical methods, are inherently relevant to our current discussion of our turn to the labor unions, and the working class. I believe that some of these lessons are already being drawn today, especially as applied to working with Blacks from the community and helping to build the Boston busing movement nationally. Again, I think it important that this be discussed and applied also to our work in the women's movement.

2. The 1973 discussion bulletin on the abortion struggle referred to above pointed out, I believe correctly, that "the abortion issue rouses some of the most ingrained prejudices about women perpetrated by class society" and, after detailing some of the then current attacks on the Supreme Court decision of January 1973, stated that "supporters of the right to abortion, including WONAAC, must remain ready to respond to attempts to roll back the abortion victory" (page 11).

In reality, though, did we as the primary leadership of WONAAC follow through? I think not. We should have, and our failure to do so has cost us politically in terms of actual gains and in terms of our influence today in the women's movement.

My observations of how we generally responded were, for instance: the massive withdrawal of our cadres from this area of work across the country; maintenance of merely a skeletal sort of "in-name-only" office and staff of WONAAC's national office; sudden paucity of *Militant* coverage of the issue (particularly following a seemingly lopsided presentation of this one issue previously); presentation at the 1973 convention by Lew Jones in the Organizational Report of working on "residual abortion activities"; discussions in workshops at that convention which heavily emphasized the victory won while ignoring discussion of possible future struggles around the issue, or how to relate to them politically; and, finally, reassignment of key people in this movement to other major areas of work, this area being therefore only incidental in our overall priorities.

To have maintained WONAAC in the same manner with the same political program then as prior to the Supreme Court decision, of course, would have been a mistake. But I believe that something between those two extremes would have been more correct. Our understanding was correct that, with the abortion concession, there would not be a mass action movement around the issue. But within the growing ranks of women already active in various aspects of the women's movement, there was the commitment and political consciousness gleaned from this struggle that provided the only natural base to take on this fight

effectively.

A continued commitment on our part, based of course on the realistic judgment that we need not prioritize this area of work to the same extent as in the past, but more so than what we did do following the 1973 convention, would have brought us real political gains, both in influence and in politicalization of the women's movement, and in increased direct recruitment to our party and its program as well.

### The Women's Movement Today

It would be impossible to list the many types of individual groups in the women's movement; they are multitudinous and vary from city to city. Avoiding any attempt at comprehensiveness, I would generally categorize them as follows:

### CLUW

Following the 1973 convention, the one area of work in the women's movement where we moved positively and decisively was into the formation and building of the Coalition of Labor Union Women. This work is, of course, extremely important politically, especially as it relates to our overall perspective on helping to build a class struggle left wing in the labor movement. A really solid base of women unionists can be a tremendously progressive force in this area. But we would be mistaken to identify our work in CLUW as our primary activity necessarily relevant to our support for an independent mass women's movement.

CLUW cannot be viewed as a feminist organization *per se*, in the sense that it does not seek to eradicate the total oppression of women in society. The majority of women presently in CLUW are not feminists politically, but are primarily female workers and trade unionists taking on the male union bureaucracy, raising demands for women on issues of employment, work contracts, and political power within the unions themselves. Their struggle in this role is supported not only by the existence of an active feminist movement, but also at times by a real working coalition around specific demands.

I believe that the continued growth and activities of CLUW will have the long range effect upon many of the women working within it of deepening their feminist consciousnesses and thereby making them a most effective part of the revolutionary vanguard; they will represent politically a union of the feminist arm of the democratic revolution with the labor movement toward the future socialist revolution.

Our continued work and efforts in CLUW are invaluable. But they are not the whole story.

*Consciousness raising and self help groups* continue to flourish. It appears, however, that the smaller, more intimate "closed commune" type of organization experiences frequent splits over everything from personality conflicts to political program, and usually swings to either counter-cultural life as an answer for them, or to an ultra-left program.

What is also happening across the country, though, and in almost every city or hamlet, is the informal gathering of women discussing feminist issues, first as to how they are

affected by them, but also frequently moving on from there to seek out pertinent group activity. Much of this is encouraged no doubt by the comparatively large amount of literature published now by an industry that recognizes and takes advantage quickly of a new, profitable market, and by the continued popularity and growth of *Ms.* magazine.

*Women's studies departments* have mushroomed on campuses around the country and have been instrumental in providing a supportive arena for theoretical study of all aspects of the oppression of women. This is readily apparent from reading the lists of classes offered; they cover topics from history, science and anthropology, to the arts and the language of sexism, as well as classes on specific forms of oppression and how to organize women to fight them. These departments are both centers that attract committed feminists on campuses, and accepted intellectual communities that disseminate these new ideas within the larger intellectual milieu, and to the society at large.

Within the past four years, under the pressure of recent growth of the women's movement, women's studies programs proliferated. They now, along with the special studies centers of other oppressed peoples (e.g., Black and Chicano), are being financially truncated by school administrators. They are in constant struggle not only for continued existence, but also to implement the affirmative action programs wrested from these institutions, and for internal control of their money and programs.

*Special interest groups* cover the widest range of issues, and probably just as many different programs and approaches. Many of these groups have tried to organize nationally (e.g., Black, Chicana, Gay); it is, however, the proliferation of local small groups that generally goes unrecognized as another impressive outgrowth of the feminist movement.

Women are getting together around common interests or as explicitly feminist subgroups working within other organizations, such as in PTA's, professional guilds, civil liberties groups, churches, social service agencies, etc. They seek each other out in order to collectively affirm their own awareness of discrimination on the job, for example, and have at least some support for action in places of employment, especially where there is no union and/or no active CLUW group speaking to their needs.

Women are constantly organizing to provide support and information in such areas of concern as divorce, child care, rape, older women, education, or women in sports, to mention but a few.

On many campuses today we see also the existence of "women's centers" (which do have varying degrees of administrative endorsement and funds available). Usually they are interested and involved in everything from sexism in all areas of campus life, to more general problems like the right of women to control their own bodies, and passage of the Equal Rights Amendment. These groups usually sponsor meetings on campus and provide an informational and organizational center for activities around specific issues.

Many of the women mentioned above, although initially expecting individual or personal solutions, very frequently realize the frustration of these goals, and actively seek other ways to realize a more equitable society.

*National organizations* are scarce. At one end of the

spectrum are two groups which had their origins within the first wave of feminism: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was an outgrowth of socialist elements in the early feminist movement and that later identified with the Bolshevik Revolution and eventually with the Third International and Stalinism. Besides attending International Women's Peace Conferences that carried primarily a Stalinist line, they were recently active in the antiwar movement.

The League of Women Voters also stems from the early feminist movement and the suffrage struggle, but today remains outside the women's movement. For example, only recently did they acknowledge that there are issues of special concern to women.

Of the two groups above, WILPF will usually participate in broad coalitions around specific feminist demands.

The more recently formed Women's Political Caucus, with its stated line of independent politics, remains totally tied to the two capitalist parties. It is, however, having a great deal of trouble trying to continue even such a modest program. When this group manages to be slightly more open, it will sometimes support single issue coalitions and most recently supported SWP candidates because of their principled feminist program.

The final national organization I want to mention is really the one I see as the most viable vehicle at this time for any future development of a mass action women's movement. This the National Organization for Women, with a membership of 45,000, 650 chapters, and an action-oriented program.

NOW was founded by Betty Friedan and others to capitalize on the interest kindled by her book. *The Feminine Mystique* struck a responsive chord in women having recently experienced their coercive return to the home in the 1950s. NOW began as an elitist organization, demanding a limited vision of equality, largely of professional women on the job.

Such a limited vision could not contain the growing awareness of women as to their oppression, nor their desire to do something about it. Though continuing to proceed largely through relatively conservative tactics, the influx of women into NOW (as the only explicitly feminist national organization) has forced it to base its demands on increasingly more explicit revolutionary principles. There is little doubt that the leadership of NOW at least is fully cognizant of the implications of "equal pay for equal work," for example.

In short, NOW has outgrown the restrictions imposed upon it by its early leadership, while retaining their tactics where effective. It currently functions primarily through chapters, autonomous but for a prescribed adherence to national policy established by resolution of the national conference. These national resolutions have covered the Vietnam war, poverty, the Black struggles, employment, as well as the entire spectrum of usual feminist demands. NOW has additionally begun to eliminate some of its elitist bias; the expenses of board members are now paid, making personal financial solvency less an issue in selecting leadership; and this year it has begun to make the price of an airline ticket less a prerequisite for voting at the national conference through a travel equalization fund.

NOW is known for doing its homework and getting things done. It currently leads the fights to pass the ERA, and to prevent deterioration of the 1973 Supreme Court

decision on abortion, its two top priorities. Additionally, it has targeted Sears as the foremost sexist employer of women, and is actively engaged in a wide variety of tactics (including picketing and organizing Sears employees) against this huge capitalist corporation. NOW continues as well to be in the forefront of litigation under civil rights legislation, such as in the suit against Bell Telephone (settled out of court for record-breaking sums of money), or in the innovative U.S. Steel case, in which NOW and the NAACP sued U.S. Steel and the labor union, at NOW's initiative. NOW has been involved in or has initiated most of the recent civil rights litigations.

NOW is this year struggling through "growing pains," perhaps predictable in any organization that has grown so much so fast. But from such internal difficulties a stronger, more political force may emerge. In any event, NOW's impact on the women of this country is unsurpassed. Women, eager and questioning, repeatedly turn to NOW when moved to participate in their own liberation. Its attraction, as well as the need for NOW to ever-more-effectively provide politically relevant action in which these women can participate, must not be underestimated. In the latter, SWP participation can be invaluable.

In the course of regular branch activities there have been some statements made about the women's movement that are misconceptions.

Comparisons are made of the program of the women's movement with that of the Black and of other oppressed groups. Implicit is the belief that the demands of the women's movement are not of a political nature.

It has also been implied in discussions that the coming revolution cannot be made without the organizations of oppressed groups of Blacks, Chicanos, Native Americans; it can be made, however, without the women's movement, although not without women.

While it is acknowledged that the ideas and demands of the women's movement are reaching deeper all the time, no political activity (with the few exceptions of CLUW and the Dr. Edelin action) exists in the feminist movement for us to work in and support.

The implication of these statements, while making note of the growing impact of feminism on the society as a whole, nonetheless imply that this impact somehow arises spontaneously without there being any sort of movement responsible.

These attitudes recognize the bourgeois reformist character of the membership and tactics of active sections of the women's movement, while overlooking the potentially revolutionary nature of the transitional demands which can radicalize not only the women themselves, but the whole working class and all of society when they are seriously and successfully fought for.

One is tempted to conclude from the above that only one type of political activity, mass demonstrations, is the rule-of-thumb by which to gauge the political validity of a movement. In our party, with its limited resources, mass action functions as a necessary criterion at times, for through mass demonstrations are we able to reach the largest number of people. However, we allocate our forces based on other criteria as well, realizing that people are not always going to be in the streets, and that other activities also have potential political impact. Given the fact that women have been historically excluded from the functional productive sectors of society, we have to base our evaluation on different criteria which take into

account this historical deficiency. The unique nature of feminist demands, challenging the very bedrock of class society, necessitates on our part a special sensitivity to the politics of the powerless, to the tactics and approaches taken by a group with no centuries-long tradition of victory, or even of identity as an oppressed group, so basic is sexism to all oppression.

And, finally, the notion that the revolution can be made without the women's movement misconstrues our political statements that the working class as a whole must accept the facts of the oppression of women and take on the fight to alleviate it. Expressed has been the belief that women's rights will be spoken to and fought for by all other groups of oppressed peoples, and by the working class as a whole, since there is no viable women's movement, or voice of this oppressed group, and evidently no need for one. This attitude is applied to the women's movement and the nature of women's oppression *only*, and represents a misunderstanding of the party's recognition of the dual role of allies as being politically necessary as independent forces and as an integral part and spur of the working class as a whole. Ignored by the above and in practice is the need for an independent movement to take on the struggle to do away with the deep-seated oppression based on sex (with all of its social implications), both before and after the revolution.

To fail to recognize the *need* for an independent women's movement defining and demanding eradication of the oppression of women as a group goes counter to our basic political resolutions which spell out the unique and different character of women's oppression, and the necessity for an independent movement to deal with it. This movement cannot be created on call after the revolution.

The ultimate result of these misconceptions is to inevitably throw women back onto themselves as individuals seeking individual solutions.

The lack of an independent feminist movement in the past and the acceptance of the idea that women can resolve their problems individually and through the working class struggles as a whole or through the struggles of other oppressed allies did not work, did not raise socially revolutionary demands, did not deal with the basic nature and form of women's oppression. Not to recognize the feminist movement as political and socially necessary is to again relegate the energies and talents of women to all struggles but their own. Casting women back into solution-seeking on an individual basis results in all of the individual guilt for the inevitable failures of this method. What a tremendous political gain it is that women are no longer accepting this personal burden, but rather are organizing to fight their oppression.

## What We Can Do

We should, of course, continue our worthwhile program of special events of interest to women—educationals, tours such as that of Evelyn Reed or of the Marias, forums on special feminist issues, campus meetings, etc.—as well as our long-term ongoing work in CLUW. However, more can be done.

On a basic level, we can read and be familiar with literature being written by women. This literature discusses everything from history to autobiography or poetry. It both attempts to analyze as well as merely expresses the nature and/or effects of sexual oppression. The *Militant*, of course, is the natural choice for expanded coverage of the writing of the women's movement. (The *Militant* might also expand to more in-depth coverage of the political activities of the women's movement.)

We can also be more knowledgeable of women's studies departments, especially regarding their battles with school administrations, and speak to the need for unity among these various special programs, Black and Chicano studies, for example.

As in the past, we should at all times continue to work in broad-based, non-exclusive coalitions around the key democratic demands of the feminist movement.

But, because of the changing character of NOW described briefly above, I believe we should actively seek out local chapters with which to work. This should be carried out on a basis similar to our understanding of and turn toward building roots in organizations of the labor movement, the Black movement, or the Chicano movement. Although we would still find many sections of NOW too conservative, confused or paranoid about working with "reds," the other side of this reality is that most women now coming to this organization are not professionals, but rather are students, housewives or workers in traditionally female jobs (usually not unionized). That the organization is attempting to use political tactics other than lobbying to fight for women's demands, like abortion, welfare rights, the ERA, etc., by working with broad coalitions around single issues, or by organizing picket lines and demonstrations, indicates that the opportunity exists to help to politically educate a sizeable sector of the feminist movement, and to further recruitment in the future.

Our working within such an organization would allow us another avenue whereby we can be instrumental in building broad working coalitions around the most politically important transitional demands. NOW has already started to work closely with CLUW; it would be possible, for example, to further this interrelationship, thereby increasing manifold the impact on class society of the combined efforts of the labor movement and the women's movement ("the whole is greater than the sum of the parts").

Implicit in my statement that NOW is an organization in which we should be working more actively are the observations that: insofar as any sector of society recognizes the women's movement at all, it identifies NOW as the voice and leadership of that movement; thousands of women seek out NOW every year to provide an outlet to engage in effective political activity, both women who are new to organized activity and those who are frustrated by the conservative do-nothing politics of other organizations and of many of the special interest groups when looking for a broader base of support; NOW is providing leadership nationally in the continuing struggle to defend the gains women won on abortion, a role it was unwilling to play during the WONAAC campaign, and as evidence of its effectiveness, has been targeted by the Catholic Church as the prime opposition (witness the San Diego Bishop's refusal to serve communion to any NOW member); NOW continues to push the powers-that-be into enacting

favorable legislation, this year focusing mainly on the ERA and on Title IX (Education), as well as protective labor legislation, while at the same time continuing to force implementation of previous legislation (e.g., suing EEOC for failure to enforce Title VII—Employment).

Some of the above represents on NOW's part a partial turn from the conservative, backroom power politics for which it has been known. In spite of NOW's conscious orientation toward the two capitalist parties and their politics, it is being impelled from within in a more radical direction by the force of the very demands it raises.

In sum, NOW has national impact and is working toward using it more effectively. However, the strength of NOW remains at the chapter level. Local chapters are prohibited from working against those specific positions that have been established by local resolution. But this is negative control. The actual activities of a chapter are usually dependent upon those women who commit themselves to active leadership, and their current level of political consciousness.

And, at the national level there is a conscious understanding of the greater impact of calling for nationally coordinated mass action in fighting for women's demands. This is symptomatic of the deepening radicalization and politicalization of the women's movement, and specifically of NOW. The theme of NOW's upcoming conference is "It's

our revolution NOW!" And insofar as NOW is speaking to the demands of women, our political documents support this theme. I believe we should reevaluate our work in and prioritization of this movement in order to make this theme more of a reality.

\* \* \*

The submission of the above is not intended to be the last word on every area that is mentioned, nor does it point to all of the very positive work done in the past two years. Nor is any sort of finger pointing intended, any assignment of responsibility or guilt. Rather, as stated, the foregoing is raised for consideration and discussion, as we have in the past reevaluated our tactical approach to a movement we support, and adjusted to a new external reality.

I believe it is time to so reevaluate the women's liberation movement and that if it is done now we would reprioritize this area of work. I would welcome an objective discussion on this matter and accept, for myself at least, the possibility that in the course of it my ideas and attitudes could be changed, that I would be shown and convinced that nothing is remiss by being given more detailed knowledge of the objective and subjective situations.

## **The United Front Tactic Applied to S.C.A.R.**

**by Joe Soares, Atlanta Branch**

**July 30, 1975**

The emergence of the National Student Coalition Against Racism represents a major step forward for the Black Liberation movement. This event has been fully analyzed in the pages of our press. My brief contribution will focus on a narrower topic. The tactical application of our united front method to the anti-racist movement.

Our current work with SCAR is similar to our anti-war experiences but there are also important distinctions. The differences between these two areas have produced some confusion and generated several imprecise formulations as to the exact character of our anti-racist work. Reviewing some of these questions will help sharpen our conception of SCAR.

### **Alliances and the Revolutionary Party**

Even though the term "United Front" has only been with us since 1922, the method of the united front is at least as old as Bolshevism. This method consists of achieving agreement between different forces on some joint action in the immediate interests of the working class

and its allies. What distinguishes a united front type formation from a popular front type grouping is the common program of the latter. In a popular front a bloc of mutual confidence and support is achieved. The cement of this bloc is not limited agreement for a specific action, but rather broad agreement on the basis of a reformist program. When a workers party enters a popular front it surrenders its right to differentiate its program and actions from bourgeois parties. A prison of inaction and mutual responsibility is constructed. A united front is considered proletarian and a popular front bourgeois on the basis of whether or not it provides for action in the interests of the proletariat without tying the hands of the workers' parties. Such factors as the composition of the alliance, whether it is single or multi-issue, and its organizational framework are secondary considerations. The framework and objectives of different united fronts can vary. Everything from a defense committee to a soviet represents a form of the united front. The way the problem of the united front presented itself in Europe in 1922 was

very different from the way it was posed in 1967 around the American anti-war movement. In Europe it was a question of achieving an action bloc between mass workers parties. In America there are no such animals. Part of the reason for the single issue thrust of anti-war ad hoc groups was the need to attract the broadest forces to the actions they called. An action agreement between parties that already represented masses would have cast the multi-issue problem in a different light.

## SCAR

The National Student Coalition Against Racism is similarly an action front. But its character and scope are very different from that of our anti-war groups. Unlike a single war, racism is a constant phenomenon that permeates American society. The current economic crisis will produce an increase in racist assaults. These assaults will be countered by a movement based on the oppressed community.

The oppressed nationalities in America are overwhelming working class in composition. The different manifestations of racism will have a combined class and national character. This combined character gives the multi-faceted anti-racist fight an internal homogeneity. The fight against school segregation naturally raises questions about segregated housing and economic discrimination. Logically, defending victims of racist injustice must also be taken up. Different campaigns strengthen SCAR instead of weakening it. In taking on these different projects priorities will have to be made and the relationship of forces taken into consideration. But the main point is that SCAR has a different *scope* than the SMC.

## General Movements

An analogy has been drawn between the anti-war and anti-racist movements. We have been told that whereas the anti-war movement was single-issue and not against wars in general; SCAR is multi-issue and against racism in general. This is only partially true. Abstract pacifism is not in the interests of the working class. A general movement for peace could only have a middle-class character. But a general anti-racist campaign is consistent with our class interests. As long as the fight is kept concrete it is principled and correct. The class content reveals a key difference.

## Single vs. Multi-Issue

However it is not true that the SMC was single-issue in a different sense than SCAR. What was really involved in the debate over single or multi-issue was not a matter of slogans. It was a question of maintaining an action focus on the war. The multi-issue proponents wanted to involve anti-war activists in reformist or ultra-left ventures separated from the question of the war. The multi-issue approach to the anti-war movement represented a liquidationist middle-class line. The centrality of the war was to be watered down until it dissolved. Our single-issue approach was a perspective of building the broadest possible mass actions against the war. This united front action approach needs to be viewed *separately* from the organizational forms and arenas in which these events took place.

The SMC was an anti-war organization with a united front approach. It was not the united front of the anti-war movement. The march date coalitions were the clearest expression of a united front for the anti-war movement. The SMC represented the fruits of years of class-struggle politics in the anti-war movement. It was a crystallized left-wing. Similarly SCAR is an expression of our united front approach but it is essentially an independent anti-racist organization. SCAR helps to build larger united fronts around specific actions where everyone participates with their own slogans.

In a sense, the SMC was multi-issued and had a programmatic position on the war. Some of its slogans were self-determination for Vietnam and immediate withdrawal. The SMC was for abolishing the draft and military spending; it was for civil liberties in the army and the high schools. The SMC was opposed to US intervention into the Mid-East and we engaged in some strike support activity.

The SMC was single-issued in one sense only: we were for mass action against the war. SCAR is single-issued in the same manner. We are for mass action against racism. Just as the SMC was multi-issued inside the scope of the anti-war movement, so is SCAR multi-issued within the anti-racist campaign. The difference is in the *scope* of the two different arenas of war and racism. Any analogy should be dropped or clarified. SCAR is different from the various front groups of our opponents because it engages in action. Its combined class and national character give it a qualitatively different potential than the SMC. As Maceo Dixon stated at the YSA plenum, we only need to be audacious.

## Why the Party Should Reject the Beren-Knoll Resolution

by Andrea Morell

Upper West Side Branch, New York Local

August 2, 1975

(This contribution is based on my presentation in a debate with Steve Beren in the Upper West Side branch, New York local, July 14, 1975.)

At its national convention held two years ago the party approved the general line of a memorandum on the gay liberation movement. I will summarize its key points briefly so we are all familiar with them.

1. The SWP gives unconditional support to the struggles of homosexuals for full democratic rights, including full civil and human rights, and against all the forms of discrimination and oppression they suffer under capitalism.

2. The SWP rejects with contempt all forms of bourgeois prejudice against gay people, including quack psychological "theories" labelling gays as mentally ill. However, the party does not and should not take a stand on the nature or value of homosexuality.

3. The development of the gay liberation movement is progressive. It arises out of the current radicalization and is part of it. It confronts and helps break down the reactionary morality that helps preserve class society. The struggle of gay people for their rights is directed against the capitalist government, and is in the interest of socialism. The party identifies with the aims of this struggle and supports it.

4. Given our political position of support to the struggles of gay people against their oppression, how we carry out that support is a tactical question. The gay liberation movement is more peripheral to the central issues of the class struggle than either the woman's movement or movements of oppressed nationalities, and its demands are relatively narrow in scope. The allocation of party resources, including cadre, must reflect the relative weight and importance of the gay liberation movement.

5. Exactly how to orient toward the gay liberation movement at the present time (or at any given time) must be considered in light of the present state of the gay liberation movement. It is not involved in any national campaigns so we do not project a national fractional intervention. Each branch has the responsibility to carry out work in the gay movement within the context of carrying out the major campaigns of the party.

The party's position is challenged by Comrades Beren and Knoll in their "Resolution on Gay Liberation" (*SWP DB* Vol. 33, No. 3) which they offer as a substitute for the memorandum.

There are two major areas of difference in the approach to the gay liberation movement between the memorandum and the resolution. One involves differences in assessment concerning the strategic importance of struggles for gay liberation in fighting for the American socialist revolution. Flowing from this are differences over what priority to assign this area.

The second involves differences over how to fight for gay liberation, namely, must the party endorse the value of gay sex before we can be effective fighters for gay liberation.

We also have differing estimates of the current state of the gay liberation movement.

The question of strategic importance is a big subject involving assessments of the whole range of allies of the working class, of which gays are one. It is the subject of one whole section of the party's draft political resolution. We can only touch on it here and give an indication of our thinking as it relates to gays.

Gays are among the potential allies of the working class because their oppression cannot be lifted short of a socialist revolution. There are many potential allies: oppressed national minorities, women, students, small farmers, GIs, prisoners, gays, and others. Although these allies are equal in human importance, they are not equal in strategic importance, and that is what concerns us here. We must make a correct assessment so that we can set the party's priorities.

The most powerful of the workers' allies are the oppressed national minorities—and among them Blacks are the most powerful—and women. They have great social weight, both in terms of sheer numbers, and in terms of their social composition. Blacks are overwhelmingly proletarian and women are increasingly proletarian.

Blacks and women have great strategic importance also because of the breadth of demands they raise, and must raise, in the course of their struggles. The search for solutions to the problems they face are among the central driving forces of the American socialist revolution.

Other potential allies, such as students, Indians, prisoners, for example, have less social weight and their struggles less strategic importance. Gays, because of their size and placement in society, and the relationship of their oppression to the central institutions of society have much, much less strategic importance than do Blacks and women and other allies. That's our assessment.

But Beren and Knoll exaggerate the importance of gays way out of proportion. They concede that gays are not equal in social weight to women and Blacks. But then they go on to talk about gay struggles as though they had nearly the same strategic importance as Blacks, and women's struggles, which is false.

Beren and Knoll exaggerate the number of people who are directly affected by the gay liberation movement. Comrade Beren cites Kinsey, saying the Kinsey report "suggests a figure of 20 to 25 million." (*SWP DB* Vol. 33, No. 3, p. 13) First, where the researcher Kinsey "suggests," Comrade Beren asserts, and in the very next paragraph assumes as a fact there are 20 to 25 million gays. He says there are as many gays as Blacks.

This is a false use of statistics to inflate the importance of the gay movement. The Kinsey figure does not reflect the number of people who consider themselves to be gay. The actual number is much smaller. Twenty to 25 million people are not directly affected by the gay liberation movement. They are indirectly affected, as we all are, because it is a movement to lift oppression and involves

struggles against a common enemy.

We say the demands of the gay liberation movement are narrow. The point is not that they are democratic demands, which they are. Democratic demands are very important and gay movement demands are important. We advocate them. We want the workers government to carry them out.

But they are narrow in scope. They don't touch upon a major institution in society. We can contrast them to some demands of the women's movement.

When women struggle for child care centers or the industrialization of housework, they are raising demands whose logic goes in the direction of undermining the family system, a pillar of class society. Gays are oppressed as a consequence of the family system, but their demands and struggles challenge the family system only obliquely.

The women's movement presents a broader range of democratic demands than the gay movement does. It raises a wide range of demands for equal treatment, such as equal pay for equal work, no discriminatory layoffs, equal education opportunities, etc. Women also raise a range of demands relating to gaining control over their own bodies.

Women's demands directly affect a much greater number of people than gay demands do. Women are 51 percent of the population, an oppressed majority.

Capitalism's traditional use of women as an exceptionally flexible part of the industrial reserve army is crucially important to the system. There would be a much more volatile situation in the class struggle today, for instance, if the depression were hitting the class equally.

Women's struggles to defend the affirmative action gains they have made, and other job-related struggles, can help forge a class struggle left wing in the unions. The party assigns women's liberation work a high priority.

Gay liberation demands are nowhere near as broad in scope as those of the women's movement and gay struggles are nowhere near as disruptive of capitalist order. We can't make them so by wishful thinking.

Gay liberation struggles cannot begin to compare in strategic importance to those of the big oppressed national minorities, especially Blacks. That would be so even if there were an equal number of Blacks and gays.

Black oppression and superexploitation are at the heart of the American profit system and have been historically. The current economic crisis is bearing down heavily on Blacks. Their large size, social cohesiveness, and proletarian composition means the battles they are going to have to undertake have the potential to shake up the whole system and show the way for all workers to fight this crisis. American capitalism cannot stand without the oppression of Blacks.

Blacks' strategic power is so great that if they were to break politically from the Democratic party and build an independent party, it would destroy the Democratic party as a vote-catching machine. The two-party shell game would be over and a whole new period in American politics—a higher one—would open up. We assign Black work a top priority.

Ideologically, racism and sexism are key weapons in maintaining American capitalist rule. They permeate every aspect of social life. Antigay prejudice also defends the capitalist system. But it is only one aspect of social life, it does not permeate all aspects and is not a key weapon used by rulers in keeping the class divided.

Beren-Knoll exaggerate the importance of antigay prejudice as a ruling class weapon. They write, "The workers must be won to support and defend the gay liberation movement *just as they* must be won to defend women in their fight for liberation or the right of Black people to self-determination" (p. 6 Emphasis added). Is it "just as" important to win workers away from antigay prejudice as it is racism and sexism? No, it is not. Overcoming racism and sexism are life and death questions for the American workers and for the revolutionary party. That is not the case with overcoming antigay prejudice. Of course, if "just as" means simply we must combat antigay prejudice among workers then that is true.

As we look ahead now to the working class radicalization and to making our turn to mass work, the Beren-Knoll position becomes even more out of balance. We must concentrate on big issues: antiracist work, building trade union fractions, world issues, such as the Portuguese events. We assign our gay liberation work a low priority.

The Beren-Knoll resolution presents a catalog of events in the gay movement, saying we are missing opportunities. Some of those events, we participated in. Some were not very important. Beren-Knoll don't distinguish. The memorandum does not prevent us from participating in the gay struggle, but with proportions guarded.

The sheer size of a demonstration is not the key criterion for us in setting our priorities. The June 28 labor demonstration against the New York City budget cuts which drew 450 to 500 people was more important politically than the next day's Christopher Street demonstration of 15-20,000. Recognizing this, we allocated our forces accordingly. What follows from the Beren-Knoll resolution is a reordering of our priorities to the detriment of our mass work. Their resolution stands in contradiction to the draft political resolution.

Beren-Knoll make six proposals for activity. Many suggestions are good. Branches should seek opportunities to implement them in the context of other work. But we should reject the concept of the package as a whole as what we must do next in gay liberation. We must reject the concept of committing large, standing fractions in each branch to gay liberation, in Beren-Knoll's words, "just short of a large-scale colonization." What would that be? A medium scale colonization? A small colonization? We reject the idea of any colonization. Moreover, the current state of the gay movement doesn't warrant a stepped-up intervention.

Beren-Knoll raise the idea that were the party to send a large force into the gay movement, we could perhaps turn the situation around and put the movement on a more political footing. This is a substitutionist error. The party cannot substitute itself for the absence of concerted political struggles in the gay movement—or any other movement.

The analysis of the memorandum is correct. We must reject this analysis of the strategic importance of the gay liberation movement set forth in the Beren-Knoll resolution. It would set the wrong priority for the party, contradicting the analysis in our political resolution. It would impede our turn to mass work.

Must the party adopt the slogan "Gay is just as good as straight" in order to fight effectively for gay liberation? No, just the opposite. "Gay is good" embodies an



unpolitical approach to gay liberation and its adoption would impede our effectiveness.

The first weakness evident in the slogan is its vagueness. Because it is vague and ambiguous, it is open to many interpretations. Because it is vague and people can fill it with a variety of contents and do. That's partly why it's popular, but that doesn't recommend it to us. We value clarity.

What, if anything, does this slogan mean? Does it mean gay people are equal to straight people? Beren-Knoll say that to them it includes, but is not limited to that idea. If it were, there would be no debate because the fact that gay people are equal human beings with all others is the position of the memorandum. So, it goes beyond the political realm of human and civil rights to make a value judgement about gay sex.

This is the fundamental reason the party rejects adopting this resolution as part of its program. We have no theory of sexuality. We do not take positions on non-political questions and a person's opinion on a non-political question—and on the character or value of any sort of sexuality—is not a condition of their membership in the SWP.

For the party to begin to take positions on cultural and scientific questions would blunt the party as a political instrument. Carried to its logic, it would transform the SWP from a revolutionary combat party to a cultural debating society. And this particular question—the nature of human sexuality—is one which is scientifically underdeveloped.

Beren-Knoll say we must break with this 47-year political policy and make an exception of gay sex. They assert we already have, at least partially, when we say in the memorandum that we reject with contempt bourgeois prejudices against gays, including quack psychological "theories." They misunderstand. We reject all prejudices against gays. We reject the prejudice that maintains your sexual preference is somehow an indicator of your rationality. This is obviously false. A person's sexual preference does not determine their sanity or rationality. There are gay people who are sane and there are gay people who are not sane. There's no necessary causal connection between being gay and being irrational. That's quackery and we reject it, just as we reject the racial prejudice that if you are Black your intelligence is inferior. That is obviously not true. There are Black people of superior intelligence, average intelligence, and some with low IQs. There is no necessary causal connection between Blackness and intelligence. That's racist quackery and we reject it. But we don't put any theory of intelligence in its place. We don't take a position on the primacy of hereditary or environmental factors, for example. So, we reject these quack "theories," but put no theory of sexuality in their place.

To argue that we need a theory in order to fight for gay liberation is manifestly false. We have no such theory, yet we defend gay rights. The truth is, if we waited to support gay rights until we settled upon a theory of gay sex we all agreed on, it would be a long, long time before the SWP gave support to gay struggles. Our support is *unconditional*; it is *not* conditional upon our having a theory of gay sex, upon our having a theory that gay sex is good, whatever that may mean.

But Beren and Knoll say we must pass their resolution with its central slogan "gay is good." They recommend

this slogan several ways. First they say it's a political slogan: gay is good equals gay pride. Second, gay sex equals straight sex, and if you don't recognize that, you are backward. Three, we must say gay is good because gay people are oppressed for being gay and this is the best way to reaffirm their humanity. We say no.

Let's take a look at this theory of sexuality, that gay sex equals straight sex. Beren and Knoll claim they don't recommend it as sexual theory. But they have a sexual theory in their document—one that goes in the direction of commenting on sex in the future society. Moreover, that is one interpretation that people give it. So we have to evaluate what it objectively could convey to people if we adopted it.

What does it mean to say gay sex equals straight sex, as applied to the future? It could mean that we think under socialism everybody will be bisexual and prefer heterosexual and homosexual equally.

It could mean we think there will still be a spectrum and an equal number of people will prefer each. Or, it could mean that we mean that sexual gratification will be equally good for gays and straights.

What, if in the future society more people are heterosexual. Does this mean we think they will all be prejudiced?

If we are not talking about the future, but the present, then it is clear that very few people now believe they are equally good in practice—the bisexuals. The overwhelming majority of people prefer one or the other.

If we are going to get into the realm of scientific theories about sex, then one is that sex is distorted under capitalism. Do we know if gay and straight sex are equally distorted? Maybe homosexuality is less distorted, we do not know. Do we have take a position on this? No, we don't vote on whether sex is distorted under capitalism or in what way. This question will be worked out by science.

"Gay is good" is understood and used by some in the gay movement to proselytize for gay sex. If we adopted this slogan we would be identified with this current, whether we wanted to be or not. But we do not proselytize for gay sex or any variety of sex. We don't maintain, for that matter, that celibates are worse off than other people. We take no position.

If we did take a position on the value of gay sex, or any sex, someone might ask us to prove it. And all these propositions are unprovable. That is a central weakness in the Beren-Knoll resolution: its central proposition is unprovable. We should not adopt resolutions whose central proposition is ambiguous and unprovable.

Moreover, should we adopt this position, whatever it means, we could not stop there. There is no way we could avoid being forced into taking positions on a broad range of sexual behavior. It is better for the party to stay out of this area altogether and stick to our political tasks.

Another possible interpretation of the slogan "gay is just as good as straight" is that the two types of sex are morally equal. If we do not say gay is good, are we saying it is bad or immoral? No, we completely reject the categories of good and evil as applied to sex. It is a bourgeois concept rooted in religious prejudice that all sexuality is evil. We reject that, and all other religious prejudices, as rubbish. As Marxists, we have a materialist, or scientific, attitude to sex.

Marxism is not identical with the party program, but our Marxist, or scientific, outlook translates into political terms in our program by our opposing laws that oppress

homosexuals.

For example, one category of such repressive laws bars homosexuals from teaching positions. Such legislation is rooted in the bourgeois prejudices against homosexuals and which claim that homosexual teachers would corrupt the morals of their students. We reject that and fight against such laws.

We don't say gay is good, bad, evil, or anything of the sort. We reject bourgeois moralizing.

We say sex is a personal matter and the state should stay out of it. We say the bourgeois state should keep out, the workers state should keep out, and the SWP should keep out. That is what we say and that is what we mean.

### **A political slogan?**

What do Beren-Knoll mean when they say "Gay is good" is "a political slogan of equality and democracy?"

This is a confusion. First of all, it is manifestly *not* a political slogan. There is nothing political about it. It's a comment on sex.

But I think it is absolutely true that it reflects gay pride. It is a sentiment, reflecting gay pride, and as such we solidarize with it. We solidarize with gay pride, just as we solidarize with Black pride.

But sentiments of gay pride are not and cannot be a substitute for a strategy for gay liberation. And that's the only thing we vote on. We vote on strategies for gay liberation or strategies for Black and women's liberation so can act politically. We don't vote about sentiments or feelings. In any case, what would the point of voting be? You can't vote them into existence, and you can't vote them out of existence. The memorandum says we welcome the gay liberation movement; it's progressive for society's most despised pariahs to be standing up and saying that they are proud. We solidarize with that sentiment but you can't codify it in a political resolution. That's no reason to vote for the Beren-Knoll resolution and it has other defects besides.

Another possible meaning to the statement that gay is good is a political slogan, and a meaning that it has for a whole section of the gay liberation movement is that gay sex is revolutionary. The heterosexual norm is bad and needs to be overthrown; gay sex does that and hence, is "revolutionary." Beren-Knoll go in that direction. "The gay liberation movement is a democratic struggle. But it is not limited to the struggle for democratic rights to that sector of the population defined as homosexuals. It is also at the same time a struggle to liberate all of humanity from the heterosexual norm imposed by capitalism," they write.

But this party has no sexual ideal that it is fighting for. Moreover, people are not oppressed by the heterosexual norm. That is totally false. What people are oppressed by is laws and prejudices. They aren't oppressed by what other people do sexually. Maybe under socialism heterosexuality will be the norm. Will gay people then be oppressed if they are in a minority? Not if there are no laws and no prejudices. What other people do sexually doesn't oppress anybody. Beren and Knoll are fighting on the wrong barricade. The way to liberate gay people is to fight politically to eradicate these laws and prejudices.

Beren and Knoll say we must say gay sex is good because gays are oppressed sexually. We say no, we don't have to say it for that reason. Women are oppressed sexually, but we don't say female sex is good and no one questioned our women's liberation credentials for not saying so.

Then they say we have to affirm the humanity of gay people by affirming their sexuality. We say no. Although the society may want to dissolve the humanity of gay people into their sexuality, we don't do that. People are not their sexuality. Humanity is defined by your social existence. Women are not sex objects, but human beings defined by their social existence. So too gays. What we assert and fight for in the women's liberation movement, we will not retreat on in the gay movement. Fetuses have sex characteristics at a certain point, but they are not human beings. Then there are celibates who would have no humanity at all, according to the reasoning of the Beren-Knoll resolution.

Beren-Knoll say we must say gay is good because the society says gay is bad. We say no. We are under no compulsion whatever to put a plus where the class enemy puts a minus and don't do it in any aspect of our work. Trotsky wrote an article on this very point with the instructive title, "Learn To Think."

Beren-Knoll say we should say gay is good because a large part of the gay movement does and they know what's best for their movement. We say no. In all movements the party takes its own independent approach. We take into account what the movement says, but the gay is good slogan means a falling away from politics for the gay liberation movement.

We should reject the Beren-Knoll resolution. It's a break with our tasks as a political party; its central proposition is unprovable; it dissolves the humanity of gays into their sexuality; it contains contradictory positions; and it contradicts our political resolution and would impede the party's turn.

# SOME COMMENTS ON WORK IN THE PITTSBURGH AREA COMMITTEE ON OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH

by Neil Berns, Pittsburgh Branch

July 24, 1975

The following is a description and analysis of the participation by some comrades from the Pittsburgh branch in the Pittsburgh Area Committee on Occupational Safety and Health—PACOSH. It will, perhaps, be of use to other branches in the period ahead.

PACOSH is a small group of unionists and professionals that was founded in the spring of 1973. Its avowed purpose is to fight for health and safe working conditions. PACOSH has no formal ties with the union movement, but sees itself as an organization providing needed education, information and assistance to the unions, unionists and unorganized workers in the field of occupational safety and health.

During its first year of existence PACOSH's primary activity was a series of monthly educational lectures by lawyers, doctors, and other health professionals held at the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health. These lectures attracted an audience—often of over 100 people—composed of rank and file unionists, lower level union bureaucrats, health professionals and a small assortment of radicals.

By the winter of 1974-75 PACOSH's small core of activists had begun to see limitations in this activity. Attendance at the lectures was dwindling, and it was felt that the information being provided was being put to very little use. Additionally, the attendees at the lectures were not becoming involved in PACOSH itself.

Soon some of the original PACOSH activists left the organization. At this same time, however, the Pittsburgh SWP decided to have several comrades begin to participate in PACOSH. It was felt that the "health and safety" question was potentially an explosive issue where our movement could have an important impact. It was also felt that PACOSH could gain for the party new contacts in the grade union movement. At this point the remaining PACOSH activists—now including four of our comrades—decided to plan a joint educational/business meeting of PACOSH for January, 1975.

It was hoped the educational part of this meeting—a lecture on occupational cancer by a professor from the University of Pittsburgh—would attract many of the people who had attended earlier PACOSH sessions. Some of these people would then stay over, it was felt, for the business meeting which was to discuss a reorganization plan for PACOSH.

During our initial participation in PACOSH, the comrades did not have a hardened perspective for the organization. We had learned a bit about BACOSH (Bay Area Committee on Occupational Safety and Health) at the 1974 Oberlin conference, and one Pittsburgh comrade had attended a number of PACOSH lectures and discussed PACOSH with several activists in that organization. Our tentative conclusion at this point was that PACOSH had the potential to have a large and positive impact on the trade union movement in Western Pennsylvania. We also

felt, on the other hand, that to accomplish this PACOSH would have to be reoriented to a certain extent. It would, in the first place, have to break out of the confines of the University of Pittsburgh and take its activities into the mill towns of the region. It would have to end its total reliance on "scientific" lectures and begin to provide education that could be of immediate use in the day to day struggles at the workplace. Finally it would have to begin to draw unionists to PACOSH as participants in PACOSH not merely as consumers of PACOSH's expertise.

Our immediate concern, however, was to draw enough resource people and activists into PACOSH to insure that it had sufficient energy to initiate any activity for the spring of 1975. At the January meeting a small group of people—about eight lawyers, health professionals and leftists—agreed to work on a Program Committee that would plan and carry out activities in the spring of 1975. Throughout the spring this group was, in fact, the whole of PACOSH.

Our comrades' initial proposal to the Program Committee was for a one or two day health and safety conference to be held in one of the mill towns of the Monongehela Valley (one of the major steelmaking centers of W. Pa.). Once before PACOSH had held a conference outside of Pittsburgh—in Sharon, Pa., the site of the Sharon Steel Co.—that had been enthusiastically received by upwards of 70 attendees from the Sharon area in northwestern Pa. The thinking behind this proposal was to focus PACOSH's energies on one region—the Mon Valley—and one industry—steel—in a pilot program for further conferences for other groups of workers and other parts of W. Pa. This proposal was given a sympathetic response in the program committee and a thorough discussion. The committee's final proposal was for a two day conference (to be held on two Saturdays, two weeks apart) emphasizing the concerns of steelworkers but not excluding other workers. Although the greatest part of building the conference was to be in the Mon Valley, it was decided to try to publicize it throughout W. Pa. Although this final proposal projected a less directed conference than we had originally proposed, the comrades supported the democratic decision-making and the development of consensus within the program committee that led to the final proposal.

This cooperativeness on the committee notwithstanding, there were still differences in approach for building the conference and building PACOSH. One case may illustrate these differences. Our comrades proposed trying to gain broad media publicity and coverage for the conference and wide sponsorship for it. Specifically since PACOSH had a good working relationship with the director of the Penn State Extension School's Dept. of Labor Studies and contacts in the Allegheny and Westmoreland County Central Labor Councils, we felt PACOSH should try to get these groups to join in sponsoring the conference. Other members of the Program Committee

didn't think this broad sponsorship was worth the effort since the labor councils were "just a bunch of bureaucrats who wouldn't really help build the conference." Fortunately, it was obvious to the committee that our comrades had strong convictions on this question. We explained how such sponsorship could immeasurably increase the prestige of the conference, the publicity for it and the participation in it—in short help to build PACOSH and its conference. The program committee agreed to go along with our comrades on this point and sponsorship from the councils was obtained. Moreover, both labor councils sent out mailings publicizing the conference at their expense.

A number of other avenues were also employed to build the conference. PACOSH did its own mailing to its list of some 200 union and health professional contacts. Members of the program committee who had contacts in the unions encouraged these people to attend the conference and to publicize it. Press releases were sent out to the media and PACOSH speakers were made available for radio and television appearances to publicize the conference. (PACOSH representatives did participate in two such programs.) From the attendance at the conference it appears that all of these approaches—but most dramatically the personal contact work—helped to build the attendance at the conference sessions.

The PACOSH spring conference was held on April 19 and May 3, 1975. The first session focused on problems of occupational health and safety such as noise, stress, toxic substances and lung pathology. The second session tried to zero in on avenues for dealing with these problems such as use of collective bargaining and contract demands, the strike weapon, grievance procedure, workmen's compensation laws, social security laws and the Occupational Safety and Health Act. Resource people at these sessions included the Coroner of Allegheny County, an industrial hygienist from the UAW staff in Detroit, the chief steward of UE Local 610 and a field inspector from OSHA among others.

Attendance at the first session was about sixty; for the second sessions this went up to approximately 90 attendees. For both sessions at least half of those in attendance were steelworkers with grievance and safety committee members and other local union officials predominating. Also present were members of the UAW, UE, IUE, IBEW, telephone workers and other unions. There was a wide age distribution among those attending but most were white and most were males. The response to both sessions, and especially to the one which explored solutions to the problems of safety and health, was generally enthusiastic.

It is important, I think, to understand why the PACOSH spring conferences were so well received. In the first place, almost any educational activity in W. Pa. around safety and health was an improvement over what the union bureaucracies, especially the steelworkers International, were doing. The union hierarchy, of course, paid lip service to health and safety, but it took few educational or practical initiatives on the question. The Steelworkers International, for example, will not support PACOSH, and neither will they set up an effective health and safety program of their own.

Many of the people at the conference were looking for answers to specific workplace problems, many were anxious to learn how to tackle the problem of health and safety at their shop. The health professional and unionists who were the resource people at the conference were able to be of great help with both of these concerns. Finally there

was an openness at the conference—no one was made to feel intimidated by "experts"—and this set up an overall favorable atmosphere in which learning could take place.

PACOSH's spring conference gave a great boost to the organization and, subjectively, to the activists in it. It built respect for PACOSH within a new layer of health professionals and unionists, provided an enlarged constituency and many new contacts. The conference also provided new openings for PACOSH—such as speaking at local union meetings and organizing seminars for individual union locals.

The gains from the conference for the party were also of some importance. Subjectively, it gave the branch added confidence that it could be effective in new and unfamiliar areas of work. It provided new contacts for us among unionists and "health and safety" activists. Finally, to a certain extent, it increased the respect for the SWP among these groups.

Before I discuss how PACOSH digested these developments and began to plan for the future, however, I think it is important to evaluate the experience from the point of view of our intervention.

Throughout this first period of our intervention in PACOSH the organization remained very narrowly based: consisting basically of leftists and health professionals. Given the relative size of our intervention (four people out of eight activists in the Program Committee) it was important that the other members of PACOSH did not start to feel that we were involved in PACOSH simply to use it as a "Trotskyist front." For this reason, we tried to have the Program Committee operate by "consensus" and not make our relative numbers count for too much. This approach was, I expect, recognized by the others on the committee and, in general, won respect and sympathy for our movement. For example, one of the independents on the committee has become a campaign supporter.

To realize the maximum gain from PACOSH it was important that we become the best builders of PACOSH. Here the methods of Trotskyism proved invaluable—the discussion around the labor endorsements being just one case in point. On the other hand, some stress developed between the demands of our other political work and the necessity of developing some expertise and familiarity with questions of health and safety. One comrade, for example, expressed the conviction that our knowledge of how to organize in general was, in and of itself, sufficient input for satisfactory participation in PACOSH. Conversely, one of the independents felt that "we were not doing our homework," that we weren't trying to become conversant with the problem of occupational safety and health.

This "problem" highlights, I believe, some questions that we must consider in this political situation now facing us. We will be involved in many new areas of work in the coming period. In general comrades must familiarize themselves with our past experience in the trade union movement and branches should educate themselves about the concrete situations in the trade union and broader working class movements in their cities and regions. Additionally, comrades should develop some expertise in these new areas—the information tends to be easily available. New areas of work should almost automatically suggest subjects for branch educationals, for forums, for new titles for our book stores. Branch reports on these areas of work can have an especially educational charac-

ter. Our own press often provides a sometimes neglected source of valuable material on many subjects (for example, see Steve Beck's *Industrial Poison* in the December, 1974 ISR). While our approach, our transitional method, is indispensable in all of our work—there is no justification for our being lambs before the wolf of expertise. We would not want to become professional health and safety experts—we are professional revolutionists—but it is naive to believe we have all of the answers ready made for all areas of work that are in some cases very new to us.

It was clear from the start that the base of PACOSH would have to be broadened if it was to play any long term vital role in the working class movement. There had been in PACOSH's first year several union militants who had played some role within the organization, but by the winter of 1975 they were tending to be less active. In at least one case PACOSH's renewed vigor was able to turn this around. The titular president of PACOSH, a UE steward, had for some time been asking to be formally relieved of that post. However, when he observed the participation in the first session of the spring conference, he suddenly began to play a much more active role himself. On the other hand, the division between the professionals who organized PACOSH and the militants and local officials who came to the conference was really never bridged. This situation presented no problem for the "professionals" in PACOSH who saw the organization as one providing a service for "the workers." But for those who felt PACOSH should be an organization of profession-

als and workers it was a serious flaw. The situation was caused in part by the failure to do serious follow-up work with the contacts made by PACOSH. It was heightened by an uncertainty over whether PACOSH should be aimed towards the local union officials or try, more energetically, to reach the militants in the plants. While an initial focus towards the lower officials was important in giving PACOSH overall "credibility" no approach was seriously considered in the spring toward involving shop militants in addition to these union officials.

In spite of these shortcomings with PACOSH and in our intervention, I must strongly emphasize the gains achieved by our movement. New contacts and friends were made among unionists and health and safety "professionals." Respect for our movement was increased among the PACOSH activists. Most importantly, perhaps, valuable experience was gained, by the comrades who were involved in PACOSH and for our branch in the working class movement.

Moreover, this initial intervention gave us a head start in participating in agitation around occupational health and safety that may develop in the future. Occupational safety and health is a dynamic issue—as the 1974 mineworkers strike clearly shows. It is an issue already being taken up by some unions, such as OCAW, and one that can well become a central concern to large segments of the working class. PACOSH's future and our future in PACOSH must be seen within this context.

## THE FILIPINO NATIONAL MINORITY

by Robert P. Capistrano, San Francisco Branch

July 23, 1975

Filipinos constitute the fastest growing national minority in the United States. The 30,000 who enter each year are surpassed in numbers only by the immigration of Mexicans. They are becoming a key sector of the clerical and service industries in this country. For years they have been a large component in agriculture. For these reasons, it is becoming increasingly important for comrades to have some familiarity with its development in order to understand the direction of the struggle. The Filipino national minority is necessarily incomprehensible without an understanding of the Philippines itself.

### I. The Philippine Islands

The Philippines are an archipelago of 7,100 islands lying 600 miles off of the Southeast Asian mainland, at its closest point. It has three central regions, divided roughly into the northern island of Luzon, the central islands, known as the Visayas, and the southern island of Mindanao. Over 37 million people inhabit the Philippines, about 75 percent peasantry, and speaking over 100 languages. Fourteen percent of the population are members of national minorities, 3,500,000 of whom are the

Muslim Moro inhabitants of Mindanao and the southern islands. The balance are mountain tribes who are analogous to the Montagnards of Vietnam. Catholicism plays an important part in the life of the majority of the population.

Even a cursory outline of Philippine history must begin with the three hundred years of Spanish rule, which bequeathed on Philippine society two still powerful features, the hacienda system, and therefore the landlord class, and the Roman Catholic church. Spanish rule tied the peasants to the plantations through a semi-feudal form of share-cropping and the fatalistic outlook on life that is the chief grace of Catholicism to the ruling classes of much of the world. But there were numerous peasant revolts, and much of the country, certainly the interior, was never "pacified."

The last revolt under Spanish rule began in 1896, and was led by middle and upper class *ilustrados*, educated in Spain, who were under the influence of the great bourgeois revolutions. Rizal, Bonifacio, and Aguinaldo were the names of that leadership. The revolt failed, but nevertheless, when the U.S. Navy began landing troops in the Islands, Aguinaldo was aboard their flagship, bearing the American promise of support for an independent Philip-

piners.

The first Philippine republic was declared under American protection on June 12, 1898, some two months before Dewey entered Manila Bay. The bourgeois nationalists had not yet heard of McKinley's vision compelling the U.S. to take up the white man's burden.

One quarter of a million Filipinos died mainly of famine and disease in the subsequent four years of the "Philippine Insurrection." Of the 126,000 American troops who took part, it is estimated that 4,000 were buried on foreign soil. Still the struggle of the Filipino people was not quelled. Fighting dragged on until 1912 in the interior and in the Moro country of Mindanao.

American imperialism had gained its stepping stone to China, a country rich in raw materials. Lumber and metals, coconut and hemp, sugar and oil; all were available. Ready also, of course, were the landlords and educated middle classes and a nascent bourgeoisie to administer the colony for Wall Street.

The Americans didn't wait long to create a base of support. While wiping out the visible pockets of resistance, it bought church lands to conduct a phony land reform; it sent the first of thousands of Filipinos stateside to become the nucleus of the colonial bureaucracy; it set up schools for colonial indoctrination, the first teachers of which were American soldiers, forerunners of the civic action groups of the Indochina War; a network of roads and rails made the country more accessible for economic penetration; and it granted "autonomy" in setting up a Philippine congress which functioned as tax-collector for the governor-general.

American imperialism allowed free trade between the Philippines and the "mother country," perpetuating the colony as a producer of raw materials, the very bottom in the vertical organization of modern imperialism. The expansion of the cash crop economy accelerated the rape of the peasantry, creating an agricultural and city proletariat, and forcing the emigration of thousands to the U.S. and Hawaii.

It was in this process that the character of the ruling class of the Philippines was forged. Like those of all of the third world, its beginnings under colonial rule tied it lock, stock, and barrel to world imperialism. In the case of the Philippines, the plantation economy supplemented by oil and mineral exploitation is dominated by foreign capital. There can be no real separation of the interests of the Filipino landlords and capitalists. Even their names suggest a lack of familiarity with the incest taboo. They are the general managers of American exploitation of the Philippines.

By 1935, agricultural strikes, often flaring up into revolts, and urban workers struggles showed that the sentiment for independence was resurging. In the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act, also known as the Filipino Exclusion Act, the Philippine Commonwealth, the first experiment with a neo-colonialist solution, was founded. Independence was promised by 1946 and a constitution even today still formally valid, was adopted. The first act of this puppet regime was to set up an army around the nucleus of the Philippine Constabulary, analagous to Indian reservation police, commanded by Field Marshal Douglas MacArthur, victor over the bonus army of the early 30s. The Philippines found its George Washington in the guise of Manuel Quezon, the first of a line of Filipino Thiens and Kys.

The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was

Japan's answer to the open door. It was met by the unashamed arms of the Filipino landlords and capitalists, to whom quarrels between the different imperialisms represent openings to better their position. One of the most agile of this ilk became the first president of the 1946 republic, Manuel Roxas. Roxas was formerly an official in the Japanese puppet regime. Japan granted the Philippines 'independence' in 1943, but apparently the masses weren't listening. By the end of the war, most of central and southern Luzon had been liberated by the Anti-Japanese People's Army (HUKBALAHAP) under the leadership of the Communist Party (PKP).

The Philippine Communist Party was founded in 1930. By 1936, they were marching under the banner of the popular front, a course which led them to "critically" supporting the puppet constitution. 1941 found the PKP pledging all-out support for the colonial government in the fight against Japanese aggression. They fought World War II under a line of exclusively fighting the Japanese, and in 1944 they welcomed the return of colonialism. As a result, after the end of the war, the Huk movement had disintegrated, its cadre becoming a veterans' organization; its people's committees, which had governed the liberated zones, reverting into peasant associations.

Philippine "independence" was granted on July 4, 1946, in celebrations hiding the cynical character of the event. The Parity Amendment to the constitution was passed by the Philippine Congress as a condition for independence. It granted the U.S. supreme authority over its bases, guaranteed U.S. property rights which made American civilians and businesses equal to those of Filipino origin, and allowed the U.S. to direct Philippine foreign policy. Other laws were passed continuing "free trade," giving the U.S. ninety-nine year leases on its bases, and another tied the currency and tariffs to American control. A "mutual defense" treaty allowed U.S. intervention virtually under any excuse. The price for not accepting these conditions would have been the loss of war damage reparations amounting to almost half a billion dollars, due to go mostly into the hands of the large capitalists and landlords.

Philippine independence opened an era of the most crass corruption and graft among the ruling classes and their servants in the government. Marcos' martial law curbed only the excesses of the system by granting Marcos, who became the richest man in the country while in office, and his henchmen a monopoly to share with the foreigners the nation's wealth.

The postwar years found the PKP operating through the Democratic Alliance, supporting one, then the other of the two bourgeois parties, the Nacionalista Party and the Liberal Party. In 1950, belatedly following the left turn of world Stalinism, they launched an armed struggle, again through the reactivated HUKBALAHAP. Its putchist line, which predicted victory within two years, resulted in the party's annihilation and the subsequent degeneration of the Huks into gangs of roving bandits, and allowed American propaganda machines to make defense secretary Ramon Magsaysay a "champion of liberty" and future president. During his administration, the SEATO treaty was signed in Manila.

Graft and corruption, the consumptive tastes of the ruling classes and upper echelons of the governmental bureaucracy, and the realities of an economy dependent on

world prices of raw commodities, had made a shamble of the economy by the early '50s. Import and foreign exchange controls were established and a treaty signed which put U.S. advisors in key areas of government. Thus was American domination insured.

The 1960s did not see a decline in the influence of the Americans. Although the government was forced by the colonial revolution to show a less slavish attitude toward the U.S., nothing has really changed. For example, in the Philippines, demonstrations of tens of thousands clamored for the closing of U.S. bases and an end to unequal treaties. In response, independence day was changed back to June 12; Japanese capital welcomed; a Filipino-first campaign launched by the government; leases of U.S. bases shortened to 25 years; etc. But the reality is clear. U.S. aid to the Philippines by 1970 added up to almost 2 billion dollars since independence. American investment, 80 percent of foreign investment in the Philippines, and 60 percent of U.S. investment in Southeast Asia, totals about three billion, equal to total U.S. investment in Africa. U.S. corporations control petroleum, rubber, mining, fertilizers, chemicals, drugs, and others. Almost 30,000 troops maintain two of the largest U.S. bases overseas, Clark Air Force Base, and Subic Bay, home of the Seventh Fleet.

On September 22, 1972, Ferdinand Marcos placed the country under martial law, outlawing strikes and demonstrations, curtailing civil rights, closing scores of newspapers and radio-t.v. stations, subjecting those that remained to rigid press censorship. The possession of arms was made a crime, and private armies, raised by politicians and gangsters to safeguard corruption, were outlawed. Marcos dissolved the Congress and subjected the courts to military decree. Most of Marcos' political enemies, rival capitalists, journalists, and even outspoken clergy were incarcerated. Today close to 18,000 political prisoners rot in prison camps, the most notorious of which is Camp Crane. A number of plebiscites were held, each outdoing the one before it in announcing the overwhelming popular vote in favor of the dictatorship. On December 31, 1973, Marcos' term as president officially expired.

Although using the excuse of quelling communist rebellion and terrorism, Marcos was led to impose his dictatorship because of rising criticism of his regime from all sectors of the population. Of course his position was the inevitably untenable one of the neocolonial bourgeoisie. High inflation rates egged on by lavish spending on public works projects for propaganda purposes, and constantly recurring devaluations of the peso do not sit quietly with a population having a per capita income of under \$500. Property-less peasants flocked to the cities creating shanty towns, the governmental solution for which was the erection of corrugated tin fences around these "eyesores." Fully 40 percent of the college graduates could not and cannot now find jobs. Doctors and teachers could not find jobs in one of the most underdeveloped nations in the world! In spite of Imelda Marcos' "green revolution," the U.N. placed the Philippines among those countries on the edge of famine. Thus the root cause of martial law lies in the world division of labor between the producers of raw materials and the imperialist centers. To stabilize the country for foreign exploitation, martial law, as Mrs. Gandhi has found, was necessary.

Today Marcos is attempting to project an image of the "New Philippines" independent of American imperialism.

He "allowed" the Parity Amendment to expire, although coincidentally Ambassador Sullivan had previously said that the amendment had served its purpose and outlived its usefulness. His government passed a law saying that all businesses in the country had to be 60 percent Filipino owned, which still allowed controlling blocs to remain in foreign hands. Under the pressure of the victory of the Indochinese Revolutions, he threatens to remove U.S. bases. Washington is not impressed. Marcos sends his wife Imelda, self-styled "Kissinger of the Orient," not only to international women's conferences, but also to People's China, hoping that the trade agreements which follow will demobilize the Maoist insurrection in the countryside. Millions of pesos are spent to give world public opinion of a dynamic nation. Marcos even sponsored the Miss Universe contest, granting the winner exclusive use of an island whose inhabitants had been "resettled" by the Philippine Constabulary. The media is kept full of beauty contests and sporting events to shut out reality. A much publicized land reform gives peasants the "option" to buy land over 20 year periods, and at sums amounting to several years income. Phony "peasant cooperatives" are also being established. Nevertheless, 700,000 people lost their jobs the first year of martial law. Inflation pushed upward at rates of 57 percent while wages were frozen. And meanwhile, foreign capital was allowed to repatriate "its" profits under a general decree. And to protect all this, Marcos will receive over 100 million dollars out of the 1975 U.S. budget, 25 million of which will be direct military aid. All this to finance the 100,000 man Philippine Army, soon to grow to a quarter million, and the unknown number of American advisors and "civic action groups," formerly known as green berets. The bulk of this expansion is to take the form of local "citizen's army" units similar to those organized by the South Vietnamese puppets.

But Marcos still faces opposition within the country. The Philippine Communist Party (CPP) was reestablished in 1968 under the "great red banner" of Mao Tsetung thought. It coalesced out of a large left-wing student movement, Kabataang Makabayaan, or Patriotic Youth, formed in 1964 out of a broad layer involved in demonstrations against the presence of U.S. bases, U.S. investment, and unequal treaties. Interestingly enough, the CP's first cadre center was called the Lin Piao school. The party took up the people's war strategy of encircling the cities from the countryside. The central government was forced to concentrate as many as 10,000 troops in a single campaign, using such techniques as strategic hamlets, depopulation of provinces, and creation of free fire zones. But operating in the hinterlands of 30 provinces, the CP's strategy isolates them from the cities and populous zones. This and martial law has made them and their New People's Army a secondary threat compared to the eruption of the Moro war for self-determination in the south.

The Moros have always been subject to the worst national oppression. Their Muslim religion and culture separated them from the mainstream, while their rich island of Mindanao with its lumber and minerals, made penetration by imperialism inevitable. Today, Marcos has almost half of his army in the south, but much of the island remains in the hands of the Moro National Liberation Front and its Bangsa Moro Army. The ferocity with which Marcos and his American advisors have struck

back was best illustrated by the February 1974 bombing attack which leveled Jolo City on the island of Jolo, killing 300 persons and leaving the remaining 100,000 inhabitants to their own resources.

This then is the situation in the Philippines. Martial law has made their exploitation of the country easier for both foreigners and the Marcos combine. Martial law has established a military dictatorship in which all criticism is stymied. Deportation, imprisonment, and exile are all common. The only nationally coordinated resistance is led by the Communist Party in the countryside adhering to the line of "new democracy," and using as its cover the "National Democratic Front," a device similar to the NLF. Ironically, only martial law could provide any kind of basis for this popular front, now that sections of the ruling class are threatened by the actions of the Marcos monopoly.

## II Filipinos in the Mainland United States

The first Filipinos to come to America were future bureaucrats, brought to this country to learn the ways of the new colonial master. They were followed in the decades between 1910 and 1935 by over 150,000 agricultural laborers, mostly dispossessed peasants, who came to the country with the intent of returning to their homeland with a tidy sum. Of course most of these "sojourners" never made their grubstake, and were condemned to follow the crops or, when lettuce and asparagus were out of season, to follow the salmon and tuna.

America had followed a policy of importing Asians as a source of cheap labor since the Chinese began coming in the mid-19th century. When the economy hit bottom, and consequently racism was whipped up, Asians were excluded from immigration. When they had "taken enough American jobs," the Chinese, Japanese, and Filipino exclusion acts were passed. The same trend has now hit Mexican immigrant labor.

Filipinos were not citizens, nor were they aliens. They could not intermarry with whites. More than once they were run out of towns in the agricultural valleys of California and Washington. Their economic position and seasonal work, i.e., instability/mobility, made the pool hall and gambling den central institutions. Unity among Filipinos was noticeably lacking due to rivalries and language barriers between the Visayans, Tagalogs, and Ilocanos, who made up the major part of the immigrants, and exacerbated by the fact that there was only one Filipino for every 100 males.

Many of these old timers died lonely and broken, their bodies bent from decades in the fields. 50,000 of them, now old men, live today in California under impoverished conditions. Others were deported under the Filipino Exclusion Act after 1935. This act ended the importation of Filipino farm labor by placing a quota of 50 on their immigration, ostensibly because the Philippines were now almost independent. A small number entered the U.S. when their service as navy cooks, stewards, and cabin boys came to an end. In the navy, Filipinos were not allowed to reach the higher grades of petty officer. Other Filipinos landed more "comfortable" jobs as waiters, busboys and domestics. The end result of this period of immigration was summed up by California statistics of the late '60s, in which the per capita income of Filipinos ranked below that of Blacks, and just above that of

Indians.

Filipinos made many attempts to organize themselves against the growers. In fact, it was this resistance to exploitation that gave the Filipino a reputation of being such an unreliable worker. Most of the attempts in the fields were crushed, their leaders deported. Filipinos did succeed in establishing Cannery Workers Local 37 ILWU in the '30s, but this did not eliminate segregation and discrimination that existed in Alaskan job sites. Today, some cannery workers have formed the American Cannery Workers Association, a political pressure group, in order to sue the bosses and all-white craft unions for their discriminatory treatment in hiring, housing, food, etc.

In the central valley of California, 1965, a Filipino union, the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee, struck the grape fields around Delano. Soon joined by Cesar Chavez' National Farm Workers Association, the two organizations fused to become the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee. UFWOC won the right to represent all farmworkers in 1967, and in 1970, signed contracts. Of course, we all know what happened three years later.

In 1965, Lyndon Johnson signed a new bill which "liberalized" immigration for those who either had relatives in this country, or who possessed so called skilled labor. By 1970, 343,000 Filipinos lives in the U.S.A., as compared to 176,000 in 1960, half of them in California. Filipinos reside primarily around Seattle, the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C. Unlike the unskilled immigrants of the previous generation, this new wave consists of skilled or relatively well educated people, aspiring to middle class status, who are part of the 40 percent chunk of Philippine college graduates for whom the neocolonial economy has no use. Of these graduates, for instance, four out of six doctors, one out of two nurses, nine out of ten dentists, one out of four architects, and one out of five engineers leave the country. The great majority of them come to America. Fifty-one percent of them are women. Many come on visitor's visas hoping to have them changed to permanent status once stateside. The chances of this happening are slim. 168,000 people were on the waiting list as of 1972, and immigration continues, although the Marcos government has put a great deal of restrictions on emigrants, such as exorbitant exit taxes.

Because many of the immigrants are originally from the middle classes, they are not imbued with anti-Americanism. Once here, the myth of making it often remains, despite the discrimination they face. Almost without exception, they find that their degrees are meaningless, their education considered inferior to that of an American school. As a consequence, Filipinos are forced to take any available job, explaining the thousands of Filipino workers on the clerical staffs of insurance and banking firms, in the social services, and as nurses aides or hospital orderlies. Even if they take professional examinations, they face the racist barriers put up by the professional associations. While deeply resenting this discrimination, many Filipinos remain conservative in their thinking.

Filipino youth, especially those recently immigrated, face social, educational, cultural, and language barriers, not to mention high unemployment. College, to many, remains unattainable. The Filipino communities thus have many similarities to ghettos, and are often clustered



amidst the large Chicano or Latino barrios. But out of this has arisen a heightened, if hesitant, national consciousness.

Community issues have taken a high priority, with struggles around language barriers, such as at City College of San Francisco, in the fall of 1974, and more especially around the fate of once forgotten old timers. One of the rallying points for Filipinos in particular, and Asians in general, has been San Francisco's International Hotel. This building, home of a number of aging *Manongs*, or old timers, but also housing elderly people of other nationalities, lies on the edge of both Chinatown and the financial district, and is the last remaining vestige of Manilatown. Scheduled to be torn down to make room for a parking lot in the late '60s, massive protests and demonstrations forced the owners to back down. Its new owners were issued a demolition permit in early 1975, even though the International Hotel Tenants' Association offered to buy the building. This struggle has in recent months been a major focus for R.U./R.S.B. and its Chinese surrogate, Wei Min She. The fate of the hotel is unsettled at this time.

In Seattle, a struggle has been brewing around the construction of a municipal stadium near the International District, where many Filipinos and other minorities live. The district is faced with the threat of urban renewal, again to provide parking for ardent sports fans.

Filipino activists have also been active around the erection of local community centers and the building of Agbayani village, a home for retired UFW workers.

The primary rallying point for many Filipinos at this time, however, has been against martial law. A Filipino-American newspaper poll recently found that 60 percent of the Filipinos living in the United States opposed martial law. A number of organizations have acted to fight and publicize martial law, including the National Committee for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines, based in Los Angeles; the National Association of Filipinos in the United States, based in New York; Movement for a Free Philippines; and the Friends of the Filipino People. The most active group, however, is the Union of Democratic Filipinos (*Katipunan ng mga Demokratikong Pilipino—KDP*).

All of these groups have united to demonstrate and picket at Philippine consulates or other places where representatives of the Marcos dictatorship might show up, but it is KDP which has supplied much of the day to day work. KDP, based in Oakland, is an organization which backs the politics of the Communist Party of the Philippines—New People's Army. Its unifying principles are support of the national democratic revolution at home, and socialist revolution in the United States. This Maoist formulation, however, has yet to affect its work in the same manner as Maoism has affected such groups as the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization (formerly Young Lords Party). KDP lacks the sectarianism of these groups, both in its practice (uniting in demonstrations with any group which opposes martial law), and its slogans (i.e., End U.S. Aid to Marcos; Free All Political Prisoners; etc.) This healthiness may make it hard for them to swallow Mao's recent soiree with Imelda Marcos. They remain undominated by any of the major Maoist groups and have a clear understanding of the need to build a broad anti-Marcos movement. They have, however, a

fetish for secrecy, going so far as to disdain use of the "bourgeois media" to publicize their actions. Nevertheless, even with this drawback, they have successfully carried out demonstrations of over 600. Such demonstrations and picket lines have usually been held on September 22, the anniversary of the martial law decree, and June 12, Philippine independence day. Actions of some sort have been held in Vancouver, B.C., Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles, San Diego, Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C.

KDP is organized into local chapters, each area having a "political" chapter and a "cultural" chapter. The latter is responsible for cultural presentations such as skits, dances, and singing at various events. KDP is not exclusively mass action oriented. It has a strong inclination to "serve the people" through community work. Still, it may be possible to work with them on common issues.

The Filipino national minority is the product of 70 years of the American experience. Now concentrated mainly in the west coast cities, it constitutes an important component of the agricultural, clerical, and public sector workers. Thus the party should make an effort to keep abreast of its current problems and intervene where practical. We should keep in mind forthcoming demonstrations protesting martial law. We should urge NSCAR to be on the lookout for community or campus issues involving, for example, artificial language barriers put up by high schools and colleges. This was done in San Francisco with respect to the English as a Second Language program, which was an attempt to restrict Filipino and Latino advancement in the City College. The campaign should be prepared to issue statements on various issues, as did the Seattle branch around the International District fight. It should publicize the need for affirmative action for Filipinos, who are at a disadvantage in this area since they are classified as either Asians or Spanish-surnamed. Another example would be to publicize the demand of reciprocity for degrees and skills learned in "foreign" institutions. In this way some steps can be made to make the Socialist Workers Party a viable alternative to Maoism or poverty pimp reformism in the eyes of Filipino activists.

## APPENDIX

### ORGANIZATIONS

National Committee for the Restoration of Civil Liberties in the Philippines (NCRCLP) P.O. Box 26454, SF CA 94126, and c/o Asian Coalition, 43 W. 28th St., NYC 10001. Friends of the Filipino People (FFP) 235 E. 49th St., NYC. *Katipunan ng Mga Demokratikong Pilipino KDP*) P.O. Box 23644, Oakland, CA 94623.

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### Ten Point Program of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines

1. Unite all anti-imperialist and democratic forces in order

to overthrow the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship and work for the establishment of a coalition government based on a truly democratic system of representation;

2. Expose and oppose U.S. imperialism as the mastermind behind the setting up of the fascist dictatorship, demand the nullification of all unequal treaties and arrangements with this imperialist power, and call for the nationalization of all its properties in the country;

3. Fight for the re-establishment of all the democratic rights of the people, such as freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, movement, religious belief, and the right to due process.

4. Gather all possible political and material support for the armed resistance and the underground against the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship;

5. Support a genuine land reform programme that can liberate the peasant masses from feudal and semi-feudal exploitation, and agricultural production through cooperation;

6. Improve the people's livelihood, guarantee the right to work and protect national capital against foreign monopoly capital;

7. Promote a national, scientific and mass culture and combat imperialist, feudal and fascist culture;

8. Support the national minorities, especially those in Mindanao and the mountain provinces, in their struggle for self-determination and democracy;

9. Punish after public trial the ringleaders of the U.S.-Marcos fascist gang for their crimes against the people and confiscate all their ill-gotten wealth; and

10. Unite with all peoples fighting imperialism and seek their support for the Philippine revolutionary struggle.

## An Examination of the G.I. Movement

by Phil Reser, Denver Branch

July 31, 1975

"We can no longer cooperate with these practices or with the war in Vietnam. We are not deserting; we are simply taking a stand to help others like us. . . . This is where we stand, and we hope other men in the Armed Forces who know that we speak the truth will stand with us."—Lance Corporal Thomas Met and Private Young Claude Gray, U.S. Marine Corps.

"We protest the war in Vietnam. . . . War cannot be rationalized, justified, or condoned. If you want to fight for peace, stop killing people. . . . You as a human being with a free will have the right, if not the obligation, to speak out against these atrocities. . . . If you really want to work for peace and freedom, then join us in our opposition. We are organizing a union in order to express our dissent and grievances."—PFC Daniel Amick and Private Kenneth Stolte, U.S. Army

The Army is one of the central oppressive institutions of youth. Young men and women are forced into the Armed Forces because of lack of education and employment

opportunities. Once in the service, they are faced with the crudest and most direct forms of discipline and class oppression.

The rebellion in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam-Era came from the same causes that have led young people to rebel in other institutions of United States society. G.I.'s have raised deep questions about the right of certain rulers to rule, of the Armed Forces to command, of the supposed right to torture and kill women, children and men in Vietnam. The realities of fighting such a totally unjust war as the one in Vietnam broke down many institutional and cultural forms that have kept the United States Armed Forces together as a so-called "Proud Fighting Unit."

There has been G.I. Rebellion within the Armed Forces during every U.S. war of expansion, but the defeat of the military in Vietnam combined with the growing rebellion at home accelerated the opposition to the war into a full crisis. The justification for war grew thin; no one wanted to die in this war.

Resistance among G.I.'s during this war was greater

than any recorded history can convey. This discussion will deal only with a small percentage of this recorded resistance; realizing that the total rebellion by G.I.'s during this conflict will probably never be known.

This problem of resistance is something the Pentagon did not anticipate. Just as the orthodox military mentality had no way of coping with the realities of "people's war" in Vietnam, so the elite officer corps of the U.S. brass, contemptuous of their own enlisted men in the first place, could not comprehend the depths of alienation and outright political opposition which infected every branch of the Armed Forces during this particular historical conflict.

The source of this development is not hard to find. Every imperialist power which has tried to conduct a colonial war with a mass army has encountered the same problem. Non-mercenary armies can and will conduct themselves with bravery and loyalty when their land is invaded or when their lives and security of their loved ones are threatened. But all the rhetoric in the world cannot disguise the fact that America's war of aggression in Vietnam was a dirty war, a genocidal war, a war which could not inspire the kind of motivation a disciplined army requires.

In order to fight such wars of counter-revolution, the United States must call upon millions of its own young, especially the poor, the black, brown, red, and the disenfranchised. In other words, it must enlist in the form of cannon fodder those who have the least stake in the success of the imperialist machine.

When we look at the death of the Army in Vietnam, let's begin by remembering a special hill, nicknamed Hamburger Hill by the G.I.'s who were sent on 11 charges to try to take it; 368 casualties resulted before they made it. When the men of the 101st Airborne reached to top, they offered a \$10,000 reward for the death of their commanding officer. A few weeks later, the hill was ordered abandoned.

Faced continually with such enormous stupidity, G.I.'s in Vietnam rebelled. Blacks and Chicanos led the fight, knowing that they were taking twice as many casualties as the law of proportions indicated they should take. By 1970 there was a deserters' community in Saigon that even the police would not enter; the Army was a collection of protesters, mutineers, and drug users; officers were being "fragg'd" to death by their own men; and a reluctant President Nixon was pulling the Army out of the war. But the G.I.'s had paid a terrible price.

While they were in Nam, the G.I.'s had resisted from the beginning. But, it was up to a few stateside G.I.'s to give the first public utterance of anti-war feelings. In 1965 a young lieutenant, Henry Howe, participated while off-duty in a demonstration near Fort Bliss, carrying a sign that read "End Johnson's Fascist Aggression in Vietnam." The brass came down on him, charging him under an obsolete article of the UCMJ dealing with disrespectful utterances against public officials—an article instituted by the British Articles of War to prevent British soldiers from defaming the royal family. Supported by only a few civilians, Henry Howe was sentenced to a year in jail and a dishonorable discharge on December 22, 1965—the fourth anniversary of the first G.I. death in Vietnam.

The next year a G.I. named Andy Stapp, who had been anti-war before he was drafted, engaged in a running battle with the brass at Fort Sill over his right to speak out and organize. Eventually discharged after a stormy tour of

duty, Stapp founded the American Servicemen's Union, the first G.I. Union in U.S. history. The A.S.U. published a newspaper, *The Bond*, provided legal support and organizing advice, and defended the rights of G.I.'s at a time when most anti-war civilians considered G.I.'s to be criminals.

Following these early efforts, G.I. resistance began to hit the newspapers. On June 30, 1966, three enlisted men at Fort Hood refused orders to Vietnam on the grounds that it was an immoral war. Their refusal was the first known in the war. They were jailed. On October 11, at Fort Jackson, an Army doctor named Howard Levy refused to train Special Forces medics for Nam duty, citing commission of war crimes by Special Forces troops. At a historic court-martial, Levy tried in vain to submit war crimes evidence; it was the first time the issue had been raised in a military court. The judge ruled his evidence "Irrelevant" and sent him to jail for 26 months. One week after he was released from jail, news of the torture/murder of a Vietnamese civilian by Special Forces Agents hit every newspaper in the country; Levy's comment was, "As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted. . . ."

News of resistance in Vietnam began to filter into the U.S. through underground sources in 1967, while stateside protests grew. The first recorded mutiny occurred that year when the 196th Light Infantry Brigade's A Company refused to go on a suicidal mission. The 196th was part of the Americal Division, a division created especially for Vietnam that would come to symbolize in its bloody history everything that was wrong with the war. In August 1967, a huge riot broke out in the Long Binh Jail in Vietnam, nicknamed the LBJ in honor of President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Prisoners burned prison records and took over a section of the jail; 12 Black prisoners held it for a month before it was retaken. Of the rebels, 59 were injured and one killed by guards. Conditions in the LBJ were so inhuman that by 1969 it would average two prisoner uprisings a month. Back in the U.S., a Vietnam Veteran named Jeff Sharlet was working on a newspaper for the G.I.'s in Nam, named *Vietnam G.I.*

Returning Vietnam Vets were becoming active at domestic bases, while many G.I.'s fought against being sent there at all. On November 13, 1967, a Black G.I., Ron Lockman, threw down his orders, walked away from a Vietnam-bound plane, and said, "I follow the Fort Hood 3—who will follow me?" Ron Lockman was sent to prison, but his question would not remain unanswered for long.

In 1968, G.I.'s at Fort Knox started the first domestic base newspaper, *FTA*. *Vietnam G.I.*'s circulation was skyrocketing as G.I.'s reported the news from the front: the desertion in May of Sp/4 Michael Branch to join the Vietnamese National Liberation Front, insurrections in the Da Nang stockade in August. Another kind of news began to trickle in: a mass murder at My Lai village on March 16. Under the leadership of Lieut. William Calley, a company of the beleaguered Americal Division massacred 567 civilians in one day. A Black G.I. shot off his own foot rather than participate. The incident, known to Calley's superiors, was hushed up until G.I.'s broke the news to reporters months later. When stalling tactics failed, the brass court-martialed Calley for murder and sentenced him to life (subsequently cut to 20 years—later dismissed). He was assigned to house arrest at Fort Benning and allowed visits from his girlfriend in his barracks. President Nixon stated he would personally review the sentence, and this resulted in clemency.

In February of 1968, two G.I.'s at Fort Ord, Dan Amick and Ken Stolte, decided to print up and distribute an anti-war leaflet on base. Each received 3 years in prison and a dishonorable discharge for a one-page mimeographed sheet. But they were part of a widespread movement by now. In one of the most famous "mutinies" in U.S. history, 27 inmates of the Presidio stockade in California held a sitdown protest on October 14 after another inmate was shot in the back and killed by a guard. They sang "American the Beautiful" and "We Shall Overcome" and asked for a lawyer. Charged with mutiny, they received sentences of up to 15 years, although all were reduced later. The Presidio case made military prisons as much of a G.I. issue as the slaughter in Vietnam.

Fort Hood, Texas, the site of the first known group refusal of Nam orders, had a bad year in 1968. When Black G.I.'s were warned that they would be sent to Chicago for riot duty during the Democratic National Convention in August, about 100 of them held a meeting to discuss whether they would go. They voted to refuse the orders. Armed MP's broke up the meeting and imprisoned 43 of them without charges until the brass decided to use "refusal of orders"—orders to disperse that most of the G.I.'s hadn't heard. All were discharged and many jailed, but pressure from their supporters kept the sentences low.

The Fort Hood 43 case made the newspapers; but a G.I. organization with the unlikely name of the Mickey Mouse Club was tearing the base apart. Two troops of helicopter-assigned G.I.'s, many of them Nam vets, were operating their own Vietnam war by holding war-crimes trials of their officers. Every time the units were sent out on maneuvers, the Mousketeers would capture an officer, take him into the woods and hold a trial of him with evidence given by the G.I.'s under his command. If found guilty, he was physically punished. Frightened officers allowed this to go on for months until the Mousketeers became utterly free of officer control; then the base cracked down. Hundreds of G.I.'s were transferred and shipped out and the base reorganized to prevent any future G.I. resistance activity.

Two years later, 1,000 G.I.'s from Fort Hood led an anti-war march in Kileen, Texas, the town near the base.

In 1969 G.I. organizations other than the A.S.U. began to appear on Army bases. In January a Black G.I. named Joe Miles, using tape recordings of some of Malcolm X's speeches, met with Black and Puerto Rican G.I.'s at Fort Jackson and founded G.I.'s United Against the War. Shortly thereafter, Miles was transferred to Fort Bragg, where he set up another G.I.'s United Chapter. He was subsequently transferred to northern Alaska, but G.I.'s United survived. In March hundreds of recruits in basic training at Fort Jackson signed a petition against the war and racism and presented it to their commanding officer. In November an advertisement against the war, signed by 1,365 G.I.'s, appeared in the New York Times.

Two G.I.'s deaths in 1969 provided evidence of the extent of resistance, and of racism, in the Army. On January 17, Sp/4 Jim Bingham died at Walter Reed Army Hospital. He had joined the Vietnamese National Liberation Front in 1968 and fought with them for several months before returning to U.S. Army authority. He died following mysterious brain surgery performed on him after he was shipped to Walter Reed. On June 7, Pfc. Dan Bullock, a Black man from Brooklyn, New York, died in combat in

Vietnam at the age of 15. His recruiter had knowingly signed him up when he was 14 years old.

But 1969 was also the year of the prisons. Inmates all over the country followed the examples of the LBJ and the Presidio in a series of rebellions. Conditions at most of the military's prisons were unbearable: contaminated food and water and not enough of either, beatings, stopped-up toilets, torture, extreme physical punishment. In April 1969, 40 inmates of the Pendleton Brig. held a sitdown strike after finding another prisoner manacled to a fence in a spread-eagle position. On May 20, 150 inmates of the Fort Ord Stockade staged a mill-in in the prison yard after being denied access to reporters investigating prison conditions. Later 400 prisoners refused to eat as a protest. On June 5, a major rebellion rocked the Fort Dix Stockade. After standing in a broiling sun for hours inmates were denied a drink of water because there were only 54 water pans (like dog dishes) available for 200 inmates. They threw the stockade commander down a flight of stairs, partially burned two stockade buildings, and tossed flaming mattresses out the windows. At the height of the melee an inmate and his fiance were married inside the stockade. Later 38 of the prisoners were singled out and charged with arson and several other crimes. Since they were the most politically active prisoners, their selection was hardly arbitrary. A huge defense campaign was mounted by civilians and Dix G.I.'s—several of whom also went to the stockade for their support work. Most the Fort Dix 38 received bad discharges and sentences ranging up to 4 years; several of them were later able to fight successfully for their freedom.

Undoubtedly the most tactically successful rebellion of the year hit the Pendleton Brig. on September 14. An article had appeared in *The Nation* magazine condemning conditions in the brig, but when reporters arrived they were not allowed to talk to inmates. At 7:30 that night, the inmates of B Company erupted, surrounding a supply hut and burning it to the ground. While MP's attacked B Company with tear gas, C Company began to smash windows and break up furniture. The MP's went after C Company and called for reinforcements and more gas. Moments later A Company rebelled in another section of the brig. A fire truck had to be called in as the round-robin insurrection continued all night.

Resistance among Army personnel in Vietnam had reached such high proportions by 1970 that mutinies were commonplace and protests routine. An entire company of men stationed at Dong Tam filed for conscientious-objector status on the same morning, taking themselves out of combat and flooding the base with paperwork. On January 3, Sp/5 Robert Lawrence, a broadcaster for Armed Forces Radio, went on the air to protest Army censorship of his broadcasts. His message was heard by most the G.I.'s in Nam—and he was immediately transferred to an obscure outpost. In May, when President Nixon ordered G.I.'s into Cambodia, one mutiny made U.S. TV news broadcasts. Six G.I.'s of the 4th Division refused to board the trucks for Cambodia until they were forced to do so at gunpoint. They told their story to an ABC news reporter, adding that they knew of many other refusals along the line. On July 4th, 1,000 G.I.'s gathered at Chu Lai beach for a July 4th party and anti-war rally. When security forces arrived to break it up, the G.I.'s told them to leave or face the consequences. The security forces

withdrew and the G.I.'s rallied and partied all day.

At home, G.I. organizations, underground papers, and resistance were present on almost every Army base of any size in the country. In June, at Fort Lewis, six G.I.'s refused to board a plane for Nam—and were supported by hundreds of other G.I.'s at their court-martial. The Fort Lewis 6 went to jail, where they proved to be as much trouble as prison organizers as they had been as anti-war workers.

As President Nixon withdrew the troops from Nam, those remaining proved more and more reluctant to fight. On October 9, 1971, 6 of 15 members of the 2nd Platoon, B Company, 1st Cav at Firebase Pace refused a suicide mission, saying they did not want to be the last G.I.'s to die for "a mistake." After being threatened by their commanding officer, they circulated a petition among their comrades, 88 of whom (including 8 Sergeants) signed it. Other G.I.'s brought in as replacements refused to take on the mission in solidarity with the 6. Two other replacement units were flown in, and they, too, refused to participate. They sent their story to a G.I. newspaper in the States: "Tonight the 2nd Platoon is supposed to go out on night ambush. . . . The 2nd Platoon is not moving from their bunker. They will be staying." In February of 1971, 150 veterans gathered in Detroit under the banner of a new veteran's organization, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and having gathered, began testimony about war crimes and botches they had witnessed in Vietnam. One vet testified that Capt. Bill Carpenter, a West Pointer who had been given a Medal of Honor for "valiantly" calling down a napalm strike on his own men in order to burn the enemy troops surrounding them, had given the order while safely in a helicopter several miles away from the battle. The Detroit hearings were called The Winter Soldier Investigation, a term derived from Thomas Paine, who had written in 1776: "The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country." These veterans identified with those soldiers who had endured the grueling winter of 1776 at Valley Forge, and they came together in Detroit to tell Americans what their country was really doing in Vietnam. Many wanted to purge the guilt which grew out of an inability to find any moral reason for the brutality, the waste, the destruction, which they had seen. The entire testimony was read into the Congressional Record by Senator Mark Hatfield, April 6-7, 1971. On April 18, 1971, about a thousand Vietnam veterans, each bearing some proof that he had been in Vietnam, arrived in Washington and set up a campsite near the Lincoln Memorial, bringing their case before the country and returning their medals and decorations received from that immoral and obscene memory. A study conducted while the veterans were camped on the Mall showed that most of these veterans had come from the very heart of Middle America. Few had finished college, unable to capitalize on college draft deferrals. Most were under 25 and had enlisted in the service. But perhaps most significantly, the study revealed that the majority of anti-war veterans in Washington, once of moderate conservative outlook, had been radicalized by their experiences in Vietnam.

The troubled Americal Division, the division of Calley and My Lai, of mutinies, drug addiction, and misery, was withdrawn from combat and broken up in 1972. In an attempt to raise the rock-bottom morale of the troops, the Americal's commanders threw a picnic the day before the

G.I.'s were to be assigned to new units. A flash flood swept the picnic area, and three G.I.'s drowned.

The extent of solidarity against the brass was perhaps best displayed at a court-martial at Fort Ord in September 1972. Billy Dean Smith, a black private who had been vocal in his opposition to the war, was the first G.I. to be tried in the U.S. for "fragging" an officer to death. He was charged with killing two officers with a grenade in Vietnam. The prosecution's star witnesses got on the stand—and stated that they didn't think Smith had anything to do with it. Each said he had been intimidated into giving false testimony earlier by investigators. Hundreds of G.I.'s signed petitions for Smith's release; at one point the courtroom in which he was being tried burned to the ground. Billy Dean Smith was acquitted of murder in October 1972; the Army had failed in an attempt to railroad a dissident on trumped-up charges. Henry Howe would have been pleased.

Specific acts of resistance by individual G.I.'s and groups of G.I.'s have been occurring in the military in this country from its inception. Rank and file G.I.'s are increasing their militancy, demanding more control over their conditions, an end to race and sex oppression and are openly rebellious against command authority that ignores their demands. G.I.'s, like many other oppressed people, are looking at the system as a whole and are seeing that their interests as G.I.'s, as people being exploited by an oppressive system, are the same as the interests of others who are exploited.

Through the draft alone the Pentagon took 1.2 million men to fight in Vietnam and maintained an imperial military of over 3 million for at least five years. The Department of Defense is used as a boycott relief valve for favorite industrialists. During the United Farm Workers boycotts of grapes and lettuce and during the Farah boycotts the Department of Defense gobbled up both vegetables and stocked its base stores with Farah pants.

At least three aerospace industries have been bailed out by big Defense Department loans or special considerations.

In recent trucker strikes, the National Guard and Reserve units were used to keep the highways open. Active duty units in some areas were on alert.

In the summer of 1968 troops were used to patrol areas of Watts, Detroit, Newark, Chicago and other cities as Black people took their rebellion to the streets. In March 1970, troops from Fort Dix and McGuire Air Force Base, in New Jersey, were ordered to break the Postal Workers' strike by assuming their duties in the post offices of New York City. The Siege of Wounded Knee, a 71 day standoff between the private army of the Justice Department and several hundred members of the Independent Ogalala Sioux Nation and the American Indian Movement was an example of new military approaches to situations. The military was allowed to clandestinely control a rather large army composed of specially trained U.S. Marshals and FBI agents. The Justice Department army was given high powered equipment available only to the military; their tactics in the negotiation as well as their tactics on the Reservation were advised by the military in the same manner as the Military Assistance Advisory Groups operating in Vietnam during the early years of U.S. involvement; even their needs for maps and intelligence were provided by military reconnaissance flights conducted with jets that had once flown the same type missions

against the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam.

Presently, as the Federal Prison system is trying to rely more heavily on behavior modification in its institutions, so is the military. With two large behavior modification programs in existence already (Ft. Riley, Kansas, and Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado), these tactics, as well as the general oppressive and brutal conditions of the prisons themselves, have led to many rebellions by military inmates and a great deal of political education: Lowry AFB ('73 and '74), Ft. Belvoir ('73), Camp Allen ('73), Long Binh Jail, Vietnam ('69, '70, '71), Ft. Dix ('70), Leavenworth ('73), Manheim, Germany ('71), Presidio ('69 and '71), etc.

Safety and working conditions have been the subject of G.I. strikes, slowdowns, and boycotts at various bases: Ft. Bragg, Portsmouth, Ft. Hood, and many others. As well, many ships in both the Atlantic and Pacific fleets have had confrontations over the same issues (USS Kitty Hawk, USS Constellation, USS England, USS Midway, and the USS Chicago are but a few examples.).

Given the kinds of conditions discussed here, and the Capitalist/Imperialist System's reliance on Armed Forces to widen and maintain its control, continued work with G.I.'s is an important part of the progressive struggle toward Socialism in this country.

The All-Volunteer Force concept was a reaction to the fact that the draft would not continue to be accepted by the American people, and that popular concern for domestic issues is growing at the expense of concern over military posture overseas. The All-Volunteer Force is also a way the Pentagon has hoped to resolve the problems of G.I. resistance and militancy while at the same time meeting their need for a more professional military. The most significant aspect of the All-Volunteer Force approach is money as a strategy to bribe workers and poor people into becoming United States mercenaries. The unemployment rate is the best recruiter this program has and is certainly supposed to be a place where one can make some money right out of high school.

The developing contradictions and weaknesses within our military are virtually a microcosm of the society that produces it. In our Armed Forces the class structure has been distilled to a regulated, blatant caste system where authoritarianism, racism, and sexism are clearly and blatantly the "Standard Operating Procedure." Service people at work do not control anything; they themselves are always subject to their commander's whim, and for the most part, they suffer from horrible working conditions. All this despite the boasting of the new look of the All-Volunteer Force. In addition, the judicial system of the military is barbaric and is one of the most easily manipulated systems of judicial process which can be then arbitrarily used against G.I.'s to varying degrees. It all depends on the color of their skin, the political content of their speech and actions, or, all too often, merely upon the whim of their superior. Each year about 56,000 G.I.'s face court-martial prosecutions, and over 93% of these people are convicted.

Militancy within the ranks of Third World people in the Armed Forces is on the rise because of the rampant racism in all branches of the service. This is in response to forms of direct racism which parallel society at large: racist entry exams, discrimination on job areas and promotions, the insistence that signs of unity are forbidden, the prohibition of the right of Native Americans to practice their

tribal and religious ceremonies, a court-martial conviction rate of twice that of Anglo G.I.'s and documented strong tendency on the part of the white command's structure to single out for punishment Third World people where Anglo counterparts are not punished at all.

By subjecting women to discrimination and objectification and by heightening sexism in men, the armed forces further divide and exploit the people they oppress. Sexism in the military results in the acceptance of and often the reliance on prostitution and fosters competitiveness between men, as well as between women and that helps keep them divided. The fact that homosexuality is not recognized as existing in the Armed Forces and is, in fact outlawed by the military, should be noted.

The working men and women of the United States fight the wars of exploitation across the world. Whenever the capitalist want war and the politicians declare war, the working man straps on a pack, shoulders a rifle (or takes a policeman's club), kisses his family goodbye, and marches off to fight a war he didn't want, a war he didn't declare, a war that belittles and wrongs him by injuring his class—and marches away to butcher other working men whom he doesn't know and against whom he has no quarrel. He yells, kills, and slaughters—because some crafty crooks called prominent people tell him to do so.

Over 50% of our country's total expenditures are for the military, and we have 3,000 bases scattered all over the world. And when things get hot right here at home, they send in the airborne. People in the military, whether draftees or volunteers, are in the best position in their lives to see how inhuman the system really is. You can also see the connection between many things which are harder to see at home. When you talk about a military-industrial/capitalist-imperialist system to a lot of people there is total apathy, but to a soldier it's an open book. This system will continue to use men and women in uniform whether in the Guard, Reserve, Air Force, Marines, Army, Navy, Police, even men or women out of uniform in the FBI, CIA, and who knows what else, to spy and sneak and kill for exploitation of a system which is dying. The oppression, racism and injustice of military service are the basis of the continuing G.I. resistance and will insure that the G.I. movement will remain a permanent feature of the American military.

G.I. rights and the movement around democratic demands in the Armed Forces reflects the defects in the capitalist system rather than just the people who administer it. Our Armed Forces are where they are because morale can no longer be bought with movies and beer. Its court martial system does what it does because men with power like to use it over the working class of this country. Americans must unite to take back the power they have lost to the military. But it's the G.I. *who must* lead this struggle.

Our party must develop a more aggressive attitude in bridging the gap between the working class and the Armed Forces. We should watch for these G.I. struggles more closely, cover them in our press, support G.I. cases brought to trial, develop current pamphlets, maybe a book on transitional and democratic demands for service people, keep an on-going relationship with military counseling services around the United States and overseas, plus opening discussion around the analysis of continuing the idea of an American Serviceman's Union and a more

consistent practice behind such an organization.

We must be there with the G.I. and the material necessary to assist them with their battles for democratic rights while widening their political perspectives toward Socialism.

The transitional program method of approaching the

masses wherever they exist in our system is the most progressive way to work with their particular struggles. This is also true with the G.I. movement which should be developed as a higher priority in our work toward building the American Socialist Revolution.

## AN EXAMINATION OF THE G.I. MOVEMENT—PART TWO

by Phil Reser, Denver Branch

August 2, 1975

The military's transition from the Vietnam era to now was the Nixon Doctrine, or the idea of Vietnamization on a global scale. Prop up the military police of governments sympathetic to the U.S., develop their capabilities to suppress their own revolutionary movements. This would make it possible for the American military to switch from massive, direct armed military intervention to a new low-profile look. Carry the American flag over the globe. Build up the Navy's capability to do that with homeports in Japan and Greece. But cut down the number of American troops land-stationed in foreign countries, especially in Japan and Europe (if NATO countries agree to carry the burden for awhile.) Cut down the size of the standing army. But build up the reserves. And build up the capability of mixed airborne divisions to intervene in the event of a crisis anywhere on the globe. But keep those troops stationed in the continental U.S. The remedy for troubles inside the military was the All-Volunteer Force—increased pay scales, the economic draft, hard times outside in the civilian world, fancy recruitment programs with promises of advancement and job training, and better living and working conditions.

Because of a Vietnamese victory, the U.S. foreign policy in the form of the Nixon Doctrine handed the military a new low-profile look. This was a strategic retreat. They had to find new ways to do that same old thing. And because of social struggle inside the military, the Pentagon planners have bent in some ways to make their military fit the demands of its soldiers.

This new look has in turn changed the quantity and quality of class struggle inside the military. Now there is less rebellious activity than during the Vietnam era. And the disaffection that does exist most often concerns living and working conditions, and restrictions on civil, human, and political rights. It rarely concerns the military mission itself.

First, let's look at the quantity of struggle in the military. Fewer people are in the military now than during the Vietnam era. Proportionately more of those are women and non-white people. More white people from depressed regions like the Southeast are joining. Most join because the civilian world turns them off, or because they've run out of options. In either case, what is important to notice is that almost none go to the military. Almost all are walking or running *away* from life as they knew it. This fundamental discontent thereby becomes concentrated in the military. What keeps people in the military once they land there? Fear of going back to the scene they left. No jobs. No options. Military life may be easier for some now than it was during the Vietnam era. But there is still not

much to *leave* for. Overall, the military for most isn't that bad that it's worth risking time in the brig, stockade, or the civilian world. Fighting the Indochina war is in large part what caused living and working conditions to degenerate. Not to be ignored, the military mission during the Indochina war—fighting it abroad, and putting down dissent at home—was itself the reason for many of the upsurges of the G.I. movement.

Because of the new low-profile character of the military, not many G.I. fights at the present time, are over the content of the military mission itself. The fact that enlisted people's opposition escalates as the military mission escalates is significant. First, it points to a VACUUM OF MOTIVATION among enlisted people. The military gives them no reason to fight its war. Even though this may not become evident until enlisted people are called upon to prepare for an intervention, this vacuum of motivation is present now all the time. The only thing most enlisted people have to fight for is themselves. In fact, this is the single theme of all armed forces recruitment advertising: join us and this is what you will get—job training, starting salary of \$341, free travel, three meals a day and total health care. They do not tell potential recruits that they are the lucky ones who can really fight the communist tyrants. They do not tell potential recruits that they can defend democracy in Vietnam, the Philippines and so many other places.

Second, because enlisted people for the most part don't begin to speak or act against the military mission until preparations are made for an intervention, this implies their indifference to the mission up to that point. This does not mean they are in favor of what the military does up to that point of intervention. What it means is that they are not opposed to it enough to take the risk that speaking or acting against it might involve. These are the two sides of the VACUUM OF MOTIVATION.

By far the largest number of struggles are now fought over living and working conditions, and over restrictions on enlisted people's civil, human and political rights. In a military which is more comfortable than ever before, which has bent over backwards to try to fit itself to the expectations of those who fill the ranks, enlisted people still expect more than they have now. The All-Volunteer Force may have partially satisfied the demands of enlisted people. They can now serve in a military which offers them a tour of duty free from combat, and a modest increase in the degree of personal freedom allowed. But the satisfaction of old needs has generated new ones.

If there were no vacuum of motivation, then enlisted

people might voluntarily suffer poor working and living conditions, as well as restrictions on their civil, human and political rights. But because this vacuum of motivation exists, enlisted people see no good reason to suffer silently. Social struggle around what are basically reform issues is the result.

The way in which these reform fights are now fought ranges from grievances posted through the chain of command, to direct action taken in direct opposition to the chain of command. With the important exception of Navy walk-offs, the hair fights in Germany and an Air Force Base sit-down strike, the GI fights of the day have been waged by small groups of enlisted men or enlisted men's wives, who have relied primarily on petitioning Congress or filing legal grievances as a tactic.

In summary, the following factors must be taken in consideration, at the present time, around the G.I. Movement:

1. The military can only maintain a low profile until it is

called upon to intervene in some world crisis. Social struggle throughout the world will determine the military's ability to hold to this low-profile plan.

2. Social insecurity which drives people into the military functions both to concentrate discontent in this one institution, and also to keep that discontent from being expressed.

3. The vacuum of motivation determines in large part the more mass GI opposition to the content of the military mission, and to the conditions under which enlisted people are expected to carry it out.

4. The activity of the G.I. Movement is at this time predominantly centered on living and working conditions, and restrictions on civil, human and political rights.

5. The methods of struggle are more often legal, parliamentary, and propagandistic. It is less often mass action, at this particular time, because of lack of leadership or a large GI organization fighting around the world for the democratic rights of these people in uniform.

## ADDITIONAL MATERIAL RELATING TO CUBA

By David Keil, Lower Manhattan Branch, New York Local

July 30, 1975

In May, I submitted a document to the pre-convention discussion bulletin entitled "For A Change in Our Position On Cuba," arguing that Cuba is a deformed workers state and the Cuban Communist Party a Stalinist Party. I had some time earlier submitted this same document to the Political Committee, urging that it be submitted for publication in the International Discussion Bulletin.

Comrades from the national office suggested to me that the best place to have the Cuba discussion was in the international bulletin rather than the party bulletin. I agreed, and the document in revised version was submitted by the PC to the United Secretariat and approved for publication (though the Political Committee's and, so far as I know, the United Secretariat's views on Cuba are not mine). This document should appear shortly.

What follows is supplementary material on Cuba for readers of the SWP Discussion Bulletin to consider.

### I. Stalinist Foreign Policy

The Cuban leadership today does not advance the process of socialist revolution in Latin America or anywhere else, but instead impedes it. The Cuban leaders do not even pretend to call for proletarian revolutions. Instead, they have consistently given political support to "progressive" capitalist regimes such as Velasco's in Peru and Allende's in Chile. This support has been determined mainly by these regimes' willingness to have normal diplomatic relations with Cuba. Such a policy can only be called *reformist* and *counter-revolutionary*.

An example of the Castroist policy toward Chile was the official joint statement with a delegation from Czechoslovakia, which proclaimed the need for "solidarity with and support for the People's Unity Government headed by

Salvador Allende in Chile, which is carrying out an anti-imperialist, democratic program aimed at achieving the structural transformation which the country needs." (*Granma*, April 15, 1973, p. 7. *Granmas* here referred to are the English-language weekly review edition.)

The Castroist leadership did not learn any essential lessons from the coup in Chile, the greatest defeat of a decade or more in Latin America, but instead continued to support the Velasco regime in Peru. *Granma* of October 14, 1973, contains an unsigned article entitled, "Fifth Anniversary of the Peruvian Revolutionary Process," by which it means five years of the Velasco military government. The article reaffirms the Cuban CP's support for the Peruvian military regime: "In these five years, the Government of General Velasco has advanced along the outlined path [of independence], adopting laws and measures to transform the socio-economic structures of the country, developing a policy of defense of national riches, struggling to have the most downtrodden sectors of the Peruvian population live a life of human dignity and applying an independent and sovereign foreign policy." (p. 10.)

Learning nothing from the bloodbath in Chile, Castro stated, on September 28, 1973, that Peru was different from Chile: "Contrary to the Chilean Army, the Peruvian Army made it possible for men from the most downtrodden sectors of the population to enter military schools, and the class composition of the Peruvian Army is different from that of the Chilean Army. This factor facilitated the work of some leading commanders and officers who, headed by General Velasco Alvarado, led the Armed Forces of Peru to unity with the people and to progressive positions, in opposition to the oligarchy." (Quoted in same issue of *Granma*.) Castro thus brazenly endorsed the military dictatorship of a capitalist army over the workers and peasants of Peru.

The Cuban leadership even stated, after the coup in



Chile, that Allende's policy toward the armed forces had been correct. Raul Roa, the Foreign Minister, said in his U.N. speech, October 10, "No other government did more to promote the institutional development of the Armed Forces and even called on them, as did President Allende, to incorporate themselves in the tasks of national development and share in the responsibilities of government." The only problem, Roa said, was that a reactionary *section* of the armed forces betrayed this trust! (*Granma*, October 21, 1973, p. 8)

Chile and Peru are by no means the only cases. In addition to supporting "armed struggle" in Uruguay, Castro supported the class-collaborationist Broad Front of Uruguay in 1971. *Granma*, December 9, 1973, included a sympathetic article on the "Anti-Imperialist Front for Socialism" of Argentina, a new popular-front formation. The December 30 issue included a speech by Castro in which he praised twelve governments as "nationalist governments, governments having a true sense of dignity, governments fully aware of their sovereignty and their independence."

The *Militant* has noted this policy (see issue of October 25, 1974).

The Cuban leadership thus clearly believes that national liberation will come to the colonial countries through capitalist regimes, or at least that these regimes deserve political support in any case. Therefore, we can say that when *Granma* talks about "the counter-revolutionary Trotsky" (e.g., November 11, 1973, p.2), it reflects not only a misunderstanding of who are the real friends of the Cuban revolution but also a political line diametrically opposed to that of Trotskyism, the political line of Stalinism.

This was noticed some time ago, in partial form, by some of our Latin American comrades. Hugo Blanco, for example, pointed out in an interview with *Intercontinental Press* published in the pamphlet *Hugo Blanco on Chile and Peru*, that Castro's trip to Peru was not only a diplomatic victory for the Cuban Revolution, but also "marked a capitulation by the Cuban government to the Peruvian dictatorship." (p. 3) Anibal Lorenzo of the Argentine PST summed up the Cuban policy toward Peru correctly at the August 1973 Oberlin convention when he said that Castro "takes a Stalinist attitude" toward the Velasco regime.

This is because Castro speaks for a Stalinist party, the Cuban Communist Party.

The utter bankruptcy of Castroism, as revealed by the coup in Chile, was lost on the International Majority leadership in Europe, from all appearances. The *IP* of December 17, 1973, reported that Tariq Ali made one of the major political points of his speech at a Chile demonstration by quoting from a speech by Castro "to the effect that if every worker and peasant had been armed, the coup would not have succeeded." (p. 1473) While Castro covered up the reformist parties' betrayal in Chile, a leading IMT spokesperson was tailing behind him, helping to conceal Castro's betrayal with left phrases.

Even if we were to call the Cuban Communist Party's foreign policy before September, 1973, *centrist*, the coup in Chile and the failure to learn from it could only be seen as proof of the complete bankruptcy of this policy and the party which carried it out. It is comparable to the bankruptcy of the Third International as shown by the Stalinist reaction to the German events of 1933. Stalin

approved the disastrous policy of the German CP that had led to Hitler's taking power, forcing the Comintern to approve as well without discussion. Similarly, the disastrous policy of Castro in supporting Allende's popular front was never brought into question after the events in Chile. This shows that the Cuban CP, from top to bottom, is unreformable—a *Stalinist* party. The acid test of objective events is much more decisive than subjective impressions, hopes and surface appearances. Before the coup, someone might have argued that the guerrilla warfare strategy and the militant rhetoric of Castroism proved it was revolutionary. Now, we have witnessed the coup and Castro's blind insistence on continuing the same catastrophic policy. What more proof is needed?

The Stalinist nature of Cuban foreign policy is not expressed only in Latin American affairs. The *Granma* editorial of July 8, 1973, for example, gives full support to the Washington agreements signed by Brezhnev and Nixon. Entitled "A Victory for the Positions of Socialism," the editorial states, "In signing the agreements, Leonid T. Brezhnev was putting into practice, as a representative of his Government, and in the name of his Party and people, the policy proposed by Lenin fifty-five years ago." The editorial serves to give left cover to the agreement by verbally condemning Nixon for his crimes in Vietnam and elsewhere at the same time it supports Brezhnev's betrayal.

## II. Piecework Packaged as "Socialism"

The Stalinist foreign policy of the Cuban leadership is backed up by Stalinist theories. Castro's main theoretical innovation has been to adapt the theory of "socialism in one country" to Latin America. In fact, Castro, in his speech April 19, 1968, announced that a *communist* society would be built in Cuba before the destruction of U.S. imperialism: "The Yankees are dreaming of a kind of tropical Titoism, but what they are going to have the chance to see is true tropical communism. . . our country can advance in the not-too-distant future toward forms of communist distribution." (*A New Stage in the Advance of Cuban Socialism*, Merit Publishers, pp. 41-42.)

Castro said, July 26, 1973, "We are in the socialist stage of the Revolution. . ." But he indicated that material incentives would have to be accentuated just at this time and that the Cubans must "correct any idealistic errors." (*Granma*, August 5, 1973, p.5.)

This was put into practice by the Thirteenth Congress of the Central Organization of Cuban Trade Unions (CTC), held in November 1973. The "Theses" published before this congress outlined a plan of piecework payment: "If the worker doesn't fulfill his norm, his salary should be reduced accordingly. . . If the worker overfulfills his norm, his salary should be increased accordingly. . . For piecework, the relationship between wages and finished product is clear and direct. He who makes fifteen units is paid for fifteen units. He who makes ten is paid for ten. And he who makes only eight cannot be paid for more than eight." (See *Granma*, September 2, 1973.) Alexandr Shelepin, top Soviet trade-union bureaucrat, appropriately congratulated this congress for one of its essential accomplishments, "the perfection of material incentives to work." (*Granma*, November 25, 1973.)

In an economy under imperialist siege, as Cuba's is, it may in certain circumstances be necessary to institute

such measures. But not in the name of "socialism"!

Piecework was not the only step backward taken at this congress with the rubber-stamp "socialism" on it. Bureaucratic privilege was formally introduced as a good method for increasing production. Without a decision being formally made, Castro spoke in concrete terms not only of spending 44 million pesos for the purpose of "linking wages to norms" and 67 million for "increasing wages for technicians"—dividing and stratifying the working population—but also of spending 65 million for "increasing wages for personnel in charge of directing production." (p. 10) From this last proposal to raise wages for lower officials such as brigade leaders and foremen, we can get a general idea of the kind of privileges that exist in the higher rungs of the bureaucracy. (See my document in the *IIDB*.)

Castro summarized his own version of the Stalinist theory of socialism in one country as follows: the difference between the distribution principles of payment according to work (interpreted by the CTC as strictly quantitative output) and according to need "is precisely what differentiates the socialist phase from the communist phase of the revolutionary process."

Cuban "socialism in one country" functions, like Stalin's original theory, to justify a foreign policy of accommodation with imperialism. It also helps to conceal Moscow's betrayal of the Cuban revolution by minimizing the effects of the inadequacy of the material aid from the Soviet Union and concealing the conditions (of a political character) which Moscow sets before it sends a single ship.

### III. A Stalinist Cultural and Social Policy

The case of Heberto Padilla, the Cuban poet and novelist who was imprisoned and forced to make a "self-criticism" for some poems he wrote, is well-known. When an international group of intellectuals supporting the Cuban Revolution expressed concern about this violation of Padilla's democratic rights, Castro denounced them as "bourgeois liberals" and "false friends." As Harry Ring's pamphlet *Cuba and Problems of Workers Democracy* (1972) commented, the Padilla affair showed that the Castro government was "making serious concessions to the Kremlin method of dealing with internal dissent—i.e., stifling it with a heavy bureaucratic hand." (p. 4) One might even say the government was *using* the Kremlin method in addition to making "concessions" to it.

The occasion on which Castro attacked the "bourgeois liberals" and "false friends" was the First National Congress on Education and Culture, held in Havana April 23-30, 1971. This congress, as Harry Ring's pamphlet pointed out, passed a resolution in the tradition of "socialist realist" cultural doctrine of conformity to a political line in art and literature, prescribing ideological conformity in general and expressing conservatism in matters of sex and sex education. The Congress decisions were especially reactionary in their violent condemnation of homosexuality and their proclamation of the need "to attack the problems of the presence of homosexuals in the various institutions of our cultural sectors." (p.10)

This was not the first attack on gay people by the Cuban

regime, as Harry Ring notes in his pamphlet. Gays were sent to "work camps" in the mid-1960s and an anti-gay attitude prevailed from the very beginning of the new regime, continuing this particular aspect of capitalist cultural repression despite the overturn of capitalist relations of production.

Since 1971, the situation in Cuba has not improved for gay people. *Le Monde*, February 15, 1973, reported that draft laws approved by the Communist Party Political Bureau (a body chaired by Castro) provided for a "death penalty for homosexual crimes involving violence, and lesser penalties for bigamy, incest, seduction of minors and ostentatious homosexuality." The laws were later approved.

Cuban Stalinism has a most backward view on women's liberation. An indication is the commentary on women attending a Cuban women's congress by *Prensa Latina* writer Stasia Madrigal in *Direct from Cuba* (an official government publication), March 15, 1973: "Unlike their women's lib sisters in other countries, most of them had just stepped out of the hairdressers, all wore bras, and all were highly politicized. . . The Second National Congress of Working Women met not under the biological symbol of the female sex, but under the industrial wheel symbol. . . ." This hostility to the feminist movement and any expression of feminism now finds its legal formalization in the "Family Code" written for the express purpose of preserving the nuclear family in Cuba.

### IV. Castroism Versus Workers' Democracy

As Peter Camejo's "Cuba Report" published in the SWP Discussion Bulletin in 1968 pointed out, no opposition tendencies or any organized criticism are permitted in Cuba. Instead, the people are supposed to speak through the mouth of Castro. This is a *Bonapartist* concept of rule. Instead of team leadership based on workers' democracy, the Cuban leadership is a fawning sycophant of Castro's.

When the lack of forms of workers' democracy is expressed in the *suppression* of dissidents, then we have no choice but to draw appropriate conclusions. As Joseph Hansen wrote in arguing that the Chinese regime is a Stalinist one: "The attitude of the bureaucracy toward political power—towards proletarian democracy—is a certain indicator of the degree to which a caste has been formed. If it succeeds in eliminating proletarian democracy, refusing the masses any possibility to express themselves; if it prevents the formation of independent proletarian tendencies and political parties, you can be certain that it has special reasons for this and that it understands these reasons quite well. The point of qualitative change in the crystallization of this peculiar formation is registered by its success in monopolizing state power, which it then uses to consolidate and defend its special privileges at the expense of the interests of the masses and the revolution." (International Information Bulletin: *Discussion on China*, p. 77.)

### V. Officer Caste and Stalinized Bureaucratic Caste

*Granma*, December 16, 1973, announced the establishment of ranks in the army. The *New York Times*, December 9, 1973, reported that this change was supposedly designed to "facilitate growing relations between the armies of Cuba and those of other countries that have a

different hierarchical order.” (p. 15)

Any explanation of this sort can only be dishonest, as Trotsky pointed out in *The Revolution Betrayed* in discussing the introduction of ranks in the Soviet Army by Stalin in 1935. There is no military need for ranks in a workers' army, each having different living standards, quarters, privileges, etc. All that is needed is a command structure. Ranks are no more useful in relations with capitalist armies than are bureaucratic privileges in labor organizations' non-military relations and negotiations with the capitalists. The only purpose served is to make life more comfortable for those with privileges. The formal introduction of ranks in the Cuban military obviously functions only to facilitate the growth of a privileged officer caste and to bring the stratification of the society to a new degree.

The introduction of ranks tells us much about Cuban society as a whole. Trotsky wrote, “the army is only a copy of the social relations.” (*Revolution Betrayed*, p. 51.) Stalin's introduction of ranks served the ends of the ruling bureaucratic caste: “in the army these needs only receive their most finished expression. The restoration of officers' castes eighteen years after their revolutionary abolition testifies equally to the gulf which already separates the rulers from the ruled, to the loss by the Soviet Army of the chief qualities which gave it the name of ‘Red,’ and to the cynicism with which the bureaucracy erects these consequences of degeneration into law.” (pp. 224-25) The only difference here between Cuba and the Soviet Union is that Cuba never had a workers' army, only a peasant army which created a deformed workers state.

Material privilege in Cuba is not, of course, quantitatively comparable to that of an exploiting class or even that of the ruling caste of the Soviet Union. The standard of living of the masses has improved greatly, as well, while there is no evidence I know of of sumptuous living by the ruling bureaucracy. Yet any privileges at all will be highly sought for in a country as poor as Cuba. Working in an office instead of a canefield and making important decisions, giving orders, is itself a big privilege. Bureaucratic privilege is *relative*.

## VI. Criteria for a Bureaucratized Workers State

Harry Ring's 1972 pamphlet, while making some criticisms of the Cuban leadership's policy, rejects the conclusion that a hardened bureaucratic caste holds power in Cuba and that a political revolution is necessary as in the USSR or China. He introduces as evidence several differences between Cuba and Stalin's Russia:

(1) “There is not the massive, nationwide oppression that marked the triumph of the bureaucratic caste headed by Stalin.”

(2) There is not “the kind of a conscious, consistent counter-revolutionary foreign policy developed by Stalin.”

(3) The world situation is not one of defeats and reaction, but “revolutionary breakthroughs which will help end Cuba's isolation and the difficulties stemming from that isolation.”

(4) The Cuban leadership “still includes good revolutionary cadres who have not passed beyond the possibility of responding to a revival of the spirit of Moncada Barracks and the Sierra Maestra.”

(5) “Among the Cuban masses there remain tens of thousands who, despite the difficulties and errors, remain

imbued with a profoundly revolutionary spirit, who recognize the gains registered by the revolution and remain ready to defend them.”

(6) The world youth radicalization can be expected to influence the youth of Cuba “to defend, deepen, straighten out and extend their revolution.”

These objections must be considered to see if they are valid before we adopt a policy of political revolution in Cuba. But three of them, (3), (5) and (6), it must be pointed out first of all, are only reasons for optimism in general and do not at all mean that a political revolution is not required. They are conditions which apply today in many countries or in the whole world: the rise in the world revolution, a revolutionary spirit, a deepening youth radicalization. In China and North Vietnam, and Eastern Europe, these conditions apply, but this does not mean that we reject the perspective of political revolution. It only means that we can be optimistic in holding this perspective.

As for the “massive, nationwide oppression” of Stalin's era, criterion (1), we do not make this an absolute condition for calling for a political revolution, any more than we reject social revolution when a particular capitalist country is relatively stable and lacking in massive crude oppression. If the workers are socially exploited, we call for social revolution. Likewise, if in a workers state the working class has been *politically* expropriated, we call for a political revolution. We call for a political revolution in North Vietnam, for example, even though we can point to no evidence today of “massive, nationwide oppression” such as was present in the Stalin era in the Soviet Union. Thus, distinction (1) is not a reason for rejecting political revolution.

Distinction (2), the Cuban foreign policy, is a question that must be considered in more detail when we discuss whether Cuba was a deformed workers' state fifteen years ago, as is my view. But can anyone point out anything about Cuban foreign policy today that is revolutionary? On the contrary, a foreign policy of explicitly and directly supporting capitalist regimes, including military regimes, can only be called a counter-revolutionary foreign policy which serves the interests of imperialism. One might object that Castro is not *consciously* counter-revolutionary, that he does not wake up every morning hoping for victories for Yankee imperialism and trying to imagine new ways to crush the world revolution. But this is not what we mean when we say “counter-revolutionary foreign policy.” We mean a policy aimed not at revolution but at accommodation with imperialism. Such a policy is objectively counter-revolutionary. It does not matter whether Stalin actually tried to crush revolutions in the bud or simply decided they could not succeed and hence handed them over to the butchers; either way, his policy was counter-revolutionary. The same is true for Castro, who has evidently decided that revolution is not realistic today in Latin America.

Distinction (4), concerning the Cuban leadership, raised a question that cannot be answered completely today. Are there leaders in Cuba today who are capable of correcting past errors? This question can only be answered by events. The first task of these leaders will plainly be to wage a struggle against Stalinist influence in Cuba, a struggle of which there is no indication at all recently but which is not excluded in the future. The main question, however, is what perspective these individuals need to be successful—

political revolution or democratic reform—and what the character of the Cuban leadership is *as a whole*.

As a whole, this leadership has many times shown itself incapable of meeting the needs of the situation. The imprisonment of Padilla and his shameful forced “confession” are not mere errors, but can only be understood as part of a general consistent policy. The Cuban leadership, under voluntary or involuntary tutelage from Moscow, has been Stalinized. It has had time to discuss such questions as the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the disaster in Chile, but there is no evidence of any critical comments from within the Cuban leadership.

Thus, none of the objections raised in 1971 by Harry Ring are valid today as ruling out the need for political revolution in Cuba. Instead, there are no doubt many

Cubans who are thinking about just such a solution. If there is a lack of open protest in Cuba it is not because there is no sentiment for it, but because of the fear of counter-revolution from abroad—a well-founded fear. Trotsky wrote that in the Soviet Union “the workers fear lest, in throwing out the bureaucracy, they will open the way for a capitalist restoration.” (*Revolution Betrayed*, p. 276)

Now, with the blockade being dismantled and the Castro leadership simultaneously doubly endangering the revolution by putting its faith in Ford, Kissinger and Company, the Cuban workers will begin thinking in more realistic terms of political revolution as a way of defending their socialist revolution. We should begin discussing such a perspective as well.

## **POSTSCRIPT TO “FOUR YEARS OF TEACHERS UNION WORK: A BALANCE SHEET”**

**By Paula Rogers, Detroit Branch  
July 27, 1975**

The teacher’s union in which we have participated for the past four years now faces a serious threat to its survival in the form of a raiding operation by the Michigan Education Association.

Spearheaded by a right-wing part-timer and a clique grouping around him, the goal of the drive is an election under National Labor Relations Board auspices among all union members to de-certify the AFT local as the teachers’ bargaining agent and replace it with an NEA local. To do this, authorization cards are being circulated among the union members to indicate support for the NEA and to call for a collective bargaining election.

Our characterization of this grouping as “right-wing” is based on years of experience with some of these individuals. They have consistently refused to attempt to seek solutions to the local’s problems within the union and the institutions of the union movement. The group’s leader has a history of union-busting in similar situations. He has made it clear in the past that his main interest is personal advantage; he stated that he would agree to drop the MEA raiding if the local would grieve to get him a permanent full-time teaching contract. In addition, there are some indications that he is working in collusion with the college administration.

Despite the composition and leadership of the group, the attack represents a serious threat to the local’s existence. The MEA has chosen to center its attack on part-time inequality within the union; it has an opening in the union’s continued denial of part-time union rights. (For a further explanation of the problem, see “Full-Time Job Trust” in “Four Years of Teachers Union Work: A Balance Sheet” on page 2 of SWP Discussion Bulletin, Volume 33, Number 9.) The local is already divided on the question; this attack may serve to crystallize a de-facto split in its ranks.

Raiding between the Michigan Federation of Teachers (MFT) and the Michigan Education Association has increased dramatically since Shanker laid out the orientation at the 1974 AFT Convention. In the last year, the

MFT has added two staff “organizers” and the MEA has recently responded in kind by hiring a staff member to handle raiding. The MFT has been successful in taking a handful of small locals away from the MEA. In this context, this local is only one of many pawns in the destructive and suicidal raiding game, which only benefits the employers.

The college administration is very well aware of the raiding, and has seized upon the opening provided by the division to deal harsh blows to the union. Feeling its advantage, the administration has been very hard in negotiations, demanding that teachers accept a pay cut and a speed up. In addition, the college has blatantly violated key sections of the contract, as if to show that the union is too weak to enforce its own contract.

The other effect of the MEA raiding may be to split the union, although this is by no means assured at this point.

The Executive Board has objectively aided the MEA by refusing to resolve the part-time issue, and not taking even minimal steps to defend the union, like asking members not to sign authorization cards. With the sole exception of our comrade, the Board has been stalling on the part-time issue, despite clear instructions from the membership. Indications are now that the Board may even deny a democratic discussion of the issue, because it “doesn’t want to raise a divisive issue during negotiations”. Our comrade has been pushing for a democratic discussion, fast action, and a principled position of equal union rights for all union members.

Regardless of any other positive actions this Executive Board has taken, its inability to resolve the central political question facing the local shows its bankruptcy and its capitulation to the full-time job trust.

Our comrades’ orientation has been: 1) not to affiliate with the MEA organizing drive, 2) to try to hold the local together on the political basis of equality for part-time members, and 3) in support of our position, to circulate a petition for full rights for part-time members as another step in organizing a fight within the local on the question.

Since part-timers are barred by the local constitution from voting on amendments to the constitution, the orientation to change the local from within requires a political struggle to convince the full-timers to break up their own job trust.

If the MEA gets an election called, we will assess our attitude to it.

The division between part-time and full-time teachers—basically a division between different job classifications—is a very real one and a very serious one for this local. There are significant material benefits which full-timers enjoy as a result of the discrimination against part-timers. For example, full-time teachers are paid twice the amount, and often more, than part-timers earn per class, not including fringe benefits. In addition, the huge part-time pool, outnumbering the full-time teachers by 4 or 5 to 1, provides maximum security against lay-offs for nearly all the full-timers, at least in the short term, since part-timers are laid off first. Actually, since they have no job security, part-timers are simply not re-called.

The job trust mentality of full-timers in this union defends the privileges of some workers against others, and operates in the same way with the same results as job trusts in other unions, be they skilled job trusts, white job trusts or male job trusts. It is another example on a small scale of divisions created by the capitalists, maintained by some workers out of a lack of class consciousness and long term perspective, which the working class must overcome.

This union simply cannot survive as an effective unit if it cannot overcome the division. And the *only* way to overcome the division is to take a hard line, to demand

that full-timers give up their privileges, and to break up the job trust.

Our comrades have been doing educational work on this issue for the past four years. We have pointed out the antidemocratic and immoral aspects of the discrimination. We have shown that the preservation of the job trust is not in the *long-term* interests even of the full-time members. There has been a growing tendency on the part of employers in the educational field to decrease labor costs by hiring more part time teachers from the swelling ranks of unemployed teachers desperate for work, and by decreasing wherever possible the number of teachers hired full-time. This trend simply underscores the suicidal futility of the full-time job trust, which by not protecting part-timers will eventually undermine the position and jobs of full-timers.

It is clear from the administration's attitude to this year's negotiations that even in the *short term* the union will not be able to win a decent contract for *any* of its members, including the full-timers, if the job trust continues to exist.

We now have a *convergence* of the objective long-term interests of the full-time teachers with their objective short-term interests, pointing directly to the necessity of breaking up their own job trust. Full-time teachers must be won to supporting part-time teachers' democratic rights within the union, and to fighting for part-time teachers' interests at the bargaining table.

The question is whether we can make full-time teachers see their own vital interests before the union suffers irreparable damage.

## Critical Support for the Gay Resolution

by Paul LeBlanc, Pittsburgh Branch

July 29/August 1, 1975

(Report given to the Pittsburgh Branch during pre-convention discussion)

The two documents we will be examining this evening are the "Memorandum on the Gay Liberation Movement" (Discussion Bulletin, vol. 31, no. 3), which is currently the position of our party, and the "Draft Resolution on Gay Liberation" by Steve Beren and Sandy Knoll (Discussion Bulletin, vol. 33, no. 3). Of course, it would be possible to do much more, to review the controversy generated by the Thorstad-Green Resolution of 1973, for instance, but I think this would actually amount to "beating a dead horse," which Lee Smith wisely warns us against. I think Comrade Smith is wrong, however, to charge that the Draft Resolution on Gay Liberation by Beren and Knoll "beats a dead horse." Certainly he is wrong to charge, in advance, that a branch like the Pittsburgh Branch is—by scheduling this discussion—engaging in "a diversion from the potentially rich discussion of the exciting period now opening up." ("On Beating a Dead Horse: A Reply to Comrade Beren and Knoll," Discussion Bulletin, vol. 33, no. 7.)

What the Beren-Knoll Resolution attempts to do is to

provide a clearer statement of the party's views and policies in regard to gay liberation. There are some confusing, ambiguous, and even incorrect passages in the Memorandum which can give us trouble on this question. I think it is strange and unsettling that a veteran comrade would think to *counterpose* this attempted correction, on the one hand, to the central task of adjusting our party's perspectives to important and exciting shifts in the class struggle, on the other. I'm sure that in Pittsburgh—and I hope that in other branches throughout the country—our discussion will be non-diversionary, serious, and fruitful.

My own position is one of giving critical support to the Beren-Knoll Resolution. I'd like to see some changes in it, but I think it's a step in the right direction.

First of all, I think it's important to recognize that there are a number of very positive points in the Gay Memorandum. I want to spend some time on these positive points, because if a consistent, coherent party statement was produced that was based on these positive points in the Memorandum, it would resemble the Beren-Knoll Resolution.

The Memorandum states that "we reject with contempt all forms of bourgeois prejudice against gay people,

including quack psychological 'theories' labelling gays as mentally ill—prejudices echoed by the Stalinists . . ."

The Memorandum goes on to describe how "the gay liberation movement is an aspect of the current radicalization and developed out of it." This is one of the most valuable sections of that document, and it concludes with an important passage which is worth quoting in full:

"While these developments in the radicalization lay the groundwork for the rise of the gay liberation movement and helped inspire radicalized young gay people to fight against their oppression, the movement itself has in turn brought about a higher level of understanding of and opposition to the oppression of gay people among radicalizing youth, and has already had a considerable impact on the society in spite of the movement's shortcomings.

"This development of the gay liberation movement is progressive. It confronts and helps break down the reactionary morality that helps preserve class society. The struggle of gay people for their rights is directed against the capitalist government, and is in the interests of socialism, which can only be built by the mobilization of the working class and its allies in the historic task of rebuilding society, eliminating every vestige of discrimination and oppression spawned by class society, including the oppression of gay people. The party identifies with the aims of this struggle and supports it, and this is reflected in the political position the party has adopted and reaffirmed in this report."

I think this is a strong and excellent statement, and I am proud to be a member of a party which has adopted such a position.

The gay movement's "shortcomings" mentioned in this passage are described elsewhere in the document as: 1) "the gay liberation movement is at present very diffuse, not organized into any single grouping or action front on a national scale"; 2) "the idea, propounded by some in the gay liberation movement, that homosexuality is more progressive than heterosexuality"; and 3) "a sector of the movement developed in an ultraleft and inward-turned direction. This sector became a part of a broader ultraleft and commune-oriented youth current. In some areas, this process resulted in the virtual disappearance of any viable organized expression of the gay liberation movement." I think this is a good listing of shortcomings, although there is a fourth that could be added: sections of the movement have developed a strong tendency to adopt the reformist attitude of endorsing and supporting the candidacy of capitalist politicians who make sympathetic gestures toward gay rights.

The Memorandum then very responsibly continues: "Given our political position of support to the struggles of gay people against their oppression, how we carry out that support is a tactical question." The point is made that the gay liberation movement does not occupy a place as decisive "to the central issues of the class struggle . . . [as] either the women's movement or the movements of the oppressed nationalities. Neither does it raise such a central issue of world politics as the struggle against imperialist wars. . . . The major issues we should be concentrating on are the big questions of the class struggle, and this must be reflected in the totality of the party's projection of its program. It would be a mistake to place equal emphasis upon the struggle of women or Blacks, and that of gay people, for example."

The Memorandum then looks at it from another angle:

"In view of the present state of the organized gay liberation movement on a national scale, we should not attempt to carry out a national party campaign on this question at the present time. . . . Our support to this movement will be mainly in our propaganda in the next period, as it has been." The Memorandum points out that most significant activity in the gay rights struggle has been on the local level and that "where such demonstrations, defense cases, etc., occur, the party should support them. Branches have the responsibility to carry out any such work within the context of carrying out the major campaigns being conducted by the party."

I find all of this quite acceptable. The points about what the party should actually do are a little vague and could be made more concrete, and other points could also be rounded out and strengthened, but it's the basis for a good resolution. Yet it's not a resolution, it's a memorandum, and that in itself is a little confusing. Unfortunately, the Memorandum is also confusing in that it contains other statements which are of dubious value.

In examining these inadequacies in the Memorandum, I want to point out ways in which the Beren-Knoll Resolution stands as an improvement. I will also raise a few criticisms I have of their resolution. But let me emphasize, the general thrust of their resolution coincides with these positive aspects of the Memorandum which we've just reviewed. Now let's look at the inadequacies.

1. The Memorandum states that the SWP "does not take positions on a whole range of scientific, artistic, cultural and other questions—to do so would cut across its purpose, dilute its nature as a political organization, transform it into an organization advancing one or another scientific or cultural viewpoint, narrow its appeal, and cripple its ability to mobilize the masses on political questions." Steve Beren himself agrees with this point. But he and the Memorandum are wrong.

Our party takes positions on a wide range of scientific and cultural questions. For example: we support the essential theories of such people as Copernicus, Galileo, Darwin; we take a position on certain complex scientific and cultural questions relating to abortion; we tend to identify with the Morgan-Engels school of anthropology; we reject any theories advanced inside (and outside) the scientific community which suggest that Blacks, women, the "lower classes," etc. are mentally inferior; we reject theories which certain psychologists advance to "explain" the youth radicalization (patricidal impulses or other neuroses, inadequate child-rearing practices, etc.).

One of the best illustrations of this is in a resolution passed by the 1971 party convention, entitled "Towards a Mass Feminist Movement." (See Linda Jenness, ed., *Feminism and Socialism*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1972, pp. 129-160.) Here we state that "it is not biology but social institutions that have kept women 'in their place' in the home; that present-day psychological differences between men and women—and even to some extent their physical differences—have been culturally conditioned, not biologically determined." We say that "the family system . . . plays a crucial role for capitalism in inculcating the norms and values of the private property system." We say: "The family plays the central role in implanting in infants and children the character structure without which no one could accept the hierarchical, exploitative, and alienating social relations intrinsic to capitalism." This is only a smidgen of what we say in this party

resolution on a broad range of scientific and cultural questions.

The assertion in the Memorandum, as it stands, is false and should certainly not be part of the party's official statement on gay liberation.

2. The Memorandum goes on to state: "... this particular question is further complicated by the fact that the whole question of the scientific investigation of sexuality and the related one of psychology is still in its infancy. Especially concerning homosexuality, little is known, and it is difficult to ascertain what is objectively based and what represents prejudice in what knowledge is available." (I want to deal with this statement along with yet another flawed statement in the Memorandum.)

3. The Memorandum informs us later: "The gay liberation movement directly relates to a relatively narrow sector of the population."

The fact is that there is considerable information on some of these questions. There is enough information to demonstrate, for example, that the layer of the population affected by the gay liberation movement is *not* narrow. Jack Barnes, referring to the Kinsey report and other research, sums it up quite well in his memorandum of November 15, 1970: "For the first time, scientific knowledge of the extent of homosexuality, and the characteristics of homosexuality has become widespread. This has helped in breaking down the stereotype of society divided into exclusively homosexual and exclusively heterosexual people. The fact that individual human beings go through different periods in their lives, with different characteristics to their sexuality, has become more widely known. The fact that homosexuality of one kind or another is widespread in the population, that it cuts through all geographical and class layers, has been established." ("Memorandum on Membership Policy Presented to the Political Committee of the SWP by Jack Barnes," Discussion Bulletin, vol. 31, no. 3.)

Steve Beren gives us some interesting statistics on this when he notes that Kinsey's research suggests the existence of 20 to 25 million gay Americans: "There are more gays in the United States than there are Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, college students, or trade unionists." ("In Reply to Barry Sheppard on Gay Liberation," Discussion Bulletin, vol. 33, no. 3.)

The false statements in the Memorandum have no place in our party's statement on gay liberation. The Beren-Knoll Resolution eliminates the false statements, although I think their document could be strengthened by the addition of something like the Barnes statement.

4. The Memorandum states: "The party should take no position on the nature or value of homosexuality, nor try to determine what is 'good' or 'bad' about heterosexuality or homosexuality, and not advocate any specific sexual orientation."

This statement has generated some confusion. There is the need for a clearer statement of what we mean. It is correct for our party not to "advocate any specific sexual orientation." It is correct for our party not to "try to determine what is 'good' or 'bad' about heterosexuality or homosexuality." But the position that we "should take no position on the nature or value of homosexuality" doesn't necessarily mean the same thing as these other two correct positions.

To clear up any misunderstandings, our party's statement on gay liberation should contain the formulation of

the Beren-Knoll Resolution: "Most people today prefer either homosexuality or heterosexuality, think one or the other is better for them. One preference 'is just as good as' the other."

Lee Smith seems to be confused about what Beren and Knoll are saying here. Comrade Smith warns against "the party's taking a position on whether homosexuality is as good as, better than, or inferior to heterosexuality. . . . It is not our business to pass on the relative merits of one form of sexuality as against another." This is true, but it's beside the point. Beren and Knoll are saying, if I read them correctly, *not* that one form of sexuality is as good as another, but that one preference is as good as another. The point is that every person should have the right to decide if "gay is good" for him or her without in any way being stigmatized for the choice they make.

Unfortunately, Comrades Beren and Knoll tie this position to the statement: "We solidarize with the slogan 'gay is just as good as straight,' and the briefer popularization, 'gay is good.'" Here I think they are wrong. These slogans are not necessarily bad, but they *are* nebulous. Lee Smith is correct when he writes: "Slogans such as 'Pass the gay rights bill' or 'End job discrimination against gays' are better slogans than 'Gay is Good' for the gay movement itself!"

What is essential in our party's statement on gay liberation is not where it stands on the "gay is good" slogan, but rather where it stands on the substantive question—is homosexuality a sickness, an inferior condition, is there something intrinsically wrong with it, or are gay preferences just as good, *just as valid*, as straight preferences? On this question our party can and should find a clear unambiguous answer.

5. The Memorandum contains a section on "the image of the party as projected by the dress and decorum of individual comrades." Here are two key passages: "Our general rule should be to dress within the socially accepted styles, and the party units have the responsibility to see to it that individual members do not abuse the party by projecting an exotic image of the party." The second passage reads: "Sexual activities, whether heterosexual or homosexual, have no place at party socials." It is confusing to have these strictures—applying to *all* comrades, gay and straight—in our party's statement on gay liberation. This can be understood in a way that will be positively insulting to gays. It has no place in such a statement and should be eliminated. Here again, the Beren-Knoll Resolution is superior.

6. As we've noted, the Memorandum is vague in regard to what the SWP should actually do. Some comrades might conclude from this, incorrectly, that we should do little or nothing. The Beren-Knoll Resolution outlines five concrete tasks:

i) Where we have the forces, we should intervene in building actions around specific issues where there are real openings and where actions might have real impact (i.e., with a political focus, or drawing large numbers, etc.). Presumably, decisions on all of this would be made by branches on the local level. It is emphasized that we should launch no national campaigns, take no central organizational responsibility, and that we should carry out "modest interventions" in this area of work.

ii) We should intervene in local and national conferences to put forth our perspectives on the gay rights movement, particularly in regard to plans for 1976 Gay

Pride week activities.

iii) "We should consider the feasibility of initiatives toward gay contingents in demonstrations supporting school desegregation in Boston."

iv) There should be more use of our press, publications, forums, and election campaigns to build the gay movement. Specific reference is made to the need for better *Militant* coverage, to the need for a couple of Pathfinder Press pamphlets, and to the need for one speaker being available (I assume through Viewpoint) to represent the party's views on gay liberation.

v) "We should begin thinking out our relationship to the First International Lesbian Congress to be held in August 1975 in Norway, and the Second International Gay Rights Congress to be held on Easter 1976 in Puerto Rico."

The Beren-Knoll Resolution makes the important point that "in projecting what our immediate tasks should be, we must have an open-minded and flexible attitude toward intervention." The tasks they suggest are modest and reasonable and seem to fall within the framework of what

the party felt we should be doing on gay liberation when the Memorandum was adopted two years ago. Of course, comrades might feel that these five proposed tasks should be modified. I assume, given what they say, that Comrades Beren and Knoll are somewhat flexible on the specifics of what the party should do.

To conclude: The Beren-Knoll Resolution goes some distance in providing our party with a good statement on gay liberation. There are some shortcomings in the Beren-Knoll Resolution. Those shortcomings should be eliminated. An improved resolution on gay rights should replace the Gay Memorandum, which is very inadequate as our party's official statement on gay liberation.

I used to wonder why the SWP never published the statement on gay liberation adopted by our national convention. I realize now that this was very naive of me. Now I feel relieved that we never publicized the Gay Memorandum. It's much better to wait until we have a statement on gay liberation that we can feel proud of. And I think it's about time that happened.

## **Trotskyist Artists and the SWP: An Appeal**

**by Judy Cuttler, Lower Manhattan Branch  
New York Local**

**July 23, 1975**

Because some people who used to belong to the SWP and I were pressured to resign because of our involvement in art, I have to write in opposition to some incorrect attitudes.

Most comrades don't understand the difficulty of trying to be both a professional artist (professional in artistic standards but not in any aspiration to make money through one's art) and a professional revolutionary through belonging to the SWP.

Although the party as a whole must concern itself with politics over everything else, comrades who must devote most of their time to art do not deserve hostility and pressure to resign from other comrades. Why must every comrade conform to a dominant lifestyle in the SWP; for an artist who works at a bourgeois job to be as active as

the average member almost certainly means being a dilettante artistically.

I think the SWP can afford and needs to have some comrades who are primarily artists. Also, artists who support our program to the extent of wanting to join the party need to be in the SWP to fully realize how complex and inspiring our politics are. I grant that what artists contribute as artists cannot be directly useful to the party in the way a pamphlet or demonstration can be. But if the party's primary concern with politics also means that artist comrades must relegate their art to a hobby, then I feel our membership policy is incorrect. It will not dilute the program of the party to have some comrades who are less active than the average, and it will only help us to have artists who belong to the SWP.