

14 Charles Lane  
New York, N.Y. 10014  
January 22, 1976

TO ALL ORGANIZERS AND EDUCATIONAL DIRECTORS

Dear Comrades,

Enclosed is an outline for a five-class educational series on "Prospects for Socialism in America," the political resolution adopted at the 1975 party convention. (This resolution can be ordered from the Militant Business Office.) It can be used as a class series for new members and provisional members.

In using this series, comrades should carefully go over the proposed questions and readings and, wherever desirable, change them to make sure that the series meets the needs of the individuals attending the classes. This may mean making major changes in the series in each branch.

The National Education Department welcomes suggestions that will help improve this study guide, as well as ideas about other materials we can provide to help the educational programs for provisional members and contacts. This will aid the department in helping the branches in this important area of educational work.

Comradely,

*Fred Feldman*

Fred Feldman  
National Education  
Department

## PROSPECTS FOR SOCIALISM IN AMERICA

January 1976

This is a five-class educational series based on "Prospects for Socialism in America," the political resolution adopted by the 1975 convention of the Socialist Workers Party. The required readings consist of this resolution, published in the November 1975 issue of International Socialist Review (supplement to the November 7, 1975 issue of the Militant); "The Bill of Rights for Working People"; and What Socialists Stand For, by Stephanie Coontz.

### Class 1. Why We Need Socialism

Required Reading: What Socialists Stand For, by Stephanie Coontz (Young Socialist Pamphlet distributed by Pathfinder Press, \$.50)

Supplementary Reading: America's Road to Socialism, by James P. Cannon (Pathfinder Press, \$1.95) pp. 71-124

#### Questions:

1. Stephanie Coontz writes: "The most glaring fact about the modern world is the contrast between the potential to satisfy human needs and the reality of everyday life." Discuss this idea. How has this been reflected in the course of the radicalization in the United States?
2. Why is capitalism an irrational system? Can it achieve permanent prosperity? How does the current economic crisis show the main contradictions of the capitalist system?
3. How would you answer this kind of argument: "Capitalists have a right to own and control factories and natural resources, and the right to make profits. They work for their profits -- think of the worry, risks, etc., that they take. Socialists just want to steal from the capitalists what is rightfully theirs."
4. What is wrong with the claim that human nature is the main obstacle to the socialist goals of equality?
5. Socialists contend that racism is not a part of "human nature" but stems from capitalist economic and social relations. Discuss.
6. How does the private property system determine the role of women in this society?
7. We are told that this is a free and democratic country because there are elections and constitutional rights. Does the majority actually run the United States? How does a small minority of capitalists manage to keep control? How are U.S. foreign and economic policies decided? What do Watergate, the Vietnam War, and election laws reveal about democracy in America? Who makes the basic economic decision, such as hiring and firing of workers and what will be produced?
8. Why can't the Democratic and Republican parties defend and advance the interests of working people? Whom do these parties represent? What is the role of

Democrats like George McGovern, Fred Harris, Ron Dellums, or Ramsey Clark, who say they can make these parties more "responsive" to the people?

9. What would a workers government do to solve the economic and social problems facing this country? What kind of international policy would it carry out?

### Class 2. The Prospects for Capitalism

Required Reading: "Prospects for Socialism in America," sections I, II, and VI

Supplementary Reading: Capitalism in Crisis, by Dick Roberts (Pathfinder, 1975, \$1.95): "The Decline of the American Colossus," pp. 85-98; Socialism and Democracy, by Linda Jenness (Pathfinder, 1972, \$.25); Democracy and Revolution, by George Novack, pp. 142-154, 189-220 (Pathfinder Press, 1971, \$2.95)

#### Questions:

1. Why does the resolution state that the "motor forces" of the boom are becoming exhausted?
2. What does the end of the boom mean for workers? How have the rulers reacted to the economic crisis?
3. How has the world relationship of forces between workers and capitalists shifted in favor of the workers? How was this reflected in the Vietnam war? In what other ways has this been reflected?
4. Why are capitalism and democratic rights essentially contradictory? Can a capitalist economy be "democratic"?
5. The resolution lists four conditions needed for the maintenance of bourgeois democracy. What is happening to these conditions in the United States today?
6. Why does the changing economic and world political situation drive the capitalists to attack democratic rights? Give examples. What has happened to democratic rights in previous economic crises like the depression of the '30s? What is happening to bourgeois democracy today on a world scale?
7. Discuss the statements: "The radicalization of the last decade can be measured in the escalation of the struggle for fundamental freedoms." "The single most important ideological gain of the initial radicalization was a loss of confidence in the veracity of the capitalist leaders of the United States." How did this occur? How is this affecting politics today?
8. Why are socialism and democracy compatible? What obstacles to real democracy would socialism eliminate?

### Class 3. A New Stage: Workers Begin to Radicalize as a Class

Required Reading: "Prospects for Socialism" Sections III, IV

Supplementary: From: The Revolutionary Potential of the Working Class, by Ernest Mandel and George Novack (Pathfinder, 1974, \$1.45), pp. 40-64; "Report on 'Prospects for Socialism in America,'" by Jack Barnes, in SWP Discussion Bulletin Vol. 33, No. 4, pp. 3-6

Questions:

1. What is a radicalization? How is the outlook of American workers changing? Why does this represent a new stage of the current radicalization?
2. How were workers affected by the course of the radicalization?
3. Did American workers become "middle class" as a result of the boom? What changes occurred in the size and composition of the working class and why are these changes important?
4. Why is the working class the only class that can lead a socialist revolution?
5. Does a high standard of living always make workers more conservative? Can capitalism offer such a living standard in the long run? What revolutionary implications can the struggle to preserve a relatively high standard have during an economic crisis?
6. What kinds of economic benefits did workers begin to view as rights during the boom? How should socialists respond to this sentiment?
7. Why did most American workers support or accept the political status quo in the past? What causes working people to radicalize as a class? What was wrong with theories that declared that workers would always be conservative?

Class 4. Allies of the Workers

Required Reading: "Prospects for Socialism in America," Section V

Supplementary Reading: "Report on 'Prospects for Socialism in America,'" by Jack Barnes, (op cit.), pp. 4-6; Towards an American Socialist Revolution (Pathfinder Press, 1970, \$1.95), pp. 142-146, 162-167, 188-195; "The Fight for Black Liberation, the Current Stage, and Its Tasks," in SWP Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 33, No. 2, pp. 2-13

Questions:

1. Why are divisions in the working class a major obstacle to winning socialism? How can the working people be united against the capitalists?
2. Why do workers need allies to make a socialist revolution? Do workers need the help of other oppressed groups to preserve their current gains? Give examples.
3. Why will the struggles of oppressed nationalities be an essential part of the American socialist revolution? Why does "Prospects for Socialism in America" say that national oppression and racism are "rooted in the historical development of American capitalism"?

4. Why can't capitalism get rid of racism and national oppression in the United States?

5. How have union leaders reacted in general to the struggles of Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and students? The resolution says that the union bureaucrats act "as representatives and defenders of the benefits enjoyed by a small layer of the most privileged white male workers." Discuss.

6. The resolution says that Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans will "more and more. . . furnish leadership in the fight to transform the labor movement into a fighting social movement." Discuss.

7. What gains did oppressed nationalities and women make in the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s? How are the rulers trying to roll them back? Why?

8. How do the demands of women pose "the problem of the total reorganization of society from its smallest repressive unit (the family) to its largest (the state)"?

9. Why do Blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and women demand preferential hiring? Why is it wrong to oppose such demands in the name of "working-class unity"?

10. Why do successful struggles by working people and their allies require political independence from the capitalist parties? What other attempts have been made by the labor, Black, and women's movements to "use" the capitalist parties? How have these efforts worked out?

11. What is the SWP's attitude to the struggles of the allies of the workers? How can a revolutionary socialist party play a key role in helping to unite the working class and its allies against the capitalists? How does the SWP's response to discriminatory layoffs and the racist offensive against busing show its strategy?

Class 5. Labor's Strategic Line of March

Required Reading: "Prospects for Socialism in America," Sections VII and VIII; "A Bill of Rights for Working People" (SWP Campaign Committee, 1975)

Supplementary Reading: "Why Can't Everybody Have a Job?" by Fred Halstead (Militant supplement); "Report on 'Prospects for Socialism in America,'" by Jack Barnes, pp. 9-15

Questions:

1. How do socialists propose to solve the problems of unemployment and inflation? Why should the bosses pay for the economic crisis instead of working people?
2. How will a class-struggle left wing in the unions develop?
3. What is a labor party? Why do workers need such a party? How would a labor party differ from the parties that run the country today?
4. What does the resolution mean by indicating that workers should "think socially and act politically"? Do most workers think and act this way today? In what ways does the farmworkers struggle represent a step in this direction? Discuss other struggles.

5. The resolution predicts a right-wing polarization along with the radicalization of workers and their allies. What signs of this can you see today?

6. How should socialists answer workers who think that their jobs depend on arms spending? How should socialists answer workers who think the United States is defending freedom abroad?

7. What are some current issues where the demand to "open the books" might be useful?

8. Discuss the Transitional Program's approach to the class struggle. What are its goals? How does the "Bill of Rights for Working People" apply this approach?

How does it present workers' real needs in terms they can understand? Discuss how this differs from reformist, sectarian, and ultraleft approaches.

9. Why is a revolutionary party like the SWP needed in the United States? Why must the SWP be an internationalist party? Why is a revolutionary party like the SWP the "historical key to victory"?

10. What are the tasks of a small revolutionary party like the SWP? Give examples from the daily activities of the party.

11. Why is the American revolution a vital part of the world revolution?