

X: PC, Malik

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Dear Jack,

Our discussion in March, began to clear up some of the questions I had concerning the Party, and its Black work. I'm just beginning to get the full impact of your thinking, and feel that what you raised should be amplified and discussed at the plenum. Personally, I feel it should be discussed in a separate Black struggle report, but since the schedule has been laid out, I hope you will spend a great deal of time on it in the political report. Such a discussion is necessary for more political clarity on what we are doing with the industrial concentration, and how it relates to our Black work.

I have no real feeling for what the thinking or the discussion of the leadership has been pertaining to our Black work. Outside of the Militant articles, the N.O. reports and minutes that I have received, I don't have a clear picture of how our attitude is evolving. I understand that Pat Wright gave a class on the evolution of the Party's position on the Black party at Oberlin, last year. However, that wasn't printed up and therefore would only benefit those who attended the class.

My thoughts were particularly stimulated by your remarks concerning Trotsky's real meaning behind his position on the Black struggle, the organizational form of the struggle of the Black community, what character it would assume, and why formations such as the League of Revolutionary Black Workers would not be repeated. My thinking has been occupied with similar questions, which I have not fully fleshed out yet.

In light of the developments which have been taking place in the labor movement, and the Party, the P.C. should consider a serious discussion on the state of the Black struggle, and prepare a summary of where it stands and our attitude toward it. All this within the context of the Party's industrial concentration and its political tasks.

To be quite frank, I feel that the 1977 convention discussion on the Black movement and the N.A.A.C.P., initiated by Omari and Harris, was distorted and not objective enough. For various reasons, a factional atmosphere developed and the comrades were lined up against them. A real discussion on their ideas did not take place. That should not have taken place. As a result, it is my belief, that some uncertainty and confusion still exists. I also sense that informally, there are some discussions going on concerning our Black work among the leadership, that should be

shared with the Party ranks, so we know what the Party leadership thinks.

I have been doing a lot of thinking on our Black work, and its relation to our industrial concentration, both prior to our discussion and more intensely since. There are a few points on which I'm not fully clear. I want to raise them with you, because I think they are on the minds of a number of comrades, and perhaps they might be of some assistance in preparing your report.

So I'll just lay them out to you the way they're laid out to me. Hopefully, I can get across in a coherent manner some of my thinking, which has been flowing around our call for a labor party, and its relation to the Black party question.

My main question is, where does the Black party stand in our political outlook for the future? I've heard some reports, the plenum, in discussions with comrades, and in our discussion, various opinions, including;

- 1) The labor party is a Black party.
- 2) The Black party slogan is to be subordinate to the labor party slogan.
- 3) We shouldn't raise the Black party slogan.
- 4) It's a tactical question.
- 5) The Black party slogan should be dropped.
- 6) Etc.

At least on my part, there is confusion on these questions, and I feel that there has to be clarity put forth on the issue, and some of these imprecise and unclear formulations corrected or sharpened up. If not, there can be confusion on it in our propaganda efforts. To make myself clear as possible, here is some of my thinking on the labor and Black party formulations.

The general formulation in explaining the role of the labor party, should be that the labor party is a vehicle for independent Black and working class action. We should explain this out, rather than use some type of slick formulations. I feel that the formulation I've heard about the labor party is the Black party is incorrect, and doesn't explain what either the labor party or the Black party is about.

The labor party's base is somewhat different from that of the Black party. The Black party concept flowed from the particular dynamic of the Black struggle, which in a certain sense was divorced from the labor movement. In contrast, the labor party rests on the beginnings of a labor upsurge, involving various elements of the working class as a whole.

We have to be very clear on this and spell it out. We shouldn't, in our propaganda, masquerade the labor party as something else. It is to be a workers political organization, involving all workers who agree with its program and perspective. It would be a vehicle for advancing the class struggle as a whole, with the central

component of that being the Black struggle. It is not a Black party, in the similar way that the SWP is not a Black party, but a vehicle for advancing the Black struggle.

As the political report stated, the working class is moving to the center of American politics. Therefore, the labor party and Black party questions should be posed in that context. The labor party would be led by Blacks, Hispanics, women, and other advanced elements of the working class. But it wouldn't be a Black party, or a Chicano party, or a women's party. Rather it would be viewed as a political-organizational form for advancing these struggles.

The form of the labor party, <sup>in its initial stages or in certain locales,</sup> could be all or predominately Black. But the dynamic is not the same as a Black party. The Black party formulation flowed out of the concrete motion of the Black movement toward independent political organization in the 60's. It had a particular dynamic. The motion toward a labor party has a different dynamic. As we see it, the working class as a whole, led by its advanced sectors, is beginning to move. We should fully explain this process, and the role of Blacks within it.

The labor party is not a Black party in the sense that we saw the Black party developing in the 60's, and during Malcolm X's rise. Although it could play a similar function, it is not the same as the Freedom Now party, the OAAU, or other similar, conscious nationalist type organizations, which could have developed. It's different. It will be multi-national, bi-sexual, based on the unions, Blacks and women. Most importantly, it will be led by Blacks and women. Its social base will be broader.

I think the key element in explaining the difference between a labor party and the Black party is its program. The program would not reflect any one particular struggle. It would be inclusive, and reflect the combativity of the entire class, or at least the sections that are moving.

If we are going to call for a labor party, and urge Blacks to help organize it and support it, we should be clear in our propaganda as to why they should, and not confuse the issue.

The labor is not going to be based in its entirety on our programatic documents on the Black party. Whereas The Case for a Black Party or The Transitional Program for Black Liberation are central to its core and foundation, in addition, the labor party's program would reflect every aspect of the oppression and exploitation of the working class. The Transitional Program for Black Liberation did this, but in a narrower sense, focusing in on one particular aspect of the class struggle.

The central thrust of the Black party slogan was "Black Control of the Black Community". That is not the central thrust of the labor party program, just one important element. Equal with the demand of Black control of the Black community are demands for women's rights, against nuclear power, union recognition, workers control of the entire society, etc. The program of the labor party is broader, both in its

content and scope. Its program is not only applicable to the Black community, but to every other sector of society as well.

The Black party slogan was the vehicle to implement the Transitional Program for Black Liberation, to organize the community, and to aid in the breaking of the control of the Black community by the Democratic party.

The labor party slogan is a vehicle to implement our program for the entire labor movement, including all demands in support of the Black community.

The role of the Black party slogan was to draw the Black community into organized independent struggle around issues relating to Black control of the Black community.

The labor party slogan is to break the labor movement from the control of the Democratic party, on the road to seizing control of the entire society.

The Black party proposal was specific, aimed at a particular sector of the class around specific struggles of that sector. We saw it as a transitional step toward a labor party or the revolutionary party, a part of a process, not something complete in and of itself.

In the context of the renewed discussion on the labor party, and in light of the developments in the labor movement, we have to evaluate the way we posed the question of the Black party in the past as to the present.

The heart of the Transitional Program for Black Liberation was the demand for Black control of the Black community. We said that the best way to struggle for this was through the vehicle of an independent Black party, in a limited framework. This was based on the correct contention that the Black community couldn't wait for the labor movement to go into motion on its behalf. Is that the case now, and is a Black party the best vehicle to advance that struggle as we originally presented it?

I'm still uncertain on this and have a number of unanswered questions.

The objective situation has changed since we first put forth the proposal for a Black party. Now it's a question of Blacks directly leading the entire class in struggle, not struggling alone in the absence of motion in the labor movement. This makes the call for a labor party and the role of Blacks within it somewhat different from the original concepts surrounding the call for a Black party.

The best example of this is the Newport News strike. There, as you pointed out to me, Blacks are leading white workers in the union recognition drive.

In the past, it was a question of Blacks by their example, in the Civil Rights movement, in community control struggles, etc., objectively showing the way forward for the entire class. We always point to this when we explain how the Black movement broke open the Cold War hysteria in this country by fighting Jim Crow. However, Blacks more and more are subjectively leading the class in direct action, as in Newport News. This is in contrast to past experiences such as the League of Revolutionary Black

Workers, which vanguarded the union movement in Detroit, but was not able to bring the rest of the UAW along with it. Today the situation is different.

There is a need for an assessment of the Black movement from the Freedom Now document to the present. This assessment should include the evolution of the party's position on the Black struggle, to help put our present course in perspective. It appears to me that in practice we are reassessing our perspective.

A serious document is needed for the upcoming convention. I think that without one, there will be a lack of complete understanding on the labor party as it relates to the Black struggle.

These are some of my thoughts on these issues. I've also done some thinking and study on the rise of the Black democrats and its implications on the development of the Black movement. However, I'd like some feedback on some of the things I've raised on the Black party before I proceed further.

Concretely however, there are some things which could be taken up by the Militant, ISR, or the YS based on the discussion which I hope will take place at the plenum.

- 1) Some indepth, analytical articles on the state of the Black movement.
- 2) Tasks of the Black movement.
- 3) The Black community and the labor movement.
- 4) What the labor party means for the Black community.
- 5) The role of the Black democrats- anappraisal of their lack of accomplishment; Why they are impotent.

I hope that the sharing of some of my thoughts can be of some use in preparing your report. If you have some time, please drop me a line in response. I'll be in Boston, so I can be reached at the headquarters.

Comradely,



Robb Wright