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TO SWP ORGANIZERS AND NC MEMBERS

Dear Comrades,

This letter concerns implementation at the branch level of the party propaganda campaign around the wage freeze and the wage controls of Nixon's "Phase II," projected by the August 30 Political Committee statement (attached).

The Political Committee statement outlined three areas of concentration for this propaganda campaign: "1) A major effort to reach workers with The Militant through sales at factories and other places where workers congregate. Special effort should be made to sell subscriptions to workers as part of the sub campaign. 2) Every effort should be made to get speaking engagements for the national and local candidates of the party before union meetings, outside of factories, etc. 3) Comrades in unions, in addition to the above, should raise our programmatic proposals in union meetings, on the job, etc. The national office should be kept closely informed of the mood in the unions, the reception to our ideas, etc., and stories should be written for The Militant as part of its campaign on this topic."

It is important that this propaganda campaign be seen by the branches as a continuing effort. The analysis of the evolution of the capitalist economy internationally contained in recent convention and National Committee resolutions, and in articles in our press, outlines the powerful forces at work impelling the ruling class to attempt to lower the real wages of the American workers. In order to accomplish this objective, the capitalist class is using the centralized power of the capitalist government to attempt to cripple the fighting power of the unions and strengthen the hands of the bosses.

The imposition of the 90-day wage freeze was only the opening gun by the capitalist government. Through "Phase II" and beyond, the government will be attempting to impose some form of wage controls on the workers. Working-class opposition to this assault upon their standard of living will grow. While we should expect a pattern of aggressive actions and partial retreats by the government, depending upon the shifting relations of class forces, the objective of the ruling class will remain the same: to lower the real wages of the workers and weaken the unions. In this effort, the government will continue to seek the support of the labor bureaucracy for some form of wage controls.

The agreement by the union bureaucracy to serve on Nixon's wage board -- and its present floundering in the face of the stiffening government attack -- highlights the incapacity of the bureaucracy of waging an effective struggle against this assault by the ruling class. The crisis of leadership of the working class has been thrown into sharp focus.

Our strategic orientation to overcome this crisis of leadership is the building of a class struggle left wing in the unions based on a class struggle program. As yet, our immediate tasks in this regard are propagandistic in nature, and center on reaching workers with the key points of a class struggle program

around which a future left wing can be built.

It is in this context that our propaganda campaign for a congress of labor should be seen. The program we pose for such a congress of labor, as outlined in the Political Committee statement and articles in The Militant, can become the basis for the formation of a class struggle left wing in the unions.

The government attack on the working class has resulted in greater receptivity to our class struggle program among workers, and we can expect such receptivity to increase in the period ahead as the real intentions of the ruling class become clearer to more workers. To accomplish our objective of reaching workers with this program, it is important that the propaganda campaign around a congress of labor be done in a consistent and sustained manner. Concerning the three areas of the campaign outlined in the Political Committee statement:

1) Sales of The Militant. After the announcement of the wage freeze, branches took large bundles and made special efforts to sell to workers at factories, union meetings, picket lines, shopping centers, unemployment lines, and other places where workers congregate. Certain branches have been able to sustain such sales to workers on a weekly basis, and this should become the norm in every branch.

Exactly which places are the best to sell at to reach workers varies from city to city. In Washington, for example, the major industry is the government itself, and the comrades there have been concentrating on sales to government workers. The Houston branch has sold well at a number of plant gates. In Detroit, plant gate sales have been high, accounting for 30 percent of the branch's bundle, and sales at shopping centers account for another 20 percent of it. Atlanta has had good sales at sanitation plants. In Seattle, where there is an unusually high unemployment rate, sales on unemployment lines have been good; other branches report poor sales at unemployment lines. The Bloomington YSA local reports regular sales of 20 papers to women workers at an RCA plant. Through probes and sales experiments, branches are determining which places are the best to sell. Such probes should continue, as we continue our effort to reach as many workers with The Militant as we can. At the same time, consistent and regular sales, every week, should be conducted at places the branch discovers to be best. It is through such sales, week after week, that we can begin to build up a body of consistent readers of the paper among workers. If workers at a particular location come to expect regular sales of The Militant, this will aid in establishing such regular readers.

As our objective through sales of the paper is to build up a body of regular readers of The Militant, it follows that special attention should be paid to selling subscriptions to workers. While the major emphasis of the campaign to sell 30,000 new subscriptions to the paper is necessarily directed towards the campuses during the period of the special sub drive, attention should be paid to selling subscriptions to workers. In Seattle, for example, comrades have been selling subscriptions as part of their regular bundle sales to workers, and have picked up one or two subscriptions a week this way. Comrades active in trade unions in Berkeley, Chicago and other areas have sold subs to fellow union members; in Berkeley, one comrade has sold 45 subs in his union, to date. Such efforts should continue as a consistent process after the end of the big sub drive.

2) Use of the SWP election campaign. In addition to The Militant, the SWP national and local election campaigns are an important vehicle for this propaganda campaign. Branches should find ways to have the candidates appear before working class audiences. There are different ways to do this, in addition to attempting to get speaking engagements before union local meetings. For example, the Detroit branch arranged for Linda Jenness to speak at a street meeting outside a plant. This plant was one where the branch has had good sales of the paper. In Houston, SWP mayoralty candidate Debbie Leonard was able to speak to workers at a factory. More consistent efforts should be made by all branches in this regard.

3) Comrades in unions. The concrete situation facing comrades in unions varies greatly, but in a number of instances comrades have been successful in raising the issue of the wage freeze in union meetings, and have been able to present our programmatic proposals, in addition to selling our press. In a few cases, this has resulted in the union local's taking a position for a congress of labor, or against the war.

The branches should discuss how best to carry out this propaganda campaign on a consistent basis. Through this campaign we will be able to make contacts among workers, win new readers to our press, and begin to disseminate the key programmatic concepts around which we can build a class struggle left wing in the unions in the future.

Comradely,

Barry Sheppard

Barry Sheppard
Administrative Committee

Frank Lovell (Bs)

Frank Lovell
National Trade Union Work Director

POLITICAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT

1. The Political Resolution adopted by the party convention outlined the factors inherent in the world economic situation that are impelling the ruling class to seek to lower the standard of living of the workers. It pointed out that, in the context of a continuation of the Vietnam war, "only two basic options are left to the ruling class if inflation is to be a successful tool to hold down the American working class's real share of the national product: move toward a national 'incomes policy,' that is, a national wage-control scheme that would give the government authority to hold down wage gains aimed at catching up with the inflationary bite; or precipitate a recession deep enough to result in a large enough increase in the industrial reserve army to drive down these wage demands." The resolution indicated that the Nixon administration had at first leaned toward relying on the recession (which it had helped precipitate), but that this had not worked, and was not likely to work unless Nixon permitted the recession to deepen to a point where massive unemployment could trigger a sharp political reaction by the working class.

The Nixon administration decided to switch tactics. It opted for the first alternative outlined in the Political Resolution, an "incomes policy." The resolution pointed out that "an attempt to impose an 'incomes policy' could provoke a major reaction by the working class, one taking place in the framework of the general political radicalization that has been developing in the country."

Nixon's wage-freeze decree aims at lowering the real wages of the workers. In order to accomplish this objective, the capitalist class is using the centralized power of the capitalist government to attempt to cripple the fighting power of the unions and strengthen the hands of the bosses.

2. The 90-day wage freeze is only the initial move by the capitalist government. Nothing will be solved within 90 days, and the government has already indicated that some form of wage controls will extend beyond the 90-day period. The government hopes to get the union bureaucracy lined up in support of some form of wage controls, under the cover of some "equality of sacrifice" formula. Despite its protestations, the bureaucracy is incapable of waging an effective fight against the wage freeze and is already tending to capitulate under pressure from the government.

3. This combination of intensified attack on the standard of living of the working class and the incapacity of the union bureaucracy, throws the crisis of leadership of the working class into sharp focus. This will create new receptivity to class struggle concepts among the workers, which will open up greater opportunities for us to reach them with our ideas than any time since 1948.

4. To effectively take advantage of this situation, we project a propaganda campaign around a class struggle program for labor to fight the wage freeze. The central axis of this campaign is the call for a congress of labor, to mobilize the working class for struggle to counter this offensive of big business. We project that such a congress of labor would not only be representative of every section of the union movement but be broadly representative of the unorganized workers as well. It should include representatives of the oppressed nationalities, women and other allies of labor engaged in social struggle.

The program we pose for such a congress of labor concentrates on the following points: 1) Against any form of wage controls.

2) The escalator clause in all contracts to protect workers' wages from inflation. 3) The sliding scale of hours to fight unemployment. An immediate change in the hours and wages law to institute the 30-hour week with no reduction in pay. 4) Defense of the unconditional right to strike; elimination of all laws restricting the right to strike, and all laws undermining the independence of the unions. 5) Bring all the troops home from Indochina now. Take the billions now spent for war and use them to meet pressing social needs at home. 6) Launch a Labor Party based on the trade unions.

In the specific context of the wage freeze, such a program can become the basis for the formation of a class struggle left wing in the unions. In the process of development of such a left wing, it will have to take a positive attitude towards the struggles, demands and movements of the oppressed nationalities, women and other allies of labor. This initiative is necessary to lay the basis for the mobilization of the entire class including its most oppressed sectors, as well as all the allies of the working class, in joint struggle against the capitalist class.

5. In the course of our propaganda campaign to form a class struggle left wing in the unions we will experience increased opportunities to develop political contacts among the workers. This in turn requires special attention to prospects for winning worker recruits to the party.

6. This propaganda campaign will center on three areas:

1) A major effort to reach workers with The Militant through sales at factories and other places where workers congregate. Special effort should be made to sell subscriptions to workers as part of the sub campaign.

2) Every effort should be made to get speaking engagements for the national and local candidates of the party before union meetings, outside of factories, etc.

3) Comrades in unions, in addition to the above, should raise our programmatic proposals in union meetings, on the job, etc. The national office should be kept closely informed of the mood in the unions, the reception to our ideas, etc., and stories should be written for The Militant as part of its campaign on this topic.

7. We must utilize to the maximum our position as the best builders of the antiwar movement to help it take full advantage of the new opportunities this attack on the working class opens for winning increased labor support for the antiwar forces. War spending is the single most important cause of inflation. A key component of the fight against high prices and the wage freeze is the fight against the war. This fact can be utilized to reach new layers of the working class and involve them in antiwar actions -- immediately the November 6 action.

The student wing of the antiwar movement should be mobilized to utilize these events and their lessons to reach out to broader layers of the working class to join the November 6 action.