

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER

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LOCAL 1199--NEGOTIATIONS AND ECONOMICS

Labor is today faced with the recognition that, not only is the continuing inflation destroying all the monetary gains won--and more--under previous contracts, but that the ruling class and its state apparatus intends to solve its mounting economic difficulties at its expense.

Thus, the 150,000 General Electric (GE) workers, united in a common strike front, are confronted by the arrogance of a multi-billion dollar corporation determined to starve the strikers into accepting a "non-inflationary" contract, i.e., a settlement which will result in an accelerated loss in real wages through inflation.

GE expresses the determination of a ruling class, faced with intensified competition on the world market with the ending of the post-World War II economic expansion, and increasingly heavy costs of policing the world imperialist system, to preserve its profits by making the working class shoulder the costs.

The Nixon administration, through its tight money, tax and budget cutting policies, hopes to control inflation by increasing the industrial reserve army of unemployed to the point where it can become a weapon against the labor movement.

While it has barely touched the huge military budget which, together with monopoly profits, is the root cause of the inflation, it has cut deeply into such services to the poor as welfare and Medicaid. Its

decision to introduce a "mild" recession now, which it hopes it can control by the usual Keynesian techniques, in order to stave off a total collapse of the system is somewhat akin to infecting the organism with gonorrhoea to ward off syphilis.

But no antibiotics are available to treat the rapidly maturing crisis of world capitalism. The expanded productive forces, despite increasingly ineffective Keynesian ministrations, increasingly conflict with capitalist property relations and press against the confines of the national state. Monetary and balance of payments problems fundamentally reflect this deeper conflict.

Each capitalist class is forced to attack the living standards of its respective working class, in an attempt to preserve its competitive position in the world market, and its mass and rate of profit. The workers, determined to maintain and further improve their standards, are propelled into struggle against these attacks, as the mounting strike wave in France, Italy, Germany and the US bears witness.

It is in this context that the

negotiations for a new contract, effective July 1, 1970, between the hospital administrators and the Local 1199 leadership, which represents 40,000 workers in forty "voluntary" hospitals in the New York metropolitan area, must be viewed.

The hospital workers, having won a \$100 minimum wage in the last contract are still far below the wage of the average worker. The high proportion of black and Puerto Rican unemployed ensures the hospitals a continuing supply of workers at sub-standard wages, although no longer at the pre-union starvation wage which made supplemental welfare customary. As has the rest of the working class, these workers have seen the wage gains made two years ago eaten away by inflation. Their morale, the fighting spirit which achieved the \$100 minimum, is not only unimpaired, but, confident of their strength, these workers are ready to fight for real improvements in wages, hours and working conditions, and for an end to their super-exploitation.

However, the positions taken recently by the Local 1199 leadership indicate that it has no intention of launching a struggle of this kind. Instead the spirit of good fellowship and cooperation reigns between the union leadership and the hospital administrators.

The State cut in Medicaid payments is used as the basis for harmony duets between the hospital bosses and the 1199 leadership. Both the union and the bosses, it would seem, have a common interest in prying more money for the hospitals from the State for the "poor".

Vice Pres. Jesse Olson at the Nov. 13th meeting of the Guild Delegate Assembly emphasized that the State budget will have "a direct severe bearing on the negotiations", and that a struggle on "two fronts" had to be launched, "First... Medicaid funds... Second... a good contract".

This order of priority is not accidental! The union leadership has refused to permit discussion on the contract recently signed by Local

144 covering workers in "proprietary" hospitals. Designated not so long ago as a "company union" by Local 1199, Local 144's contract calls for \$125 for a 35 hour week. The union leadership does not want this discussed, evidently, because it has no intention of posing similar demands to the administrators of the "voluntary" hospitals.

Nor is the 1199's leadership's cooperation limited to legislative demands. The hospitals have instituted a "job-freeze" in which workers who leave are not replaced. This means that the same volume of work has to be performed by fewer workers. To date, the leadership has done nothing at all to fight this speed-up, which directly menaces the safety and health of hospital workers and patients.

Instead, in a letter to the head of the hospital association, Pres. Leon Davis condemned the hospital workers for a work stoppage at Brooklyn Jewish Hospital, which resulted in the rehiring of a fired worker, as an act which "may jeopardize the welfare of the patients"! The leadership alibied its knuckling under to the hospital bosses by saying that the worker had been "reinstated prior to the stoppage". As if co-workers are not in the best position to know the real facts!

At the root of the growing chumminess of the 1199 leadership with the bosses is the old class-collaborationist policy of Pres. Davis.

He supported multi-billionaire Gov. Rockefeller's re-election in 1960, after bartering away the union's right to strike, in exchange for union recognition. He is now threatening Rockefeller with support for his Democratic Party opponent, in concert with other "progressive" labor leaders and "liberal" politicians, unless Rockefeller restores the State budget cuts.

The 1199 leadership boasts of having "contributed in a very significant way" to Mayor Lindsay's victory, the same mayor who demanded that Gov. Rockefeller call out the National Guard to force the sanita-

tionmen back to work in 1968.

The policy of labor "statesmen" who call for support to "liberal" capitalist politicians has consistently boomeranged against the trade union movement, as the anti-union Taylor Law, backed by labor's "friends" and ex-"friends", Lindsay and Rockefeller, and passed by a bipartisan bloc of Democratic and Republican politicians, amply demonstrates.

The workers need to be involved in political struggle, but not as cats-paws for ruling class politicians! They need an independent labor party which would be able to fight, not only against the growing attacks on the workers and the poor but, for the immediate and long-term needs of the working class, including an end to anti-labor laws, unemployment and slums. They need labor candidates who would demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of American troops from the bosses' war in Vietnam, who would fight for an end to racism and the racist brutality manifested in the vicious treatment of Bobby Seale and the cold-blooded murder of Black Panther leaders. They need candidates who would use the political arena to educate the workers to the need for a socialist revolution.

The Davis "progressive" leadership is, however, congenitally unable to understand, let alone fight for, class politics. Hat-in-hand politics to ruling class flunkys is more its line.

Local 1199 needs a broad-based caucus of the rank and file, organized around a program which poses the immediate and fundamental needs of the workers. We propose a non-sectarian approach, a united front, for the purpose of building such a caucus around the following demands:

-A minimum wage of \$125 for new workers, with corresponding increases in scale relative to experience, skill and seniority, for a 35 hour week, in order to raise the standards of workers in "non-

profit" hospitals to those already won by other hospital workers and workers in industry.

- An immediate end to the "job-freeze speed-up. No lay-offs as a result of the introduction of automated equipment or streamlined procedures.
- A one year contract containing an escalator clause to prevent wages from being eaten away by taxes and inflation. Every worker to receive a copy of the contract printed in English and Spanish.
- End dictatorial hospital rules! Hospital workers to determine rules! No worker to be punished until after a hearing by a grievance committee, composed of union members at the same hospital, has found a clear violation to exist. The union to support workers' job actions against arbitrary procedures by hospital administration. The workers to have a voice in the determination of their immediate supervisor.
- Unemployment insurance coverage for all workers in "non-profit" hospitals.
- Free medical and dental care to be readily available to all hospital workers.
- A city, state and national campaign by the trade unions to provide free medical and dental care for all workers earning \$6000 or less per year.
- For a pension plan, paid in full by the hospitals which would guarantee a minimum of \$3500 per year, adjusted so as not to be diminished in purchasing power by rises in the cost of living.

-Open the hospital books! The hospital bosses claim that they cannot afford a living wage and better working conditions. But the doctors manage to get fat pay-checks! Blue Cross continues to get ever-higher fees! Federal, State and City, as well as tax write-off money is available to purchase tax-exempt real estate, and to build luxury apartments for the hospital "aristocracy"

- and fancy medical schools!
- Nationalize those hospitals under workers' control, which do not or cannot pay a living wage.
- A workers' representative to be present at meetings of hospital boards of directors, in order to function as a watchdog of the workers' interests, and to report to union members all anti-union activity, planned or pending, but not to serve as a member of the board, nor participate in its deliberations, to prevent manipulation intended to transform the workers' representative into a hospital administration stooge.
- Eliminate the "No Strike Pledge" and the arbitration machinery!
- End the division of hospital workers! Unite Guild and Hospital Divisions! The separation of the union into the lower-paid "blue-

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- collar" workers, who are mainly from the minorities, and higher paid, predominately white-collar and still predominately white "Guild" members, feeds white-collar and race prejudices, and only plays into the hands of the bosses, who use these divisions to lower the wages and worsen the working conditions of all workers.
- Equal vacation rights and fringe benefits for Guild and Hospital Division workers.
- For a united front of all hospital unions, City, State, "proprietary" and "non-profit", in the fight for a decent standard of life for all hospital workers.
- For a labor party based on the unions! For an independent labor candidate for governor and for a slate of independent labor candidates in 1970.

THE STRUGGLES OF THE ARGENTINIAN WORKERS by Joseph Gottlieb

∟The following discussion article is submitted by an acute observer of ongoing struggles in Latin America.

∟Cde. Gottlieb testifies to the enormous revolutionary potential of the Argentinian working class, and its capacity to struggle against the military dictatorship headed by Onganía, which is attempting to solve the growing economic crisis on the backs of the workers.

∟The Leninist concept of the vanguard party has been vulgarized into "student-ism" by the revisionists of Trotskyism, the Socialist Workers Party in this country, and its co-thinkers internationally. Cde. Gottlieb justly takes issue with the elitist conception that radicalized student youth are the present-day "vanguard" of the working class, which can give it leadership from the outside. He correctly views this approach as a futile attempt at manipulation, and not the self-action of the working class which Marxists have always understood as the essence of the proletarian

revolution.

∟The party of the Bolshevik type can only exist as a dialectical unity of intellectual and proletarian, of the consciousness produced by a scientific understanding of the movement of society united to the fundamental lever of social revolution, the working class.

∟This party of a new type can only be built in the process of leading the workers toward a revolutionary perspective in daily struggle, as an integral part of the class. Only in this manner can it acquire a working class base and leadership. Only in this manner can it acquire the ability to give leadership, not only in the day to day struggle, but for the revolutionary moment as well.

∟The Leninists view activity among all other sectors of the petty-bourgeoisie as subordinate, and not only in words, to the fundamental question of winning the working class. However, they do not ignore the student radicals who can play an important propagandist and agitational role, as part of the revolu-

tionary party apparatus, in helping bring an understanding of scientific socialism to workers. As Marxist revolutionists succeed in winning a working class base, they are, indeed, certain to attract radicalized students.

✓The revisionists, however, true to their empiricist methodology, ignore the need to concentrate their forces in the daily struggles in the shops and in working class organizations, except for reportage, to be sure, to concentrate where the "action" is, the student milieu.

✓Here we also arrive at an area of difference with Cde. Gottlieb. He omits the question of participation inside the two trade union factions, the CGT and CGT Rebelde. He considers that the illusion "shared by all" Argentinian radicals that "the CGT is some sort of 'revolutionary' vehicle" is "passed on" to the workers as a belief that these organizations are "their only representatives".

✓We believe that Cde. Gottlieb inverts the relationship, and that the CGT factions manage to retain the support of workers because these workers see that, despite the reformist and/or sell-out leaderships, the unions still function as a shield--limited and inadequate, to be sure --against the rapacity of the bourgeoisie and their state.

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[The Argentinian working class is one of the most powerful and militant in all Latin America.]

[It alone could spark an irresistible surge toward socialism in the southern tip of the American continent, a struggle which would inevitably attract the Chilean, Uruguayan and Brazilian workers to a similar struggle for power.]

Recently, the Argentinian workers have shown their capacity to struggle and organize themselves against terrible odds. In May, June and July, they repeatedly went into the streets, in Córdoba, Salta, Corrientes and many other cities, to fight against the Onganía dic-

✓Cde. Gottlieb testifies to this fact when he states that CGT Rebelde "fought side by side with the rank and file against overwhelming odds", and that many workers consider it to be "'their' union because... [it] is underground and siding with the workers in the fight."

✓Lenin's Left-Wing Communism emphasizes that revolutionists cannot evade their responsibility to be active in the mass organizations of the working class, not, of course, to sow illusions that the trade union bureaucrats are revolutionary, or the syndicalist illusion that the working class can take power through trade union struggles alone, but to pose an alternative program and leadership, as an essential part of the process of winning the workers to their vanguard party.

✓Finally, we note Cde. Gottlieb's confidence in the ability of the Argentinian working class to learn from the heroic struggles, so that the "next onslaught will not end in defeat". The lessons of all working class struggles continue to affirm through negative examples, that only that working class which possesses a Leninist party can win state power. We would hope that Argentinian Trotskyists are fulfilling their responsibility to build such a party, so that Cde. Gottlieb's prognosis in turn may be fulfilled.]

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tatorship and US imperialism. They shook Argentinian society so violently that the ruling lackeys had to beg Rockefeller to cancel the Argentinian part of his "fact-finding" mission. [The general strike of May 30th had given the workers an awareness of their power--had made them realize that they could go into the streets, shut down the plants and engage the police and army in fierce, bloody struggles, that they could face the military dictatorship in spite of all the brutal anti-labor legislation and

anti-communist laws.]

Numbering around 10 million (4 million of them organized in the different segments of the collapsing Confederación General de Trabajadores (General Confederation of Workers--CGT), the Argentinian working class failed to prepare itself in time to smash the state of the Argentinian bourgeoisie. In a country of 21 million, the Argentinian working class is a majority indeed. But, as seems to happen in countries where the workers are a majority, a certain room for reformism exists. In Latin America, the reforms go hand in hand with state controls and Bonapartism. Argentina provides a classic example, with its Peronismo, a brutal regime which lasted nearly ten years. These years to a great degree shaped the entire political outlook of the CGT, its psychology, and its leading cadre. The failure of the May-June-July struggles of this year, however, has served to expose many myths and illusions. There is no doubt that the Argentinian workers will learn from them, so that the next onslaughts will not end in defeat.

One of the main illusions, shared by all groups of the Argentinian left, in one degree or another, is that the CGT is some sort of "revolutionary" vehicle for the Argentinian workers. This illusion is passed on to the workers, who, in turn, especially in these years of underground struggle (the Illía "democracy" was a passing burp), tend to see one of the wings of the CGT as their only representative. The CGT has been split into pro-government (CGT) and "left" (CGT Rebelde) wings. But the programs of both reflects nothing but attempts to sell themselves to the highest bidder, which, in this case, happens to be the state. That is precisely the basis of the politics of the CGT--which is a kind of huge Social Democratic trade union, and which sees its role as junior partner of a state organizer (a Bismarck or a Peron. Since the Onganía dic-

tatorship is a temporary military Bonapartist regime, it follows that it is hated by every class in society except for US interests and the native, terrified Argentinian bourgeoisie. Thus, it is a regime of extreme crisis. No wonder then, that the CGT has been unable to fuse itself with it, though such a tendency exists. The leader of this CGT faction who had opposed a general strike scheduled for June 30th, was executed in a machine-gun attack last June in connection with the Rockefeller visit. It seems that the "left" CGT Rebelde, which had also lost part of its leadership last May, may have had something to do with this action.

But illusions as to the "revolutionary" possibilities of the CGT are not particularly shared by the workers, especially the young ones. The May struggles in Córdoba, Rosario, etc., showed that the workers could organize their own forms of struggle, even if segments of the underground CGT leadership formed part of these bodies. Juntas Coordinadoras (coordinating bodies or councils) were spontaneously formed in Tucumán, La Plata, Rosario and Córdoba. In the city of Córdoba, there were gigantic demonstrations on May 29th, which developed into a general strike on the 30th. Workers from the Kaiser Works had been brutally machine-gunned when they marched into the city in a contingent of more than 3,500. From then on, the whole city rose as one against the dictatorship. Sniper fire and street fighting went on during the whole night. More than 50 people were killed. The next day's general strike expressed itself in all its heroism in the working class neighborhood of Clínicas, where barricades had been erected to stop army trucks and jeeps. The army was able to win control of the city only by late afternoon. After all, .22 caliber guns could not stand for long against the FAL submachine guns of the infantry. The soldiers did not go to the side of the strikers, and

thus, the struggle petered out.

What role was played by the CGT factions during the strike? It is difficult to imagine CGT Rebelde as a strikebreaker, and this they surely were not. It even fought side by side with the rank and file against overwhelming odds. [But the momentum, the thrust of the struggle, came from below, from the workers themselves, who by-passed the leadership of the CGT.] If CGT Rebelde is considered by many workers today as "their" union, it is because that CGT faction is underground and siding with the workers in the fight. It is Bonapartism when young, when heroic--it is facing its pre-power existence, just like the present pro-government CGT did when ruthlessly persecuted by the military under Guido. But it is in the present, pro-government CGT that CGT Rebelde should see its future image. It is there portrayed in all the irony of the manipulative, treacherous, petty-bourgeois politics of Latin American reformism. [Some "Trotskyists" in Argentina saw the struggle as portraying the irresistible rise of a "people's and workers'" government--the CGT Rebelde, of course, implicitly included in this popular front. In Argentina the socialist struggle is for workers' power, not for a "people's and workers'" government. If the French workers in 1968 were capable of shaking French society to its cornerstones, and if the Italian and American workers (witness the militant struggles against Bell and General Electric!) can do similar things, why not the Argentinian workers--as a prelude to their taking power? Would some of these "Trotskyists" (whose fraternal sister is the SWP) call for such a thing here in the US? What do they think a striking Ma Bell phone worker would say if he heard the proposal for a "farmers" or "students" government with the word workers in second place? Listen to it! "For a revolutionary government of students and workers"! The popular front, class collaborationist

content of the slogan "a revolutionary workers' and people's government" (it is immaterial in this case whether the word "worker" comes first) is most clearly expressed when we see that in Argentina the majority of the people are workers and their families.

The role of the students in these struggles has been, of course, blown out of proportion by the press, including the SWP-United Secretariat press. Some of these "Trotskyists" saw their main role in telling other students how to go about "unifying" a united front when in fact the workers were already in the streets and the students had no need to hear about brilliant strategies to "unify" the workers and students.

The student organizations (FUA, HUMANISMO, FEN) had become polarized when the workers intervened in the political arena. The student leadership could only continue its external manipulative, sterile, bickering--all in the name of "anti-imperialism". The workers, however, dealt real blows to imperialism. Rockefeller's visit had to be cancelled--the strike against him of June 30th, caused a loss of \$3 million dollars to the Argentinian economy. In addition, an immensely important fact, Rockefeller was repudiated by the population of a country which is supposed to be so "friendly", so "pro-USA", so "Western", etc. Yes, during the "jornadas" of May in Córdoba and other cities, the working class struggles completely eclipsed student oriented "politicking". Many students, seeing real struggle, joined the workers in the street. The student leaders, on the other hand, plus the "Trotskyist" druids, preferred to issue all kinds of manifestos and decrees to "add consciousness".

The revolutionary workers party will have to be built on completely new foundations, with Marxist militants going into the shops and to the working class. That is where they belong, not in the halls of the respectable School of Philosophy and Letters.

NATIONALISM AND INTERNATIONALISM

Trotsky on the Negro Question

--Conclusion

The "Trotskyist" opportunists and sectarians have a common bond. Both substitute eclectics for dialectics in the process of falsifying Marxism.

Contributions of the creative Marxists which do not fit their political outlook are ignored or deliberately distorted. Both, therefore, operate as opportunists in theory and in practice.

One variety discards the revolutionary essence of Marxism, the other, necessary strategy and tactics which do not accord with its preconceptions or prejudices. Unable to critically examine certain basic postulates, the sectarian sometimes attempts to force success through organizational manipulation. Along with a metaphysical rigidity on selected theoretical questions, therefore, the sectarian can often outdo his dialectical opposite in opportunist organizational function.

Despite pious obeisance to Marxist "METHOD", both opportunist and sectarian are practitioners of empiricism. The former, by sacrificing principle, for a "practical" road to "success", the latter, by a simplistic representation of the motion of social phenomena, and through the magnification of some aspects at the expense of others.

Nowhere are these manifestations more evident than on the Negro question, the most sensitive and critical question for the American revolution.

VANGUARD NEWSLETTER, in contradistinction to both opportunists and sectarians, has presented an integral and revolutionary position on the Negro question. We proceed from the fundamental understanding that the Marxist outlook is scientific, that the body of knowledge acquired through the dialectical method is an essentially correct representation of constantly changing reality, and that the present cannot be understood without an appreciation of the hard-won lessons of the past.

Our position on the Negro question is a synthesis, therefore, of the contributions of Trotsky, particularly on the Negro question and the Transitional Program, of Lenin on the national question, as well as our experience in working class and civil rights struggles.

We have understood the radicalization of the Black masses as an opportunity to build the Leninist vanguard party in the most oppressed layer of the working class. We have recognized that the disorienting, reactionary and utopian black nationalist ideology could be overcome, and that the black workers could be won to a class viewpoint only by an uncompromising struggle by white workers against all aspects of Black special oppression, including super-exploitation in the workplace; that the white workers, now in motion on the economic front as a result of the sharpening of the contradictions of US and world capitalism, would only be won to socialist consciousness by a struggle which would convince them that white chauvinism only served their class enemy, that the student radicals would finally adhere to those revolutionists who showed themselves capable of winning a base in the working class; that bi-racial caucuses, basing themselves on a program of transitional demands, could be linked in a transitional organization which could, in turn, aid their transformation into factory committees and workers' councils, into the organs of dual power and working class rule, in the revolutionary period.

We believe that only a program which incorporates these concepts can lay the foundations for a Leninist party in the US capable of leading the black and white workers in a socialist revolution.