

INTERNAL INFORMATION BULLETIN

October 1969

No. 6 in 1969

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Published by

SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY

873 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003

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REPORT ON TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM FOR BLACK LIBERATION

(23rd National SWP Convention, 1969)

By Clifton DeBerry

At this session, the convention will devote its discussion to the Transitional Program for Black Liberation. In the discussion on the Political Resolution we discussed the building of the multinational revolutionary party and the role of the black struggle in that connection, and the role of the black freedom fighters in the vanguard of the coming American revolution.

There will also be a discussion, later on tonight, at the Third World and black fraction meeting which will take up the concrete work that the party will be engaging in in the coming period. This will include such questions as the organization of the black and Third World fractions, the recruitment of black and Third World comrades, and the organization of activities on the campuses, in the anti-war movement, and in the community.

The resolution on the transitional program has a different character from the other documents before this convention. It deals mainly with questions where there has been general agreement within the Socialist Workers Party over a long period of time. The real value of this resolution is that it takes our basic concepts and views on the black struggle and puts them down in one place, both for our members to read and absorb, and for widespread circulation throughout the movement.

One of the basic weaknesses in the black liberation movement today is that the need for a transitional program is not understood. For this reason, our document speaks to the most crucial problem facing the struggle for black liberation today.

The past half-decade has been one of unprecedented radicalization in the black community. There has been the rise of Malcolm X and the widespread acceptance of his revolutionary ideas. There have been mass spontaneous rebellions taking place in almost every town and city where black people live. And more recently, during the past several years, we've seen the awakening nationalist consciousness reflected in a more organized form -- such as in the struggles for self-determination as we see them developing on the campuses, in the high schools, in the army, in the trade unions, and in the black community.

But while there is this unprecedented radicalization, much of the potential is not realized because there is no black political party to give it expression. There is no political party to draw to-

gether, to unite, the various aspects of the black struggle and move it to the next stage. There is no black political party to challenge the capitalist parties for political power in the political arena.

In a report to our last plenum, where we discussed the need for an independent black political party, we noted that black people have very deep illusions about the Democratic Party. As a matter of fact, these illusions have been so deep in the past that many people would hardly listen to our ideas about an independent black political party. And those who did listen had difficulty grasping what we were talking about. Today, many blacks still have illusions about the Democratic Party, but there are also many more black people who understand the idea of an independent black political party.

Objective conditions for the formation of an independent black political party are more favorable now than ever before. There are many signs which indicate that this is the case, such as the political ferment within the Democratic Party itself where it has reached a point that in the cities they have to run, or consider running, black candidates for mayor. The black caucuses that have developed within the Democratic Party are another sign.

The capitalists are well aware of the political power embodied in the black community and they are going all out to try to keep it in check. Just as they put forth a McCarthy to curb the antiwar movement, they are putting forth black political Toms such as the Stokes, the Hatchers, the Bradleys and the Austins, as a means of putting a damper on developing black nationalism.

The idea of using black people in this way is not new, and more and more black people are beginning to understand this. During the second American revolution, in order to aid their struggle against the slavocracy, the capitalists needed black people. They granted them formal freedom and made some concessions and promises, but once they had no further need for black people, they ducked their problems and established those conditions which black people today are fighting against. And ever since that time they have consistently used black people to make their profits.

At this time, when the capitalists are struggling for their survival, they're

going to do all they can to stop the spread of black nationalism, because they recognize that it will set a process into motion that will rally the forces that will crumble the capitalist system.

As black nationalism has spread throughout the black community, there have been a number of organizations which have sought to give expression to the black nationalist sentiment. The Organization of Afro-American Unity was initiated by Malcolm X before his assassination. There was the Freedom Now Party which developed in Michigan in 1964, and the Lowndes County Freedom Party formed in 1965, which was the only political party that has sunk deep roots within the black community.

In 1968, SNCC began considering the idea of organizing an independent black political party. But they didn't do anything about it, at that time. However, in 1968 they did support the development in Newark of the campaign initiated by the United Brothers.

The Black Panther Party was the first attempt to build a black party nationally, which had branches across the country. And the rapid growth of the BPP in the fall of 1967 when it first spread across the country is an indication of the potential for building an independent political party in this country.

But now, as we've had a chance to see the BPP and its evolution, we should note both its positive contributions and its weaknesses and limitations from the point of view of drawing the necessary lessons.

On the positive side. One of the single most important contributions that the BPP has made has been its very existence as a party, the fact that it came into existence as a nationwide black political party. One of the problems we had in trying to propagandize for the formation of an independent black political party is that the idea seemed abstract to people outside of our movement. By and large, Americans both black and white have been so brainwashed by the capitalists with the notion that capitalism will endure from here on in, that the idea of challenging the capitalist parties has seemed to be just out of the question. So people have found it very hard to understand what we were talking about when we have propagandized for the formation of an independent black political party. Therefore the Black Panther Party has been helpful in that it brought the idea of a black party from the realm of the abstract into the concrete. And as a result of this, more people understand the idea of an independent black political party.

Also, because of its strong anti-capitalist character, the BPP has played an important role in legitimatizing the ideas of socialism and the class struggle within the black liberation movement. But in the course of their carrying out what they consider to be a revolutionary perspective, they've been plagued with ultraleftism and reformism. So instead of growing into a sizable party, with roots sunk deep in the black community, the Black Panthers are becoming isolated from the black community, and this, combined with the attacks from the federal, state and local governments, has been a key factor in diminishing the size of the BPP at a time when the radicalization of the black community is on the rise.

The real weakness of the BPP is that it doesn't have a transitional approach, doesn't have a program which can lead toward taking power. One of the things which makes the development of the black nationalism in the black community so explosively revolutionary is that it speaks to the question of power. Black control of the black community challenges the power of the capitalists. The building of an independent black political party to fight for black control of the black community is an expression of that power. The struggle for black control of schools, black study departments, black caucuses in the union movement -- all of these are ways in which this power can be developed within existing institutions of society laying the groundwork for the total taking of power away from the capitalist class.

The Black Panthers took their first step in the direction of formulating a transitional program when they put forward their ten point program. Point number one was the demand for black control of the black community. But, when the actual struggles broke out around the demand for black control of the black community, the Panthers generally abstained from participation and have played almost no role in their development. This is most obvious in regard to campus struggles where the Panthers had the biggest opportunities to increase their influence and recruit young people to their party. As a matter of fact, in some instances the Black Panthers even attacked some of the campus actions because of what they called "cultural nationalist" aspects. In recent months they've even reverted to the old anti-nationalist name-calling of the pre-Malcolm era, referring to black nationalism as black racism and black fascism. This kind of anti-nationalist talk has only served to pull the Black Panthers further away from their original base of militant nationalist support in the black community.

The building of a mass black politi-

cal party is a task which can only be accomplished as a result of participation and activity in different struggles over a period of time. Like many ultraleft individuals or tendencies, the Panthers seek some sort of get rich quick scheme to get around this long-term perspective, some way of doing it faster, some way of accelerating consciousness mechanically. But there are no short cuts. The only way is through education and participation in the struggles that are taking place.

Due primarily to the impact of the colonial revolution, one of the courses that has been pursued by the BPP as a part of their ultraleftism is that they've projected the idea that the revolution is just around the corner, that all they need to do is to spark the masses into motion, and just go and make the revolution. This has been expressed by their guerrilla warfare type approach. As a result of this oversimplified military approach to the struggle, they have left many victims within their movement as well as a few outside of their movement. Their ultraleftist rhetoric has been used by the capitalists to break into the offices of the BPP, to arrest their leaders on trumped up charges, and in a number of instances even to the gunning down of their leaders in cold blood.

Now it is within this context of the brutal repression that we have to view the most recent moves of the Panthers. Their lack of participation in the black struggles going on, their ultraleft rhetoric, the lack of democracy within the party, and, more recently, the purges within the party -- all of these things have helped to weaken their base within the black community. And given this kind of a worsening situation, they have sought allies among white radical groups.

Now, in principle, there's nothing wrong with alliances with white radicals in order to fight against repression and defend the movement. But there is something wrong with an alliance where the BPP gives up its principles and reorients the party in a less militant direction. This seems to have been a precondition for the alliance that took place with the Peace and Freedom Party in 1968, and it was an important factor at the conference in July. In 1968, instead of running candidates on the Black Panther Party ticket, providing a serious alternative to the capitalist parties within the black community, the Panthers sought to subordinate themselves to the building of the Peace and Freedom Party. They called it an "alliance," but it was actually a capitulation to reformism.

Another diversion from the task of building a black party has been their association with the Communist Party at the

Oakland conference where they allowed capitalist politicians to address the gathering. Although nothing has been said, it poses the question of whether or not they're going to support the capitalist party candidates at election time. Their attitude certainly did not rule out the possibility that they may move all the way in this direction.

This so-called "united front against fascism" placed the BPP in the position of working with all of the opponents of black nationalism -- with the Communist Party, the Independent Socialist Clubs, and even the Democratic Party politicians. Politics makes strange bedfellows; we look at this situation where the Black Panthers at their inception were against the Democrats, against liberals, against Toms -- yet they find themselves working with their original opponents at this time.

That's true -- politics does make strange bedfellows. And this poses a question for the black liberation movement as a whole, that is, it has to be recognized that any attempt to organize or build an independent black political party has to take into account the capitalists and all of the reformists who are going to do all they can to prevent this development, because they're all against black nationalism; they're all against the right of self-determination; and they are all for the preservation of capitalism.

Our Transitional Program for Black Liberation is based on the concept that the radicalization of black people today is a nationalist awakening -- that the main demands raised in the struggle, both now and in the future, will have a nationalistic character. This is reflected in the central demands of the resolution, which calls for a mass black political party and for self-determination through black control of the black community.

During the preconvention discussion some questions have been raised by Comrade Morris Chertov about whether it is true that the basic nature of the struggle is a nationalistic one. In his contribution, he brings up the important question of cultural nationalism and asks whether cultural nationalism isn't something mainly of interest to intellectuals rather than being a working class phenomenon.

One way of answering these very basic questions is to take a look at the history of the black liberation struggle, to look at it in the past and at what is happening today.

It has been pointed out by Comrade Breitman in his contribution to the dis-

cession that the spread of nationalism has gone hand in hand with the radicalization taking place in the black struggle. And although the independent movement for black freedom began in the 1950's, and was accelerated in the early 1960's with the militant struggles associated with the demand for freedom now, the deep-going and widespread radicalization of the struggle which we see today had its true beginning with the rise of Malcolm X and the spread of his ideas.

One of the best examples of this was mentioned earlier -- the rebellions that have broken out all across the country in recent years, right down to even this summer -- although they didn't get the prominence and the coverage that they did in 1968 -- rebellions have taken place in the black community. When we look at these rebellions, which had their highest point of intensity in the spring of 1968, we see that it is not just students, not just intellectuals who are involved. These rebellions embraced the entire community, all strata -- the workers, the mothers, the fathers, the grandparents, the children. The entire black community was involved in this struggle. They identified with it. They felt a feeling of pride. They felt a kinship with one another. And this has provided part of the inspiration and a part of the impetus leading to the acceleration of more organized struggles in the black community.

Our last convention, two years ago, took place about two months after the rebellions in Newark and Detroit. Since that time, the nationalist sentiment expressed in those rebellions has accelerated. This is a part of the radicalization we are speaking of now, and is being reflected in all strata of the population.

The most consistent struggles that have taken place have involved the young people on the college campuses. The black students are unquestionably the vanguard of the rebellion at this time. All indications are that they will continue to play a leading role in the movement as it is unfolding.

The nationalist upsurge on the campus first took the form of a cultural nationalist awakening which was expressed in the formation of black student unions and in the demand for the teaching of black history. During this year, the demand for the teaching of black history has been expanded into the idea of full black studies programs, controlled and run by the black people, for the benefit of the black community.

Although school administrations have done their best to keep things confined to safe channels, the students time after time have raised demands with the most

revolutionary implications. Most of these demands, of course, have been outlined in the Transitional Program for Black Liberation.

The black student struggles are probably the best example of how a black nationalist consciousness has radicalized the struggle. The demand for black control of black studies departments has played a role in inspiring demands for self-determination in the black community as a whole. The demands for a change in curriculum spell out the fact that education as it is presently constituted is designed by the capitalists to keep black and Third World people in their place.

Another demand which has been raised and has far-reaching revolutionary logic in the struggle has been the call for open enrollment for black students. It's obvious that this demand goes far beyond the old civil rights battles where the goal was to try to keep colleges from discriminating against individual applicants on the basis of race.

The most dynamic struggle that has taken place around this demand was here in New York at City College. At the time of this struggle, nine percent of City College students were black or Puerto Rican. This represented a big step over three years ago, when there was only 1.9 percent. But the Third World students at City College stirred up a storm in city politics this year by raising the very reasonable demand that future classes admitted to the College reflect the racial composition of New York City high schools. This would mean that the percentage of black and Puerto Rican students would jump from nine percent to 50 percent. These are some of the reasons why the capitalist politicians and the educators are so bitterly opposed to these demands. You see, they want the right to decide what goes into the minds and heads of young people.

Now, along with the nationalist awakening taking place on the campuses, we see reverberations within the high schools. At first, the most popular demands raised in these struggles were the demands for black history and the replacement of white administrators and teachers with Afro-Americans. But this struggle has broadened to include a whole list of demands including better facilities, student and community control over what goes on in the schools, no cops in the schools, a curriculum which meets the needs of the students, and an end to discrimination in high school union apprenticeship training programs. In many schools the protest has reached the level of a continuing wholesale revolt. This has been reflected by the placement of cops in the various high schools.

It is significant that cultural nationalism has been an important part of these high school struggles, which involve tens of thousands of young people from the most oppressed sector of the working class. The awareness of the cultural heritage of black people and the attempt of the capitalists to deny their identity has been one of the most important teachings of Malcolm X. Because it was he who, upon grasping the history of black people and how it had been falsified by the capitalists, sought to educate black people against this fraud of the capitalists and teach them their true history.

The nationalist sentiment has reached other areas. We see it in the trade union movement, as the memorandum adopted by the Political Committee indicates. I urge all comrades to read this memorandum on black caucuses in the trade unions. It indicates the impact that nationalist sentiment is going to have inside the union movement.

We have already seen the formation of black caucuses within the union movement which fight against discrimination and deal with other problems in the unions. The nationalist sentiment is beginning to bring a new dimension to the struggle within the union movement. One example, of course, has been the development in Detroit. There are others that are taking place. Here in the New York area, one year after the assassination of Dr. King, a bunch of black workers closed down a plant to commemorate his death.

We must recognize that when we speak of the nationalist sentiment spreading throughout the black community it has an effect on the black workers because the majority of the workers who are going into basic industries now, into the heavy industry, are young workers, most of whom are part of the radicalization which is taking place. And they take with them this nationalist sentiment, and as a result of this they are bringing a new momentum to the opposition to the bureaucrats and setting the process into motion which will begin the transformation of the entire union movement.

The nationalist sentiment of the black workers within the union movement will also have an effect on the political arena. As the idea of the organization of an independent black political party begins to spread, it will have repercussions within the union movement to the extent of breaking the Democratic labor-black coalition, thereby posing a basic crisis for the union leadership.

Now, the comrades who were at the trade union panel last night heard reports, from the Twin Cities, from Detroit, and in the important remarks by Comrade

Lovell, of the ferment taking place within the union movement. They described the unity of black workers, the black caucuses, and along with this, all kinds of questions which are being brought to the fore. And we are seeing that the new radicalism is beginning to have an effect on the white workers in some areas of the union movement.

The radical sentiment has also been reflected in the opposition to the war by black GIs. You see more and more indications of black GIs within the army who are opposing the war in Vietnam, and who are forming organizations to express their opposition to the war.

Now this raises a very important concept that I think we should be aware of. We have indicated that the nationalist sentiment is reflected in all areas of the black community -- the unions, the army and so forth -- and that an independent black political party can draw together all aspects of the black struggle and orient it in a political direction toward bringing about a fundamental change.

But up to now in the attempts to organize a black political movement, this drawing together of different aspects of the struggle has not occurred. In our activities, the antiwar movement and the struggles for self-determination are the two focal points of struggle within this country. What has to be brought about is a recognition of the need to bring together and unite the struggles. There is a very fundamental basis for this. We need to fight against any kind of notion that there are two separate struggles -- the "white" antiwar movement on the one hand, and the black struggle on the other. It is the capitalists and the capitalist ruling class which are responsible for sending black GIs into other lands to kill or be killed, to defend capitalism's profits. Blacks are being sent in to oppose the colonial revolution. These are the same capitalist rulers who are responsible for denying black people their right to self-determination here in this country. The point is, it is the same enemy.

We need to draw all the available forces together into one gigantic fight against the capitalist ruling class. The vehicle to do this is an independent black political party. Now, the leadership of the black liberation struggle at this time has not had the consciousness to carry out this task of relating and unifying these struggles. It will take the most conscious leaders within the black liberation struggle to recognize and understand and be able to articulate and carry out this task. And that section or that conscious leadership is our black and Third World cadres here in the Social-

ist Workers Party. Because what we have learned, and what was reflected in the discussions in the trade union panel, is that the question of the war is being discussed almost anywhere you go, that the question of the struggle for the right to self-determination is being discussed, that the struggles in the schools are being discussed, that the struggles in the army are being discussed. With the radicalization that is taking place, all questions are open for discussion.

And it is in this connection that we see the power embodied in our Transitional Program for Black Liberation. It addresses itself to the need for an independent black political party. It poses the question of the absence of program as a weakness within the black struggle and at the same time puts forth the kind of transitional demands that meet the immediate needs of black people in the various struggles that are taking place now and orients them toward a perspective of taking the power away from the capitalist class. This program will arm our comrades against the reformists, against the ultraleftists, and at the same time places our comrades in a position to intervene effectively in whatever struggles that emerge.

I don't mean that in the sense of calling for a whole new orientation. That's not what I'm presenting here. The main arenas of work are still the campuses and the high schools. But what I am proposing here is a new consciousness and a new alertness to the opportunities that are opening up everywhere, in all areas. By being alert we can address ourselves to any struggle that is taking place, and this is a test for revolutionaries. Our comrades, our cadres are in a position to help in directing the struggles that are taking place.

Our party has Third World and black work fractions which can play a role. With the circulation of our transitional program throughout the black liberation movement -- and it has been indicated by reports from the branches over a period of time that it has already been circulated -- our comrades are in a position to have something to give, something to take to the struggles that are going on in the black community, something that can give a real conscious direction to these struggles.

Our task is still basically to build the revolutionary movement in this country, to utilize our most powerful weapon, which is our ideas, to achieve the task of organizing and educating and mobilizing the American working class to fulfill its historical task of overturning capitalism and bringing into being a new social system, which is socialism.

We can utilize our election campaigns as we have been doing in the past, but with the new radicalization we can have a greater impact. An example of this is the formation of such organizations as Afro-Americans for Lodico to organize Afro-American youth around our election campaigns.

To bring people to our movement, to educate, to train, to send them out again, to broaden our ideas and influence within the mass movement -- this is our goal. Selling The Militant and the selling of all our literature remains an important part of this. The organization of classes to teach and train new and younger comrades as they come into our movement is also important.

With this new radicalization, and with our program, we can be more aggressive in intervening in struggles that are taking place. We need to combine this with more internal communication, with more exchange of experiences of comrades in different areas of work in the Third World and black struggles. The main thing is that our program our transitional program, represents what the serious black militants and potential revolutionaries need. It's up to us to get it to them.

I agree with the comments made by Paul Boutelle earlier about the need to change our thinking just a little bit. We have got to get away from the way that we used to think when the opportunities weren't so great. The point is, we're revolutionaries, we have a program. We've got a program for the working class, for the union movement, for the youth, and a program for black GIs who are in opposition to the war, as well as a program to meet the needs of those participating in the struggle for higher and better education in this country. So that we are armed with a program directed to all aspects of the struggle.

What I mean, put in another way, is this. I think that there is a little bit of a tendency to think that if you are working on the campus, you are just working on the campus, if you are working in the antiwar movement, you are just working in the antiwar movement, you know, with these kinds of closed categories of work. We need to have a greater consciousness of the relationship of all of the struggles as they unfold. For example, the question of opposition to the war is something we can discuss in the unions, in the army, in the community, and in the schools. When we speak of the question of the struggle for self-determination, this likewise can be discussed in any arena of work that we will be participating in.

There is no need to go out of our way, so to speak, to adapt our positions to any of the sectarians or opportunists amongst the nationalists. We are in a position to discuss with hundreds of newly radicalizing youth, to discuss with them politically, to discuss program, to discuss the organization of an independent black political party, to discuss making a revolution. And any nationalist who is serious will discuss these things. Those who are interested only in doing their thing, we are not interested in them most likely anyway.

So that we have a chance now, with the new openings that have taken place, to begin to recruit, to begin to expand

our ideas, to expand our publications, and to build our movement. And one of the key cogs in this wheel is the black and Third World fractions, along with our program which I mentioned earlier.

Now we know our program and our ideas are being read. This is reflected in the literature sales, in the sale of Merit publications. Our ideas are being read; they're being discussed. And it is up to us to get to those who are reading our ideas, who are discussing our ideas, and to offer a perspective to those serious black and Third World militants who are interested in overturning capitalism and creating a socialist society.

SUMMARY OF TRADE UNION PANEL REPORT AND DISCUSSION

(23rd National SWP Convention, 1969)

By Frank Lovell

About 200 convention delegates and visitors were present; the exact number who were union members is not known, but we do know that there were present members from the auto union, steel workers, the building trades (carpenters, painters, electricians, iron workers), longshoremen (ILWU -- west coast), printers, railroad workers, teamsters, teachers, social service workers, and others. It is probably more informative to mention that our records show none present who are now active in saw mill and lumber workers unions, seamen's unions, mine workers unions, rubber workers unions.

The panel report proceeded from the social and political changes in the past two years, since the time of the last SWP convention. These changes, as reflected in the unions, are an influx of young workers and black workers into industry. Such changes in the work force have automatically changed the composition of the unions, resulting in a shift in the numerical weight and political influence of black workers, especially in heavy industry.

There has also been a marked change in the general political climate of the country, brought on by the political crisis of the employing class which is reflected in its inability to face up to the problems of the dragged-out war in Vietnam.

The inflationary spiral, causing a general decline in the standard of living of working class families, is now adding great pressure to the social unrest that affects all classes in society today. There is a feeling of impending change, something is about to happen. This finds expression in the unions in many different forms:

(1) The appearance of rank and file caucuses at the local level. This is common in the UAW and in the past has simply been a tussle between the "ins" and the "outs" with hardly any other difference between them. Now we see some genuine issues beginning to appear such as the character of the UAW grievance procedure and the wage policy (emasculatation of the escalator clause). In other unions where caucus formations are uncommon, the appearance now of rank and file caucuses reflects genuine dissatisfaction among the membership.

(2) The appearance of the all-black caucus. This is something new, representing the militant mood of black workers. The character of these caucuses and the

leaders who are now developing is revealed in the interview with Kenny Horston that appeared in the August 4, 1969 Militant.

(3) The black power movement against the Jim Crow practices of the construction industry and the building trades unions. This movement is organized outside the organized union movement, but it is having some effect within the unions. Pickets in Chicago closed down 20 big construction jobs, demanding 10,000 jobs for black workers. In Pittsburgh the Black Construction Coalition has forced the construction industry and the craft unions to open negotiations for jobs. These actions by locked-out black workers have received a much more favorable response from union men outside the building trades than the black pickets yet know about.

(4) New unions and the expansion and transformation of others that for years were dormant. Over the past two or three years we have seen the rapid growth of unions for municipal workers, hospital workers, social service workers, teachers.

The combined effect of all these developments is noticeable in many unions at the local level and also within the top bureaucratic structures.

On the local level there have been changes in the officers, often with little change in the standard policy, practices and procedures of the locals. But a very different attitude on the part of local officers has developed. Some of the old arrogance is gone. Many local union officers are more likely to listen to serious rank and file members these days, including those who express what used to be thought "radical" ideas such as an escalator clause in the wage agreement, shorter hours of work with no loss in take-home pay, a strong stand against the war in Vietnam.

There have been serious rifts within the top bureaucracies of several large unions including Steel, Electrical (IUE), Rubber, and now the Mine Workers. The most recent and most serious crack in the top union bureaucracy is the Reuther-Meany split, followed by the formation of the Alliance for Labor Action. This development is reported in The Militant, September 5, 1969.

We must ask what all this indicates for us. What can members of the Socialist Workers Party do in the changing union situation today? What is the relation be-

tween these unions and our party? How can the party -- in the final analysis and over the long haul -- influence the political development of these unions?

These are the questions the Trade Union Panel must discuss. We do not come to this discussion cold. We have a certain body of collective experience, and the comrades in the National Office have followed in detail all the developments outlined here. The result is that we already have some guideline documents.

Convention folders include the PC memorandum adopted April 18, 1969, titled "Black Caucuses in the Trade Unions," Discussion Bulletin, Vol. 27, No. 11. We also have a "Memorandum on Trade Union Policy" adopted at the May 1968 plenum of the National Committee. Both documents deserve careful study by anyone involved in union work.

The task of the reporter here at this panel is simply to indicate the general attitude we have developed toward some of the rather important -- and constantly recurring -- tactical and strategic problems, as follows:

(1) The trade union bureaucracy, including local officers. The tendency is always to attack the fakers because this gets a ready following these days. Most union members would like to get rid of the do-nothing friends of the boss who manage to stay in office year after year. And most local union caucuses are formed on this basis. Kick out the incompetents and get someone different. When such moves succeed, the newly elected "different" officials usually turn out to be not much better.

The truth is that the bureaucracy is well entrenched and retains its positions of power by means of close association with the employers. Some of the more cunning of these bureaucrats are now adjusting to the new times, and have become self-critics.

A recent article in the Detroit Free Press illustrates this: "Walter Philip Reuther is too often out of touch, too inaccessible, trapped by the bureaucracy around him, and for all his liberalism, he's an establishment man. This sharp appraisal of the president of the 1.6 million-member United Auto Workers comes from a well-informed inside source -- Reuther himself."

The bureaucrats have acquired a good deal of experience and know how to handle situations that might appear to strike at their very existence, even to turn this to advantage. The "wildcat" strike is an example. The top union officials deal with such situations in close

collaboration with the company representatives. Their established pattern is to let the workers remain out for a few days to "blow off steam" and then coax them back to work with the promise that working conditions will improve. In the process a few of the militants, very often those who are a thorn in the side of the union officials, are fired.

We have learned to be wary of caucus formations and sporadic actions aimed against the officialdom as the main target.

(2) Legitimate union demands. There are many legitimate union demands that develop today which we want to identify with and become prominent supporters of. Such demands are easily recognizable. They are aimed straight at the class enemy.

Sometimes this type demand develops and is raised outside the unions. The Black Coalition in Chicago, now demanding 10,000 new jobs in the construction industry of that city, is pressing a demand that we must support and help to win by explaining that it can and should be coupled with a reduction in the hours of work with no loss in take-home pay. In this way we show how the fight of black workers for more jobs benefits all workers.

The simple demand for higher wages, especially in this period of inflation, can be useful to us. The recent experience in Minneapolis where our comrades led a fight to break the national wage pattern in the printing trades is a case in point. In the UAW wage negotiations next year (1970) we hope to help organize rank and file demands for restoration of a meaningful escalator clause in the union contract.

These demands are clearly directed to the employers. And in this fight we have something to offer the more impatient militants who are inclined to begin with an attack on the union officials for not having pushed these demands. It is always better to avoid this whenever possible. Our success depends upon how well the rank and file can be organized to win the demand. And however apparent it may be that the union officials are dragging their feet and even helping the employers, in the end it is the employers who must sign the contract and pay the new wage scale.

Our tactic is to expose the weakness of the union officials and, if possible, to get some of them to go along with the demands of the rank and file.

(3) Rifts in the bureaucracy. The bureaucracy is now subject to many dif-

ferent pressures, both inside and outside the unions. These pressures -- political and economic -- often throw the union officialdom into what appears to be self-contradictory positions -- or they appear to be saying one day exactly the opposite of what they said the day before.

This opens the possibility and makes it necessary for us to begin talking about broader social questions. Here, in this connection, we should review a short list of our transitional demands. Many of these are included also in our Transitional Program for Black Liberation.

* Rank and file control. (This does not mean that we are demanding that every single union official be immediately replaced, only that the rank and file make itself heard and begin now to participate in a decision-making way.)

* Escalator clause in all contracts, formulated to keep wages fully abreast of rising prices.

* Reduction of the work week with no cut in pay.

* Full wages for unemployed, including youth unable to find a place in the labor force.

* The unconditional right to strike. (We would eliminate the no-strike clause that now goes into most union contracts as a matter of course.)

* Complete union independence from government control.

* Equal rights for all workers in the union and on the job.

* Full union support to the Afro-American struggle in every sphere.

* Immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam.

* Complete break with capitalist politics and formation of an independent labor party based on the unions.

This list is not all the transitional demands we can raise. And conversely, there is nothing that says we must raise all these -- not all at once, anyway. But what is important to remember is that we are not concerned simply with shop problems -- questions of speedup, overtime, even pay raises. These may become very important at times, but they must always be related to the more basic questions involving social change. This directly concerns the plight of the union bureaucrats today. Such basic questions are very commonly brought up now, sometimes by the very union spokesmen from whom it could least be expected.

Frank Fitzsimmons, head of the teamsters union, spoke about youth and the war in Vietnam at the founding convention of the Alliance for Labor Action in Washington, D.C. May 26: "We find the youth of the nation up in arms over an unpopular war in Vietnam, up in arms over the billions of dollars this country spends annually to carry on this war in the Far East, when our own people go begging right here at home. This war, the bane and the plague of both Democratic and Republican administrations, must be stopped, and must be stopped soon."

Such statements are very useful to us. They open up many questions besides the war issue. Why are neither Democrats nor Republicans able to end the war? Why do the unions not intervene to end the war? How can they intervene?

There is no reason why we should not talk quite openly about the war, the need to demonstrate against it -- and in some instances we may be able to get the local union to support antiwar demonstrations. We will get a more ready following among many young workers on this issue than something to do with some long-standing shop problem.

In this way, by drawing upon our transitional program for guidance, we can take advantage of the rifts and splits in the union bureaucracy in order to advance our basic program of social revolution.

(4) General propaganda and "trade union work." We now find it very easy to sell Militants at plant gates. There is a great advantage to this, especially if comrades or friends of the party are working in the plant. We find out right away what the general reaction is and we learn who is most receptive to our general program. We find, also, that we can distribute antiwar literature to advantage -- especially if we have a comrade working in the plant.

It is not advisable for worker comrades to sell in front of the shops where they work because The Militant covers many issues that they would not wish to introduce into shop discussions at a given moment and under certain conditions. Moreover, the sale of The Militant by others enables the comrade in the plant to participate in such discussions without being completely identified and forced to take a last-ditch position on every single thing that may be brought up by some company stooge.

The sale of Militants at plant gates makes it possible for us now to recruit young workers directly from the shops.

(5) The labor party question. This

question comes up in nearly all our discussions in the shops today. It is a natural. It is central to all our propaganda work in the unions -- but it remains propaganda work. It is still too early for us to begin talking about labor party clubs in the unions -- or if we sometimes project these as a possibility for the future, the time is not yet ripe to undertake the actual formation of such clubs.

(6) Our general attitude now in the unions. We cannot hope to anticipate every situation that may arise, but we ought to have a general attitude to guide us in our judgement of what to do. In this respect the memorandum on trade union policy adopted in May 1968 is specific and retains its validity today:

"Although objective conditions are improving, our prospects in the trade unions at present remain modest. The key task is still one of propaganda and education aimed toward formation of left wing forces around a class struggle program. Since the workers are not yet ready for a general showdown with the bureaucrats, it is necessary to steer clear of premature power struggles in the unions. Critical support to an oppositional ticket may be in order here and there as a step toward loosening up bureaucratic control over the ranks. Concerning our comrades participating in power caucuses and running for union posts, the question must always be put: will it help or will it cut across building left wing forces around a class struggle program? On this point delicate matters of timing may sometimes arise. In such cases appropriate tactics should be worked out in consultation with the party. In addition, wherever comrades are involved in trade union situations, the party should be kept informed of significant developments as an aid to the assessment of general trade union trends."

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In the discussion Comrade Ferguson explained how ITU Local 42 in Minneapolis managed to break the national wage pattern in the printing industry (Militant news coverage, September 5). There a single-issue caucus was formed to win a \$1-an-hour raise. "Despite the red-baiting and slander attacks of the local bureaucrats," the caucus kept the single-issue alive -- \$1 an hour more pay. The caucus finally won the demand and, having won it, disbanded. It had served its purpose. And just to make sure that everyone retained a feeling of satisfaction, the caucus treasurer paid off \$1.40 on every \$1.00 contributed to the caucus.

This report was most enjoyable to many who have often worked in some deadly caucus that always ends up with a slate

of candidates for local union jobs, and usually disbands or sinks into inactivity when the union election is over and nothing is accomplished regardless of which slate of candidates wins.

The advantage of the way our work was handled in Minneapolis is that we avoided a showdown fight with local officials, managed to win the sympathy of some of them, and gained authority for our comrade and his associates. He is now in a position to undertake other actions as the opportunities arise.

The lessons from the experience as listed by Comrade Ferguson are the following: (1) in this area of work young comrades can learn from the older comrades who have had past experience; (2) the rank and file in the unions seek organization; (3) what we learn in the antiwar movement is applicable in the trade unions, i.e., the single-issue tactic; (4) practical skills such as how to get out a leaflet are greatly appreciated by other workers who have had no experience; (5) the younger union members are ready for action and if properly led can command the respect of older members (in the \$1-an-hour caucus, few were over 40); (6) a union fraction can work effectively only in close collaboration with the party branch and the more experienced comrades; (7) ultraleft tactics are the sure road to failure.

Comrade Mackler reported on experiences in Local No. 2, United Federation of Teachers, and the seven-week New York teachers strike against community control of the schools in black and Puerto Rican areas. Because of the large number of teachers and the considerable interest among them a separate meeting attended by approximately 20 comrades was arranged. At this meeting a mailing list was compiled by Comrade Mackler for the dual purpose of placing all teachers on the New Coalition caucus mailing list and circulating among all teacher comrades any item of useful union information.

In discussion the following consensus developed: (1) there are many ways teachers can support the antiwar movement, and participation in demonstrations is possible and desirable; (2) involvement in teacher caucus formations or in union organizing projects should be decided in accordance with local SWP branch needs; there is no national teachers fraction and none is projected or warranted at this time; (3) normal party-building work should be carried on at all times when relating to teachers, i.e., individual contacts, Militant sub sales, forum announcements, etc.

At the Trade Union Panel discussion Comrade Halstead stressed the need to involve unions officially in the antiwar

demonstrations. He explained that this is becoming altogether possible now, and that even when such efforts fail they attract the interest and support of larger circles of union members who will participate in the demonstrations.

Richard Hill described the Chicago demonstrations of black workers at the building sites in that city (Militant,

September 12).

Merit publications of special interest to comrades in the union movement:

(1) On the Trade Unions, by Leon Trotsky.

(2) A Political Biography of Walter Reuther, by Beatrice Hansen.