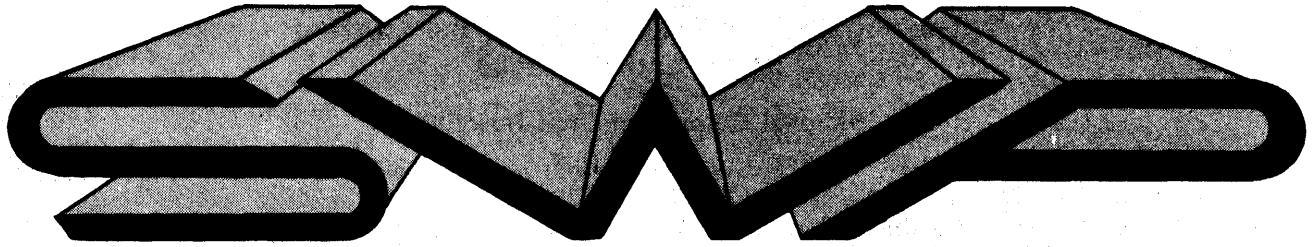


*Part 5.*



# Discussion Bulletin

Published by

**SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY**

14 Charles Lane, New York, N.Y. 10014

Vol. 33, No. 2  
May 1975

## Contents

	<b>Page</b>
<b>THE FIGHT FOR BLACK LIBERATION, THE CURRENT STAGE AND ITS TASKS, National Committee Draft Resolution, May 2, 1975</b>	2
<b>A LETTER ON NATION, NATIONALITY, AND NATIONAL MINORITIES, by Gus Horowitz</b>	14

35 cents

# The Fight for Black Liberation, the Current Stage and its Tasks

## National Committee Draft Resolution

May 2, 1975

More than 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation and twenty years since the Supreme Court decision outlawing school desegregation—racism, discrimination, and *de facto* segregation still exclude Afro-Americans from equal political, social and economic opportunities.

Despite the attempts of apologists for the status quo to demonstrate that Blacks have made significant and steady progress, the facts show the opposite.

The disparity between the income of Black families and white families increased 3 percent between 1969 and 1973, and the yearly income of the average Afro-American family was \$123 lower in 1973 than in 1972.

Black unemployment has been consistently twice as high as white unemployment since the Korean War. Government statistics placed Black unemployment at the end of 1974 at more than 12.8 percent compared to the overall figure of 7.1 percent. Blacks who do get jobs tend to be segregated into lower paying positions with worse working conditions.

Even more revealing is the unemployment level among Black youth. In 1973 the Department of Labor estimated that unemployment for Black teenagers was 30 percent, about two-and-a-half times the rate for white teenagers. Growing numbers of bourgeois reporters put the figure well over 60 percent today.

Schools in the Black community are bad, and cuts in state and federal funds will make them worse. The high pushout rates and low reading scores register the effects of systematic discrimination in education. Blacks are shunted away from courses that lead toward college or better-paying salaried and industrial jobs. The educational blight in the Black community helps breed the disillusionment and hopelessness that have driven tens of thousands of Black youth to drugs for escape.

Discrimination makes it difficult to buy or rent decent housing. Most Blacks are crowded into segregated neighborhoods with inferior apartments or homes at exorbitant costs.

The police prey upon the Black communities. While protecting and profiting from rent-gouging landlords and organized crime, the cops harass, shake down, beat up, and murder Blacks. Special tactical squads, ostensibly established to cut down crime, are used to terrorize Blacks. Blacks are more victimized by crime in general than whites.

The miserable situation that Blacks are forced to live in is exacerbated by every economic crisis. The high cost of living, along with massive layoffs that make it even more difficult to get jobs, hit doubly exploited Black workers especially hard.

The ruling class is trying to divert from themselves the responsibility for the growing social crisis of American capitalism by whipping up racist prejudices against all non-whites—Blacks, other oppressed minorities, and non-white foreign-born workers. This reinforces the present campaign to roll back concessions and rights won by Black people in their struggles during the 1960s.

These wretched conditions persist in spite of the civil

rights struggles and ghetto revolts of the 1950s and 1960s, the largest and most powerful movement of Blacks in the United States since Reconstruction. This shows how deep-rooted racial oppression is and points to the power needed to uproot it.

### Racism and capitalism

Racial oppression of Blacks has been a pillar of capitalist rule since the founding of the United States. Its historical roots are in the slave-labor system that was the basis for the Southern plantation economy until the Civil War. Anti-Black prejudice originated to justify the enslavement of Blacks. In the North racial discrimination and prejudices were reinforced by the existence of slavery in the South and by proslavery governments in Washington.

But racial oppression against Blacks did not disappear with the abolition of slavery. Instead it continued in new forms. After the Civil War and Reconstruction it was retained for use by the industrial capitalist class, forerunner of the present-day monopoly capitalists. In the South this took the form of the apartheid-like system of Jim Crow laws. In the country as a whole it took the form of discrimination and *de facto* segregation in virtually every aspect of life. And although the Black upsurge of the 1960s smashed the Jim Crow system, racial oppression continues to be a fundamental feature of American capitalism.

Racism has been retained because it economically benefits and politically strengthens the capitalist rulers. It is one of their essential weapons in dividing the working class.

Blacks, who in their overwhelming majority are workers, are also part of capitalism's industrial reserve force of unemployed. As the last hired and first fired they function as an auxiliary labor force from which workers can be drawn during periods of economic upswing. At all times their lower wages help depress the wage levels of all workers.

The billions of additional dollars the capitalists reap as a result of racial oppression is very substantial. In addition to weakening the labor movement and helping to depress wage levels, racial discrimination means that Blacks receive a much smaller proportion of the national income than whites.

In 1971, for example, Black income was 46 billion dollars. This was 6.6 percent of the total income for the country. However, Black people were 11.3 percent of the total population. If Black people had received 11.3 percent of the total income—their proportionate share—then their income for 1971 would have been an additional 32.6 billion dollars. These billions go into the coffers of the ruling rich.

Billions are also made by charging Blacks higher rents for rotten housing. Billions more are diverted to other uses by the rulers by not providing decent schools and other social services for Black people.

The capitalists try to make white workers believe that their relatively better conditions compared to Blacks can be maintained by keeping Blacks down rather than by

fighting the domination of the capitalists. To the extent they hold this attitude, white workers are led to view the unions as white job-trusts, which undercuts the development of class consciousness and solidarity, and the advancement of all workers.

The results can be seen in the racist attitudes of top trade union bureaucrats. Leaders of the construction unions, for example, strongly oppose admitting Blacks into the skilled building trades. Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, one of the most prominent white job-trusters, has won a national reputation as an opponent of preferential hiring of Blacks and other oppressed minorities, and of the struggles of oppressed minorities for improving or controlling their schools.

These reactionary policies have weakened trade unions by depriving them of the support they could receive from Blacks and other minorities.

By injecting racist prejudices into the white working class in order to create suspicions, hatred, and conflicts, the ruling class divides and weakens the working class as a whole and reinforces reaction. They brand an entire section of the working class as pariahs and try to get relatively better-off workers to view this layer as "them" rather than "us."

By undermining class solidarity the capitalists try to get racist-minded whites to tolerate high unemployment, rundown housing, and bad schools in the Black community as a product of Black "inferiority."

This helps convince white workers to accept the large-scale Black poverty and unemployment that would otherwise seem shocking to them, given the high level of wealth in American society. This is especially true during a depression or recession when the conditions of Blacks relative to whites are worsened.

The national oppression of Black people also reinforces the political rule of the capitalist class by fostering reactionary political ideas.

Racism has proved a useful ideological prop for justifying U.S. imperialist oppression of non-white peoples in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. The fact that the Japanese are a people of color was used by the American rulers to win acceptance for dropping atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Likewise, racism was utilized to make the savage atrocities committed against the Korean and then the Vietnamese people appear less heinous to the American people.

Whites who believe that their school, housing and job problems can be solved by keeping Blacks out, are echoing the rulers' concept that the only way change can take place is within the guidelines dictated by the capitalist regime. This runs contrary to the truth that these problems can be solved only by struggling against the capitalist class, not against Blacks.

The ruling class tries to convince white workers that they have a *racial* interest as whites opposed to Blacks, rather than a *class* interest as workers opposed to the capitalists.

Racism is also used to whip up support for increasing political repression and restricting the democratic rights of all workers. Racist codewords such as "law and order" and "crime in the streets" have been used to justify strengthening police forces and restricting civil liberties.

Racial discrimination provides a social basis for extrale-

gal violence against Blacks and others fighting against capitalist oppression. This can be seen in the racist mobs mobilized in Boston against busing. Violence of this type has also encouraged smaller right-wing groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis to more aggressively distribute their hate-mongering literature and launch terrorist attacks against Blacks and their supporters. Capitalist politicians—both liberal and conservative—bear a large share of the responsibility for these attacks—both for retreating on the question of school desegregation and for refusing to arrest and convict the racist terrorists. This shows that their real interests are not in helping Blacks achieve equality and that Blacks cannot rely on the capitalist politicians to realize their goals.

During periods of extreme political and economic crisis, when capitalist political rule is threatened, modern capitalism is forced to rely on extra-legal violence to roll back and crush the working class movement. In Germany, Italy, Spain, and other countries it utilized mass fascist movements to terrorize and smash the unions and working class parties, demoralize the working class, and end all political rights including those of oppressed nationalities.

As the class struggle sharpens in this country and the ruling class feels more threatened by a radicalized labor movement, it will increasingly encourage fascist demagogues and preachers of race hatred. They will attempt to make Blacks the scapegoats for capitalism's ills and take advantage of every source of friction to inflame white prejudices and incite whites against Blacks. Racism is a spawning ground for, and will be an integral part of, fascist ideology and fascist movements.

If the working class is not united against capitalist attacks, it will be crushed. Unity can be achieved only by winning the workers' movement to a policy of complete and unconditional support to the struggle of Afro-Americans.

The privileged position of whites relative to Blacks has made the question of how working class unity will be attained more difficult for those proposing Black liberation through a socialist revolution.

The possibility of overcoming this difficulty is easier to grasp if it is recognized that this society is not only divided along national lines—between oppressed nationalities and the white majority, but is objectively even more deeply divided along class lines, between the capitalist class and the workers. In fact, the key function of racist oppression is to divide and weaken the working masses and bolster the system of class exploitation.

Thus white and Black workers have a very significant thing in common—an enemy that economically and politically dominates them and benefits from their divisions. Some white workers will only recognize this common problem when they learn by bitter experience that racial divisions result in defeats for them.

Unity will not be achieved by Blacks subordinating their struggle for equality to the present racist setup, but by white workers supporting Black rights. This process will be advanced by the Black struggle itself as it mobilizes for its own democratic demands and for class demands which express the interests of all working people. A strong, independent Black movement with its own organizations and caucuses will increase the prospects of winning respect and support from white workers.

## Combined Character of the American Revolution

The centuries of oppression of Black people have welded them into a distinct nationality with an identity that differentiates them from both other oppressed nationalities in this country and from white Americans. Consciousness of their national identity has deepened with the urbanization and proletarianization of Black people in this century.

The Black struggle has a dual character, flowing from the class and national aspects of Black oppression. On the one hand, Blacks are fighting against the oppression they face as a people, as a nationality. On the other, they are fighting against their exploitation as workers. These two aspects of their struggle are deeply intertwined. The oppression that Blacks face as a people is conditioned by their largely proletarian status, and the exploitation of Blacks as workers becomes superexploitation as a result of their oppression as Blacks.

The Black struggle has been a permanent component at the center of political life in America. Despite ups and downs, setbacks and diversions, the general tendency has been toward greater Black self-confidence in asserting demands. Every wave of Black militancy in the 20th century has led the most militant fighters, like Malcolm X, to develop anticapitalist convictions as they saw America's capitalist rulers in their dual role as both class and national enemies to Black people.

The spread of Black nationalism over the past thirty years and the growing radicalization of Afro-Americans has confirmed Trotsky's prediction that Blacks "are convoked by the historic development to become a vanguard of the working class." The Black struggle has surged ahead during the past decades while the labor movement remained relatively quiescent.

Blacks will play a leading role in the development of a class-struggle left wing in the unions and in the political radicalization of the working class. Their importance is indicated by the strategic place of Blacks in the working class—their concentration in basic and service industries, their growing importance in the major industrial centers of the country, and their numerical weight. The nationalist self-identity and self-reliance of Blacks will not diminish in importance as organized labor regains its militant character. As labor begins to move Black people will become even more outspoken and militant in their demands for human rights. The power of an insurgent labor movement will inspire Blacks with greater confidence to push ahead with this struggle.

The heightened political consciousness and independent struggle of the Black movement will make it a powerful force *along side of* and *intertwined with* the labor movement in the struggle against capitalist oppression and exploitation.

The coming American revolution has the job of winning equality and freedom from racial oppression for Blacks along with the liberation of the working class in its entirety from capitalist exploitation.

Fundamentally the revolutionary transformation will be working class in its social base, anticapitalist in its direction and program of action, and socialist in its aims and achievements. No other kind of social revolution is possible in an imperialist country of the twentieth century, least of all the United States.

Neither the first nor second American revolutions resulted in full equality for Black people. Although the

Civil War abolished chattel slavery, the Reconstruction period which followed did not bring land reform or any other type of economic and social transformation that could lift the mass of Afro-Americans out of the lowest depths of poverty and oppression. The bourgeois reaction in the last 1870s snatched political liberties won during the post-Civil War period from Afro-Americans, relegalized racial oppression and reduced Blacks to the condition of an intensely exploited pariah section of the toiling masses.

The equality that the capitalist class failed to extend at the height of its radicalism could certainly not be granted as it became a more and more hardened imperialist force. In fact, the rise of American imperialism created a *new* need for racism to serve as a justification for the superexploitation of, and brutal wars against, non-white peoples.

In the uneven development of the American people, Blacks have been cheated of their democratic rights even on a bourgeois basis. This uneven development and the limitations of America's bourgeois revolutions mean that the working class socialist revolution will be inescapably intertwined with the struggles of Blacks. The democratic task of providing equality, left over from the past, has been handed down to the present generation for solution. This historic default of the bourgeoisie has to be corrected by the progressive anticapitalist forces of our time.

This conforms to Leon Trotsky's theory of the permanent revolution which states that whatever progressive tasks the bourgeois revolutions have been incapable of carrying through have to be made good by the working class.

The size, social weight, and nationalist consciousness of the Black population indicate that the coming American revolution, as part of carrying through the democratic task of equalizing opportunities in all aspects of social life, will also be a revolution for the self-determination of Black people; that is, the Black people will have the right to decide for themselves what state form they need to guarantee their complete liberation from racial oppression. At this stage it is not clear what their decision will be—whether a federation of councils exercising community control of the Black community, a separate state, integration in a common state with whites, or some other solution. If it turns out that the legacy of racism and degree of oppression are so great that Blacks feel it is necessary to separate from this country and set up a separate Black state, it will not only be the obligation of the new workers state to defend the right of Black people to do this, but to provide all the material assistance necessary.

## The Defeat of Jim Crow

The Jim Crow system of legally sanctioned segregation, enforced by extra-legal terror, was created in the South as part of the defeat of Reconstruction. Its purpose was to provide cheap labor for the production of cotton and other agricultural crops formerly produced by slaves. The rights to vote, move, organize, speak, and assemble, won during Reconstruction, were taken away from Blacks. Every aspect of life was segregated by law. This entire social and juridical system was rigorously enforced by the police and courts.

This system molded Southern Blacks into a distinct oppressed grouping defined by race with legal and social

rights sharply circumscribed. Blacks were forced to work at very low wages, or as in the case of many sharecroppers for no wages at all.

This was different from the forms of national oppression and *de facto* segregation Black people faced in the North and now face in the South. Jim Crow aimed to exclude Southern rural Blacks from the free labor market in order to provide the type of cheap labor needed in Southern agriculture. *De facto* segregation, on the other hand, aims to keep Black people on or near the bottom of the free labor market. *De facto* segregation, which has existed in the North for years, has replaced legal segregation in the South. It is being consciously established in virtually every area of life by landlords, employers, school boards, city governments, and other ruling institutions.

While Jim Crow disenfranchised Southern Blacks, under today's *de facto* segregation the legal barriers to Blacks voting have been eliminated in the South. The ruling class attempts to politically subordinate Blacks in the South the same way they have been doing for years in the North, by deceiving them into voting for the capitalist politicians of the two party system.

The economic structure on which Jim Crow was based began to break down after World War II with the stepped up migration of Blacks to urban industrial centers and the big advances in the mechanization of Southern agriculture.

Despite these changes, the capitalists found it politically and economically useful to continue this form of racial oppression which reinforced racism in general and helped keep non-whites in all parts of the country as special pariah sectors of the industrial reserve army.

The 1954 Supreme Court decision declaring school segregation illegal, for example, was not prompted by a desire to end Jim Crow in education or anywhere else.

This ruling was intended as a face-saving measure because of two problems facing the ruling class.

The first was the embarrassment Jim Crow created for the rulers in their foreign relations and diplomatic maneuvers, especially with the countries of Africa and Asia. The American imperialists needed to make it appear that they were doing something about this social blight which most of the world viewed with horror.

A second factor was the rise in struggles for Black rights that followed the migration of Blacks to the urban centers in the 1930s and 1940s. Black people had already forced the government to establish fair employment laws in government jobs and to desegregate the armed forces by the time of the 1954 Supreme Court decision.

The central, although unintended, effect of this court decision was the encouragement it gave Blacks to launch a struggle that finally abolished the Jim Crow laws that legitimized segregation in the South. This struggle was also inspired by the victories of independence struggles in the colonial world.

The first of the major civil rights actions was the 1955 bus boycott by the Black community in Montgomery, Alabama. This set the pace for nearly ten years of demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, wade-ins, freedom rides, and other actions which involved masses of Blacks, students and other supporters of equality.

Some of the most significant developments during this period of struggle were the massive ghetto revolts that began with Birmingham in 1963 and led up to the

rebellions in almost every major city in 1968. These struggles displayed the massive anger that had developed in the Black community over the government's inability to give satisfactory answers to the demands posed by the civil rights movement and later Black struggles.

Advances in agricultural technology and the large-scale migration of Blacks laid the basis for the elimination of Jim Crow on an economic level. However, it required the massive extraparliamentary actions of the Black liberation movement to carry through the job.

Eliminating Jim Crow did not end racial oppression of Southern Blacks. But it cut out the legal justification for racial discrimination, putting the law formally on the side of Blacks fighting segregation in whatever form it appears. It opened the door to a new and more favorable stage of the struggle for social, economic and political gains.

Just as Jim Crow strengthened racism all over the country, its defeat was a blow to racists everywhere and spurred actions in Black communities throughout the country.

The struggle for the abolition of Jim Crow accelerated the struggle against *de facto* segregation that had been established outside the South. This posed the need for major social and economic changes in this country in a way that the struggle against Jim Crow did not.

The inability of the moderate civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. to deal with these problems and the limits of the civil rights victories in the mid-1960s led to the spread of Black power consciousness. This development also went under the names of Black nationalism and Pan Africanism.

The aim of Black power advocates tended toward establishing Black control over the economic, educational, political and cultural life of the Black community. This objective was concretized in the demand by masses of Afro-Americans for Black control over the Black community and the demand, by a smaller number, for a separate Black state. Black nationalism increased identification with the colonial and semicolonial countries, particularly in Africa. It also stimulated and increased interest in alternatives to capitalism and imperialism including socialism.

There were major community struggles around the demand for Black control of Black schools, widespread student actions, the emergence of Black caucuses in the unions and the Democratic Party, Black GI organizations, prison revolts, and Black power and nationalist conferences that drew thousands of militants.

This upsurge forced the ruling class not only to end the Jim Crow system in the South, but also to grant other concessions. These moves were made easier for the ruling class because of the economic boom of the early and middle 1960s.

Some better-paying industrial and white collar jobs were opened up to Black people. A small layer of Blacks was given executive positions in the government and private industry. However, most white collar jobs Blacks gained were in low-paying professions like teaching and social work. A much larger layer of Blacks is now employed in federal and municipal service jobs where they are concentrated in the lower-paying levels.

Larger numbers of Blacks are finishing high school and substantially more have been admitted to colleges and

universities since the mid-1960s. While many of these changes reflected shifts in the composition and character of the work force, others were also products of the struggle for civil rights and Black power.

Increased numbers of Black students made student actions a more important aspect of the Black struggle. In the last 1960s, Black students were able to win Black studies departments on many campuses, and the higher educational systems increased admission of Black students.

Due to these changes and the final stages of the migration of Blacks out of the rural South, there was a slight narrowing in the income differential between Blacks and whites during the middle 1960s. However, even during that period of economic improvement, the masses of Black people remained on the bottom of the economic ladder.

The power of the civil rights movement, the mass ghetto explosions, and the Black power struggles won respect for Blacks from many whites and helped break down racist prejudices. The civil rights movement, for example, was the spark for the student movement in the early 1960s. It helped prepare a new generation for the moral rejection of U.S. aggression and the oppression and alienation bred by American capitalism.

The struggles of the 1950s and 1960s significantly raised the political consciousness, self-identity and confidence of Black people. The struggle against Jim Crow, one of the forms of national oppression Black people have faced, passed over into a struggle against and recognition of other forms of national oppression. This, in turn, produced greater nationalist consciousness throughout the Black community and greater recognition of the fact that racism is an intrinsic part of the American system, not an aberration.

The net result of the victories and the new consciousness created by the civil rights movement and the Black power struggles was to substantially alter political life in the United States, and to improve the relationship of forces for Blacks and all oppressed and exploited nationalities, social groups, and classes.

### **Ruling Class Shift**

At the height of the Black struggles of the mid-1960s, particularly after the ghetto rebellions, the ruling class recognized that it had to change its strategy in regard to the Black community. This shift included granting the concessions that have already been enumerated. Taking advantage of the deficiencies in the leadership of the Black liberation movement at that time, the rulers' new strategy combined both cooptation and repression. Its aim was to break apart the militant civil rights and Black power movements of the time and channel them into the Democratic party and government apparatuses.

To maximize the power of the Black liberation struggle after the civil rights victories, the movement required a leadership willing to mobilize the masses of Afro-Americans around the problems facing them in their schools, communities, and work places. It needed a leadership willing to take the Black movement forward toward political independence from the Democrats and Republicans through the formation of a mass Black political party.

The Socialist Workers party has mapped out this type of program for the Black struggle. Its key elements are

contained in the *Transitional Program for Black Liberation*, adopted by the 1969 SWP convention. Despite the exemplary role played by the Trotskyists in Black student struggles, in involving Blacks in the antiwar movement, and in popularizing the demand for an independent Black political party, the Black Trotskyist cadres were too weak numerically to make up for the leadership deficiencies the Black struggle faced in the mid-1960s and early 1970s.

Most civil rights and Black power activists believed that the problems of the Black community could be solved through the capitalist system and the Democratic party. This trend stood in the way of the development of the Black liberation movement, because many tended to subordinate mass action to the goal of pressuring the Democrats. This view was shared by integrationists such as Martin Luther King Jr. and some nationalists such as the leaders of the Congress of Racial Equality.

More revolutionary minded militants were not able to develop an effective program to continue the mass struggles that led to the civil rights and Black power victories. Groups like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panther Party developed ultraleft strategies based on their misconceptions of the models of revolutions in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

This crisis of leadership was aggravated by the fact that demands for community control and the abolition of *de facto* segregation required more far-reaching social changes than did the struggle against Jim Crow. Today's tasks require a deeper understanding of the necessary relationship between racism and American capitalism, as well as more powerful social forces, than were required for the destruction of the Jim Crow laws which were no longer essential to the capitalists when the civil rights movement appeared in the 1950s.

### **Poverty Programs, Repression, and Democrats**

The government and ruling class counteroffensive against the Black struggle in the 1960s was centered around the poverty programs, repression, and opening up the Democratic party to Blacks.

President Johnson's "War on Poverty" was primarily a method for putting thousands of local Black leaders and potential leaders on the government payroll where they could be pressured to moderate their demands and methods. Others were corrupted by "grants" from private corporate and church foundations.

While the poverty programs have been curtailed during the economic downturn, they still keep thousands of Black activists on government payrolls, drawing many of them deeper into the government apparatus and the Democratic party.

Secondly, the ruling class opened up the doors of the Democratic party to Blacks on an unprecedented scale. This was a way of channeling the desire for Black political power that came out of the civil rights and Black power struggles into capitalist electoral activity. Thousands of Blacks now hold state and local elected office, and some have been appointed to posts in the top echelons of the party and the federal government.

Black mayors in several of the country's major cities symbolize the ruling class's strategy to shift the blame for



the "urban crisis" from decaying capitalism to supposedly "independent" Black capitalist politicians. Their attitude is symbolized by telling Blacks, "O.K., let's see one of *your* people do better."

The increased number of Black Democratic politicians has reinforced the illusion that progress for Blacks can be achieved by supporting Black Democrats and has encouraged the policy of confining struggles to limits acceptable to the Democratic party leadership.

Another obstacle in the way of developing a nationwide, struggle-oriented leadership has been the government's ferocious repression against Black leaders who threatened to take an independent course or projected the mobilization of the masses. This was particularly shown by the assassination of Malcolm X, the most promising Black revolutionary mass leader yet to appear.

The extent of this effort has been recently revealed with the release of documents from the FBI's Counterintelligence Program (COINTELPRO). Repression against SNCC and the Panthers was facilitated by the adventurist errors of these groups, especially their ultraleft rhetoric. Despite massive support for these victims of government persecution within the Black community and beyond, their ultraleft and sectarian attitudes made it difficult to organize an adequate campaign of defense against government repression.

The difficulties in developing a leadership prepared to cope with the government offensive were reinforced by the conservatism and stagnation of the labor movement for the quarter century following World War II. What this means can perhaps best be seen by imagining the impact an upsurge in the working class as a whole, with a powerful class struggle left wing development in the unions, would have on the Black movement.

An insurgent labor movement, fighting the same enemy Black people are fighting—the capitalist class—would by its very power offer encouragement and inspiration. It would end the present skepticism as to whether the working class will ever radicalize, and would pose the perspective of a majority of the American people struggling against the evils of capitalist society. As a minority of the population, Black people cannot topple capitalist rule and end racial oppression by themselves, even though they have shown that independent mobilization of their forces can have a powerful impact on American politics. The lack of a labor radicalization in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s contributed to the periodic frustration, cynicism, and hunts for shortcuts by many Black leaders.

## **The Current Stage**

The combined impact of the poverty programs, the disruption tactics, and the increase in elected Black Democrats has been to bring to a halt the tide of mass action and victories that began with the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott.

This does not mean that nationalist and radical consciousness in the Black community has been set back. In fact it has broadened and deepened since the 1960s.

What is lacking are the confidence and readiness to use mass action to move the struggle forward.

In the current economic crisis the state of disarray within the Black struggle makes it easier for the ruling class to launch new attacks on gains that have already been won by Black people.

Among the sharpest attacks today are those in response to attempts to desegregate schools by busing Black children to predominantly white schools. The antibusing forces were given a big boost by the Supreme Court decision in 1974 permitting the preservation of school segregation in Detroit. This ruling is an important step toward trying to reverse the 1954 decision declaring that separate schools for Blacks and whites are inherently unequal.

The aim of busing is to break down the inequality in education that prepares Blacks for inferior jobs. It asserts the democratic right of Black people to have access to facilities denied them by racial discrimination.

A ten-year effort has been organized by Boston's school board and city government to prevent school desegregation. This effort has served as a model for racist and reactionary forces throughout the country determined to hold back access of Blacks to decent education, housing and jobs. In Boston this racist offensive has made this city one of the hottest battlegrounds in the struggle for equality in education. Racist lynch mobs are demonstrating the boldness and magnitude of the antibusing efforts.

The racist forces, who sense that nationally the present leadership of the Black struggle is politically weak and atomized, are probing to test how far they can go. If the racists are successful in preventing school desegregation in Boston and other cities where busing plans are being implemented or planned, it will be a severe blow to the Black struggle. Not only would it set back the struggle for equal education, but it would demoralize and discourage those fighting for equality in housing and jobs, equal rights for women, bilingual education programs, and all others fighting for progressive social change. At the same time it would give the racists more confidence to push ahead.

The Boston racists have received the support of top leaders of the Democratic and Republican parties, including President Ford who sympathizes with their opposition to busing. Antibusing legislation supported by racist groups has been sponsored by congressional leaders from both the Republican and Democratic parties. The racism in Boston is thus not a local aberration, but part of a national campaign endorsed by the top leaders of American capitalism.

In the atmosphere created by the ruling class's drive against Black gains, theories of Black inferiority ranging from those of the Ku Klux Klan to more "scientific" myths are being peddled by William Shockley and others. Shockley has lectured on his racist theories at colleges and universities across the country. Klan and Nazi spokespersons are also finding more openness to their views.

If the civil rights movement and the Black power struggles demonstrated the enormous capacities of the Black struggle even without an adequate leadership, the past ten years of ruling class cooptation, repression and attacks have shown the limitations of the existing leaderships and the need to construct another one.

## **Present Trends and Organizations**

The more direct action oriented organizations like the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress on Racial Equality, and SNCC which led to civil rights movement have disappeared, split or significantly lost ground. Other groups, like the Black Panther Party,

that grew out of the Black power phase have suffered a similar fate. Black student organizations that were once centers for Black nationalist activity have been transformed in many cases from political organizations into purely social and cultural groups.

However a number of important organizations and trends remain which are both a reflection of the weakness of the Black struggle and of important new changes in the struggle.

1) The National Black Political Conventions held in Gary, Indiana, and Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1972 and 1974 rallied thousands of Black activists from all over the country. These gatherings confirmed the growing political awareness of Blacks and demonstrated the potential that exists for establishing a powerful national voice for Blacks. Unfortunately, the results were meager. The leadership of these conventions oriented the participants toward getting more Black Democrats elected rather than initiating and leading struggles. The National Black Agenda, a program of specific demands adopted at the Gary convention, was never utilized as a call to action by the National Black Assembly, the organization created by the convention.

2) Another attempt to establish a national voice was the Congressional Black Caucus. Consisting of the elected Black representatives in Congress, this group of Black Democrats drew up a program and promised to launch a campaign to fight for the needs of Black people. But not much ever came of it because the CBC's activities centered around personal advancement and getting along with fellow legislators. Thus it thought of mobilizing Black people as an obstacle.

On a local scale many Black elected officials are looked to by Blacks for leadership. But the primary orientation of the entire layer of Black Democrats is to convince Black people to rely on the Democratic Party to fight racism rather than on their own independent initiatives and struggle.

3) Since the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference has split and declined. The wing led by Ralph Abernathy no longer has the national standing that it did. However, the wing led by Jesse Jackson which has become Operation PUSH, has initiated some direct actions including nationally coordinated rallies against unemployment. It is attempting to expand nationally from its Chicago base. PUSH has a religious character and is heavily dominated by Jesse Jackson. It is deeply involved in Democratic party politics and played a major role in the efforts to get a Black Democratic candidate nominated for mayor in Chicago's 1975 election.

4) An important organized component of the Black struggle is in the trade unions. Large numbers of Blacks are concentrated in the auto, steel, and other basic industries, in service industries, and among public workers. This is reflected in predominantly Black memberships in some unions, the emergence of Black caucuses, and in the election of an increasing number of Blacks to official positions in the trade unions on a local and a union-wide level.

The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), organized on a national level, is an organization of Black trade-union officials. While it was organized in order to give support to McGovern's 1972 campaign, the CBTU has supported actions against Black oppression including the

December 14, 1974, demonstration against racism in Boston.

A number of Black women trade unionists have been active in the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW). Six to eight hundred Blacks attended that organization's founding conference in 1974. CLUW, which includes both officials and rank-and-file members, has taken stands in favor of Black rights in a number of local areas.

5) There are also some changes in the NAACP, the largest and oldest civil rights organization, and for a long time the dominant one. Many of its older leaders are cold-war liberals. However, in many chapters and among the national leadership, there is a new generation that became active during the rise of the new radicalization.

During the rise of the civil rights movement and Black power movements, the size and relative influence of the NAACP declined. Its failure, with some exceptions, to go beyond court action, however important that is at certain points, and take the lead in building mass actions, meant that the NAACP was outflanked and bypassed by more militant organizations.

The NAACP, however, despite its decline and loss of prestige among militants, remains the largest national Black organization, and has been thrust into current struggles. The work the NAACP has done in defending Black rights and gains in the courts made it an important component of struggles around issues like busing, housing, and jobs. The pressure of the racist offensive, and the difficulties of getting the government to enforce the law against segregation, are stimulating younger leaders to initiate mass actions like the May 17 demonstration in Boston, which was then supported by the national NAACP. They have also taken positions in defense of the Black community against those held by many liberals, social democrats, and union officials. For example, the discriminatory layoffs of Blacks during the current depression has led the NAACP into basic conflict with the top AFL-CIO bureaucracy, as the NAACP has opposed such discrimination while the bureaucracy has defended the utilization of seniority to carry it out.

6) A wing of the Black nationalists, particularly those that identify with Pan Africanism, are turning to socialist ideas. The impact of international revolutionary developments as well as the recognition that national oppression is intertwined with class exploitation are attracting more radical Black youth, particularly students, to socialism. Many take a favorable view of Maoism, mistakenly believing that it is genuine Marxism. Some belong to one or another of the many small Black Maoist groups; most don't belong to any organizations.

The most prominent leader among this layer is Amiri Baraka, who heads the Congress of African People. Baraka emerged as a spokesman of nationalist-minded students and youth in the late 1960s because he articulated what many felt about the dead-end ultraleftism of the Black Panther Party. His stature rose even higher as a result of his role in helping to elect Kenneth Gibson mayor of Newark in 1970.

He advocated forming an independent Black party, but proposed that this be done by working in and through the Democratic party and supporting certain Black Democrats. At the National Black Political Conventions in Gary and Little Rock he opposed the call for an independent Black party and oriented the participants toward supporting Democrats.



Once Mayor Gibson consolidated his power he didn't need Baraka and his organization any longer. He denied Baraka's supporters any positions of power within the Democratic administration and used the police to harass his organization. This experience along with his turn toward Maoism culminated in Baraka's break with Gibson in 1974.

So far none of these radical groupings or a coalition of them has developed the confidence, experience and methods to effectively challenge the hegemony of the pro-capitalist reformists who are holding back the struggle. One indication of this is the lack of attention by most of the radical groups—Pan Africanist to Maoist—to the fight against the racist drive to beat back school desegregation.

Nevertheless, this is an important ideological development we should become participants in.

### Counter the Racist Offensive

To overcome the problems facing the Black community, it is necessary to organize to counter the current racist offensive. The organizations and individuals willing to struggle should be brought together to help re-establish lost confidence in mass action and united struggle, and to awaken the Black community, the labor movement and their allies to the dangers presented by the racist offensive.

In preparing such countermobilizations, Black people are defending rights supposedly granted by law such as the right to desegregated education. They can build on the positive social and political consciousness that has been achieved by the Black struggle in past decades. Initial protest actions calling attention to the need to defend such rights are a necessary first step toward preparing future advances.

To carry out this objective united action coalitions of various groups and individuals involved in struggle should be formed. Such coalitions can rapidly expand to a national level given that the problems Black people face are national in scope and usually require a national action campaign to deal with them.

Local struggles are important and can make important gains, but they can be considerably strengthened by a powerful national opposition to racism.

A good example of this relationship is the development of coalitions against local antiracist struggles that were part of the national campaign to build the May 17, 1975, Boston demonstration called by the NAACP. While the focus of these local coalitions and the local chapters of the National Student Coalition Against Racism (NSCAR) was around the struggle in Boston, they linked that fight to others on a local scale whether it was student cutback struggles in New England and New York, the community control fight in New York City's School District 1, or busing struggles in Pasadena and other cities.

Through the organization of such united-front type actions and action coalitions, the fragmentation of the Black movement can begin to be overcome, and a new leadership emerge. Blacks can be remobilized and not only beat back the racist offensive, but make further gains on various fronts of the struggle.

Three of the most important issues facing Afro-Americans are the racist offensive in the areas of jobs, education and housing.

### Jobs

The question of job discrimination and unemployment, an important problem for Blacks during periods of prosperity, has become an even more pressing problem due to the current economic depression.

Massive support from Blacks should be organized for actions called by the labor movement for more jobs such as the April 26 demonstration in Washington. To combat unemployment of Blacks and other workers, an emergency public works program to create millions of socially useful jobs should be established. The workweek should be reduced with no reduction in pay to spread the work. These demands relate to the need for the labor movement to refuse to allow the capitalists to shove the burden of the economic depression on workers' backs.

Special measures are also needed to protect Black workers against discriminatory employment policies, and Blacks can take the lead in fighting for them. In many industries Black workers face discriminatory layoffs. This occurs especially where Blacks are the most recently hired. In some cases the bosses have used such layoffs to nullify affirmative action programs won by Black workers. Some racist union bureaucrats have tried to use the seniority system as a justification for these moves.

Seniority was won in struggle by workers to protect them from the bosses' arbitrarily firing whomever they pleased. However, the seniority system should not be perverted to be used as a tool by the bosses or the bureaucrats to strengthen racist hiring practices.

One demand that Blacks, unionists and the Socialist Workers party raise in connection with this problem is that where layoffs take place, the same percentage of Blacks be retained after the layoffs as were working before. This demand should be linked closely with the fight for jobs for all.

Maintaining this position is important. The bosses are trying to use racism to divide the workers to make them think that there is an individual solution to the economic crisis. The demand that the percentage of Black workers be maintained despite layoffs poses the need for the working class to refuse to be divided over this issue, as well as the need to convert the trade unions into a fighting social movement championing the rights of Blacks and other oppressed layers.

Any program to expand jobs must be linked with a program to abolish job discrimination and upgrade Black workers into higher-paying jobs. To equalize employment opportunities for Black workers preferential hiring, promotions, and upgrading linked with a special program to train them for skilled and professional positions are needed.

Blacks have been fighting for elements of this demand in struggles around hiring quotas and affirmative action programs. While in some cases court rulings and struggles have won these demands, existing programs are inadequate and largely unenforced. They are also being obliterated by the layoffs.

Preferential hiring and the demand to maintain existing percentages of Black employment are under stiff attack from the employers because they cut into the capitalists' prerogative of hiring and firing whom they please and their desire to keep a large majority of Blacks on the bottom.

## Education

Another key problem where a national effort is needed to strengthen local struggles is education. Education is closely linked to job opportunities, political and cultural outlook, and political control. Schools in the Black community give Black youth bad education to assure that they wind up in bad jobs, if they are able to find jobs at all. This is a serious problem because in today's industry more education is required to get decent jobs.

Black people have been struggling for decades to break out of the straitjacket of inferior segregated schools and to end racist practices in "desegregated" school systems.

The 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation and the subsequent struggles and decisions to enforce them marked an important advance for the Black struggle. In fact, the struggles for desegregation of education and community control of the schools are symbolic of the overall struggle for Black liberation.

While desegregation laws have been in effect since the civil rights victories in the 1960s, *de facto* segregation continues in the schools. Segregation is maintained through what are called "neighborhood" school systems. Housing segregation and gerrymandering of school district lines are used to maintain *de facto* school segregation.

Even where individual schools are formally desegregated, "tracking" and other divisions segregate Black education from white education to maintain white privilege.

To eliminate this inequality, Black people are demanding that their children be bused to better schools across neighborhood lines. In some cities support for these demands has been won and recognized by court decisions and laws. In Boston and other cities, busing is one of the focal points of the racist offensive against Black rights.

The racists contend that busing is "forced" upon white children and violates their freedom. For years the same racists have used force to keep Blacks out of predominantly white schools and prevent them from moving into their neighborhoods.

The issue is not the use of "force" versus "freedom," but whether force is to be used in defense of Black rights, or whether it will be used to keep Black people down, depriving their children of equal educational opportunities.

Where existing institutions and housing patterns are used to deprive Blacks of the right to a decent education or to go to school unmolested by racist threats, force is necessary. This is why leaders of the desegregation fight in Boston have called for the use of all force necessary, including federal troops, to enforce school desegregation.

The demand for federal troops in situations like the Black community faces in Boston is a necessary and legitimate expression of the struggle for Black equality.

This demand poses the need, for the government to enforce the law and protect the rights of Black people against racist mobs and the racist Boston school committee. As such the demand for federal troops to Boston can help further the mobilization and heighten the political consciousness of Blacks and others involved in the struggle.

Violence and racist attacks against the Black community in Boston and other cities also demonstrates the need for Blacks to consider taking measures of self-defense

against racist attacks. Self-defense is a democratic right and its acceptance has been increased by the experience of the civil rights and Black power struggles. Experience has shown that self-defense actions are most effective when based on mass support and integrated with a perspective of mass mobilizations.

Blacks and other probusing forces are rallying behind the national effort to roll back school desegregation with a countermobilization centered in Boston. An important stage of this campaign was the May 17 demonstration called by the NAACP. This is the type of effort that can help counteract the demobilization of the Black movement and its supporters that has emboldened the racists.

In some places the desire of Black people and other oppressed nationalities to improve the education of their children has led to struggling for community control over the schools in their communities.

Some groups within the Black community have tried to counterpose the demand for community control to busing. However, these two demands are not contradictory, they are complementary.

Racism in education is maintained by segregating Blacks out of good schools as well as by keeping the schools in the Black community on a low level. To achieve Black equality in education both aspects of educational racism must be eliminated.

Both busing and community control over schools pose the need for the Black community to have genuine control over adequate educational facilities to improve Black education, not just legal recognition of the harmfulness of segregated schools. Both struggles must be linked with an overall fight to demand more state and federal funds to improve and expand schools in the Black community.

## Housing

Housing discrimination dictates the areas where Black people have to live. It establishes the so-called geographical justification for school segregation, and the geographical definition of the area subjected to the specialized police terror, inferior social services, and other forms of oppression Blacks face. Segregation forces Blacks to pay exorbitant rents for inferior housing.

It is one of the most blatant manifestations of how capitalist property rights are used to force Black people into a condition of oppression. Housing discrimination is perpetuated by openly discriminatory practices of landlords, real estate agents, bankers and contractors.

Racist opposition to attempts by Blacks to move into predominantly white areas has erupted in savage attacks on Black homes.

The Black community needs equalized housing opportunities. It needs full enforcement of all laws banning housing segregation and their extension where they don't exist. All apartments and homes should be opened up to Black tenants and buyers. A federally financed crash program to build low-cost housing for the Black community should be launched. The Black community should demand protection against racist attempts to force Blacks out of previously all-white neighborhoods and should consider actions of self-defense where no protection is offered. The labor movement has a fundamental responsibility to pitch in and help with any such efforts.

## Political Independence

The increase in the number of Black elected officials is a political reflection of national consciousness in the Black community and indicates the strong sentiment of Blacks to be *represented* in the political arena. Blacks who previously voted for white candidates or did not vote at all now vote for Blacks hoping that Black officeholders will be more sensitive to the needs of Black people. They hope concessions can be wrested by these Black Democrats to bring some relief to the Black community. Many well-intentioned militants mistakenly see Black participation in the Democratic party as a step toward eventual Black political independence.

These illusions have enhanced the equally false notion that Black people should refrain from engaging in direct action and taking militant stands because such tactics might offend or embarrass Democratic politicians.

Experience has shown that these policies have set back the struggle for Black liberation. When Afro-Americans with the reputation of being militant representatives of the Black community participate in the Democratic party, they divert and hold back the progress of the struggle. They miseducate Black people on the roots of their oppression and the solution to their problems.

Most importantly they nurture the misconception that the problems of the Black community can be solved without a continued campaign of struggle and without a mass political confrontation with the upholders and servants of the capitalist system.

Black participation in the Democratic party is totally unrealistic because it advises Blacks to operate within an institution which is one of the main instruments for upholding the economic and social system that perpetuates the oppression and exploitation of Black people. The financial power and behind-the-scenes intervention of the big corporations far outweigh any influence Black people can exert in such an organization.

The proof of this is that, since the number of Black Democratic politicians and officials increased by the hundreds in the late 1960s, there has been no consequent increase in the concessions granted to the Black community.

On the contrary, there has been a pronounced ebb in mass struggles for Black rights and in the gains and concessions won.

The road to Black political independence and gains for the Black community lies through organizing actions that mobilize the independent power of the Black community and other working people, not through reliance on the Democrats, Black or white. Central to this task is our ongoing fight and propaganda against the Democratic party's hold on the Black community.

Black Democratic party supporters can be involved in action coalitions and organizations around specific struggles to fight for the interests of Black people. Such struggles will show by experience that independent mass action and not Democratic party politics is the way to get things done. Such coalitions and struggles can draw Democratic party supporters into contact with Blacks who are more conscious of the need for political independence and thereby help convince them to break from the Democrats.

Any other course abandons the leadership of the masses

in the Black community to the Democratic party and the capitalists who control it.

To fight for their interests against the capitalist exploiters and their parties, Blacks like other workers, need their own independent organizations.

An advanced form of organization would be an independent Black party which could fight in the electoral arena as well as on all other fronts. Unlike the capitalist political parties, a Black party would not counterpose electoral activity to demonstrations, rallies and pickets; but would use its electoral campaigns to reach broader forces, win them to its perspectives, and help advance the mobilization of the Black community.

Independent Black candidates that were elected could use their legislative or municipal offices to serve the interests of the struggle against oppression, instead of crippling and crushing it, as the authorities now do.

Given the overwhelming proletarian composition of the Black people, the formation of an independent Black party would be a class break with capitalist politics. It would attract Black unionists and make an impact in the labor movement, giving a big impetus to the formation of a labor party based on the unions.

The formation of such a Black party seems very distant at this time because of the overall dominance of the Black Democrats. Previous attempts at setting up Black parties have failed, as in the case of the Black Panther Party, the Michigan Freedom Now Party, the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), and Baraka's Committee for a Unified Newark.

The Panthers failed because of their ultraleft positions and activities, Baraka because of his illusions in the Black Democrats, the LCFO because of its illusions in the national Democratic party, and the Michigan Freedom Now Party because of its lack of a perspective of winning over the Black community through a long-term struggle.

More positive strides toward political independence will undoubtedly be the product of future actions by the Black community to defend itself from ruling class attacks. Mass actions, demonstrations, and struggles will educate the Black community on the need for relying on its own political forces.

## Blacks and Labor

An important feature of the present situation is that while the deepening economic crisis leads to more ruling class attacks against Black rights and gains it also generates increased struggles by workers—both Black and white—to defend their deteriorating living standards. Many key actions of Blacks are linked to the struggle of the working class as a whole which gives greater impetus to both movements. And labor actions like the AFL-CIO sponsored April 26 March for Jobs reinforce the struggle against racism.

This brings into relief the fact that the struggle for Black liberation is more closely intertwined with the fate of the labor movement than ever before. The number of Blacks in industry has grown considerably in the last thirty years as has Black union membership. Moreover, the greater numbers of Blacks in the working class and in major industrial cities means that the trade union movement is more and more forced to confront the questions posed by the Black struggle both inside and outside the plants and offices.

Unfortunately a narrow-minded, conservative bureaucracy presides over the trade unions. Its outlook and policies are based on collaborating with the capitalist class rather than struggling against it. This includes its failure to organize any significant struggle for jobs, wages, and working conditions. It is capped by its subordination to the two capitalist political parties.

The labor bureaucracy fundamentally refuses to fight the discrimination against Blacks on and off the job. Union misleaders from George Meany and Albert Shanker on down try to convince workers to oppose preferential hiring, busing, community control and other demands to achieve equality for Black people, echoing the capitalist lie that this threatens the living standards and security of white workers.

This policy is in marked contrast to the policies carried out by the CIO movement in the 1930s. This movement led to the formation of the massive industrial unions and laid the basis for the expansion of other unions.

Unlike the labor movement today the CIO was a rank-and-file movement basing itself on the mass action of the workers. It was a social movement as well as a trade union movement. A large number of its members and some leaders aspired to working class political independence through the formation of a labor party, but the class collaborationist policies of the Stalinists and Social Democrats prevented labor from taking this important step.

Even though there were fewer Blacks in industry as a whole at that time, CIO unions, especially in the auto and steel industries, opposed discrimination against Blacks and fought for Black rights both on and off the job. The CIO militants taught the lesson that the only way to unite Black and white workers was through supporting Black rights. Previous racist policies of the unions had led to defeats for organizing drives in the steel, meatpacking and other industries.

During World War II, the McCarthyite witch-hunt, and the post-war economic boom, the trade union bureaucrats consolidated their grip on the unions and reversed the more radical policies of the CIO movement.

Efforts toward political action were channeled into subservience to the Democratic party. The attempt of the union movement to speak out as a working class voice on social and political questions was replaced by a narrow trade-union outlook. At best the union misleaders trailed behind the ideas of Democratic party liberals. Part of this shift was the dropping of the unions' stance as defenders of Black rights.

To defend the interests of Blacks and other workers against ruling class political and economic attacks, the trade union movement must be transformed into the type of radical social movement that the CIO at its best was; and one that breaks from the two parties of Black oppression and labor exploitation. A new leadership is required to replace the class-collaborationist policies of the union bureaucrats with a policy of class struggle against the capitalists on all political, social, and economic fronts.

Black workers will play a key part in this process for a number of reasons.

One is the large number of Black workers. This factor is underscored by the fact that Black workers tend to be concentrated in specific industries, such as auto, steel, service, and public employment. Within these industries, Black workers are usually concentrated in the lowest-paid

jobs.

Job discrimination has meant that Blacks are concentrated among the unemployed. Fighting for the interests of the unemployed is an important task facing the labor movement.

The political consciousness developed among Black workers in the struggle for Black liberation in recent years will play a key part in forming a class-struggle left wing in the unions. Black people have already been in motion against the capitalists for over twenty years. Ideas of mass action, radicalism, and the need to find political solutions to problems working people face are more accepted among Black workers than among white workers.

Black workers, by the very nature of their oppression, raise social and political questions in the unions. This is essential to defeating the narrow trade-unionist approach held by the union bureaucrats.

Black workers have already brought methods of action and mobilization developed in the civil rights and Black power struggles into the unions. These factors can be noted especially in newer public workers unions like the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees, District 1199, a mostly Black and Puerto Rican Union. Reflecting their large Black composition, these unions have taken more progressive positions in relation to Blacks, women, foreign-born workers and the U.S. intervention in Indochina than most other unions.

The 1974 sanitation workers strike in Baltimore and a series of Black-led strikes in 1972 and 1973 in Atlanta are among the many labor struggles where Blacks have used the same methods of organizing broad Black community support that were used in the civil rights movements. Often these struggles are seen as actions of both the labor movement and the Black liberation struggle.

Black workers will also play an important role in the development of a class-struggle left wing because they are not part of the better-paid, relatively privileged labor aristocracy on which the bureaucrats are based. Victims of discrimination in the unions and the plants, and the hardest hit by inflation, layoffs, and bad working conditions, Black workers have nothing to lose and everything to gain from a shake-up of the union movement.

An indispensable part of the program of a class-struggle leadership in the labor movement will be to break from dependence on the capitalist parties and launch a mass independent labor party based on the trade unions.

Since Black workers will play a key role in the development of a class struggle left wing in the unions they will be at the center of any moves to organize a labor party. Unions where Blacks are concentrated and left-wing currents are articulating the needs and outlook of Black workers will be at the forefront of any developments toward running independent labor candidates or forming a labor party.

Once formed, a labor party could rapidly become a political voice and center of attraction for the Black community as well as the labor movement. Black candidates running as candidates of a labor party would be seen not only as trade union candidates but as candidates fighting for Black people.

At this stage it is not clear whether the formation of an independent Black party will come before a labor party

and give considerable impetus to forming a labor party, or whether a Black party will be precluded by the emergence of a labor party in which Blacks are playing a leading role. Combined developments may take place in which candidates are jointly presented by labor unions and organizations of Black people.

### **The Black Struggle and Other Radicalizing Forces**

The struggle for Black liberation is closely interrelated with the struggles of other oppressed and doubly exploited social groups and national minorities.

The Black struggle has been greatly affected by the radicalization of other sectors of American society, particularly students and women. While the Black movement was an initial stimulus to the student movement, the student-based antiwar movement in turn helped generate a massive student radicalization which deeply influenced thousands of Black youth.

The example of the Black movement also influenced the development of the women's movement. In turn, the ideas and attitudes of the women's liberation movement have penetrated the Black community radicalizing Black women and inspiring them with new confidence. This has strengthened the Black movement as a whole.

It has led to the formation of Black women's organizations to fight for the special needs of Black women. Important struggles like the defense of Dr. Kenneth Edelin and Joan Little demonstrate the interrelationship between the interests and demands of the Black movement and the women's liberation movement. This is underlined further by the reactionary attacks of racists in Boston against women's rights as well as against Blacks.

The Black liberation movement also has had a strong effect on the radicalization of other oppressed minorities. The civil rights and Black power movement inspired Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and other oppressed minorities to fight for their rights. Similar modes of struggle and organization to those used by the Black movement have been adopted where similar problems are faced. All of the doubly oppressed and superexploited groups are natural allies to Blacks in their fight for liberation.

The Black struggle has also had a pronounced impact on the armed forces. Opposition to U.S. aggression in Indochina, racism within the armed forces, and the impact of the Black struggle and the antiwar movement outside of the armed forces, led to a deep radicalization of the armed forces, especially among Black GIs.

Black GI groups and actions cropped up on military bases and naval ships in the United States, Indochina, and other parts of the world. This activity showed that radicalization of significant layers of the population cannot be quarantined from the armed forces, thus making it difficult for the imperialists to use the army in an unpopular war. The combination of Black dissidence and general antiwar sentiments among GIs played an important role in forcing U.S. military forces out of Indochina.

With the formation of the volunteer army, an even larger percentage of the armed forces has become Black. Job

discrimination and unemployment drive Afro-American youth to enlist. The problems this has presented to American imperialism have generated a debate among top military and government leaders on whether or not to limit Black recruitment.

Meanwhile there are also hundreds of thousands of Black Indochina veterans who returned to mass unemployment and inadequate medical and educational benefits. This situation is worsened by the unfavorable stigma the employers put on veterans to try to create another pariah grouping in the working class.

The Black struggle has also been a central factor in the numerous prison revolts in recent years. Once politically quiescent, the prisons, penitentiaries, and jails have become centers of discussion, political education, and anticapitalist radicalization. Prisoners, asserting their right to be treated as human beings, have launched actions to improve the conditions inside the prisons.

Large numbers of Black people have been put behind bars by racist cops and judges. In fact, in California, which has the most extensive system of public colleges and universities in the country, more Blacks are in prison than in the state college system.

Struggles by prisoners such as the 1971 Attica rebellion have received widespread support from the Black community and from other radicalizing layers.

### **Socialist Workers Party**

Black liberation will be won through the coming American socialist revolution. Historical experience has demonstrated that for the whole working class, the Black people, and their allies to successfully carry through the revolution, a mass Leninist party must be constructed. In order to win against the centralized power of the ruling capitalist class, there must be a single combat party, overwhelmingly proletarian, which is composed of cadres from every nationality that makes up this country, that can coordinate and lead the workers, the Black people, and all their allies in the struggle for power.

This mass Leninist party must have deep roots in the Black masses or it will surely fail.

The Socialist Workers party is the nucleus of this future mass revolutionary socialist party. The SWP is the only party that understands the combined character of the coming revolution and has charted a program that links the immediate and day-to-day struggles of Blacks and all the workers with the struggle for power. In order for the SWP to carry out its tasks, it must become more deeply rooted in the Black masses and in their struggles.

New opportunities are opening up for the SWP to help build united actions by Blacks and their allies against the ruling class's racist offensive. The SWP enters this new stage with the most politically developed and capable Black cadre in its history. In this work, a key task is the winning of Blacks to the SWP and training these new recruits as revolutionary cadre. The party must turn to meet these new opportunities and carry through this task central to the success of the coming revolution.



# A LETTER ON NATION, NATIONALITY, AND NATIONAL MINORITIES

By Gus Horowitz

The following is a copy of a letter that I wrote to a comrade in India in the course of a discussion between us on the national question in India. The discussion was initiated around a draft article he had written on this subject. While written from that specific point of view, his article highlighted several important aspects of the national question of a more general character, including points relevant to the United States. These include such questions as whether a multinational state is historically "abnormal"; the distinction between a state and a nation;

the process of nation-formation; the criteria to define a nation, a nationality, and a national minority; the distinction between self-determination, national autonomy and cultural autonomy, and the conditions under which these are applicable.

I have edited and abridged my original letter to eliminate secondary points of limited interest. The comrade in India is still working on his article, and it is not yet completed in a form that he wishes to have published.

New York  
September 19, 1974

India

Dear S.,

Here are the observations I promised to send you on the document, "Critical Remarks on the National Question in India." I venture these observations with hesitation, due to my lack of knowledge about India. Some suggestions below are made with the idea that the "Critical Remarks. . ." document might be published, and thus certain points would require more explanation for a non-Indian audience. And, on some of the more general theoretical questions, I became inspired to write at length to clarify my own thought. . . .

\* \* \*

A multinational state (like India) is not an abnormality; on the contrary, it is quite common. There are no "ideal" completely homogeneous nation-states. Everywhere there are internal national, socio-religious, or ethnic divisions; these are a result of historically created unevenness.

Even in the very long-established bourgeois nation-states, there are big national divisions. Some of them have become well known because of the rise of national struggles for self-determination: Blacks and Chicanos in the USA, the Irish people, the Basque people in Spain, the Québécois people in Canada, and others. In addition to these well-known examples, we can see the continued existence of national minorities in many countries that are socially rather homogeneous: The Bretons and others in France, the Scots and Welsh in Britain, etc. There are important disparities (regional, ethnic or cultural) in even the most seemingly "homogeneous" countries like Germany. An interesting article on this type of situation in Jura, Switzerland, can be found in the July 15, 1974 issue of *Intercontinental Press*.

What is unusual about India, I think, is the great *specific weight* of the national question, stemming from the division of the state of India into so many sizable nationalities. This contrasts with the usual situation in which there is one nationality preponderant. . . .

\* \* \*

[The draft says that] India "is a state or a nation. . ."

Well, it certainly is a *state*, but is India also a *nation*? The answer to this important question is not obvious to me. For example, there is a Soviet state, but is there a Soviet nation? Certainly not in the sense that there is a French nation. Or look at another type of development: there is an Arab nation (more accurately, an Arab nationality), but not yet a pan-Arab state.

Often there are several distinct processes going on at the same time. Which becomes dominant is determined by the vicissitudes of history. The Arab nationality includes a very strong tendency towards becoming one single nation; but the present division into separate Arab states, however much it originated as an artificial construct of imperialism, itself introduces a dynamic towards the evolution of separate nationalities.

In the Spanish-speaking areas of Latin America, can we speak of one nation, or of many nations? The truth is probably that there is a combination of both: an up-to-now dominant tendency toward reinforcement of separate nationalities, and a possible historical variant of the formation of one nationality. (Note also, that there are also many non-Spanish-speaking, native American peoples in these areas.)

Both processes (or even more than two) can be dialectically combined at the same time. I think it is most accurate to speak of Palestinian Arabs, for example, not only as Arabs by nationality, but also as Palestinians by nationality. Both processes are going on simultaneously.

With this in mind, would it make sense to speak of someone as both a Gujarati by nationality and an Indian by nationality? Are both processes going on? Or is India more analogous to the Soviet Union in this regard; that is, can India be considered a coercive federal union of separate nations, but definitely not one nation? There are, of course, important differences between the Soviet Union and India. India has a far older history than the Soviet Union and the Czarist Empire; centralization on the state level has existed in India for a long time, reinforcing many elements of a common cultural heritage throughout the subcontinent.

An interesting point to keep in mind: in the present era a coercive union will usually foster the perpetuation of national divisions, but a voluntary union should eventually lead to the merging of nationalities. The latter is our socialist perspective, although we do recognize that it will take many years.

The question is interesting from the point of view of an observer far removed from the actual situation. In the



United States, most people are unfamiliar with India, and tend to think of the inhabitants of India as one nationality, mainly because there is a state of India. At the same time, they tend to think of the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of Latin America as distinct peoples, because they live in separate states. Yet the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of Latin America all speak the same language, while the inhabitants of India speak different languages. . .

Is the Hindi language imposed on the non-Hindi-speaking people of the South with a greater degree of coercion than on the non-Hindi-speaking people of the North? If so, perhaps this should be explained. Outside India, it is not widely known that the northern Indian languages are closely related to each other, but are quite distant from the southern languages. . .

It would [also] be useful, for the benefit of a non-Indian audience, to explain which nationalities and regions are favored in the central governmental apparatus. Another interesting point can perhaps be made here too: While there is favoritism toward Hindi-speakers in the governmental apparatus, the Hindi regions are economically less advanced than some other areas of India. This anomaly is not unique to India, by the way. In Spain the Castilians, and in Yugoslavia the Serbs are the politically dominant nationalities, but they are less advanced economically than some of the other nationalities in these countries. There are other examples as well. . .

\* \* \*

I think that the "classic criterion" defining a nation has been proved inadequate. For example, Blacks in the United States do not live in a common territory, and their common language is English, yet they are most definitely a distinct nationality.

One cannot define a nationality by easy schema. There are a variety of factors that must be taken into account—in their totality—in determining if a group is a nationality. Among these factors, a group's self-consciousness is perhaps most important. The existence of a common history and common language may be the most important factors shaping that self-consciousness. But a common language need not be unique: there are many distinct Spanish-speaking, French-speaking, and English-speaking nationalities. Territoriality is important, but not essential—it is the totality that is decisive.

By the way, if common language were an absolute requirement of nationality, then you would have to say that Indians are *not* a nationality; you would have to say that while there are citizens of the Indian state and residents of the Indian subcontinent, there is not an Indian people. This is an interesting question, because India is not unique. For example, Belgium is composed primarily of Flemish-speaking and French-speaking people. Switzerland is composed primarily of German-speaking, French-speaking and Italian-speaking people. Is there such a thing as a Belgian or a Swiss nationality?

To help make the discussion clear, I should point out the way in which I prefer to use the terms, "nation," "nationality," and "national minority."

I think it is useful to think of a *nationality* as a nation-in-formation, and a *nation* as a nationality which has established a sovereign *nation-state*. Thus, the French people can be considered a nation, whereas Black people in

the United States are a nationality.

A distinction is necessary because a nation-in-formation may not necessarily ever form its own nation-state. Whether or not Black people presently living in the United States eventually form their own nation-state cannot be predicted. Separatist sentiment is a minority sentiment among Black people, but it is not insignificant. Only history will tell. Thus, the SWP calls for the *right* of Black people to self-determination, but we do not now advocate separation.

Among some oppressed nationalities (nations-in-formation) the tendency towards forming a nation-state can be so strong that we *advocate* that position (going beyond defense of the *right* of self-determination). We advocate independence for Puerto Rico, Angola, and Quebec; we advocate the unification of Ireland and of the Arab people. Perhaps these nationalities could be called nations, in anticipation of the future. But history is so full of surprises that I would urge caution in doing so. The very act of forming a nation-state, and undergoing a process of historical development as a sovereign nation-state, is, I think, essential in making the qualitative leap from nationality to nation. In the absence of forming a nation-state other historical variants are possible (for example, the division of the German people into Germany and Austria, or the division between the Latin American nations.)

In some cases, a nationality may be so small, or have undergone a historical development such that the question of its forming a separate nation-state is not considered a serious question by the nationality itself. In such cases, however, the question of achieving national autonomy (as distinct from independence) is usually a relevant issue. (Note that there can be various degrees of national autonomy.)

I have deliberately linked the definitions with our policy on the national question. I think that the description of a group as a nationality should be tied to the posing of the question of self-determination or national autonomy (leaving aside the special case of oppressor nationalities). That is, a group can be considered a nationality when the question of possibly forming a separate nation-state or winning national autonomy is posed as a realistic variant or development.

This leaves the question of *national minorities*. Usually this term has been applied to members of a recognized nation or nationality living as minorities in a country other than their homeland.

Sometimes this applies to immigrant workers temporarily resident in another country. For example, in Europe there are large numbers of Spanish, Portuguese, Algerian, Italian, Turkish and Yugoslav workers living and working in countries other than their own. It is widely assumed that almost all will return to their countries of origin after several years. But it would be wise not to be too categorical about this assumption.

The term national minority is also applied to the first few generations of long-term immigrants to a country: for example, the Irish, Poles, Russians, and Italians in past years in the United States. These groups have become assimilated, and I doubt that it is correct to describe them today as national minorities. They are sometimes called "ethnic groups."

But assimilation does not always occur. In Britain, the

immigrants from the Indian subcontinent are strongly oppressed, and may not become assimilated. In the United States, the Chicanos, who originate partly as descendants of the nineteenth century inhabitants of the Southwest prior to its takeover by the expanding United States and partly from more recent immigrants from Mexico, have not been assimilated. Instead, they have developed into a distinct *nationality* (different than Mexicans).

At present, the Puerto Rican immigrants in the U.S. are an oppressed *national minority*. It is not yet clear whether: 1. they will remain a national minority in the U.S., belonging to the same nationality as Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico; 2. they will develop into a distinct nationality like the Chicanos; 3. they will become assimilated; 4. most will return to Puerto Rico, as European immigrant workers are expected to do. (I think that the last two alternatives are very unlikely.)

In some cases, national minorities have existed as such for many years without being assimilated. Sometimes they play a specific socio-economic role, not always at the bottom of the ladder: the Chinese in Southeast Asia, the Indians in East Africa, the Armenians in the Middle East, the Germans in Eastern Europe.

Following the method I mentioned earlier, the appropriate policy of Marxists with regard to oppressed national minorities is to call for national autonomy. There can be varying degrees of national autonomy, depending on the specific circumstances. National autonomy can include those elements of governmental administration that fall short of control over a separate state (self-determination). But *national* autonomy, like self-determination, refers to questions of government, which are applicable in relation to *national* groups. It should be distinguished from *cultural* autonomy, which can be applicable in relation to ethnic or socio-religious groups, as well as national groups.

Perhaps it is a little artificial to speak of three separate categories (nation, nationality, national minority). Perhaps we might better speak of one category; that of nationality, of which there are two special types: 1. nations, in cases where a nationality has formed its own sovereign nation-state; 2. national minorities, who live in countries other than the one to whose nationality they belong.

The most important thing, of course, is not the term or the definition, but the policies and demands we put

forward in this area. For us, the question is definitely not academic.

It is also important to realize that we are not talking about categories that are fixed for all time, or that are mutually exclusive. A group that begins as a national minority (Mexican inhabitants of the American Southwest, for example) can evolve into a nationality (Chicanos) distinct from its original one. Because a dialectical process is going on, a group can belong to more than one category at the same time (Palestinian Arabs, for example). An ethnic group or a socio-religious group can develop into a nationality (East European Jews, for example) . . . . (Similarly in India,) the very predominance of the Muslim religion in areas like Sind and Baluchistan was an important factor in shaping these peoples as distinct nationalities.

Aside from the large nationalities that are mentioned in the document, such as the Andhras, Malayalis, etc., many smaller groups are left out. The Eighth Schedule to the constitution of India lists 15 major languages spoken in India. But that does not tell the whole story. The 1961 census lists 1,652 mother tongues in India, of which only 103 are non-Indian! Doesn't this indicate that there are some significant national minorities, in addition to the major nationalities in India?

Of course, most of these mother tongues are probably spoken by very few people; many are undoubtedly tribal languages. Perhaps the term "ethnic groups" is most appropriate in these cases. I confess, however, that I tend to dislike this term, because it is used so often by bourgeois sociologists to cover up the existence of a national question.

We should look at these cases very carefully. After all, it is precisely out of "ethnic" groups, and also out of "socio-religious" groups that nationalities are often created. It is a matter of trying to determine when the qualitative step has been taken from an "ethnic" or "socio-religious" group into a "nationality." This process is not historically completed. One of the effects of the Bolshevik revolution, for example, was the flowering of *national* self-consciousness among some groups in the Soviet areas of Asia that had not previously been classified as nationalities, but were thought of more as "ethnic" or "socio-religious" groups. . . .