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FOR NC INFORMATION ONLY

Dear Comrades,

Attached is a transcript of a discussion on the General Motors strike and related matters held by the Oakland-Berkeley branch.

The material consists of a report by Tom Kerry and discussion by branch members. It is for the information of NC members only and is not for general membership distribution.

Comradely,

*Barry Sheppard*

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National Office

REPORT TO BERKELEY BRANCH ON UAW STRIKE  
GIVEN BY TOM KERRY, DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

September 27, 1970

[The discussion was taken from a transcript of the tape recording without benefit of correction by the discussants.]

Comrade chairman, comrades, in my presentation, I intend to comment on the issues that have arisen in the course of your discussion on the problems of our intervention in the UAW strike -- the branch has had its discussion and made its decision; I don't propose to attempt to alter that decision. I do hope I can shed some light -- there has been quite a bit of heat -- and some clarification on the issues involved, which go beyond just the local here. This is a national strike and what you do here, on questions of policy, affects the national organization. And so we're very deeply interested in the matter.

I consider that the central economic issue in this particular strike is the struggle over the escalator clause. The cost-of-living clause is a transitional demand. The UAW first won the escalator clause I believe, in the 1948 strike, but in the 1967 strike, against Ford, Reuther traded part of the escalator clause off for other concessions. That is, he cut the guts out of the escalator clause by placing a certain limit on it in which all increases in the cost-of-living beyond a 16% ceiling, the escalator provision would not apply.

He also stated that in the event the cost-of-living went beyond this ceiling, anything in excess would be automatically granted the auto workers after the expiration of the agreement. They found it wasn't so. There was a little deception. He lied to the auto workers, as he was wont to do. Or, if it wasn't an outright falsification, it was a careless handling of the truth. For the corporations now insist the agreement was that the excess over 16% coming to the workers on the escalator clause, would be included in the new wage package, not given the workers as an outright grant under the compromise clause.

Ever since a number of unions succeeded in gaining the escalator clause, the corporations have not ceased for one moment in their attempts to emasculate or to eliminate it all together. They have no confidence in the ability of a Nixon or a Kennedy or a Johnson, Democrat or Republican, to control inflation. Unfortunately they have succeeded and not only in the UAW. The Steelworkers cut the heart out of their escalator clause. They did the same thing Reuther did, and other unions did likewise.

So I view this struggle not just around an issue that concerns the UAW alone, but the entire labor movement. This is how the corporations and the administration see the question, because if the UAW is successful in restoring the cost-of-living clause to cover all increases in the cost-of-living, be they what they may, it is going to spark a demand on the part of other sections of the labor movement for the same provisions.

The corporations and the administration say the escalator clause is inflationary. That it "contributes" to inflation. Not so! Increases in conformance with the escalator provision are granted only after the cost-of-living has gone up, not before, to compensate workers for an increase in the cost-of-living that has already taken place.

General Motors and the Nixon administration and the employers as a whole see this struggle as a conflict of fundamental importance to the capitalist class of this country. That is why I contend that the central economic issue in this particular strike is the question of the cost-of-living clause.

That doesn't mean that the question of wage increases isn't important. It is -- workers have got to catch up for the slash in the standard of living over the past three years. And the workers want to improve their standard of living also. One of the great advantages of the escalator clause is that it gets the workers out of the rat race of getting wage increases in a two, three or five year contract, and then having the cost-of-living eat up the wage increases beyond what they've gotten, and then have to begin the chase all over again.

It's only through the escalator clause that the workers can succeed in increasing their standard of living, by providing some protection against inflation. Then negotiations can take place on the basis of wage demands which can result in an increase in living standards. The truth of the matter is that the standard of living of the American workers has been decreasing in the past period, precisely because of the inflation, and the lack of such protection.

Let me quote from an article written by Raskin, the labor expert for the New York Times, one of the more astute bourgeois labor commentators, on what their attitude is towards this question of wages and escalation. He says: "When prices kept going up and unions in construction, trucking,

newspapers and other industries pushed wages through the roof, the administration's advice to industry was that the only real hope for checking runaway wages lay in the willingness of the employers to take long strikes. That advice got so assertive in the early stages of the Big Three Auto talks, that Leonard Woodcock, the United Automobile Workers new president, called administration leaders and reminded them that they were publicly committed to a hands-off attitude in labor relations."

Woodcock must be very naive if he believes that his admonition to the Nixon administration is going to have any real effect. The only way, they are convinced, to cut down the workers' standard of living is to take long strikes. To starve the workers back to the job without the kind of wage increases they are entitled to. But here they're confronted with a problem. There are only certain industries and certain areas where they can carry through such a policy without sparking the kind of a reaction that will compel them to either conduct all out war, or to make concessions.

Reuther, in the 1946 General Motors strike, first initiated the so-called one-at-a-time strategy. The one-at-a-time strategy was based upon the premise that if the auto corporations were struck one-at-a-time, you see, it gave a competitive advantage to their rivals, and this would act as pressure to shorten the period of the strike. Now that may have been true many years ago, and it's true in some degree today where you do have small competitive employers, but the auto industry is the most concentrated, monopolized industry in this country. When they adopt their labor policies it's done in joint agreement. In fact the trend has been in recent years, for those employers who have confronted the one-at-a-time strategy to band together and declare in advance that if you strike one of us, the rest of us are going to shut down. It happened in newspaper, it happened in aircraft, and it happened in a number of other industries. Why don't the auto corporations follow the same course of action?

They don't do it because it's in their interest not to. It's in their interests to which one-at-a-time strategy conforms. It conforms to the interests of the administration, and to the narrower interests of the labor bureaucracy, that is the Reuther bureaucracy, and now the Woodcock bureaucracy. If that is so then to whose interests is it opposed? It's against the interests of the workers of the UAW, and the workers as a whole, because of the way Reuther has utilized this one-at-a-time strategy. It has been consistently used in order to put over some compromise settlement which the workers would not accept without a struggle.

Reuther would employ the strategy to put the UAW members through a more or less prolonged bleeding process -- soften them up, and after they had been on the bricks for two or three months, or maybe more, they would be in a mood to accept a much weaker and much worse agreement than they would at the beginning. Furthermore it divides the union one section against the other, the employed against those who are out on strike. It serves to prolong the strike and results in agreements which are not commensurate with the strength of the union.

Just consider for a moment. The emasculation of the escalator clause was a result of the one-at-a-time strategy in 1967 as applied to Ford. And now, three years later they have to fight all over again, to get back what Reuther had given away in 1967, in exchange for inadequate wage and fringe concessions.

Let me again quote Raskin -- not that I think he's such a great authority, but to give you an idea of what the thinking is in these circles, who write not for the workers, particularly, but for the bosses and bureaucrats. He says: "The one sure thing is that the White House will not let the railroads stay shut if a strike does begin. Mr. Nixon will go to Congress for emergency legislation, similar to that which President Kennedy got in 1963, to compel arbitration of precisely the same dispute. By contrast, the government is totally out of the General Motors dispute. The trains have to run, but the country can limp along indefinitely without new cars from the biggest of the Big Three auto makers. The UAW counts on the inroads Ford and Chrysler will be making into GM's customary market dominance to intensify the struck company's interest in a speedy end of the strike." No! History has proven just the opposite.

On the same question, in the same paper, on the financial page, by Jerry M. Flint. He observes: "Not fast like a rail strike, that can stop everything quickly, and bring immediate court injunctions and government bans.

"Not dramatically like a garbage strike that brings denunciations from almost every political pulpit on labor's public responsibilities, as well as well on the odor.

"But slowly, as dirty oil damages a finely tooled machine, that's how an auto strike works on the nation, and that battle between the United Auto Workers and the General Motors Corporation is under way.

"If the future may be judged by the past, this strike could be a long one. The last great confrontation between the two a quarter century ago lasted 119 days. But is also could be followed by a boom, perhaps the biggest in Detroit's history."

And then he goes on to point out that the profits of the corporations are affected, but only temporarily, and they will be recouped in the boom that is going to follow a very extended strike so in the end GM is not going to lose very much to its "competitors."

Along with the one-at-a-time strategy, Reuther had made it a practice to demand "flexibility" in the negotiations for a new agreement. He didn't spell out precisely what the demands were going to be, but intimated what they were, and talked a lot about "equity" -- Reuther always stood for "equity." But, as nobody knew precisely what this equity amounted to, there was a certain advantage to it, because he didn't get committed to any specific bargaining demands. So it left him free to make whatever kind of deal he felt would be accepted after the membership had been sufficiently softened up.

For some reason or other, Woodcock departed from Reuther's model and therein created for himself potential trouble. Let me cite another quote from Flint on this particular question. "Mr. Woodcock's biggest problem may be that he's been boxed in on specific demands, something Mr. Reuther tried to avoid, insisting that he needed flexibility at the bargaining table, and never, never, never, publicly mentioning exactly how much money was wanted. If Mr. Woodcock fails to win any of the union's specific demands, some will call the strike or the agreement a failure, and ratification may become a problem." That's right, "ratification may become a problem," because there has been a specific commitment made especially on the escalator clause provision.

This briefly is the way I see the problem of the UAW strike. And to me it indicates a certain tactical approach, deriving from the major issues, both economic and strategic, involved in this dispute. Frankly, then, I was somewhat dismayed when I saw a copy of the Local 1364 United Action Caucus leaflet of September 1, 1970, which stated: "We agree with Irving Bluestone," a co-director of UAW GM Department who stated "that GM be selected as a target company for a pattern-setting agreement."

No, we do not agree with Irving Bluestone any more than we agreed with Reuther before him. We do not agree with the one-at-a-time strategy because the one-at-a-time strategy is calculated to put over sellout compromise agreements by bleeding the workers, and softening them up, and starving them back to work. That's what the one-at-a-time strategy meant under Reuther. And that's what it means under Woodcock and Bluestone.

No, we don't agree with that. True,

this was corrected in a subsequent leaflet that spoke about making the strike general. But it is contradictory and it is confusing. The central issues do not emerge clearly, as the important and decisive issues, in this strike. Instead, agreement with Bluestone is coupled with the demand for a boycott -- a national boycott. Another contradiction! Because if you hold with Bluestone on the one-at-a-time strategy, how can you be for a national boycott which must extend the action to the other auto corporations: Ford, Chrysler and American Motors, to begin with.

And then let me remind you that a boycott is a mark of weakness, not of strength. No union resorts to a boycott as an effective instrument of struggle unless it doesn't have the capacity and the power to shut the industry down; in some cases, in very rare cases, it is employed as a supplementary, only as a very insignificant supplementary, instrument.

And not only a boycott, but a boycott conducted not by the union, but by the caucus. Now to conduct a nationwide boycott, you've got to have a national apparatus. And if the caucus is going to conduct it outside the union, it's got to set itself up as a substitute for the union apparatus. Where are you going to find such an apparatus on a national scale to initiate and carry through a national boycott? This confusion is worse confounded by several leaflets talking about the union doing it, and some of the leaflets talk about the caucus doing it. The caucus, actually, in one of the leaflets, initiated an action, in its own name, for a boycott here.

The first we learned of the boycott proposal is when we received from comrade Tom C. a letter, a copy of which he sent to us, which was sent to Pete Kelly in Detroit, and to Louie Cicconi in Los Angeles. Pete Kelly is the head of, or prominent in, the United National Caucus which is about as big as this caucus that you have here, and about as effective.

In the letter, Tom C. said to Pete Kelly that "it would be very doubtful if it were to receive -- "the boycott" -- official international union support, because they would view this as a weakening of their controls over the ranks, something they regard most carefully. Pete, I propose to you that the United National Caucus become the national boycott organizing center, with support here on the West Coast, and we prevail on Frank Lovell to provide us with his good services, and the backing of the National Student Mobilization Committee support as a starter." That is, that the so-called United National Caucus in Detroit be the headquarters for this national boycott, for the UAW.

In your discussion, and I carefully listened to the tapes, there were certain analogies made, particularly with the Oil Workers, and the Grape Boycott. Arguing by analogy can be very tricky, very tricky, because no two situations are so closely parallel as to warrant the conclusion that if a tactic is applicable in one place, then ipso facto it is applicable in another. I happen to know something about the oil workers and their boycott. I was here at the time. And in a meeting with Jacobs and Nat Weinstein we discussed what could be done. The strike was on its last legs, it was hopeless, the strike was broken. The workers were drifting back to work; they couldn't get enough pickets to stop the trucks from going into the plant or to stop the plant from operating.

One of the reasons Jacobs turned towards the youth was because it provided an arena for recruiting the youth as pickets to try and shut the plant down. The strikers were unable to shut the plant down. But before we initiated that boycott, we told them they had to get the support either of their International, or of the Labor Councils in the area. The International was ambiguous on the question, and so the Local went to the Labor Councils and got their endorsement, at least the one here in Contra Costa, and Alameda, I believe. And so we said on that basis we can go to the labor movement, we have the endorsement of the organized labor movement in the area, your own local, and see if we can't force the International to give its endorsement to the boycott.

Well, it turned out otherwise. The International had made a rotten deal with Standard Oil in Los Angeles and were trying to impose this deal on Richmond, which Jacobs and his union wouldn't go for. They were, in their own way, trying to get the Richmond workers back to work even if they had to help bust this strike, and so they sabotaged the boycott.

Later they ran a full page ad -- I saw the Los Angeles paper, I suppose it was repeated here in San Francisco -- for a boycott not of Standard in Richmond, but of Shell Oil at Martinez!

Now that strike was broken. Those workers went back to work without a contract; not only didn't they get any concessions, they lost the union shop in the Chevron chemical plant which they had before the strike. The boycott of the oil workers union was, as I said before an expression of weakness. They were unable to shut the plant down, they were unable to stop the back-to-work movement, and they were casting about for some method of last resort to permit them to salvage something out of this strike.

But does that apply to the UAW? Do they have any problems shutting the plants down? The biggest of them all, GM? I don't think so. I don't think so. They shut them down, and there's no attempt to open them!

There's no attempt like there was at GE, under Boulwerism. The first thing they would do is start a back-to-work movement, make a last offer on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, and start a back to work movement when the workers walked out on strike. Unfortunately in many cases it was too successful, but they don't even do that in auto. The UAW is too powerful; it has established its position in the industry and they know any attempt to open these plants would result in civil war! Not only the UAW but the entire labor movement would consider it a threat to its very existence.

No problem, no problem keeping these plants shut down. In fact they just have a few token pickets.

The grape workers. Was the grape workers' boycott a manifestation of strength or weakness? The grape workers couldn't shut production down. They couldn't halt the production and distribution of grapes. They didn't have the power. So they initiated a boycott. And they got a very sympathetic response, and -- after five years -- they got union recognition and some kind of an agreement.

It wasn't too great a sacrifice on the part of people who were sympathetic to the grape workers to give up grapes, but even then they had the support of the organized labor movement. Reuther himself poured a lot of money into that action; they had the support of the AFL-CIO unions throughout the country, the sympathy of students, liberals, and so forth and so on. They did a good job and they won union recognition.

But is that the situation with the UAW? There's no analogy, comrades. I say that arguing by analogy can not only be tricky, but it can be false.

Another thing we were disturbed about when we saw some of this "caucus" material was the question of the so-called non-negotiable issues. Where does this come from? This is the first I ever heard of that in the modern labor movement.

The first time I ever heard of it I think was San Francisco State, where some hot shots thought up the idea of non-negotiable issues. To win their demands, those so-called non-negotiable issues would require taking state power. That was the only way they could do it. But it sounded very radical, it sounded very good, but it sounds very disturbing when we begin to take over that kind of rhetoric. Meaningless rhetoric! Confusing! Not clarifying, not educating.

And the non-negotiable issues are tied up with the proposal, and I quote: "Our caucus intends to send a telegram to President Woodcock advising him to break off negotiations with the Big Three and

go fishing at Black Lake Michigan while we conduct a strike to win our three top demands," and in parentheses, "non-negotiable." Woodcock go fishing; we'll win the strike for these "non-negotiable" demands, then you can come back and negotiate the others. Well, let me tell you, that if, while Woodcock is fishing, you can win these "non-negotiable" issues, that is, compel General Motors to surrender, then Woodcock can stay fishing from then on. Because everything in your other demands would be subordinate and peripheral to that, and there couldn't be much of a strike after.

And who would do the negotiating? The rank and-file, but the rank and file as a mass cannot negotiate. They need leaders. We're not against leaders; we're not against elected representatives, elected leaders. We're for the right kind of leaders, yes. We're not anarchists; we know that the workers in the mass cannot negotiate an agreement with General Motors. There's where the real power rests, yes, and with a correct program and a fighting leadership they can go very far.

The question is not Woodcock or anybody else, and I don't think the workers would go for it. I mean the very idea would be repugnant to them at this time. You know Woodcock has a very difficult problem. He's got to fill Reuther's shoes. He's got to make it for himself; he's got to make a record. So he didn't take on Chrysler or Ford, you see, he took on General Motors for the first time since Reuther did it. That's where Reuther won his spurs. It was Reuther's leadership in the General Motors strike that catapulted him into the presidency of the UAW. So Woodcock is going to take on the biggest one of them all, to show that, by God, Woodcock is as good as Reuther ever was.

Then he went a little further and made a definite commitment on what I consider one of the central issues in this strike. In the negotiations they refused to give him what he was asking for, so he called a strike. So why would you want to send him fishing? Up to now, up to this point, with the exception of criticisms you might have that he's not asking for enough money, he has acted in conformity with the interests of the union. Not that I have any faith or confidence in Woodcock. Woodcock, as I say, in employing the one-at-a-time strategy is trying to do exactly what Reuther did. Soften up the workers and prepare them for some kind of rotten compromise.

But this is at the very beginning of the strike, and workers have to go through a certain body of experience before they are convinced. We know now what Woodcock is up to; we're smart, we're Marxists. We're able to generalize from past experience, from theory and from practice, but it's a mistake to invest the workers with

our consciousness; they've got to go through an experience first! They won't take our word for it. And it's in going through this experience with them, pointing out what the main dangers are at this stage in the struggle, basing ourselves on their present consciousness, that at a later stage when a conflict does occur, when the issues do erupt around which workers begin to mobilize for action, they will give us a hearing. They would say, "You people are right; you were right at the very beginning, what you said was right and I think you're entitled to leadership."

I want to say a word about slogans and our transitional demands. We can always learn something from discussions around very concrete and very specific issues -- well, we should try. I noticed in these leaflets, there is reiterated again and again and again, the "labor party" demand. But most always in a very wrong way.

We're for the labor party. But we're against emulating the Wohlforth hotshots, who are not only for the labor party Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, but in the days in between. Twice on Sunday. That's their answer to every problem! For every problem that arises in the working class they have a pat answer -- "labor party!" So everybody can be a hotshot theoretician, everybody can be a strike strategist, don't you see -- all you've got to do if you have a problem is form a labor party. Nothing short of that will do.

And here again, as I say, the question occurs in the caucus leaflets in a way that is not good. It says, and I quote: "If Leonard Woodcock refuses to reorder our contract priorities for a halt to job loss, we must organize an independent political party of labor to fight for these demands." It's not realistic, comrades. A labor party is not going to "fight" for the UAW demands, even if there was one in existence. And to say if the UAW fails, we've got to organize a labor party to fight for our demands is preposterous.

Then again, "The need is to prepare for a political struggle against government interference next fall around the fight for a labor party." There's not going to be any labor party next fall -- in the elections. As of now, we've got slates of candidates in the field; we say "vote for the Socialist Workers Party candidates." That's realistic. Not that we're going to be elected, I don't think, but voting for our candidates is the best way to promote the movement for a labor party in this period.

The labor party slogan, or any slogan, must be applied in different ways at different times. At one time the slogan is a propaganda slogan. The same slogan at other times is a slogan of agitation and at other times the same slogan is a slogan

of action. Right now, with no sign, no hint of a labor party development anywhere in the working class, obviously the labor party slogan is a propaganda slogan. It's not a slogan for agitation and certainly not a slogan for action. You mix everything up. You confuse everything when you use it as a slogan for action, under circumstances where all you can do is propagandize for the idea of breaking with capitalist politics and embracing the concept of independent working class politics or the independent labor party.

But there's another more insidious aspect to this question. The Wohlforths present the labor party question as a counterposition. They counterpose it to the Black independent political party and to the Chicano independent party. They're against both. They're against Black nationalism; they say they're against the Black independent political party. They're against a Chicano independent political party. They say "wait!" "Wait until the labor party is formed, and then you'll all find a home inside the labor party. You won't need your own party."

I wish I was as sure as they are. I don't think so; we have no assurance. We can't tell the Blacks or the Chicanos to wait until the workers get ready to form a labor party, if you please, with any assurance that the leadership of that labor party will truly represent the interests of these two oppressed minorities.

We're for a labor party even under reformist leadership, and reformist leadership will never solve these problems -- we're for the Blacks organizing their own political party, even if there's a revolutionary leadership at the head of a labor party. Because you're not going to convince them by words. You'll convince them by deeds, and only by deeds.

X ( It's only a labor party, a working class, mass party in action, that demonstrates that it says what it means and means what it says, that will convince them that maybe it isn't necessary to have their own party. All we can say at this point is that if the workers form their own independent labor party, then for the first time there's the basis for an alliance; to cement an alliance between an independent labor party and a Black independent political party and a Chicano independent party.

Why must we insist they give up their right to form their own political organization until the workers are ready to move? I don't know when that will be but I'm sure they're going to move. You know the Socialist Party prior to World War I had an almost identical position as the Wohlforthite group does now. They said that the struggle of the Blacks, termed at that time the "Negro struggle," was not a special struggle, that their needs, their aspirations, their demands would be

resolved within the framework of the general class struggle for socialism.

They denied that there was any such thing as a national minority, although they did recognize race-color oppression -- at least in words. Well, what did that lead to? It led to the Socialist Party, to the leaders of the Socialist Party who were officials of their unions, placing a ban in their unions against Black membership. Yes! All under the aegis of "wait until the social revolution and that will solve your problems."

This approach is a treacherous, a reactionary, a counter-revolutionary application, if you please, of the idea of working class independent political action. That's not our view -- we do not ask and cannot ask that the oppressed minorities give up their own political independence contingent upon the workers forming a class party. So we have to be careful how we use slogans -- slogans should be used to educate, not in such a way that everything is thrown together in the same pot.

Now the question of caucus and caucuses came up, and the question of "exceptional" circumstances. Let me say this at the outset. There was confusion on both sides of the question. The question of caucus and caucuses to me is a question of time, place and circumstance. No principle for it or against it, one way or another. Tactics are always concrete. And you've got to view the form of intervention in any given trade union situation according to the most effective method of intervention, the relationship of forces, and many other questions that must be taken into consideration.

Every union is "exceptional." I don't know of a single union that's identical to another. I don't know of a single local within a national union that doesn't have exceptions, so when you say "exceptions," you're not saying very much. I think that in the Fremont plant, it's to our advantage at this stage in the development to say "yes, there's an exception" -- the exception is that the caucus would get in our way! That would be the exception here, over some of the other exceptions that you cite.

The painters union. I'm guilty here also. I was the one, together with Nat and the other comrades involved, who proposed a caucus in this union. And why? It was an exception, yes. The painters union in San Francisco in the Bay Area was rather unique -- it was unique in the sense that in the past period, prior to Nat Weinstein coming to this area, an internal struggle had taken place, led by Dow Wilson who was an ex-CPer, a radical who formed a caucus in the organization that ousted the old leadership in the local and conducted a big struggle against the International.

The Wilson group began by outlining

a militant policy of fighting for the working conditions and rights of the members on the job. He was assassinated, and one of his lieutenants, named Evenson "inherited" the local. He was considered Dow Wilson's lieutenant. He was of a different cut, different breed and in his term in office began to adapt himself to the privileges and prerequisites of a piecard, and began to give up, surrender, many of the gains that had been previously made; to give away conditions in the contract, and not enforce existing work rules and conditions and this caused a division inside the former Dow Wilson caucus.

Some of the militants, after a year of internal struggle, concluded that in order to preserve those gains that were made under Dow Wilson, it was necessary to organize a caucus. In the painters union, like in Fremont, caucuses are an accepted part of their tradition, not only here, but in New York and elsewhere. We had a very capable and very competent political comrade, a member of the National Committee, directly involved. We knew we had no problem on the score of close collaboration in the execution of this tactic. We were able to win over almost immediately some leading people who had collaborated with Dow Wilson and went into opposition, announced our opposition on the basis of a program, a program which we wrote, on the question of internal union democracy, enforcement of the agreement and a number of other points.

Later, when the question of the elections came up, it was decided to run a slate of candidates in the elections. That was essentially the "exceptional" situation there. I think they did quite well -- I think they got 25% or 30% of the vote, I can't remember.

Now the Right-to-Vote Committee was also dragged in. The Right-to-Vote Committee in Chicago is not a caucus. The militant who's the head of the Right-to-Vote Committee is an official of the union because he is chairman of the Right-to-Vote Committee, and this local is conducting a fight in the whole area among the railroad workers to enlist support for the "right-to-vote!"

What is the right-to-vote movement? It's primarily a struggle for internal union democracy; it's a fight on the part of a section of the railroad workers for the right to vote on their contract. They do not have the right now to vote on their own contract! The officials negotiate the contract and the contract is signed by the officials, and the rank-and-file has no right whatsoever to vote on the terms of the contract. Now you can call it a caucus; you can say the local constitutes a caucus in relation to the other locals and the national union, I suppose. But that would be stretching the meaning of the term.

On the AFT (I understand that came in) you have Jeff here who was in that situation. I believe he has made plain what the situation was there and what was the character of the struggle. We weren't concerned about office.

In the New York AFT the fight for Black control of the Black community was one of the major issues. We were concerned about projecting this issue into this union in conducting a struggle against the Shanker leadership that was carrying on a policy of subordinating and victimizing the Blacks and the Black community for the interests of the white teachers. We were opposed to that.

Yes, we formed a caucus, or there was a caucus in existence, I can't remember which it was, and we got involved with alliances and so forth and so on. Frankly, I don't know what happened to the caucus after the election campaign was over, but I think we did some very effective work.

So as I say there's no question of principle involved here. It's merely a matter of determining what is the most effective method of intervention with the forces available at our disposal, and the given relationship of forces in the organization in which we work.

In some unions you can't form a caucus at all. In most unions, as a matter of fact. Why, they would kick you out the moment it's known that you belong to a caucus; out you go on your ear.

Some unions, like the ILGWU, permit caucuses only for a period of several weeks or a month prior to an election. That's all. They're "legal" then, and they become "illegal" the moment the election is over. That is, you're subject to punitive reprisal if you engage in caucus activity. We're talking about where it is possible; it is not a question of principle.

Why do I say that I think a caucus gets in the way in Fremont? At least this kind of a caucus? You know, there are caucuses and caucuses. If I understand this caucus, it's a small group, a very small group, of whom most are radicals of one kind or another. It has no real influence in the union; and it's picked the wrong time and the wrong issues.

To me, what is required in this situation is patient analysis and education. Around what question? Primarily around the question of the one-at-a-time strategy.

As the strike goes on, this is going to become a more and more burning question. For the workers who are on strike will begin to ask: "How can we end this thing?" The economic pinch will get ever more serious, and the natural thing for them



to do, as was done before, is to demand that the other sections of the union join the strike in order to bring it to a conclusion.

Or another alternative -- after several months, three months, or more, elapse, and Woodcock and General Motors think the auto workers have been softened up enough, they may come through with a proposed agreement that does not restore the escalator clause, does not honor the commitment made, and attempts to put over a compromise agreement. At which time the possibility exists for another eruption, that is, a movement to reject the contract. I believe that's been done before, wasn't it, Tom?

Tom C.: No, never, never.

Kerry: In your local, in Fremont?

Tom C.: I'm saying nationally, it's never been done.

Kerry: It's never been done in your local?

Tom C.: Nationally, it's never been done nationally.

Kerry: No. I'm not talking about nationally. I'm talking about your local in Fremont. Didn't they reject the agreement in 1964?

Tom C.: Yes, but we don't have veto power.

Kerry: Yes, I know that. I'm not talking about veto power. You're not working "nationally;" you're working in Fremont.

It's not excluded, and it's not excluded then, that under the pressure of the workers you will get the collaboration of the local leadership in rejection, as happened before, or if there's a division at that time, we may find it necessary to organize a caucus, but there will be a genuine basis for it then. There will be an issue which has aroused the workers, an issue they understand, and for which they would welcome leadership in this struggle.

You cannot arbitrarily impose a whole host of issues on the workers and say "come join us, we're the ones to lead you." No! They're not prepared to do that. You get in your own way. When you come out at the very beginning with all guns blazing, with broadsides directed at everybody, when you attempt to substitute yourself for the leadership in conducting actions which the union is opposed to, you can only discredit yourself, so when the real movement develops, nobody will listen to you. I've seen this happen before.

This strike is going to go on for a long time. It's wrong to act as though it's a question of now or never, do or die, that the whole thing is so explosive that all it needs is a spark, and we're going

to provide that spark. We don't believe in the "spark" theory of politics, or union tactics. We don't believe it. No, it doesn't work that way.

I think the most effective method of intervention now would be through the pages of The Militant, through analysis in The Militant. Another advantage in using The Militant would be that along with this analysis -- and this has been our experience when workers are on strike, and we are writing about their struggle in our paper -- they're interested in reading about questions of particular interest to them, and if what we write about their struggle makes sense to them, they will be interested in other aspects of our program. They'll read the rest of the paper, they'll read about the Chicano struggle, they'll read about the Black struggle, they'll read about the Women's Liberation (movement), and all our politics.

You see, it's an advantage over the leaflet type of propaganda and it's educational -- it educates. It analyzes and it educates.

You're not going to be able to direct the course of these current negotiations, or this strike, out of this plant with any kind of a caucus, I don't give a damn what kind you've got. You're not going to be able to do it. All you can hope to do is to educate some workers, to raise their political consciousness, to prepare them for what is coming.

They went through the same thing in 1967. One-at-a-time led to the kind of escalator clause that Reuther put over on them three years ago. Now they have to go through the same fight to get what they lost then through the same one-at-a-time policy.

What I'm concerned about is taking the kind of action that is the most effective under the given circumstances, with the given relationship of forces, and that's why I personally am against a caucus formation at this stage in the Fremont local.

Now let me conclude. Well, never mind, I'll conclude here. I have a few remarks to make about the branch. I don't want to mix the two things up. I'll make them after the discussion on this question.

#### DISCUSSION

Alan W. I was pretty disturbed by the speech that Tom Kerry gave us tonight, because Nelson said that he was going to come out and address us on the issues that were dividing the branch, but the fact is that the overwhelming majority of his speech was on issues that did not divide the branch.

In fact, most of the speech was irrelevant to the discussion which took place in the branch last week. I don't know who Comrade Kerry talked to that gave him the idea that the boycott and the non-negotiable demands, the labor party, Black nationalism, and so on, were the main issues of the debate. Because the fact is that these were not at all discussed, and they were not at all debated in the branch, because the Exec. moved to stop the caucus altogether regardless of what politics it put forward. And that's what divided the branch.

That was the issue that was discussed, although there were comrades that kept trying to cloud up the main issue. Last week Marylou said in the discussion that working with the Stalinists in the caucus was tantamount to a popular front. I think it would be very incorrect for me to demand an hour to explain why this is incorrect, when that wasn't the main issue that we were discussing. That was a sidelight; that was one person's point of view. And most of these things, the boycott and so on, were only held by perhaps Tom, maybe not even clearly by Tom. Maybe if they had been debated and discussed as the issues for the program of the caucus, maybe Tom would have been discouraged the other way, but that wasn't what the discussion was all about.

And that's basically the method Tom used in his debate, was taking up minor issues, secondary issues, that one or two comrades may have supported, and using them as the basis of his polemic and skirted a lot of the main issues until the end. All this stuff with analogies he criticized, the analogies were used to show that having a caucus as a method of work is not the most horrible crime in the world. That's why people used analogies, and Comrade Kerry agrees with that; he says that it would be the exception not to have a caucus out here. That was the only purpose the analogies were for, to unconfuse those comrades who thought it a heinous crime, that it was against the national line.

Now, as I say, I don't know who Comrade Kerry talked to -- he didn't talk to me, although I indicated to Nelson that I was interested in talking with him -- so I should think that the branch leadership would have tried to clarify the issues that split the branch, rather than to muddle them and give a talk of this character which I think is only going to confuse people further, and anger a lot of people, because a lot of it just wasn't what the debate was all about. But maybe this is what the branch leadership preferred.

Tom C.: I wonder if I could have an expanded amount of time, an additional five minutes, because there are two points I'd like to cover.

Chairman: Take the five minutes and then ask for an extension.

Kerry: Give him as long as he wants.

Tom C.: OK? Ten minutes be OK? Well, we'll see. I won't take as long as Tom Kerry in presenting this here.

What I want to discuss is the lack of competitiveness of our press which required my working through a caucus and leaflet utilizing leaflets at the plant. I attempted to emphasize to our comrades the fact that our press had been completely silent about the approaching auto strike; there'd been no mention of it previous to the strike, and we have all the other political tendencies out at the plant selling their press with banner headlines stating that there was an approaching auto strike, and they were getting their propaganda into the plant precisely because they were pitching it and keying it to the level of the workers' interest, and they were getting their particular political line into the plant.

Our comrades were attempting to sell our press out there, and we sold 30 or so, which was fairly good, considering that it was sort of irrelevant to the present struggle, the interest of the workers at the present time. They were about student struggles and all the rest.

My attempt to adapt our caucus formation to getting our line and our program into that plant, this caucus formation was entirely my work, my effort, the leaflets were mine, and I attempted to subordinate this to the branch -- I attempted to present my whole program to the branch for discussion; I attempted to subordinate my activities to the party and the branch as a whole. I submitted a resumé of our rough draft of what we were going to do on all the leaflets back to the national office. Frank Lovell made it available entirely to the entire party.

Now the strange thing about this is that there was no criticism until after I had initiated a series of programs, you see. There was no criticism from Frank or suggestions of how I should firm it up, you see. I'm under party discipline. And I want to be as effective as I can in that plant. And by being effective I'm open for advice, see; if the comrades say there are certain weaknesses in my program, I'm open to these suggestions. That is why I submit to the branch and to the party in our intervention out to the plant.

Now Tom Kerry presents, he epitomizes what I'm attempting to make a point of here, the fact that there's been no leadership, no leadership in the working class struggles whatsoever. We have no interventionist program or policy out there. The only thing they can do is

criticize or attack after we carry out a line of action or a program at that plant.

Now, briefly, some of our competitors out there, the Stalinists, were giving away their PW, their press. Of course we can't compete with that, with banner headlines, you know "The Coming Auto Strike," and which was well distributed within the plant; and then we have the Workers League, selling their Bulletin out there, and handing out a leaflet which has an application on it for five free issues of The Bulletin, and discussing with one of their salesmen, they got 55 takers on this which they're attempting to build on.

And I'm very sensitive to our lack of competitiveness with our rival political tendencies. We have PL out there, with all kinds of gimmicks for free copies of their press, Challenge. The Militant leadership of our press back there and the leadership of our party failed to intervene or give any advice at the time that I was open, you know, for this. And I'll admit there might be a few weaknesses but I'm not going to defend those weaknesses. I'm going to make a pretty sharp criticism of our leadership that does not lead, and they do not offer any type of corrective advice or programmatic line out there; they can only attack after you carry out a line of action. This is not vanguardism; this is definitely not vanguardism. If we're building a vanguard party of the working class, we're deficient in this area. This is one of the points I want to emphasize.

Now the boycott. That was not a firm demand. The boycott was just a legitimate platform or cover from which we could unite student groups with the workers and keep this, develop a unity between the forces, which would be much more constructive than this divisive thing we see developing now in the UAW where the leadership is attempting to blame the students for all the violence, the bombing of our plant. They're trying to create a false straw man in order to divert the workers' attention from the real problems. The real problems are with GM, the struggle against GM and a weak compromising leadership in the trade unions.

Now the boycott was taken out of context -- it was only part of a total program -- we advocated full strike power -- this is only one part of the coin, you know. We advocated to shut down the whole industry. If you want to take something out of context and criticize it, this is Tom Kerry's prerogative, but it's not fair in debate, where he has an advantage over me because he's been debating a lot longer than I have on these points. But this boycott was not firm, it was only a platform, a propagandistic thing that we could unite those students with the workers, where we now see a division, a pulling apart on that.

Kerry's presentation on labor struggles here tonight was excellent; it should have been in our press one month ago. This could be educating the entire comrades of our party which really need this education. Tom Kerry had to fly on an airplane all the way out here in order to put me down rather sharply because he sees some little deficiencies in my program. This is strange. This is strange behavior.

Now all the history of all the labor strikes this year have shown that our press has only reacted impressionistically to these strikes. They only cover them when they happen. In other words, we only report on these things. We don't seem to draw conclusions from these strikes; we don't have an interventionist attitude; we don't have an interventionist program. We don't tell the workers what to beware of or the leadership when it's betraying the workers. We don't criticize this labor leadership. This has been another weakness in our party and our press; over the past year, it's been very noticeable to myself. It's been a weakness of our party, not being able to play a vanguard role in leading the working class and interjecting our line within these struggles. We seem to be adapting to the trade union bureaucracy. This could be a fatal illness in our party if we allow this trend to continue.

Kerry had to pick apart all my weak points in the program and he proposes to destroy the vehicle, the only vehicle we have for getting our propaganda in that plant. That plant has completely ...is an armed camp out there now; where they don't allow any sales of literature or outside intervention within this, and I mean it's quite a tense situation out there. If we send some of the comrades out, they might get their heads cracked. We don't want to see this. And the only vehicle we have at the present time is a caucus formation and those we had attracted within the caucus formation for that purpose. Now this is like saying we have a baby that perhaps is not in the perfect image that we wanted; it didn't have the blue eyes or the hair that we wanted, or something like that. So in effect we're saying let's destroy that baby because it has slight imperfections. Instead of attempting to mold and shape its character and personality and develop this thing, and in the proper image we want it developed, in a programmatic image that we want it developed, Kerry says let's destroy the baby. The majority of the branch says let's destroy the baby. It's no longer of any use. This is ridiculous. I fail to see the logic of this argument.

The caucus, now, in abandoning it, the Stalinists are moving in on the thing -- and of course they're trying to co-opt this whole thing, the mailing list ...I hate to admit it, but it seems as

though our party is playing left cover for the Stalinists, who are playing left cover for the bureaucrats, who are playing left cover, period. You know, I consider this a very fundamental weakness in our party. And I fully intend to carry this fight back to the International, to the convention. I just want to point out that all the leadership of the party, I think that the main thing that rubs Tom Kerry wrong and rubbed a lot of our leadership wrong, I disagree with the fact that he says that this is a local matter -- I really think we had an intervention by the national office, and the thing that irritated them more than anything else is my attacking the leadership out there. I called on the rank-and-file to fight that leadership every inch of the way and be prepared for a sellout; I think this is what disturbed our leadership who is attempting to form some sort of a coalition, an antiwar coalition, with the leadership.

Next month we're going to have to go out and get one of these slimy UAW bureaucrats and make a speaker of him out there at the same time they'd be stabbing us in the back on our strike. These are very serious deficiencies in our party that I've been aware of for some time. I've neglected to really speak out on them. But I think this has brought it in sharp focus; this problem is not going to be solved here tonight or anywhere in the near future. This is a very serious deficiency within our party.

Paul M.: There's not much time to speak on this subject before the branch. There's not much you can say in three minutes, or for that matter in five. But I want to briefly recount the circumstances for the evolution of this.

Tom C. came up before the branch organizer of the previous Exec. sometime a month or two ago and indicated he had been doing a great deal of thinking and studying and he had some ideas and proposals to make, as far as future work, etc., and a special meeting of the Exec. was called to discuss that. All the old comrades who were on that Exec. can recall it.

At that time, Tom C. essentially presented to the Exec. what subsequently was printed up into the three pages. It was in my opinion a rather confusing body of ideas. The point was made, and I was maker of the motion, that Tom C. was requesting rather strongly that we seek branch education. He kept emphasizing that the whole branch has to be brought in.

The whole party has to be brought in. Instead of having what he characterized as "secret meetings," etc., we should have branch meetings. And of course this was something we rather strongly agreed with, and the motivation was made very clear and was spelled out rather clearly and

rather specifically that in order to possibly enhance and develop a branch awareness and understanding of this, we were going to refer the question to the branch itself for discussion.

As a matter of fact, I was the maker of that motion, and I prefaced it and qualified it by saying, "Now I personally am in disagreement with Tom C.'s remarks on the labor party, and emphasis of that, etc., but what we want to do is have a branch educational discussion." And the question was brought before the branch.

Now unfortunately the two meetings that it was discussed, I had to work that night, which I think was somewhat of an advantage, because when you listen to a tape of a meeting it gives you a better ability sometimes to grasp it than it does by sitting here in the hall itself. And at the meeting itself, Tom C. presented more ideas than he had presented at the Exec. For that matter, I recall him using the term characterizing the independent Chicano movement as something that was divisive. Now what did he mean by divisive? I think Tom Kerry explained that, and I'm not going to go a little further.

When you have his point of view of the labor party being the thing, etc., everything else gets in its way. And subsequently he also made the point in passing that he just made now on the party leadership and the party line, cottontailing it up to some phony bureaucrats in order to get them on an antiwar platform. At the branch meeting where this was discussed, Ralph asked a question. And he says, does this represent the point of view of the Executive Committee? And Jean S. got up, and said "no, it does not," specifically, clearly, unquestionably.

What the Executive Committee voted for, was what was on Tom C.'s paper, on Tom C.'s initial document. So anyone who can draw, or who attempts to or tries to draw out of that the conclusion that the Executive Committee had endorsed a proposal for caucus, or anything of that kind, is falsifying history. On the contrary, the motivations of the Executive Committee were to seek an educational discussion. Tom had committed himself to two things at that first Executive Committee. The first one was that he committed himself to running for the Branch Exec. which was going to take place in two weeks, something that he had fulfilled. And we welcomed it very, very strongly. And the second thing was to go to Oberlin. And the point was made, time and time again, that that was one of the most ideal places and opportunities in which to discuss the question at this time. And we deferred; we held off, because we looked to Oberlin as a possibility.

Unfortunately, Tom C. was not able to make it there. But there was a rather rich discussion at Oberlin that took place. After that, suddenly the leaflets started flying. The rest is past history. The caucus was formed, etc. Tactics can only be approached with validity and clarity when they are derivative of, subordinate, and flow out of a clear strategy. What is Tom's strategy, you see? That is the question that I'm asking here.

Tony C.: I want to address myself to some of the remarks that were made. Unfortunately I didn't get a chance to speak at the last discussion, because it was very lengthy. I wanted to raise some questions there which Tom C. raised. First of all, Comrade Alan W. was shocked at how Comrade Kerry proceeded in his presentation. I'd like to explain what Comrade Kerry did, which was absent from the presentation of the comrades of the minority, on the question of the caucus. Comrade Kerry proceeded from a general evaluation of the status of the trade union movement, particularly the UAW as it stands today, the struggle that's been taking place inside the trade union bureaucracy, and from that general, national evaluation of the issues involved in that strike and their historical roots, Comrade Kerry then went on to look at the concrete situation of the particular local in Fremont and the particular tactics that then applied to our intervention there.

This, comrades, is what is called a Marxist approach to questions dealing with our intervention in any movement that takes place, and if comrades are surprised by this approach, I suggest that they look at this again, carefully.

Also, Comrade Kerry went over the key political questions involved and precisely did not deal with organizational questions, secondary questions. He dealt with the primary, political questions involved in terms of our overall evaluation of the situation, and therefore, how we would intervene and what organizational forms our intervention would take place on the basis of that general political evaluation of the situation. That again is in the traditions of how we Marxists analyze and function.

Now in that discussion that took place a very interesting thing I think we should point out. As far as I'm informed, there was no evaluation by the comrades out at Fremont or by the comrades in the minority of the existence, or the relationship, or our attitude, or a program towards any Black or Brown caucuses that exist out at the Fremont plant.

Now our evaluation in terms of the radicalization of the working class in this country has been that the Black and the Chicano workers represent the most

advanced section of the working class and in fact are providing the vanguard of the trade union movement in the Black caucuses that have been formed in various parts of the country and so on. Now comrades didn't mention what our attitude is to these Brown caucuses; I understand there is a large percentage of Black and Chicano workers out at that factory. What is our attitude towards them? Do we say to them that a Chicano party is divisive? Do we say to Black workers that a Black party is divisive? That wasn't made clear.

Now, you know if we worried about being outdone by all the other political tendencies, why, we're outdone every day. If you look at Challenge, Challenge runs screaming headlines every day about how the workers are about to go out on a general strike. That's not how we function, comrades. I think that the comrades in the minority are reflecting the pressure of these ultraleft and opportunist elements out there, particularly the Workers League, Progressive Labor Party and the Communist Party, who are all to the letter anti-nationalist and absolutely diametrically opposed to the creation of a Chicano or a Black party. But I think there's a certain amount of adaptation to the pressures of these reactionary currents within it.

Now, what Comrade Kerry pointed out is that the question of a caucus is not an abstract question that you look at in the general. It's a concrete question of a particular situation. The question of a caucus is not some type of organizational form through which we have to work, or can only work. As Tom C. pointed out now, that we're destroying the only means that we have to work -- that's incorrect. That's not the only means we have to work. A caucus is something that is created at a particular time in a struggle that relates to the consciousness of the mass of the workers in that particular situation or the mass of whatever grouping, like happened to us in Los Angeles. Where it became possible to form a caucus at a particular point in the struggle where it wasn't possible to do that before. It's a tactical, concrete question.

Peter G.: I'm glad Comrade Tony C. got up and explained to us what Comrade Kerry had said; I'm sure none of us understood it. I really do not think that it was necessary for Comrade Tony C. to put himself as the crutch of Tom Kerry in his remarks, and I think we pretty clearly understood that. Now a couple of things -- I'm not sure how we're going to deal with this problem of whether we voted or didn't vote to establish a caucus, or not. I hope these tapes that were made of those meetings are available to the entire branch so that we can go back and listen to them and decide in our minds again more clearly whether we voted for this or not. It was my understanding that we had; it's other comrades' understanding that we

hadn't. So this question I can see is never going to be resolved until we can review those tapes. That's the only way I can see it being resolved.

One thing I'm going to request is for Comrade Kerry to give us a political perspective for our intervention, a strategic and tactical perspective for our intervention in this strike. Now you mentioned that there would be a time where a caucus would be good. Or that it would be possible in certain situations in the development of this strike, or in future strikes, or the future development in the union as related to this specific plant, that it would be good to do that. The only real perspective that he mentioned was one of trying to get The Militant out, which I think is a good thing. But that does not substitute itself, I don't think it can substitute itself, for relating to the strike, to the issues of the strike and trying to get people actually involved so it affects not just the general workers involved in that plant -- it involves them also, they are directly involved, because they are there -- exactly what kind of activity they could carry out; how to prepare for a situation when there would be a need for this caucus.

I'd also like, if he could explain how the withdrawing from this caucus is the best way to get in that situation -- to get in the situation where we're putting forward clearer politics, how he sees that would be impossible politically for that to come about.

Jeff M.: Comrade Tom C. made the analogy of the decision of the branch to abolish our caucus as "killing the baby, even though it has certain imperfections." Whether or not we discussed the imperfections at all, the fact is that if all it takes to kill the baby is the withdrawal of one person, the kind of caucus that we were talking about could not have been that effective to start with. So I think we have to be clear about what we're talking about. If it hinges on one man, then we're talking about a different kind of baby.

Comrade Tom C. said from the articles in The Militant we seem to be adapting to the union bureaucracy on the question of, for the sake of, our alliance in the antiwar movement. "We don't have an interventionist program for this strike or for the trade union movement. We don't lead." That our leadership in the SWP disapproves of Tom C.'s position in a caucus because it doesn't like Tom C.'s attacking the trade union bureaucracy which we are forming an alliance with.

Now comrades, we don't have any position whatsoever in opposition to forming caucuses in the unions. We just ask that when we do form a caucus, when we do intervene in a caucus type formation, that

there are political benefits to be reaped from it. We know that there has been considerable movement in the antiwar, women's, Chicano and the Black movements, and we have sent comrades into those movements. But we don't have a general policy of either sending comrades in or forming caucuses in unions, because we don't see the beginnings, or we don't see the class struggle today on a level where we can make any kind of gains, in comparison to the kinds of gains that we have made elsewhere, or that we are making elsewhere.

And I mentioned last week if we followed the policy of sending comrades for the record into the unions, so we could say, like the IS, PL and everyone else -- the abstentionists from the mass movement developing today -- that yes, we proletarianized, we're a working class branch, and so on. We would be the same numbers that we were when we started this party in '38.

Comrade Kerry gave his position as he saw it on the factors that mitigate against a caucus. It's unfortunate that the leadership of this branch was not able to come up with a statement as clear. And from the entire context of the discussion -- and, by the way, on the side here, it's not going to do us any good looking back on the tape recordings to find out whether or not we agreed or did not agree to have a caucus. That doesn't solve the problem. It goes way beyond an interpretation of a decision.

What Comrade Kerry did say, in his opinion, is a caucus at this point would not be fruitful and that is because we could not clearly differentiate and draw around us a group in the union at this time. And if the comrades think that that's not true, then they should give us their analysis of the objective situation in the plant that differs from that.

Now, the other thing which is even more crucial. There was total disagreement in the caucus and on this branch floor about what kind of program we had in the caucus. That is also not the fault of Comrade Tom C. but the fault of the entire branch. We can't pooh-pooh these, and it was Comrade Kerry and every other comrade's obligation to point out what's wrong with the program we're intervening with, regardless of the fact that Wohlforth, Spartacists and the CP can intervene from now until the end of the world, as they have been doing, and groups like them for years with a program that isn't worth a pile of dung!

And if we want to emulate that kind of intervention, we can go on intervening with no program and total disagreement on the floor. I agree with Comrade Tom C. that the leadership of this branch has not conducted this discussion or our intervention

in any way that -- well, it should warn us in the future for better preparation. And if comrades feel that we should have a caucus there, then they should present to us their position on the objective situation which would merit it.

Mike T.: I'd like to strongly disassociate myself from the remarks of Comrade Tom C. in several aspects. One, on "make The Militant competitive." I think The Militant is the only paper worth a moment's consideration in the labor movement today. The Stalinists had to give their People's World away, because no one would buy the rag. The other papers, Challenge and what not, are a joke and bear no relationship to reality. Now as a left cover for the bureaucrats because we're trying to utilize them in the antiwar movement, would we welcome Woodcock to speak at a national rally against the war? Right! It would be a terrific step forward for the antiwar movement and I would welcome such a move. At the same time you have to point out we'd support a Woodcock, we wouldn't let that interfere with our role of presenting demands, etc. which cut across class lines.

Now as a left cover for the Stalinists, the Stalinists' role, of course, has been to, in the past period they've supported the bureaucracy and basically they have the same position as the bureaucracy: maintenance of the status quo, with realignment of the Democratic Party and some tertiary reforms, etc., and the ex-Stalinist unions are welcoming them in.

But our record against Stalinism in the labor movement dates back from the foundation of the party, and I suggest you re-read the struggles we lost in UAW and Maritime against the Stalinists. I think that many of the things you've picked up are slanders of the Wohlforthites, whose pomposity is only outdone by their sterility.

Now at the same time I agree with Comrade Tom C. that we should have a caucus at Fremont, and while I agree with many of the things Comrade Kerry remarked about, including the demands that one of the key things is that we have to oppose the one-at-a-time, just attacking GM and leaving Ford and Chrysler alone, and we have to face the cost-of-living also and the non-negotiable demand and the boycott, etc., were mistakes. They were mistakes by Tom C. of I don't think a too serious nature.

Where Comrade Kerry makes his error, I think, is on the following. That the basis of the strike in the UAW and the basis of the struggle in the labor movement is not around the cost-of-living and not around wages per se; any collective bargaining agreement where a wage settlement is the main feature is only a defen-

sive thing and that even includes the cost-of-living.

An escalator clause may maintain the status of living, the standard of living, but doesn't increase it. Where wages have fallen for four years in this country and capitalism is demanding a bigger share from the workers to pay for imperialism, to pay for the war in Vietnam and to pay for their own contradictions, the trade union bureaucracy is going to have to carry this struggle to obtain what capitalism wants in the trade union movement.

The big thing centers on the productivity of labor and the tremendous speedup engendered, both absolute and relative, of increase in productivity of labor and the whole question of working conditions and shop conditions and struggle over what basically is aspects of workers' control in the plant itself.

These struggles the unions want no part of whatsoever and have turned hands down on, and that's the way where a caucus can make an inroad and prepare some gains. That struggle has to be launched, not negotiated on a one, two or three-year basis in Union Square or Solidarity House, but has to be fought on a day-to-day level in the plant. And in this area where the caucus has the ability under a program worked out in accordance with our traditional policies, of the transitional program, etc., can intervene and be effective.

Ralph L.: I feel obligated to speak since I made the presentation for the minority which has come under such criticism and attack in the course of tonight's session. Of course I can't help but respond to Comrade Tony C.'s ludicrous remarks that in contrast to Comrade Kerry, this minority didn't outline its Marxist perspective for the struggle in the auto unions. In ten minutes, comrade? All that in ten minutes? I mean I speak pretty fast, but in ten minutes we're going to give that analysis? That isn't what we were discussing! We weren't trying to give you a full perspective; we were trying to orient the branch towards some positive and modest gains that it could make in a particular union situation. Nor can I give you that Marxist perspective in four minutes. Please don't be ludicrous. Could you do it in ten minutes, comrade? Comrade Kerry spent an hour and twenty minutes doing it.

Now, I have to comment on these remarks on the discussion in the general context of which I think it is most important and that is the context of why Comrade Kerry came to make this visit and report to our branch. And I can only make a judgment on this based on some remarks in a conversation I had with Comrade Kerry. He said there were several aspects to his

coming here. One was to give this report on the general situation in auto and this union situation that has divided the branch to some degree. Now in my opinion there's no doubt that this aspect of Comrade Kerry's visit has been very instructive; I learned quite a bit in the course of his remarks. But I must point out to Comrade Kerry that we were not aware of this information about the painters' union situation. I only assumed myself -- the only evidence we had to go by on the question of caucuses was a letter that Comrade Lovell sent, something to the effect that our experience had been that caucus work hadn't been too effective.

But this was a very narrow statement and we had, as opposed to that, the opposite evidence that right across the Bay one of our leading National Committee members and a former branch organizer and so on was conducting such an intervention. Now we had no way of knowing that this intervention was not fully approved by the national office and Comrade Kerry indicated that it might have been an error, or partially an error and so on. And we made our judgement on the caucus question by pointing out the other situations where we do intervene, via caucus and so on. So this information puts it in a different light although I don't think it's convincing. Although nonetheless it's educational and it certainly will play a role in this conversation. Comrade Kerry raised some remarks that were not at all broached, points of view that weren't even broached in our original discussion.

Now there were several other reasons why Comrade Kerry came and I have to comment on them too. One, I think a major one was that this situation in our branch, which had been somewhat divisive, be handled in the best possible manner for the further growth and activity of our branch and that it not divide the branch in a way in which it would become bogged down and lose sight of our broad, party-building objectives. I don't think that the character of this discussion, Comrade Kerry, has been and your presentation is such as to lend itself towards that.

I think it has the very definite potential to further divide the branch and that the remarks were not put in the context that I certainly assumed they would have been. I think the Executive Committee had played no role whatsoever in the organization of this discussion or any other aspect of it. We learned about Comrade Kerry's visit at the last branch meeting. The Executive Committee was never consulted in any way, shape or form on this question.

Finally I just want to repeat the comments I made to Comrade Kerry and that was, although he was coming out to a branch that was divided, this is not a problem branch. It is a branch that has problems. These divisions that have taken place in

our branch on this question and others have not led to any of the various factors that would indicate this being labelled a problem branch which needs a very strong intervention in order to reorient it. In most of the activities of our work the branch has turned outwards. There is no demoralization in our branch for example, and that is one of the best indications of a problem branch.

There is no demoralization that I've seen among comrades because of these disputes. Moreover, it's a branch that is continuing to recruit. Our branch has been continuing to recruit through the YSA and we're doing outside work. Along most of the basic activities of the branch I see no reason for this to be called a problem branch and see no reason to say that these disputes or divisions have been such as to create a problem situation in Berkeley that have required a very strong intervention with respect to straightening us out. And I think that your comments, Comrade Kerry, have more potential to divide than unite.

Ed D.: The points I'd like to stress, comrades, are first, that I disagree as I said last week that the party leadership can just take an interest in a question like this on a trade union question. It has to exert leadership. I agree with Ralph L. that Comrade Kerry has shed a lot of light on the problem -- it should have been long before the question came up and we should be getting direction. Again I repeat from the Transitional Program that a correct union policy, a correct policy on the trade unions, not any policy, a correct one, is a basic condition for an organization that considers itself in fraternal ideological solidarity with the world Trotskyist movement.

Our policy has to be correct. It can't simply depend on the way a branch will vote. It's one of these questions that the party leadership has to be decisive on. And I think, just like on the question of critical support, this branch voted to give support to the Panthers on the Peace and Freedom ticket. Well, the party overruled that. I think the trade union question and our intervention with the class like that is such a question and. I think that should be stressed.

I also feel that I have to defend Tom C. Certainly organizationally he accepts a lot of the criticism made as I do, especially on those leaflets. But organizationally, I mean, let's all admit Tom C. acted as a Bolshevik, as a revolutionist, not as a trade union militant in this. Last summer it was Tom's initiative alone that raised the question of our intervention in Fremont. Tom C. brought on the discussion well in advance of the strike. And as the strike approached Tom tried to get the Executive Committee to take leadership of our intervention there. He asked for



party direction. He didn't get that. Two Execs in a row didn't even consider the question.

He told me that Nelson met him at the door at the second Exec. a week before the strike asking him not to bring it up again. I mean that's just a plain fact. And the fact is that we didn't enter into a discussion until the night of the strike when the comrades at Fremont had to go down there and leave at 9:00 or 10:00 or whatever it was. So I think Tom should be defended. He acted correctly; he asked for party direction and it's false polemics, comrades, to find fault with this or that point. On GM as the sole target. I agree, I think Tom C. agrees. He came out with it in a leaflet for industry-wide. To criticize Tom C. for stressing the labor party, it's no big deal. He also retracted on the boycott idea but he had reasons for it. But it's false polemics to criticize these things if you yourself, I mean the branch, now the Exec. and also the party, refuse direction.

I think it should be stressed. Leaflets didn't just fly around by the way. They were passed out as they were turned out. The Exec. knew about them. The first person who got them was Nelson B. I turned them out myself you see. I know that. Now on the question of the caucus itself, all I'll say is maybe it's correct to say that that caucus down there is pushing the wrong issues, certain wrong issues. But the point is we have a possibility of building a caucus with the correct issues and Tom C. mentioned some of those issues. Tom Kerry mentioned those issues. We should build it. It's possible to do that.

They're hard-nosed workers down there; it isn't just a bunch of radicals. I went to the first meeting and the majority of the people there were workers at the plant. Mike was there -- he said they were all hard-nosed workers. I agree with him. I've seen a lot of guys in the antiwar movement; these guys looked great! Now, we might be discreet in our intervention there -- that's one thing. But to say that we can't intervene is something I find hard to understand.

So let me sum it up by saying that Tom Kerry's statement that we can't affect the negotiations -- that to me sort of sums up our disagreement. You see, that's the attitude of the trade union bureaucrats, whether they can affect the negotiations or not. We don't think we can. We operate in fascist unions, don't we? Can we affect negotiations there? The fact that we can't affect negotiations, or can't affect the general course of the struggle, doesn't mean that we don't operate in the unions, even fascist unions.

Comrades, there are good workers

down there. The reason we intervene from the inside is to split as much as we can the influence of the trade union bureaucracy on the workers. That's why we're in the fight. That's why we're there -- to split them away from the trade union bureaucracy and to recruit a few people. I say there are people we could recruit down there! How can you say we can't work with them? How can you give them education and consciousness except you go through a struggle with them when they're ready to struggle? You see, they showed they were ready to struggle. Those workers, they came to caucus meetings. A hundred of them signed up.

Celia S.: In terms of this discussion there's one sort of general comment I'd like to make before I get to specifics, something that really bothers me that I've seen done in this branch a lot and I think that is something that's very bad and tends to give the branch a factional atmosphere which we don't want. And that is people constantly pulling up the boogey man. Like Paul pulls up the boogey man of anti-nationalist feelings and someone else pulls up the boogey man of taking all the students off the campus and sending them into the plant and so on. All these kinds of things that were not discussed in the previous discussion, and bringing up things that everyone knows that's in this branch are not ideas of most people of the branch.

For instance, I think that Alan W. was justifiably shocked to a certain extent by Comrade Kerry's remarks. I was too, and not in the sense that he gave a history of the UAW or gave an analytical and national perspective on that strike, but in the sense of spending so much time on the boycott and the analogies of the boycott when nobody discussed those analogies in terms of the boycott. See, that's the kind of thing, the kind of distortion, that's very irritating to a sensitive situation and I think should be avoided. People should be very careful and very precise in these kinds of things.

Now on the question of killing the baby, or throwing the baby away, or whatever it is. See, it's not true that the withdrawal of one person -- that whole idea is kind of a strange idea. If we withdrew from the SMC, for instance, and turned it over to the opponents who were operating in the SMC, at least at Cal., it would kill the SMC. And that doesn't mean that the SMC is worthless or that we should discontinue work in that area. And I think allowing the Stalinists to come into a formation could effectively kill it. The formation might continue with a name or something. But it certainly would in a certain sense kill it to withdraw our ideas and our movement from that.

Now in terms of a caucus, I think

that we should continue with some kind of formation. I don't care if we call it a caucus or not. Maybe that's not exactly the appropriate name. But certainly there are many things that we can do with a formation of people out there that we have around. Many people, you know there are a number of healthy people there that perhaps we could recruit. Especially with the situation that we have now where it's very difficult to sell The Militant externally and to do work where comrades go out there on trailblazes and so on.

We can literally at this point write the leaflets and programs for any kind of formation out there. We could have written them in the beginning. In fact, the first leaflets that were written around the elections for that formation, for that caucus, were written, I believe, by comrades from the Executive Committee including Comrade Montauk. And there was the opportunity to do that with these other leaflets. I think that it's possible to develop a program or a strategy on which we could utilize that group of people and that formation in an effective way. I think that we should spend some, and the Executive Committee should spend some, time discussing how we could utilize that group of people.

I mean, for instance, perhaps they could sell Militants for one thing. Perhaps this group of people could be used as a lever for some of the red-baiting and anti-student attitudes and statements that are being put forward by the local bureaucracy out there. There are a whole number of other things and I think that some of the ideas that Comrade Kerry mentioned were very useful ideas that should be discussed further in terms of that formation.

Dave W.: I think that one of the key things that has marked this discussion is that it has contrasted an organizational type approach to the question to a political one. And the excuse of the minority for not giving a political argument is of all things, time, or that the Exec. proposed as part of its implementation of tasks out there, proposed that Tom withdraw from the caucus.

These are all secondary issues and these are the issues that attorney's argue on -- fine points, not political basic issues. Now all along, and regardless of what Ralph says, the majority has talked politics all through the last discussion. And through this one. It has proved that the caucus is incapable of carrying out our party line out there, or our party tasks. And it has proved that this caucus, regardless of your snickers, is attempting to be a substitute for the union leadership out there.

A totally incorrect attitude toward

a movement at this stage, completely obvious. And it's so obvious that's why they don't want to discuss it. In fact the minority has focused on that the Exec. has failed to organize this discussion, that Tom Kerry flew out here (that's really key); that the United Action Caucus a few months ago (which was really a misnomer -- it was a fraction of our three comrades out there plus any other person who agrees with the Socialist Workers Party ticket) turned into some broad coalition on the arbitrary action of Tom C.; that this somehow warrants that we should continue this.

Totally an organizational argument. Another one is that we need action out there, right? So we should keep this caucus going and then talk politics. That was explicitly said in the last discussion. Until the minority, except for a couple of comrades like Ed D. agreed to face the political issues and really talk about the politics in this, the minority is just going to be ineffective in helping to build this branch and build the action of this branch out at the UAW plant.

#### SUMMARY

I'll try to make it as short as I can. I can't answer everybody fully. I'll try not to neglect anybody. But I can't answer everybody; otherwise I'd be speaking for another hour and a half. So I'll deal with the questions I consider relevant.

First, on Tom C. I'm very much disturbed about his attitude towards the party, the party leadership and the party press.

I say I'm very much disturbed about Comrade Tom C.'s attitude towards the party, the party leadership and the party press. I don't know how you comrades feel, except Comrade Mike T. who expressed himself on the question. If the comrade is serious about what he said, then we've got a much bigger difference than just this strike out here at Fremont and the UAW. If the party, the party press, is covering up for the labor bureaucracy, is serving as a left cover for the Stalinists who in turn cover up for the labor bureaucracy, then you've got to get rid of this party leadership. Yes!

Then your problem is not that of working out a tactic for intervention in a strike. I didn't repeat to the comrades here the discussion I had with Tom C. I had a conversation with Tom C. He was the first person I wanted to speak to because it was precisely this question which we were most concerned about. And he told me the same things, only with some amplifications and elaborations. I wouldn't even repeat them here, but he repeats them openly in a branch meeting! As I say, you'd

better think very seriously, Tom C. about what you're saying, whether you really believe what you're saying. If you really believe what you're saying, then this is not the party for you. I'm sorry.

Or you would have to start a faction, fight in the party to oust this leadership and to get another revolutionary leadership, because covering up for the union bureaucracy is betrayal!

That's what we accuse the Stalinists of doing and other opponents of the party. So I don't know, I don't know whether you're serious or whether you're just using polemical exaggeration in your arguments, but it's a serious matter to me.

Now, is it true that there has been no advice, no collaboration, no intervention? I don't think so! I recall as far back as the time that the comrades ran for convention delegate, it was after consultation with Frank Lovell, and Frank Lovell warned against the type of caucus activity that the comrades had been previously engaged in out there! We've had a long history and I know something about it.

I worked with Bill K. and Tom C. years before this branch was formed. This is not my first experience with this plant. This plant, when it was out in Oakland, Bill K. reminded me the other day when I spoke to him, too, to the two comrades who were active in the plant to to find out what the facts were.

He reminded me that he'd been kicked out of the plant several times and that I had warned him if he got kicked out again, I was going to kick him out of the party. Why? Because he was getting kicked out for all the wrong reasons! For the wrong reasons and getting into the wrong fights! That's why he was kicked out. I'm surprised he got back. It was only because of Tom C.'s activity and the intervention of some other officials. But he's back in that plant now. I don't want that to happen again!

If our comrades get kicked out of a plant, I would prefer it to be on the basis where the party can conduct a big campaign for them and not be fouled up with all kinds of stuff that is indefensible.

Tom C., don't say there hasn't been any line. I don't know whether you've been reading The Militant. You say The Militant hasn't carried articles on the UAW situation before the strike began? We apparently haven't been reading the same paper! And what I say here is new? No, it isn't new! Some of it is new, but the line's not new. It was in the article that was printed before the strike broke out, written by Frank Lovell, en-

titled: "UAW Goes for Wage Boost." Frank goes into the whole question of the one-at-a-time strategy and the history of it in the UAW and what a pernicious role it played, but you ignored all that. Where do you get the line from? Who do you think Lovell's writing for? Himself?

His articles are written in collaboration with the comrades in the center. And on an important question like this they represent the party line. And you ignored them, and you came out with a leaflet about agreeing with Bluestone and Co.

We were so much concerned about this question of the strike and of getting at least a meeting of the minds and laying out a perspective for the strike that we urged Comrade Tom C. to come to Oberlin. And why? Because we would all be there at the same time. And Frank L. wrote to him -- not only wrote to him, he called him from Atlanta, Georgia, didn't he? And he urged you to come to Oberlin. I wanted to talk to you. I wanted to talk to Tom C. Dobbs wanted to talk to you. We wanted to get together because we knew this thing was busting out.

You (Nelson B.) spoke to Tom C. also to urge him to come. We even offered that if it was a question of finances, the party would advance the money to come out there. But he either wouldn't or couldn't come, I don't know. You can't compel someone to do it.

Now you say you made this material available to the national office. But this wasn't made available in the form of a query or asking for our consultation. You sent us a copy, that's what you did; you sent us a copy of a letter that you said you had already sent to Detroit and to Los Angeles. We didn't make a big to-do about it, because we knew Pete Kelly wasn't going to do a thing about it (he couldn't if he wanted to) and Lou Ciccone would do less. Because I know both of them; I know Pete Kelly and I know Ciccone and I know they wouldn't go for this sort of boycott gimmick.

You see, I'm not accusing you of malice, Tom C. I think it was a question of not knowing proper procedure, that's all. And maybe we'll learn a lesson from this: how to proceed.

A comrade involved in a strike which is of national character cannot, must not, take it upon himself to advance a policy, a national policy, without consultation with the center. We've got other comrades in the UAW besides you and Bill K. and the other comrade involved, who don't agree with this line. But they didn't even have a chance to discuss it. That is not the way to operate. I know it's not done maliciously, but you've got to learn something. We've all got to learn something.

I don't think the Executive Committee was correct in everything they did. They probably should have intervened earlier, probably should have asked me to fly out. I've done that before.

I spoke to you a year ago, didn't I, Tom C.? At the time of the oil workers' strike, we discussed the whole Fremont situation then about joining a caucus headed by a Black worker. And I said yes, I was all for it on the basis of fighting for the right of minority representation. I said, "That's enough for me. If it's headed by Blacks, has the support of Blacks and the Chicanos in the plant, and the fight is for representation of this minority, that's plenty for me. I'm for it." Didn't I? Yes!

We've never refused collaboration to any comrade. We know how tough it is to get caught up in a situation; things begin to happen pretty quick. But the basic mistake was to feel that this was a right now, do-or-die matter, that you didn't even have time to consult or to consider the question; and so you went ahead and made a lot of mistakes.

And, in my opinion, you discredited this caucus, such as it is. I don't know what it is, frankly. I've never been able to find out, except that a petition with a hundred names was signed after the strike broke. You've got a hundred names. Now what does that mean? What does that mean in a situation like this? All I know is that in one leaflet the caucus called for an action, an action. They said that on Saturday at 10:00 A.M., there will be a boycott demonstration at the Corey Chevrolet in San Jose or somewhere; bring your friends and fellow workers.

Now that's a test of how much support, how much influence this caucus had. How many turned up for that demonstration the next day? The comrades who knew about it tell me that six turned up -- four of whom were students or hippie types, two auto workers. Is that a manifestation of a caucus that is viable? And if you give it up, you're giving up the fight? You're cutting your heart out? Betraying the workers and so forth and so on?

No, I can't be conned on this question, comrades. I've had too much experience. I've been in this business too long. I know a viable caucus when I see one, not only by what it says, but by what it does, by the response it gets to a call for action.

Now, I told Tom C. I wanted to talk to him again after this meeting. I didn't want to talk to him again before the meeting. I want to talk to him after this meeting. And I hope I can. I hope I can see him tomorrow or before I leave, and we'll have another talk, try and arrive

at some kind of modus vivendi, see whether or not there's any basis for collaboration and work out some practical measures if we can to facilitate our intervention.

Now, Comrade Peter G. asked whether I could lay down some specific and strategic and tactical formula for intervention in this strike. I thought I did that. I said as of now I think that the most effective intervention must be on an analytical and educational level and be through The Militant.

I don't mean by that that the comrades rush out there, start selling The Militant. You can't do it even if you wanted to. There's just a token picket line out there to begin with, and because of the incidents that occurred the night of the strike, Tom G. himself tells me the workers are armed with clubs to beat any student or anybody who's not a member that tries to get in there.

But we are fortunate enough to have two or three people in the situation, don't we? If you can't sell The Militant, give it away. Is the branch unable to subsidize distribution of Militants -- 50, 75, 100 or 500? The national office will do it for you. Give it away, if you can't sell it. Bill K. tells me he takes a bundle of 15 each week -- very good! And distributes them around. I think they'll get more out of that, those 15 workers, more of an understanding of the strike, an understanding of our politics and an understanding of what the basic issues are than out of 1,000 of these so-called "caucus" leaflets. I believe that.

And I think if Tom would do that too -- he's known out there as a union militant -- the very fact that he would sell them or give them a copy of the paper, turn it to the page dealing with the UAW strike. We're covering the strike in every issue of the paper. Before I left New York I spoke to Frank L. about zeroing in on the question of the one-at-a-time strategy. I said that this is the central tactical issue; I think we should do more on it. Do it in a more pedagogical way; show how this thing has worked out in the past.

Do an article on the Ford strike and how that was sold down the river through this one-at-a-time strategy. Go back in history and relate and reveal some of the incidents in the development of the UAW, you see. This is not new. It is new to many of the workers in the factory, to most of the workers in the factory. It's not new to us. If you go back to the May, 1946 issue of the magazine in an article by E. R. Frank, he also dealt with this question.

The UAW strike then, the role that Reuther played, and the whole business of

the one-at-a-time strategy. It would be very instructive to do it, because it's sort of analogous to the present struggle. Then, also, there was the question of a national offensive against labor. It was a question of mobilizing the labor movement on a national scale in order to counter this offensive, and the one-at-a-time strategy cut right across it. The demand then was for 30 cents an hour. All the unions had joined in this demand. And because of the one-at-a-time strategy, the UAW settled for 19½ cents; some of them took 18 cents, some of them 18½ cents, and some of them took 17½ cents. About half of what their demands were, because they used one-at-a-time in a struggle that required the collaboration of the entire labor movement.

How would withdrawal from the "caucus" help? It would get rid of what I consider is an impediment to doing this kind of educational activity at this stage in the strike. It's going to be a long strike, comrades! Unless they are prepared to shave their demands and especially on the cost of living clause. This strike is going to go on for some time. And if it goes on for a long time, the mood of the workers is going to change.

You know, when they first come out on strike it's a big celebration, like New Year's Eve, you know, a release from the tension of uncertainty about whether it's going to be strike or not strike. Then you march out of that plant! Assert yourself, confront the corporations, by God, and make them bow down to the demands of the union, sure. It's festive. It's a celebration.

But that mood is going to change, you see. When they're out on strike a month, two months, three months, it becomes tougher and tougher all the time. And they begin to ask why the strike is going on so long when the UAW and the labor movement have so much potential power.

They're going to be receptive to the idea of using this power, by God. Use this power that we've got; to hell with this one-at-a-time strategy! Get the Ford workers and the Chrysler and American Motors workers out with us. Create a social crisis; challenge the government to intervene. Because that's the real opponent of the workers -- the executive committee of the bosses, the administration in Washington.

The real confrontation on this issue is with the government; it's all concealed though. They can't see it. They think they're in a fight with just GM. Poppycock! They're in a fight with the employing class of this country and their executive committee in Washington.

We want to strip the blinders from their eyes, so they can see who the real enemy is, and that's the only way you're going to do it. If you tie up this whole industry, create an economic crisis which engenders a social crisis.

If Washington intervenes the rest of the labor movement has to jump in. They cannot tolerate any kind of frontal attack on the UAW which would immediately mean an attack on the entire labor movement. That's the strategy; that's the tactic.

How successful will it be? I don't know. When is the mood going to change? I don't know. I wish I did. I'm not a mind reader; I don't have a crystal ball. I do know the dynamics of the class struggle. I do know what long strikes do to the consciousness of workers and the pressures they go through.

When the bills become due and they can't pay them and the mortgages and so forth and so on. I don't have to describe it to Bill K. or to Tom C. or to other comrades who have gone through it. They know.

The mood changes, and some of them begin to get mad. And it's not just the ho, ho, ho stuff anymore -- going out and getting loaded up on beer and dumping a garbage truck. No, that's play stuff. They're in for the fight of their lives. That's what we've got to make them understand, and that's what the paper is going to do and has been doing.

We didn't start with a big bang. We started patiently, explaining, analyzing. The tempo will pick up. The mood will change; manifestations of resistance will become manifest not only in Fremont but throughout the entire GM complex. The paper will be in tune with that development.

Now this about the baby, destroying the baby, if you'll pardon me an analogy. You know it's just as fatal for a politician as it is for an obstetrician to mistake the first month of pregnancy for the ninth. You didn't have a baby here, Tom C. You have the idea, the germ, but not a good germ. And the best thing to do before you get into any more trouble is to get rid of it.

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I'm sorry, Mike T., but I lost the thread of your remarks. You said the basis of the struggle is not the cost-of-living, but I didn't get what your alternative was. I'm sorry. It was something else.

Jeff M. (from the floor): He said speed-up and conditions, as I understand it, is

going to be a factor, would be a target that we could rally people to at the plant, as I understand it.

Kerry: Well, speedup and conditions, that's always true, whether the strike's on or off. They've got 37,000 grievances in GM alone, and so now when the negotiations broke down, they say they are going to settle these grievances. They're not going to settle anything important, because on this issue, on this issue the only solution is workers' control. Are they prepared for that? Union control of the line speedup, for example, they've raised the issue before. It may come up again, but not now!

We are not confronted now with the kind of consciousness among these workers that's prepared to fight for workers' control of production. I wish we were. The slogan is perfectly correct and it's a transition slogan and can be raised in a propaganda way, but should not be advanced as an action slogan now.

I know working conditions are bad and getting worse. And that's true generally, not only in GM. It's probably worse in GM, but it's true in Ford and it's true in all these production plants. It's going to get worse, you see. The intensification of labor is going to get worse, because they've got to drive down the cost of labor.

They're facing increasing competition from abroad, and the only way they can meet it is to take it out of the hides of the workers through driving down their standard of living and intensification of labor on the job. That's the only way it can be done.

But the question of the sliding scale of wages now is a major union demand, don't you see. It is a transition demand and it happens to be the demand which at the present time meets their needs. They had it before. They lost it. They want to get it back. Now in this period of inflation if unemployment continues to rise, I think we will have to begin to present our full slogan which is the sliding scale of wages and hours because you have both inflation and unemployment.

While the sliding scale of wages takes care of those workers who are employed, what about those who are getting kicked out of their jobs, who can't find jobs? What about the youth who, in ever growing numbers, can't get jobs? So the sliding scale of wages and hours, that's our transition slogan. It's the transition slogan -- or, as it's interpreted -- 30 for 40 and the escalator clause. This is the slogan now, calculated to develop the greatest amount of support in the organized labor movement and among the unorganized working class, because all of

them, all of them, face the pressure of inflation on their standard of living.

Comrade Alan W. says he wanted to speak to me; he told the comrades. I'd be glad to speak to Comrade Alan W. The comrade never told me.

Nelson B. (from the floor): He never told me either.

Kerry: Well, I don't know. I spoke to Comrade Ralph L., I spoke to Tom C., I spoke to Bill K., Comrade Paul M. I can't remember how many comrades I spoke to. Comrade Alan W., I'll be here tomorrow; I'll be glad to speak to you tomorrow. I'll be glad to speak to you but not about the union.

I want to speak about the union to the comrades who are directly involved. When I spoke to Ralph L. I spoke very little about the union. I asked him a couple of questions. He said, well, he wasn't too sure about how big the caucus was, so forth and so on. I didn't press it; I wasn't interested in speaking about the union to Ralph L. I wanted to speak about the union to Tom C. and Bill K. because they were directly involved.

Now let me conclude on Comrade Ralph L.'s remarks which I think provide the occasion for elaborating the questions which we discussed. First, I don't agree with you, Ralph L., that such reports as I made here tonight serve to "divide" the branch. That's not been my experience.

My experience has been that issues which are concrete, that can be openly presented, discussed and a vote taken, are the most productive. They are the most productive kind of discussions. You see, I can be very firm in my presentation because I believe very deeply what I think and feel. It's my style. I can't adopt any other.

But I think what you did was wrong, Ralph L. I didn't characterize anything that Tom C. said as "ludicrous". No, I say that's the sort of thing that irritates, that's personal -- personal and insulting. And such personalizing of differences does not contribute to an objective discussion among comrades.

We have differences; we're going to have more differences, I am convinced. And, as I told you, I am convinced that when the discussion opens up, the pre-convention discussion, we're going to have a discussion on all of these questions.

And comrades with differences will be given the opportunity to present their point of view to the entire party. I think that when that happens, it is going to clarify the atmosphere, because once political lines are presented, there's a

proper basis for taking sides.

Otherwise, groupings that are not based upon clearly demarcated political line become personal groupings. The tendency is to degenerate into cliques. And what is the basis then for discussion? It can only be on organizational questions, organizational matters and suspicions that people are trying to take organizational advantage one way or another. You then have a situation where apparently everybody agrees politically, but all kinds of fights break out about how to do what. That's a dangerous sign; I've seen it too many times in the party.

And so I said to you that what we are interested in doing is ameliorating friction, trying to soften whatever hard lines exist, to eliminate any organizational grievances in order to prepare the way for a more fruitful exchange when the political discussion opens. Otherwise people can get so hardened and fixed, you see, so solidified on a personal basis around personal groupings that when the political discussion opens up they don't listen to each other.

You then can't have an objective discussion. Groupings then don't take place on the only proper place that they should take place on in our party: along political lines. But when political divisions are manifested openly and clearly in open discussion, you can have close personal relations with a political opponent even though you have differences, because you know there's no organizational maneuvering going on; nobody's trying to take advantage of you.

You know a political minority has certain rights, and those rights will be safeguarded by the party. A minority is entitled to certain representation, but on the basis of political line and not by organizational maneuvering.

Now you say this is not a problem branch. I don't know how you mean that. It's a problem branch because there are groupings in the branch and there is no political differentiation upon which comrades can have a discussion and take a vote. This is the first time in a long time that you've had this kind of discussion on an issue where the comrades could exercise their judgment on the basis of the facts as they see them and not on the basis of loyalty to individual groupings.

I feel that we have a common basis for coexistence in the party, that we are all committed to the task of building this party. We consider this as our party, regardless of what differences we have, and that comrades who are loyal to this party have to be given every opportunity to participate in the activity and leadership of the party.

Nobody should be victimized or can be victimized -- you've got to be very careful about that -- because they have a minority point of view. That's wrong. That would poison the atmosphere in the party. No, if a comrade wants to work, we don't have so many that we shouldn't provide every opportunity for them to show their ability and their talent to help build the party, because that's our mutual objective.

If we debate differences, it's only because we want to strengthen the party. If comrades think we ought to adopt a different line or policy, it's because they want to strengthen the party, and I respect their opinions and I respect their views. I may not agree with them, and I'll argue against them, and you may rest assured it'll be very vehemently and very vigorously, but I won't insult them, not personally, no.

I have very good relations with Tom C. We can get together and have our discussion without insulting each other. And other comrades. With you, Ralph L. We don't have any problem. I don't know what your differences are, but whatever they are, when the convention discussion opens, I told you when I spoke to you, I trust you'll put them down on paper, circulate them to the whole party, and let's have a good discussion.

But don't ever say anything that I write or say is ludicrous, because I'll resent it. And you can make an enemy out of me, and we've been friends for a long time.

There's no demoralization, you say. No, I didn't say there was demoralization. We want to prevent as much as we can any sign of demoralization. We want to act prior to the onset of demoralization because when it gets to that stage, it's pretty far gone. I'm not blaming anybody; I'm not trying to make a judgment on what has gone on in the past. I've heard stories, not only in this branch, grievances and horror stories, and I say, comrades, I cannot make a decision on that basis.

I learned long ago to take positions on the basis of politics. That doesn't mean you don't have close friends and associates. Some people are compatible, some are incompatible. But you always seek to establish the kind of an atmosphere in which we can coexist and build the party together, which means if there are differences, at the proper time those differences are presented, they're discussed and a decision is made.

Comrades who have political differences, if they have large enough support, get representation. There's no reason for personal quarrels. That's all.

So we sent some comrades from here to other branches. We thought maybe that would help the situation, and we transferred a couple of more people in and I hope we helped the situation. We're certainly not trying to make it any worse.

I would shudder to think that my remarks here made the situation worse. I don't think so, Ralph L. I don't think so. Because I've steered clear of any

personal insults, stuff like that.

I've expressed my view, and I've expressed it as vigorously as I can. And I hope that we've learned something. I think that mistakes have been made on both sides. And I hope that in a more comradely atmosphere, we can review some of those mistakes and avoid making the same mistakes in the future.