



**THE
UNITED FRONT
AGAINST
IMPERIALISM ?**

SOJOURNER TRUTH ORGANIZATION

Originally published in the mid 70's as a polemic against the Revolutionary Union (who later became the Revolutionary Communist Party). The RU had called for forming a United Front Against Imperialism in the midwest area. While the criticisms here can be useful, the primary reason for reprinting this is around understanding the strategy Sojourner Truth Organization lays out, in contrast to the dogmatic and arguably idealist strategy the Revolutionary Union was putting out.

It's important for communist organizations building today to understand some of the pitfalls of those who tried before us. And to understand the force that fighting white supremacy and supporting the Black Liberation Struggle holds.

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PART I - A NEW ORGANIZATION

In recent weeks several organizations, including the Revolutionary Union and the Black Workers Congress, have been contacting left groups in the midwest, inviting them to join in a United Front Against Imperialism. The Sojourner Truth Organization was one of the groups invited. We have declined the invitation. In this paper we will try to set forth our reasons for doing so, as well as our attitude toward coalitions in general.

The sponsors explain that they hope to unite left groups as well as broader mass organizations - all who can be united - around a minimum program of opposition to imperialism.

As a basis for this unity, they have set forth five principles, which are laid out in a paper circulated by them entitled "Rough Draft of principles and structure for the UNITED FRONT AGAINST IMPERIALISM."

These five principles are:

- 1) Support for the right of self-determination for black people, chicanos, puerto ricans, native americans, and asian americans; (sic) and support for the democratic demands of all oppressed peoples in the U.S.
- 2) Support for the struggles for national liberation by the peoples of the world against imperialism and its allies.
- 3) Against fascism.
- 4) Against the oppression and exploitation of women.
- 5) Against the attack by the ruling class on the living standards of poor and working people in the United States.

In our opinion, these five principles serve no useful function. They are too general to be of any value in establishing meaningful unity

on the left, and they are too restrictive to serve as a basis for uniting with those existing mass organizations which could conceivably be drawn into such a coalition.

Those mass movements which most people would look to for participation in a united front similar to the one projected are mainly groups like the following: welfare reform organizations, rank-and-file trade union formations, tax reform groups, parents groups concerned with school problems, women's groups, some community organizations dealing with the police and courts, and so forth. Very few of these groups are in the habit of formulating their positions in the manner of the five principles.

What could possibly be served by presenting them with any list of statements for their approval? Such a manner of proceeding would tend to repel rather than attract genuine mass organizations. To us it makes more sense, in cases where a left group wishes to engage in joint action with a broad mass organization, to simply seek agreement on program and tactics in each particular area of concern.

As for uniting and differentiating among groups on the left, the five principles seem equally pointless. They contribute almost nothing toward left unity on strategic questions necessary to achieve sustained and significant united action.

Such questions as one's attitude toward the trade unions and the building of mass organization at the workplace, the autonomous black movement and separate black organization, the character and potential of the struggle for women's rights, the purpose and direction of the student movement, community organization and dual power institutions, mass struggle, self-defense and terror, the inter-relation of spontaneity and consciousness - all these and more are questions which cannot be summed up in any five-point statement that we are for the NLP and against imperialism.

It is differences on precisely this sort of question, reflected in the daily struggle, which lie at the root of the disunity on the left. Until

real progress is made toward overcoming these differences there will be no substantial unity on the left, and any united front established without a foundation of substantial left unity will prove to be a very shaky structure.

We do not think the path to left unity lies through the endorsement of principles. Experience has taught us that left unity can only be achieved in the course of sustained activity, in which different groups seek out programs they can implement jointly and exchange views and experiences, attempting to clarify a common approach to that particular area of work.

Who Is to Take Part?

Since the principles are so general as to include every left group of consequence, the matter of participation must turn on "the provision, laid out in the "Rough Draft," that new members will be admitted by majority vote of those already belonging to the United Front.

To clear this up, we asked the person who presented the proposal to us whether various groups were being invited to join. We named the Communist Party and the International Socialists, among others. The answer was no, they were not, because they are not "genuine" anti-imperialists.

We asked about some other groups and were told that they have been invited. We cannot see such substantial differences in practice between some of the groups excluded and some of those taking part.

We are not arguing for the inclusion or exclusion of any group. We are simply stating that we have great difficulty understanding the basis upon which the decision was made.

The only conclusion we could draw was that, for explicitly socialist groups, a sixth, unwritten criterion for admission to the United Front is support for the basic aims and policies of the People's Republic of China.

But there already exists an organization which is open to all individuals and groups that support People's China, regardless of differences among them. It is called the U.S.- China People's Friendship Association and it is performing a worthwhile and important service in informing the American people of the marvelous accomplishments and revolutionary character of Chinese society since Liberation in 1949. So far as we can judge, it is doing a good job. What, then, is the need for another organization of leftists whose only distinctive basis for unity is support for China?

What Will It Do?

The boldness of the sponsors in defining "Principles" for the United Front Against Imperialism is in noticeable contrast to their reticence in describing what it will do. The "Rough Draft" declares its purpose in the following terms:

- 1) To serve as a means to organize a mass response to major offensives by the imperialists or to major developments in the antiimperialist struggle.
- 2) To provide a means for regular exchange and discussion of ideas and practice between member groups in the area.

In other words, it will call demonstrations and be a talk shop. These functions are not without value. 'The present "system" for organizing joint responses to outstanding events is not very efficient. Sometimes, as in the case of Nixon's November visit to Chicago, when the Seed took the initiative to call meetings and a demonstration which were attended by a wide variety of groups, it works out fairly well. In other cases it has not worked so well. This unevenness is due at least partly to causes other than the absence of regular channels of communication; in large measure it results from the tendency of white radicals to be unmoved by matters which are imperative crises in the black community. Nevertheless, it is fair to argue that the establishment of a more efficient mechanism to speedily mobilize the usual left groups and their circles of

supporters, as well as the population at large, would represent an advance over what presently exists.

Unfortunately, the potential benefits accruing from this side of the United Front is undercut by the sponsors' insistence on drawing "political" lines without apparent cause. If the April 22nd anti-war demonstration called by the United Front is any indication of what we can expect, it does not seem that -the differences with the traditional peace marches -in terms of speakers, content, logistics, makeup of the crowd or general impact -are so dramatic as to warrant limiting the numbers by attempting to exclude or set up a rival center to compete with the Peace Council or other groups that the sponsors consider insufficiently "anti-imperialist."

As for the second purpose, exchange of views among left groups, here too the proposed United Front is open to serious criticism. It does not establish a healthy context for debate to be excluding groups, based on a judgement of the "genuiness" of their anti-imperialism, when the sponsors are unable to formulate their five principles with enough precision to exclude them. If the reasons for wishing to exclude certain groups cannot be spelled out in the five principles, then it would make more sense to invite all groups who express agreement with the principles to take part in the debate and activity. This is especially so since, considering the vagueness of the five principles, the differences within the United Front are likely to be as sharp as any with groups outside of it.

But even beyond this, there are other problems, which call for extreme caution. Bringing together in one room a wide diversity of left groups in the midwest, hopefully along with broader mass organizations, is not necessarily the most productive way to go about the exchange of views. Judging from some of the polemics and attacks floating around today, some groups are not accustomed to serious, principled and reasoned debate. Some arguments shed a great deal more heat than light on the substance of the differences. If this is so often the case in one-to-one controversy, can people really believe that it would be less so in a United Front bringing together representatives of a couple of dozen groups, some of whom - let us

admit it - hate each other passionately and all of whom are to some degree competitive? Is it not likely that such a scene, rather than leading to reasonable debate and clarification of differences, would more likely further poison the atmosphere and embitter people who are sincerely striving for left unity?

Is This Trip Necessary?

Beyond the question of whether the fears expressed above are justified: neither the first nor the second function listed in the "Rough Draft" requires for its implementation anything so imposing as a United Front Against Imperialism. The first aim, to be able to call joint actions swiftly when necessary, could be met by a coordinating center, in contact with the various left groups in the area, able to call larger meetings when the need arises. As for the second function, organizing the exchange of views and experiences, it could be met in a host of different ways and, in any case, it is not so urgent, since those groups that wish to talk together generally manage to find a way to do so.

Granted, this "Front" is overblown, some people may argue. Granted, the name is pretentious (especially with every letter capitalized) and some of its sponsors seem to have an unrealistic view of its role. Still, if it can perform one or two minor but useful functions, shouldn't every revolutionary group join it and make the most of it?

The above line of reasoning has merit, and we respect those who act on it. We can't speak to what other left groups in the area should do about this matter. We can only set forth the reasons for our decision not to take part. To sum up, these reasons are:

1. We don't see any benefit in affiliating with a formation that includes some groups we want nothing to do with and excludes others with whom we have been able, on occasion, to work amicably.

2. We think that this formation does not offer a healthy context for ideological struggle and is likely to leave a bitter taste in people's mouths. We don't want to contribute to that and we don't see how we could take part without doing so. There is another reason for our decision, and it is related to a comical side of this whole business of tacking up a corrugated-shanty-organization and giving it the steel-and-concrete-name of the "United Front Against Imperialism." At a recent meeting of several groups in Champaign, Illinois, one of the leading spokesmen for the R.U. in this area was arguing for the formation of the United Front on the grounds of its "historical necessity" at this time, owing to the increased repression and the urgent tasks it was called upon to accomplish. He then proceeded to answer some people's objection that it would take time away from more important work by saying that - it wouldn't take much time away from other work.

Would someone who understands these matters please explain to us how something can be a "historical necessity" and not take much time away from other work? Who is kidding who?

But the point is that, for some people, this United Front is literally a matter of "historical necessity." This brings us to our third reason for not wishing to take part:

3. We know where this formation came from and we understand the strategy on which it is based, and we don't agree with it. We have not dealt with this matter so far; let this, therefore, serve to introduce the second part of our paper: the United Front in theory.

PART II - THE UNITED FRONT IN THEORY

The Revolutionary Union had first put forward its theses on the united front in Red Papers #1, where it stated: "It is therefore the primary revolutionary duty of the people of the U.S. to build a militant united front against U.S. imperialism. The main force and leader of the united front must be the working class. But such a united front can and must include other classes and groups in the

U.S. which at any stage in the struggle find their interests in opposition to those of the monopoly capitalists.”

Later, in that same issue of the Red Papers, the R.U. explained the class basis for its projected united front: “The monopoly capitalists are the ruling class of the United States. But various small and middle-sized capitalists have interests that conflict with those of monopoly. A number of other class segments in the United States - for example, small farmers, 'independent' professionals, small storekeepers - also have basic interests in opposition to those of the monopoly capitalists.”

The Experience of China

The united front as a strategy was first applied on a large scale in China, where it became the basis for the political program of the Communist Party for the twenty years preceding Liberation.

What were the conditions of Chinese society which led to the adoption of this strategy by the CPC? There were several, which were distinctive and which owed their existence to China's character as a semi-colonial country under the heel of foreign imperialist powers. These conditions were, in brief:

- 1) the smallness of China's proletariat in proportion to its total population;
- 2) the continued survival of major elements of feudalism in the countryside, and the inability of China to make the transformation into a modern bourgeois nation;
- 3) the domination of China's resources, labor and internal market by foreign monopolies, which denied the native bourgeoisie the opportunity to develop in the classical European fashion.

These conditions led the CPC to conclude that in China there really were segments of the population other than the proletariat with basic interests in opposition to those of the foreign monopolies - basic

enough that these segments could be won to participate, actively and in the interests of their own class, in the overthrow of the feudal-bureaucratcomprador regime and the construction of a new society.

Since every new society is shaped by the forces that bring it into existence, and since the Chinese proletariat, led by its vanguard party, had neither the intention nor the possibility of playing fast-and-loose with its allies, the goal of the revolution was determined to be not socialism (not at first) but something else called New Democracy.

New Democracy emerged as a new kind of state, representing the smashing of the old reactionary apparatus and the establishment of the power of the people, including the workers, peasants, urban petit-bourgeoisie, sections of the bourgeoisie whose enterprises were rooted in the Chinese economy rather than in serving the needs of the foreign monopolies, and even "patriotic landlords." This alliance was led by the proletariat, but other classes shared in the exercise of power, maintained their freedom to organize and were represented in government through their own political parties. Economically, the aim of the New Democratic regime was to expropriate foreign capital, carry out the agrarian revolution, build up a modern economic base, improve the livelihood of the workers and peasants and protect the legitimate interests of the national bourgeoisie.

New Democracy was a distinct stage in social evolution whose function was to prepare for the construction of socialism. The development of the revolution in Vietnam is proceeding along much the same course, as a reading of the Program of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam will indicate.

Some Doubts

When the united front was first proposed, as a strategy for this country, some revolutionaries naturally were dubious, based-on their inability to see how it could be applied here. After all, they reasoned, this country is not China. It is difficult to conceive of a stage in

social development intermediate between capitalism and socialism in the U.S.

In Red Papers #2, in an article entitled, "The United Front Against Imperialism - Strategy for Proletarian Revolution," the R.U. responded to these doubts: "The objective of the united front strategy is not some intermediate type of state, such as people's democracy, prior to a proletarian state, but the proletarian state itself. Unlike colonial, semi-feudal nations, where the struggle proceeds through people's democracy to the consolidation of the dictatorship of the proletariat, we have only one stage to go through. Capitalism has developed to its ultimate stage; imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism. It is rotten ripe. It can only be brought down by replacing it with the dictatorship of the proletariat One stage! One strategy!"

If the R.U.'s conception of the united front is not a two-stage theory of revolution patterned after the Chinese model, then what exactly is it? The Red Papers explain that it is a broad alliance of "all those who unite-on the basis of a minimum program - short of the overthrow of the imperialist ruling class - in opposition to monopoly imperialism."

This minimum program involves "opposition to the ruling class policies of aggression, war budgets and militarism," and a "determined struggle against monopoly profits." This latter struggle is spelled out to include the fight against speed-ups, layoffs, welfare cuts, wage freezes, high taxes and virtually every other conceivable demand involving the betterment of the people's livelihood. The Red Papers repeat several times that the 'basis of the united front, at the present time, is not the overthrow of capitalism but the minimum program.

In other words, it is a reform coalition. Its partisans may not like to admit this fact, but they cannot evade it: the united front against imperialism, as projected in the Red Papers, is a reform coalition.

What is it that makes this particular reform coalition a "strategy for proletarian revolution" and makes its formation the "primary revolutionary duty of the people of the U.S.?"

The R.U. says that, in the course of struggle, the united front will be transformed from a reform coalition into a revolutionary alliance. We will deal with that claim later on, but first there are two other things that must be taken up.

The United Front Against Imperialism and the Anti-Monopoly Coalition

When they first learned of the united front strategy, a number of people thought they saw a basic similarity between it and the anti-monopoly coalition of the Communist Party. Naturally, the R.U. was quite resentful at the comparison and was quick to differentiate itself from the CP. In the second issue of the Red Papers they wrote: "In their 'New Program of the Communist Party, U.S.A., second draft,' (published in 1968), they call for an antimonopoly alliance which sounds like a united front against imperialism. But they never once mention the need for proletarian leadership and the vanguard role of a Marxist-Leninist party in the united front; they blur over contradictions between the potential forces in the united front - particularly between the proletariat on the one hand and the petty bourgeoisie, including middle-sized capitalists and farmers, on the other; and they never once discuss the dictatorship of the proletariat as the revolutionary goal of the proletariat ."

On the next page, the Red Papers admit that "the CP mutters something about the leadership of 'labor and the Negro people.' But it is clear from the practice of these traitors that what they mean is an alliance behind the 'liberal' imperialists, with labor fat cats and black bootlickers as the front men."

These are very angry words. Moreover, they are slanderous ones.

We do not have on hand the 1968 draft of the CP program, on which the RU bases its attack, but anyone who takes the trouble to read the final draft of the program, or some of the other major documents the CP has published over the past five years, will easily see the absurdity of the R.U.'s charges. With the single exception of the reluctance of the CP to use the term "dictatorship of the proletariat," there is not a shred of evidence to support the R.U.'s polemic.

This is not to deny the reformist character of the CP program and outlook. The point is that, in order to differentiate its united front from the CP's anti-monopoly coalition, the R.U. is forced to resort to the instrument of fabrication, for want of better tools.

There certainly are real differences between the R.U. and the CP. But on this matter of strategic perspectives they stand very close together - a position no doubt embarrassing to both of them.

How Can the United Front Be Built?

One question that must be put to those who place major stress on the creation of broad coalitions around minimum programs is - why doesn't such a coalition exist already?

The struggles that are to make up the component parts of the united front are already taking place. In every area of the country, mass movements exist around every single programmatic demand put forward in the Red Papers. Why have these movements up to now failed to come together in a coalition against monopoly?

The answer is simple: the fact that they are all objectively aimed at monopoly is not sufficient to over-ride the conflicts in interests among them.

School teacher and parent, welfare recipient and tax payer, farm worker and food buyer - all of these categories have interests "that conflict with those of monopoly." Unfortunately for the strategists of the united front, they also have interests, within the framework of capitalism, that conflict with one another.

Another example - white construction worker defending his union's control over job distribution and black worker trying to break into the construction trade - adds another dimension to the problem, as it poses, more sharply than any of the above examples, the whole question of the relative status of white and black labor and the various defenses and challenges to that relative status.

The united front strategy operates on the premise that the main thing holding the various movements apart is their ignorance of the common enemy, and that this ignorance can be overcome by taking advantage of people's experiences in the reform struggle to identify that enemy for them.

That is a fallacy. Until people are motivated by some vision which promises to transform society so radically that present interest group lines are erased, there will be no reason for them to alter the standard ways they act in order to survive, and no amount of argument, no matter how skillful, will persuade them to choose their friends and enemies on more than the most immediate, ephemeral and opportunistic considerations.

For example, so long as there is not a realistic challenge to capitalism - not merely the wealth and power of monopoly, but capitalism - there is no compelling reason why a worker-taxpayer should seek lower taxes at the expense of the big corporations rather than at the expense of the welfare recipient. There are many reasons why he should follow the opposite course: it is easier to align oneself with those in power than with the powerless

In China, from the beginning, the goal of the united front was revolution - the reconstruction of society in such a way as to transform ways in which people acted to meet their needs. The united front in China had no minimum and maximum program; it projected a central, revolutionary goal, the overthrow of the old regime and the establishment of New Democracy, and implemented, it through a number of specific programs adapted to each particular situation.

That is not the case with the united front as projected by the R.U. It cannot provide a goal for change profound enough to permit people to see the world differently and form lasting coalitions rooted in that new vision. Any coalitions formed on the basis of the united front against imperialism will be, at best, shifting, unstable and of no strategic significance - clearly not what the R.U. has in mind.

Strategy for Proletarian Revolution?

Let us grant the possibility that the R.U. may, perhaps by utilizing any organizational control it gains over mass organizations in various spheres, succeed in pulling together some sort of coalition around a minimum program. Such a coalition may or may not be a good thing, depending of the stands it takes on the issues of the day. But what is there in it that will give this coalition strategic, rather than mere tactical significance?

In order for the united front against imperialism to be taken seriously as a strategy for proletarian revolution rather than a mere tactical device to achieve a partial end, its partisans must explain how the coalition is to shift its goals from the anti-monopoly minimum program to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

The R.U. has very little to say on this matter: "As the ruling class is weakened and the proletariat and its basic allies gather strength and momentum, the fundamental contradiction between the proletariat and its basic allies and the monopoly capitalists and their basic allies will come to the fore. This will happen in revolutionary crisis, when the proletariat and its allies must fight for power in order to meet the immediate urgent needs of the people. Then the basis for determining friends from enemies - the program of the united front - will be the question of socialism, dictatorship of the proletariat."

There are two terms in the above passage we wish to call to the reader's attention. They may seem like minor points, but they reflect the shortcomings of the R.U. strategy. The first is the use of the word "basic" to describe allies of the proletariat. Presumably, this term is

introduced here to distinguish some allies from other, non-basic ones. The difference is never explained. The Red Papers earlier pulled the same sleight-of hand with the word "basic" when talking about the conflicting interests which various strata have with monopoly. Vagueness is apparently an indispensable element in the R.U. strategy. But where do they get off accusing the CP of "blurring over contradictions between the potential forces in the united front?"

The second term we question is the use of the word "must" in this context. The moment when the "proletariat and its allies must fight for power in order to meet the immediate urgent needs of the people is now - and for the last hundred years. Conversely, there will never come a time when the working people have no alternative but to make revolution. Marxism does not give orders to history. The oppressed will make revolution when they have become convinced of the need and possibility of doing so. Those "vanguard elements" who depend on the force of objective conditions to bring about the "final conflict" are shifting their own responsibility to some Goddess of History who has never answered their prayers and never will.

The Red Papers proceed: "No one can predict exactly when or how the dictatorship of the proletariat will come to the fore in the mass movement, but we can say that it will develop dialectically through the struggles led by the proletariat around the united front line and program."

That is all. If we subtract the obvious truism that "no one can predict exactly when or how," we are left with the word "dialectically." That word has been used more than a few times in Marxist circles to hide unsightly blemishes in theory.

It is no wonder that the R.U. has so little to say on this matter of how the united front against Imperialism is to be transformed from a reform coalition into a revolutionary alliance. Anyone would be hard-pressed to explain how people who have for years been the target of "anti-monopoly" propaganda, who have shaped their mass movements with the aim of isolating a small handful of monopolists and winning concessions to a minimum program, can alter their

stance so radically at a moment of crisis. We just don't think it can happen that way.

Let us at this point recapitulate the major lines of our argument against the united front against imperialism strategy:

1. Whatever grandiose name its sponsors choose to assign it, under present conditions it can only be a reform coalition.
2. Because of the great divergences among the potential groups in the united front, and the inadequacy of any reform perspective as a basis for overcoming these divergences, it is unlikely that the united front can achieve any lasting existence except, perhaps, through control and manipulation of mass organizations by the R.U. and other proponents of it.
3. If these "vanguard" elements do succeed in pulling together a united front of the type they describe, because of its character as a reform coalition it would be "unable to fulfill the need for a revolutionary force at the very moment when that need and the opportunities open to such a force are greatest.

If Not the United Front, Then What?

At one point the Red Papers ask, "If united front is not the strategy to defeat imperialism, what is?" Although the question is meant rhetorically, it is a fair question. Our answer is: class against class!

To put it another way, our strategy consists of attempting to unify the workers as a class which stands in categorical opposition to capitalist society and is determined to build a new society based on freely associated labor - in a word, socialism.

For us, the "primary revolutionary duty" is to discover those programs, activities and organizational forms which arise in the mass reform struggle and which foreshadow the new society we seek to build, to clarify their revolutionary implications and to link

them together in a social bloc which serves as an alternate pole of attraction to official society and which strives to expand its sphere of operation in the teeth of fierce resistance from official society.

To put it still another way, this is our strategy: the formation of a revolutionary dual power based on the will and potential of the proletariat to function as a ruling class - a power which exists within the framework of capitalism while posing a constant challenge to it.

If the "primary revolutionary duty" is to create a broad, multi-class coalition around a minimum program, then the main aim is to be to expose, isolate and defeat the handful of monopolists and their agents.

On the other hand, if the "primary revolutionary duty" is to unify the workers as a class, then the main aim will be to expose, isolate and defeat those influences within the proletariat itself, and the partial and narrow interests on which they are based, that impede the development of class unity.

The difference between the two approaches will be expressed, not merely in the slogans and programs put forward in the reform struggle, but in the lessons that the revolutionary organization will draw from the struggle and the kinds of ties it will seek to extend and make permanent.

It should be noted that we are not opposed to broad coalitions around a minimum program, just as we do not think the R.U. is opposed to the unification of the proletariat as a class. However, there cannot be two "primary revolutionary duties" at the same time; one must be subordinated and made dependent on the other. Which one can make a great deal of difference in practical work.

The Fight Against White Supremacy

We regard the movement of the black people as the most progressive social force in America. The internal ties which the black people, especially the black workers, have created amongst themselves, and

the culture which has arisen out of their strivings for freedom, represent the most advanced outpost of the new society.

The black people's challenge to the institutions of white supremacy has posed a choice for every white worker between his identity and interests as a worker and his identity and interests as a white. In forcing this choice so insistently upon the white worker in every sphere of life, the black masses are giving a practical lesson in the meaning of proletarian class consciousness, a lesson for which every advanced worker is grateful.

There is no reason whatsoever to fear the strivings of the black people as a divisive force. On the contrary, they are the greatest force for proletarian solidarity in contemporary life. Weaknesses in the black movement - whether they take the form of undifferentiated anti-white sentiment or the form of reluctance to push too hard for their just demands -are conditioned by the tremendous pressure on black people and black organizations from white America, generally hostile to their purposes.

Since the influence of white supremacy is at present the greatest barrier to proletarian unity and class consciousness, and since the black movement today represents the most effective challenge to the selfish, racist, opportunistic tendencies of white workers, the most urgent task of the revolutionary movement as a whole is to remove the obstacles that stand in the way of the black movement. For white revolutionaries in particular, this means a special responsibility to win the support of the white workers for the aspirations of the black masses, to help the white workers actively and militantly reject their partial, selfish and counterfeit interests as part of a group which is favored in relation to blacks, on behalf of their total, broad and true interests as part of a class which is coming alive.

For us, the central point of reference on any issue is the need to tear down the walls of white supremacy and achieve equality for black people.

If, in regard to education, equality for blacks required that children be bused, then we support busing; if it requires that they not be bused, then we are against busing. If equality in housing requires open-occupancy laws, then we are for open-occupancy laws. If it requires black control of black communities, we are for that. If it requires both open-occupancy laws and black control of black communities, then we are for both. If equality in employment means that the seniority system must be destroyed, then we are for scuttling it. If it requires the preservation of the seniority system, then we defend it.

Organizations, whatever their defects, that fight for equality for black people are worthy of support, in our eyes. Organizations that reinforce white supremacy, whatever their virtues, we regard as reactionary.

And so forth. The reader will note that we have advanced a somewhat different criterion for determining friends from enemies from the one put forward by the R.U.

Our stand on this matter flows directly from our strategic perspective, which places top priority on efforts to unify the workers as a class.

We do not think that the R.U., or any other group with a strategic perspective similar to it, could take the same position we have taken on the matter of white supremacy and the fight against it - at least not if it remains true to its strategy.

It is obvious that the movement of black workers, as it has developed in many places, poses a real threat to the seniority and apprenticeship privileges of white workers, who have consequently reacted defensively. Of course, the blacks are justified, but wouldn't it be better to pose demands that are more obviously in the immediate self-interest of the white workers, such as those relating to wages and speed-up? Or some of the various organizations, such as DRUM, which have sprung up among blacks as the workplace -

doesn't their autonomous character represent a threat to the trade unions, many of whose leaders, especially on the local level, are potential allies in the united front? Wouldn't it be better if these black organizations were not so stridently anti-union? Or take the matter of housing: the blacks are of course justified in wanting the right to live anywhere they please, but is it necessary to place so much of the burden for integration on the small white working mortgage-holder? The inferior quality of the schools in the black community is certainly the fault of the ruling class, and it is wrong. But isn't it true that busing children brings down the general level of the schools, and isn't busing a false issue, and wouldn't it be better if the blacks would concentrate their efforts on trying to improve the schools in their own communities? Or the peace issue - why do black radical spokesmen always focus their attention on the racist character of the war? It is true that the chief victims of the war, both in Asia and at home, are non-white people, but the war is also doing plenty of harm to white workers and, white youth. Doesn't it narrow the anti-war movement to continually stress the racist character of the war?

And even if black organizations have good reasons for taking a hard line on all the above questions, is it necessary for white revolutionaries to take a similar one-sided stance? Wouldn't it be wiser for them to blunt the edge of the black struggle, in order to make it more palatable to white workers?

Such are the considerations which enter into the making of policy by an organization which regards its primary task as the building of a broad coalition around a minimum program. We are not suggesting that the R.U. always takes a backward stand on the question of racism. No group's practice is ever as bad (or as good) as its theory. But anyone who is familiar with the work of the R.U. since its birth knows that these pressures have had their effect.

Trade Union Policy

Labor unions in this country are institutions of class collaboration, as well as of struggle against the employer. They represent the

particular interests of groups of workers within the framework of the wage system, as opposed to the general interests of workers as a class, which are outside of the wage system. They play a major role in reinforcing capitalist rule, by providing a means of mediating grievances that threaten to disrupt the system.

In order for the working people to prepare for the overthrow of capitalism they must have organization which functions as the representative of a future ruling class in the reform battles of the present.

At the workplace this means that, they must have organization which does not respect the sanctity of private property and the union contract which upholds it and which attempts, wherever possible, to exercise power in opposition to the power of the capitalist class and the Individual employer.

The organization must be political, not in the sense that it carries the fight for its particular interests into the electoral sphere, but in the sense that it regards it as its right and responsibility to take direct action at the workplace in the interests of the proletariat as a whole. It must be linked with organization in the community, not on the basis of a convenient coincidence of demands, but with the knowledge that the revolutionary social bloc of which it is a part must embrace every aspect of the worker's life.

Building organization of the type described above is the basic organizational task we face at the workplace. In order to build it, it is necessary to take advantage of every arena of struggle, including the fight within the union for more progressive policies - so long as it strengthens independent mass workers organization and does not subordinate the workers' struggle to the trade union apparatus.

The R.U., to the extent to which it has developed a line on this area of activity, regards inner-union struggle as the main focus of its work. For the R.U., the main attention and energy is to be put into the attempt to influence the policy and direction of the union, and to involve more workers in trade union activity.

The reader will note how the two approaches to the trade unions flow from two different strategies. We, in accordance with our basic perspective of attempting to unify the proletariat as a class, focus our main attention on the integrating, class collaborationist function of the trade unions, and regard as our main organizational task the building of organization which is independent of and counter-posed to capitalist legality, 'including the trade unions. The R.U., in accordance with its perspective of organizing a broad coalition around a minimum program, regards the reform gaining function of the trade unions as their principle aspect, and focuses its main attention on the For us, every reform struggle is the starting point for building organization outside of-the trade union, organization which is frequently counterposed to the trade union and which the workers increasingly come to regard as the main reflection of their activity at the workplace, For the R.U., every reform struggle is the starting point for a program of union reform.

Conclusion

We could, if we wished, carry our investigation further, and examine how the two different strategic perspectives are reflected in other areas of political work, such as the campus, the military and the community. But we think that, on the "basis of what we have written, the reader should have little difficulty in recognizing the implications of the two lines in these other areas.

We hope we have demonstrated the conservative character of the united front against imperialism strategy, have shown how it leads to reformism in practice and have indicated with sufficient clarity the salient features of an alternate strategy which we regard as revolutionary.

Lastly, we have heard that the R.U. plans to reprint the three numbers of the Red Papers. Faced with this prospect, we can only hope that they use re-cycled paper.

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