

COMRADES

First, we want to apologize for this paper taking so long in the writing. There have been, of course, some new developments since we began writing this paper--the struggle against BWC and PRRWO, the new "party building line", etc. None of this has caused us to change our analysis, on the contrary, recent events confirm in our minds, the correctness of our criticisms.

We have had a number of criticisms of the line of our org. for some time, going back beyond the 72 NCC. We've not been sure about the seriousness of these problems, their real effect in practice, to what extent mistakes add up to the org. going off on the wrong road. Recent events have convinced us things are quite serious indeed, and the greatest expression of these mistakes is the way the question of the party is being approached.

We'll start by reviewing some the the org.'s history because this can shed light on the current problems. First, we want to concentrate on the level of unity that came out of the Franklin struggle, because we think that the present contradictions developed out of improperly dealing with some of the challenges we faced in moving ahead in that period.

The org. did some good work previous to that, had some real strengths, including a modest respect for the masses of the people, their revolutionary ability, the decisiveness of the mass struggle, and an understanding that our theory had to be developed in the application of MLM to the mass struggle.

Mixed together with the strengths in those days, as is now well known, was some petty bourg. revolutionism inherited from the youth movement. Why? Because most of us were inexperienced communists. We talked of building a workers movement but we weren't workers and had no experience in applying MLM to the daily conditions and problems of the working class.

There weren't always clearly two lines on the lumpen prol., military adventurism, etc. The two lines developed out of summing up our experience and, to a great extent, the mistakes we had all made. Some learned from applying Marxism enough to their experience to realize what was wrong with the adventurist line, others didn't have the experience, the theory, or the honesty to turn themselves around. It was the lack of a solid history in the working class (w.c.) that enabled this line to develop.

After this struggle we had a much better understanding that we must base ourselves on the w.c. and of the importance of theory. An ambitious program of internal education was set up. plans for concentration were made, and there were many questions about how to build a worker's movement that we began to investigate; regionally, one form of which, was to establish a labor commission.

Also, respect for democratic centralism was built on the basis of a very broad, thorough, and democratic struggle. Our understanding of d.c. like our understanding of political line in general, was built on the application of MLM to our own experience; and also was limited by the small amount of our own experience.

The next period was characterized by getting more familiar with workplace and union problems, a more conscious application of mass line, and digging in our feet for the long haul of winning over the workers. The org. was accused by many on the left of "economism," essentially because we believed that communist work could only develop in close relation to the real struggles of the workers themselves, and because we did unashamedly say that, to be a good communist, you damn well better be a good trade unionist (not that being a good trade unionist is enough.) But more to the point, a revolutionary org. had better have a program dealing with the recognized immediate needs of the w.c., especially in their main arena of struggle, the unions. This view was not new to the communist movement, it had always had its program for TU work, as a central part of its work. It was only new to p.b. intellectuals, or student based movement, that had contempt for the workers and their fight for "pork-chops", and that had a very superficial view of the mistakes of the CP and their degeneration into economism and revisionism. According to this view it was not the fail-
ing to link political and economic work that was the mistake, but the very fact of taking the economic struggle seriously, and being concerned with the aims of the mass workers movement.

This took many different forms. Some offered advice from the sidelines as Trots have always preferred to do, not dirtying their hands with the real problems of struggle. Others, such as OL preferred to get into the thick of things only to turn around and say, "This isn't really important you know, what we need is a united workers' party, etc. "

Our org. then was a long way from this, but the line that has gradually developed since the 72 NCC on TU work, seems to be moving in that direction. The topper was the point in the New NCC notes that if you take over the leadership of a local, the International will only put in into receivership anyway. CL has been arguing this point for years, and previously we opposed this line as ultra-left defeatism.

The point is that, yes, the int'l ma; do just that. But does that mean you leave the leadership of the TU level struggle, uncontested, to the bureaucrats? With your line of opposing "pushing the TUs to the left", it can only mean that while you work in TU's, your point is really to build something on a higher level, outside of TU's which becomes the main form of our work in the w.c., and which is, of course, easier for us to lead.

To make holding official TU positions in itself a great achievement, and subordinate long range tasks to that, would be a revisionist mistake. But on the other hand to neglect the task of becoming a significant and eventually the leading force in the TU's themselves, is completely out of step with the experience of the communist movement, esp. in the capitalist countries.

The recent NCC paper refers to quotes from Stalin that seem to support our view that communists must fight for the leadership of the TU level struggle, and points out that the one quote mentioned was written in 1925 when there was still disagreement as to whether communists should work in reactionary TU's, and they offered another quote from 1928, to show that Stalin didn't believe in confining work to TU's or the TU level struggle. (This was at the time the mistaken analysis was made that in the US, the AFL was about to fall apart and could be replaced by the communist led TUUL. See chapters from Foster's works on this period.) But the point Stalin made was correct; our work should not be confined to what can be developed through TU channels. But does that mean the fight for leadership of the TU's should not be made, and is not at the heart of the matter? Of course not. You can find a hundred quotes from Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin affirming that fighting for the leadership of the unions is a central duty of communists, apart from which we can't hope to win the following of the masses. Here's a quote from Stalin which was popular in the org. a couple of years ago and we feel it is worth quote at length from "Results of the Work of the 14th Conference.":

From this it follows, however, that if the Communist Parties want to become a real mass force, capable of pushing the revolution forward, they must link up with the trade unions and get their backing.

Failure to take this specific feature of the situation in the West into account means leading the cause of the communist movement to certain doom.

Over there, in the West, there are still individual "Communists" who refuse to understand this specific feature and continue to make play with the anti-popular and anti-revolutionary slogan: Leave the trade unions! It must be said that nobody can do more harm to the communist movement in the West than these & similar communists. Regarding the trade unions as an enemy camp, these people contemplate "attacking" them from without. They fail to understand that if they pursue such a policy the workers will indeed regard them as enemies. They fail to understand that the trade unions, whether good or bad, are regarded by the rank and file worker as his fortresses, which help him to protect his wages, hours, and so forth. They fail to understand that such a policy, far from facilitating, hinders Communist from penetrating among the vast working class masses.

The average rank and file worker may say to such "Communists": "You are attacking my fortress. You want to wreck the org. that took me decades to build, and are trying to prove to me that communism is better than trade-unionism. I don't know, perhaps your theoretical arguments about communism are right. How can I, an ordinary working man, grasp the meaning of your theories? But one thing I do know: I have my trade-union fortresses; they have led me into the struggle, they have protected me, well or ill, from the attacks of the capitalists, and whoever thinks of destroying these fortresses wants to destroy my own cause, the workers cause. Stop attacking my fortresses, join the trade unions, work in them for 5 years or so, help to improve and strengthen them. In the meantime I shall see what sort of fellows you are, and if you turn out to be real good fellows, I, of course, will not refuse to support you," and so forth.

That is the attitude, or approx. the attitude, of the average rank and file workers in the West today toward the anti-trade-unionists.

Whoever fails to understand this specific feature of the mentality of the average worker in Europe will understand nothing about the position of our Communist Parties at the present time.

Wherein lies the strength of Social-Democracy in the West?

In the fact that it has the backing of the trade unions.

Wherein lies the weakness of our Communist Parties in the West?

In the fact that they have not yet linked up with the trade unions, and certain elements in these C.P.s. do not wish to link up with them."

We've digressed here, but we'll return to this subject under "Intermediate Workers' Org" The point here is that much of the org.'s approach to economic work following the Franklin struggle was correct, and we believe, is essentially the viewpoint on economic work we're now putting forward. The line of the org. has begun to veer away into a dual unionist approach, borne of impatience with the objective situation and our own limited ability to make great gains in the w.c. very rapidly.

Some right and economist errors have been made, and particularly were made during this period, from the beginning of 71 to the middle of 72. The org. had developed a single minded emphasis on workplace organizing that had features of both left and right errors. Right because it promoted a kind of "workeritis" which said that "whatever the workers think is right it cool." This narrow scope of work also tended to downplay broader political struggle. It had left features because the rearing behind

it was that only the w.c. was revolutionary, therefore, important. Thus it downplayed other sections of the U.F. And very important, the question had not been answered, "What are we trying to accomplish in the w.c.?" People had hunches they were going on and some economist practice, which is currently made so much of, was bound to develop. Being materialist about where our weaknesses came from, we have to say that the leadership didn't have the experience in the w.c. to give much more concrete guidance in the work; it could hardly be otherwise. But the danger is that the lack of experience leaves us open to not having a proper perspective on the relationship between political and economic work.

The main tendency, for a period flowing from this inexperience, was a narrow economist approach to work. The political development that would spontaneously develop out of economic struggle was somewhat exaggerated. While mass work was taken more seriously, and this was good, there was a tendency to only be concerned about one's own mass work in isolation from the overall political tasks of the org.. The view of leadership was that right errors were not as serious as left errors at the point, and that left errors would be the main problem for a long time to come.

Now, of course, the pendulum has swung the other way. The lack of greater success in implementing the line is attributed usually to the right-leaning tendencies of cadre, as the recent NCC notes did in regard to a number of questions. (Some of us are familiar with this argument from PL that the "line is correct, the cadre are just too p.b. to carry it out." This argument is usually a dead giveaway that the line isn't in fact correct. Besides, the mistakes of an org. are never primarily the fault of cadre apart from leadership.)

While concern has shifted to right errors, we believe some serious errors of sectarianism and dogmatism are gaining ground and many of these errors are directly related to the earlier right errors. One of the first examples of this was the attitude on elections and McGovern.

ELECTIONS

An essentially left error related to the earlier narrow workplace viewpoint has been the attitude on electoral activity. During the McGovern period, much of what the org. or the newspapers close to us, said about elections, was that the masses shouldn't see elections as very important. We tended to pit demonstrations, plant caucuses, etc. against elections. While to a certain degree that's correct (in terms of where the working class main gains will be made) Lenin pointed out in "Left Wing Communism" that the masses are bound to see as important questions which politicians are running the country. Until we have a labor party, new "Peace & Freedom" type formation, or until a CP is strong enough to participate in elections in its own right, elections will be hard to relate to. But then, we shouldn't elevate a weakness to a principle.

The Browder articles in Revolution have referred to the CP's participation in community struggle and electoral activity as though to put any emphasis on that work was a great mistake. This is a departure, actually an old departure, from ML. Much of the analysis made in the Browder articles was good, but as usual, we get a little carried away. Mistakes were made by the CP in relation to Roosevelt, sacrificing an independent role in the TU's to a large extent, and on the other questions. But the basic policy was worked out in agreement with the Comintern. If we're going to imply as the Browder articles do, that the policy of building TU based electoral activity in itself, or the approach of fighting for influence with the CIO, was incorrect, let's recognize we're taking on the line of not Browder, but the Comintern. To do so, while we may decide the Comintern and Stalin did make mistakes, will make it clear that such policies as "pushing TU's to the left" has been generally the line of the communist movement.

On McGovern, some incorrect principles were put forward, such as that the ruling class never resolves their differences in elections, or that the ruling class never has major differences such as shifting its aggressive plans from Southeast Asia to elsewhere. If, for example, the Chinese view that the Tanaka election in Japan represented the victory of some less rabid anti-China forces (not that they weren't imperialist) is correct, a significant, you might say, strategic difference--these arguments are proven wrong. Other examples were the sharp differences in Britain, and some of the Scandinavian countries, which were sometimes resolved in elections, about whether to be in the Common Market.

We're not raising whether the line on McGovern was right or not. Some of the arguments raised to support the position reflected the beginning of a classical leftist tendency to overestimate the strength of the ruling class by minimizing the ruling class's own internal contradictions. A more timely example is the handling of the Nixon issue recently.

Much more of a mass campaign might have been built if the "Throw the Bum Out" line had actually been implemented. The line had hardly gone out, when word came to pull back on it, or at least, that's how it was interpreted regionally. Both before and to a certain extent after, the "Through the Bum Out" phase, the view was common that only the p.b. not the workers, are interested in such rifts in the Bourgeois. Thus,

while seemingly attacking "economism", at the same time economist error of thinking that workers are only interested in layoffs, strikes, gas shortages, etc. is being made.

That's a carry over from our earlier tendency toward economism, but the more fundamental reason for pulling back on the Nixon issue was the fear that we might create illusions regarding bourg. politicians. Instead of saying, "Look at this and what does it show about the system." we were saying more often, "Hold everything, you have to understand it isn't just Nixon."

The org. seems to think we can set ourselves off from any possibility of creating reformist illusions by creating a silly distinction between using a slogan like, "Impeach Nixon" and one like "Throw the Bum Out." The latter is a good slogan but when we oppose "Impeach Nixon" we cease to relate to an actual demand, and get off into rhetoric. How do we intend to throw him out; push him out the window? We think we're being militant by only talking about, but not actually supporting, reform demand. What is reflected is the fear, that Lenin talks about in "Left Wing Comm." that the people are too simple minded to support a political reform and still be able to see beyond that. A basic fact of dialectics is that in the course of fighting for a reform the people learn about the system.

TRADE UNION WORK AND THE INTERMEDIATE WORKERS ORGANIZATION (IWO)

Again, prior to the 72 NCC differences began to emerge on trade union work. As we mentioned, after the Franklin split a Labor Commission was set up to develop line around a number of questions in TU work. This commission floundered for some time, has some good discussions, did make a thorough investigation of comrades TU work, and was about to propose some tentative conclusions, when a line developed (eventually supported by many from regional leadership, that it was not very important to decide such questions as the value of caucuses, their basis of unity, use of union elections, rank and file newsletters, what can be accomplished in changing the TUs and what gains can be made against the employers. To get too much into these matters, the argument went, would be to repeat the economist mistakes of the CP--we fight when workers fight, but nearly our entire concern or exclusive concern, is to find the way to raise political consciousness. If we talk about organization at all, it should be about the political organization of workers--IWOs.

(The commission folded with these questions unresolved. Recently, a year later, a draft summation of the commission went out to members which, without explaining the differences, characterized the one line as correct and the other as the "kind of narrow TU mentality that Lenin mercilessly exposed."

Shortly after this, the 1972NCC notes came out which contained hardly a word about TU work, while the great majority of our cadre are doing work in this area and grappling for answers. Instead a great campaign was launched for developing IWOs which there had been no experience with except as basic failures.

At first these orgs. were put forward as uniting workers who were ready for an org that would take up political questions, broad questions of importance to the w.c. etc. not even starting out as single issue orgs. Over a year has gone by and to our knowledge these orgs. haven't been built anywhere. The line was changed somewhat, rather than sum this up, so that we could sort of call for a Support Comm. or left-led plant, workplace or TU rank and file movements, such organizations.

Are IWO's correct? Maybe, that at least depends on when and how. "How wishy-washy" some comrades may say, who are not greatly bothered by the real world. The main problem with this line of building IWOs and a "political workers movement" is that if it isn't a concrete program for the workers movement and tends to turn our emphasis away from the mass orgs. of the prol., the TU's and the mass struggle going on there. For this to happen at a time when we still have little experience among the workers, and even less of a base, besides wasting our time, can isolate us seriously. One effect is that the TU work is as pragmatic as ever, with practically no guidance from leadership.

Many of the points brought out around "building an independent workers movement" are correct; generally the idea of the w.c. acting in its own interest, building its own political force(forms), relying on itself, being class conscious. But these are ideological points, not in themselves a program. Being "independent" of the Bour. political parties, for example, cannot become a mass program until you do project a labor party or some program along those lines. Building support for these ideas is an important task, but ideas, like the "Throw the Bum Out" idea, are not enough without a concrete program of struggle to achieve them. They are not just "propaganda points." Essentially, you can't build support for ideas in the abstract, but the "political workers' movement" line dwells very much in the realm of ideas alone.

What the goals of our political workers movement actually mean is that we want to see a class conscious working class. We haven't really said how we intend to accomplish that. To do that, we'll have to deal with what can be accomplished in the TU, labor party, and many other questions.

When workers are concerned with other immediate problems, for us to have a line of "fellowship" what you need is a political org. of workers to build political workers movement" makes as much sense as the Trots pushing their labor party as the solution

to everything. Or PL pushing "30 for 40." Though all three are abstractly not a bad idea. Here's a quote from a Comintern report from the mid-30's called "Strategy & Tactics, (p. 85):

Only the immediate aims of the present class struggles of the proletariat, the actual slogans of the Communist policy, can serve as a political platform for the formation of this militant agreement, not the principles of the Communist programme which are, as yet, incomprehensible to the non-Party and reformist workers, but which ought to be popularized among them during the course of the actual partial struggles."

What would a plan to TU work look like? For one thing even guidelines, summed up from experience, ours or somebody's, on the use of tactics, is important, such as newsletters, being shop steward, strike support, etc. Some common demands could be developed for the w.c. in general (the harder part is implementing them), but a more particular program would have to be developed in each industry. The most basic question to be answered though, is "what is the importance of doing work in the TU's and what are we trying to do?" Much is made currently of the fact that trade union ideology is in itself bourg. ideology. That means that TU ideology will not spontaneously develop into socialist ideology; it doesn't mean that TU's are not the principal form of class organization under capitalism and therefore the principal arena for the work of communists. It follows that a program for that work is just that, not a program for building something else outside the TUs. Outside orga. may relate to that program but as part of the strategy for TU work, not vice versa. A TU program is not, of course, your only program for the w.c. There's work among the unemployed etc. but as RP 4 makes clear, work among workers in large scale industry is primary, and that means work in the TUs.

Here's a remark Engel's made (A Letter to Bebel, 3/8/1875): "Nothing is said about the organization of the working class as a class, by means of trade unions. This is a very important point, because these, as a matter of fact, are the real class organizations of the proletariat, in which the latter wages its day to day struggles against capital;..." (Engel's emphasis). Or from a much later period, take this quote from Dimitrov, "Fascist Offensive and the C.I., p. 49, New Delhi edition, "Yet we must base our tactics not on the behavior of the individual leaders of the Amsterdam TU's, no matter what difficulty their behavior may cause the class struggle, but primarily on the question of where the masses of workers are to be found. (his emphasis) And here we must openly declare that work in the TU's is the most vital question in the work of all the CP's."

This question is very important in this period when the fightback on an economic level is strong, still only at scattered times and places. To say this, is far from being pessimistic or demeaning the workers, as some have suggested. It is also not to say that the political and economic crisis is not very serious. In the '29 to '32 period of the depression, there was very little fightback among organized workers.

When a worker's movement is really developing, as in the mid 30's, mass leaders come forward, and plenty of them, who have the interest of their fellow workers at heart, know the workers, and when we're wrong, tell us so in no uncertain terms. Mao said of the Chinese Peasants that their instinct was right at every important turn in the mass movement. The same will be true of the workers here; this was the case with the active strikers in the recent carpenters' strike. It's at this point that the workers, while they also see the need to take up class issues, support other strikes, etc. primarily move to reclaim their won mass orga., the TU's. That's a tough job, and they know it, but they feel it's their job to do and they're correct. We should remember that quote from Mao that "The masses are the real heroes, while we ourselves are often childish and ignorant, and without this understanding it is impossible to acquire even the most rudimentary knowledge."

None of us have been involved in the struggle around the Bay Area Worker, but it seems that many of the same issues are involved--what is the level of the workers movement, should our work be aimed at the few who are the most advanced or on the more mass level, should the paper be something that the more active workers can take and use to build their struggles or do we know so much and the masse so little that we have to control every word that goes into it?

RIGHT AND LEFT ERRORS

There has been a certain tendency, in the movement, for example by OL, to correctly criticize "left error", but at the same time to make errors in the direction of watering down politics. For example, having a picture of Mao shaking hands with Nixon on the background for part of the Oct. 1st rally is not the right thing to do. Also, as the leadership of militant activity passes more to the w.c., there's more of a chance of a reformist or economist trend getting stronger. In the long run, definitely, right errors are the main danger. However, there's still plenty of leftist attitudes isolated as the communist forces are from the w.c. As the political and economic crisis sharpens, we're bound to see more left adventurism and this time more among younger workers as well as students. Sectarianism on the other hand, is a particular

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malady of inexperienced, if well intentioned MLs. One experienced comrade at the height of the Franklin struggle pointed out that adventurism tends to come and go very quickly, while a sectarian outlook is not so easily disproved in practice, finds more theoretical justification, etc.

Who are we then, at this point in time? Most still white, from p.b. student backgrounds, though some documents, including RP 5, have implied differently. We have more experience, and more roots among the workers, than a few years ago, but still not very many. This is important. We're not dwelling on the negative because we're bourg. pessimists. It does no good to kid ours lves about our strengths and weaknesses. As an org., even moreso than individuals,. The recruitment document of last year is an example of doing just that. Were we capable of doubling the size of the org. in one year, half from among workers? Of course not, and we didn't need to figure that out. That mistaken analysis alone reflects something and should not be taken lightly. It reflects that we're an org. that has gotten into a mood of exaggerating our own strength. The impatience reflected in the recruitment document, and the 1st NCC notes about our degree of success among the workers, despite talk of now having a "significant base", creates a fertile soil for sectarian errors (this was written before the new party building line, where this tendency develop full blown.)

It's ture that right and left errors are always linked and we're convinced that this kind of "left in form" talk of "building a political workers' movement" through organizations we initiate, is, in the final analysis, a burocratic solution to the effect that if we don't set everything up in advance and make absolutely sure we have political control of activities we participate in, the workers will never gain a more revolutionary consciousness and our leadership will be disregarded. We agree that rightist ideas exist but the more dangerous one is lack of confidence in the masses, not our meager economist sins.

While the lack of confidence in the workers that exists may be more sublte, the org.'s lack of confidence in p.b. and "movement" forces is more obvious. Since the first NCC period, united front events have been initiated by the org., the basic plans announced in advance, and then other forces asked to help build it, rather than consulting with them from the start, which we would do, if we really wanted to involve these forces. Continually, that has been summed up as a mistake, including in the recent summation of last year's May Day. In that same document, while announcing the plans for this year's May Day, that method is developed into a principle. We have meetings without other orgs. being invited for a couple of weeks. The details are left open, but eh political line is established, even a steering committee is set up. This is supposed to guarantee the priciple that "the working class wil take the lead" while with the org. being the only organized group involved, it is a burocratic way of guaranteeing that the org. takes the lead.

UNITED FRONT WORK

Now we're into United Front work, where the line has again definetly changed; but bit by bit, instead of say, "some of our previous outlook was wrong for these reasons and this is the direction we think we should go it." That's hard for us to do, because mistakes are not usually admitted and the switch is couched in "we were only partially correct," "it was correct at that time", "we could easily have been misunderstood" etc.

On U.F., as an several other questions, we feel that the previous view, while undeveloped, was more correct. As is the case with other areas of work, we feel the mistakes come from impatience, "group individualism" as RP 5 puts it (extension of egotism or individualism to the org.) and very poor summation of experience and use of mass line. In short, we have now decided that we might as well stop kidding everybody, we do have all the asnwrs.

One example of the previous view of UF work was the "Defend the Right to Strike" rally during the longshore strike in SF 2 1/2 yrs ago. We agreed with the active strikers involved who wanted to unite everyone who could agree with that slogan, and therefore, told a host of Trots, and other "movement" people who wanted to raise every issue under the sun, to get lost. There may have been mistakes made, but that view was fundamentally correct.

Compare that to the attidue toward the Jan 20th rally, which you get in the Anti-OL paper. All sorts of criteria have been established for having a rally on a correct politcal level. One absolute is that you have to have an openly communist speaker. For the 20th Coalition, it was agreed that Otis Hyde would do that and made a damn good speech that went a long ways to correct the "Get Rid of Nixon" idea that had been allowed to develop to a certain extent in building for the rally. He emphasized that it was the system, run by big business through flunkies like Nixon, that had to be changed.

The org. attacked his speech as not bein a communist speech. Mainly this is said because he's in OL, but also because we must have the idea now that to give a communist speech you have to talk about the crisis of over-prôduction, etc.

Very much is made of the fact that Ken Meade was asked to speak. The fact that p.b. as well as working class forces can come togher, are forced to come together, around some progressive demands, does broaden the appeal, even for most workers.

The political control should not be handed over to reformist forces (while if ML forces aren't strong enough to gain control, the effect may still be positive). Some forces may not challenge enough the political influence of reformist leadership, or may be too cautious in limiting the political line. We're not dwelling on these mistakes because our first concern is the line of the org. and these are not the kind of mistakes we're currently making. Could we have built a bigger and at the same time more politically correct rally, as some say. That's a little metaphysical since we didn't. We had a rally the month before that was intended to be as broad as we knew how to make it and 200 people came, compared to 1000-1500 people. Some comrades have learned how to reject criticism by pointing out that it isn't all-sided. The other side here is that our rally was a much better rally. What accounted for the small size of our rally then? You can't look at this one activity isolatedly; the fact is we've become isolated from a number of groups and individuals on the left. One reason is that we've developed a certain amount of purism in political line that makes us difficult to work with (by purism we mean deviations from our idea of the correct political line and blowing them out of proportion to the importance of finding a way to work patiently with other forces). That goes hand in hand with a suspiciousness of anyone who has differences with us (a strong feature of PL from an early stage) and, to a certain extent, our attitude toward other class forces in the UF.

For the view of other class forces, we well as relations to other orgs., let's take the line on the ERA. Nobody has ever demonstrated that the actual passage of the ERA would have any significant effect, either in regards to cutting into sex discrimination on jobs, or on the negative side, getting rid of protective legislation. Title 7 of the Civil Rights Act already provides the legal basis for both. The ERA was a verbal concession to pacifying the growing pressure against sex discrimination. We could have exposed it as that, while not campaigning for its defeat, considering the support it had, even as a verbal concession, from most women's rights groups.

At the time of last years May Day and Women's Day, we insisted that the "defeat of the ERA" line be a basis of unity. The OL's position was that, in view of the differences, no position be taken. We, of course, didn't go for that. This year the national position was that agreement with this line should not be a basis for unity. If that's correct now, were we wrong a year ago? Of course we were. Where is our self-criticism that we demand so often of OL?

Another serious mistake around the ERA was the line that p.bl women may profit from it, whereas w.c. women won't. Since we take the side of w.c. women, it becomes a matter of "class line".

What kind of class line is this that creates a contradiction between the w.c. and the p.b., where no such contradiction exists. There are plenty of figures to the effect that w.c. women have profited in greater numbers from whatever inroads have been made against sex discrimination in jobs than any other section of women. This is a serious mistake to spread among workers that their interests are opposed to the selfish interest of the p.b., where it has no basis in fact.

An unrealistic idea of how the UF can be built comes up in the org's attitude on social-democrats. The first regional bulletin on the Farmworkers Campaign is an example. A lot of good work was done in this campaign but there were mistakes in the way we set out to do it and the mistake wasn't just that we underestimated the strength of the revisionist as it was summed up/

After having done very little work, as an org. in general, in support of the Farmworkers, we intended to initiate a mass campaign pretty clearly under our influence. We would work with the union, but not through the union, make sure there weren't many labor bureaucrats on the platform and the level of unity of the rally would not be "simple TU solidarity" but fighting against the crisis in the system. First off, a group of workers on strike should have, and will demand the decisive say over how support for their strike is built, reformist leadership or not. As to the labor bureaucrats, there's no way we're going to ice the bureaucrats from taking some role unless we think we can lead a broad labor struggle like this ourselves, and by ourselves lead large sections of workers in supporting it. Obviously, we can't, we're not in the leadership of the farmworkers' union. We can contest the role they play, but we can't organize a movement that can build the broadest support for the Farmworkers, and do it completely independently of the established labor movement. On the last point, we can mention the crisis in the system ourselves, but we should not try to make that the basis for unity to support the Farmworkers. Simple TU, or better, class solidarity, only goes so far, but at this point in time, to build class solidarity is an important step.

But then, when he had taken the lead on a strike support campaign, as in the Farah strike, the main emphasis was, in fact, the importance of working class solidarity, and the importance of this particular strike on a TU level; because it couldn't be anything else. We didn't mainly use this strike as an example of how the system was in crisis. To do so would have been to confuse our independent propaganda role with the aims of the mass struggle.

Another example is the regional org's attitude on the United Labor Action Committee, which is to ignore it. This is an org. led by "progressive" labor bureaucrats but involved many active rank and file workers (its Sears strike activity has involved many carpenter's out of the carpenter's strike) and has led the support of several

local strikes in addition to atking up some political action such as the rally last April against wage controls. Granted, it isn't usually easy to work with together with labor burecrats, they may try to isolate us, whatever. Here we would have to fight for some influence, much less for leadership. The mistake here is to think we can ignore such mass organizations of the working class, (Nobody would argue that you can entirely stay out of unions, but here the particulars are different, while the same principle applies), or stay out if we're not strong enough to be a leading force.

A similar mistake was made in the attitude towards the Chicago march against high prices, unemployment etc., in "Revolution". The whole thing which involved several thousand people, was called a ruling class trick to keep us from building caucuses, anti-imperialist orgs. etc. Why? Because it's leadership included such people as Jessie Jackson who runs in Demo. party circles. What if we had taken such an attitude to the mass anti-war demos. a few years back? People might have asked "whose side are you on?" PL developed exactly that attitude, but much worse in saying the anti-war movement was controlled by the ruling class. This greatly underestimated the intelligence and force of the people, the fact that the ruling class was desperately trying to have some effect on the surge of the people, put such a mass movement mainly reflected the surge of the people not the trials of the r.c.

This and the attitude toward participating in a group like ULAC, reflects that we don't firmly believe that it is only in participating in such struggles that the people will learn to reject opportunist leadership, and demand communist leaders. Again it doesn't show much faith in dialectics.

Now the questino of felations with other organizations. Is this a question entirely seperate from that of a U.F.? No, it's not. U.F. involves making ties with groups that represent other class forces, but at this point we have to at least understand how th apply some of that tatices of a U.F. with other groups that claim to be commujist since we claim in Red Papers4 to not see ourselves alone as the C.P. (Which is not to say at all; all unity and no struggle.) Aren't we, as the anti-CL document says confusing strategy with tatics and mistakinly viewing U.F. as a colation of orgs.? That's a very idealist way of approachjng things. You need U.F. tatic to carry out U.F. strategy, and to imagine that you can build a U.F. without coalitions of orgs. Lenin said of some people that they expect the prol. line up over here and say "we're for socialism" and the p.b. over there, etc.

Haven't many of the orgs. on the left made one of their main tasks attacking us? Yes, it appears they have. We don't know enough about these orgs., such as OL to get into a debate on their merits at this point or on which of us did more to create antagonistic relations. But, the evidence in the NCC notes that OL is degentrating into Browderism, (which is qualitatively different than just making real mistakes) we feel is rather weak. Besides, for a group like OL that shares many of the same views (with the RU and calls itself Maoist, we should observe them over o long period of time and only after considerable effort to convince them of their mistakes before such a judgement is made. The Chinese comrades, to our knowledge, maintain friendly relations with OL, and we don't think that's how they normally relate to Browderite orgs.

NATIONAL QUESTION

We get to the National Question late, not because it's less important or controversial, obviously not, but because the recent controversy over the national question is at least partly, we feel a product of the problems already mentioned

Developing a line on the nat'l question, even more than on the working class or united front work, demands o little modesty, that is if we think politics has anythinf with pratice.

We believe that many of the points made in NB13 are correct, such as the nat'l question being part of the overall class question, that bourg. nationalism can be a divisive trend etc.

Some of NB13 and the discussion that has folled, we view as pressing the point to an unnecessary dispute over definitions, or battle over quotes, such as whether a black communist is a revolutionary nationalist, or nation at heart, class in mind or vice versa argument.

To insist that the struggle for black lib. must not be lead by black communists but by the multinational w.c. and it's C.P. in general, esp. at this point and considering who we are, is to deal with a difficult question in a rather arrogant manner. The thing that bothers us most is that differences over these questions have isolated from some honest forces and among the most important forces at the present time in building a multi-national C.P. From what we have seen to label differences on these questions as "bourg. nationalism" or "Bundism", even if mistakes tend;ing in that directions are being made, just as labeling OL Browerite is exeagerating the differences and builds a wall between us and these forces, were no real struggle is possible. WE don't agree with some of BWC's paper, but a full blown "bourg. nationalist" line it is definitely not and the charge of "Bundism" is even more unsubstantiated. BWC is very clear

that they are for a multi-national party, they just aren't prepared to do it on our terms. They don't argue for any kind of strict autonomy within a party but because they felt some aspects of the RU's line was incorrect, they wanted to make sure they were developed to the point and a structure set up where they would have their say. If we're serious about building unity with other forces toward a party that's the kind of problem we have to deal with. After all, representation for black communists in a mostly or majority white org., esp. on the questions of the Black Liberation movement is not as simple as "one man, one vote, so what's the problem?" Their proposal to spend some time strengthening their org. first, while it may have been for some incorrect reasons, or may not have been, should have been a red light to go slow and resolve problems standing in the way. Instead, it seems an ultimatum was given, join us or we're going alone. The "Markism vs. Bundism" paper points out that while there had been differences, more unity had been built prior to this blowup over forming a party.

Do we believe that a criteria for a party in this country is that it be really multi-national? That a C.P. could be initiated as the vanguard of the working class that had almost no black members or base among black people. We know what the answer to that question would have been a couple of years ago, but now we're not so sure.

The answer to all this has been, "political line determines everything". But political line is not so static a thing that it exists apart from such questions. Without any significant multi-national unity, the "era" of separate collectives and orgs. has defiantly not come to an end.

Another question comes up around the struggle with BWC and PPRWO and that's the question of democratic centralism and security. When an explanation was first given, of the differences with Wright and the then fraternal orgs. nothing was mentioned; of the proposal to form a party, which according to the RU's own admission causes the sharp differences to come to a head. When word about the new party line started to get around, a campaign was launched in several areas against "rumormongering" Wright and more important, the differences on the "what's" question, had been discussed for months before this new line was discussed openly, as though these political differences had developed in the abstract.

DEMOCRATIC CENTRALISM

When cadres were given an explanation of the new "end of an era, new central task" line, the NCC had already met, the line was established, as the NCC makes clear the discussion is only over what the line means and how to implement it. Even in PL until a certain period, there was discussion of major changes in line before the line was accepted. CP's generally have certain periods before important conferences usually, when there is broad discussion of political line that is being developed and opportunity for broad criticism of line or policies of the org. Instead, in the RU, the attitude has developed that things are completely settled at the top, line is established, before any discussion among membership. Once the line is handed down, various levels of leadership become "organizers" for the line. Any disagreement is seen as challenging the leadership; if more than one agree it's seen as factionalism. Disciplinary measures in response to disagreements emerging are beginning to be used quite frequently. For example, the rule that there isn't to be communication with comrades outside your own area without the approval of leadership, or the rule that criticism is not to be raised

outside of collectives.

Not only is the question of democracy involved, but the political line is bound to suffer when development of line is not based on a thorough summation of work and discussion among cadre; subjectivism and idealism become much easier, especially with an org. as inexperienced yet as our own.

In the Feb. Revolution article on Browder, it's pointed out that relation of members to practical work and leaving the theory to leadership is deadly, yet we seem to be doing just that. Yet no serious attention at all has been paid to study classes for RU members since the period shortly after the Franklin. struggle.

Leadership, contrary to the principal of communist org., is not generally elected, and not subject to, as we said in RP1, "selection and supervision by the rank and file." The only form where this was possible to some degree, the regional CC, has not met in a long time, contrary to the rules established, and the makeup of the regional exec. cannot correspond very much to the group elected at that time. No regular responsibility for reports on its work now exists for leadership at any level.

Comrades should read Lenin's "congress summed up", (Collected Works, Vol. 10, pg. 376; sec. 8 of "Report on the Unity Congress of the RSDLP"). There Lenin emphasized that democratic centralism had to be seriously developed now that they were entering a period of more legal conditions. This included elected leadership, and meant that every member should thoroughly acquaint himself with any important decisions, should be polled as to what he agrees with, and to have "intelligent" discussion there should be the "broadest and freest" ~~xx~~ struggle, condemnation of mistakes even openly in the party press, except for areas where "unity of action" was necessary such as in electoral activity. ~~xx~~ Lenin, according to RU logic was rumormongering about the recent congress and no good discussion could come of it since he was just communicating with a group of workers who agreed with him.

There's been much talk of factionalism and rumormongering. Factionalism has always meant an organized group within the party, carrying out its own work regardless of the line and discipline of the org. To call meetings with comrades who share similar views of political matters for the purpose of raising open struggle within the rule of the org., factionalism creates a situation of political secrecy ~~with~~ where only leadership can freely discuss its opinions. If comrades remember, the struggle with the Franklins was not won in this way. That struggle was carried on very democratically and openly, and if it hadn't been, more members would have been lost through bickering, ~~misunderstanding and confusion.~~

Some people have quit or been suspended recently. At least one Black comrad was suspended for attending the Third World Conference. We feel this was a matter of being inflexible, where obviously there were great differences. That this comrade was Black, and among the few Black comrades in the org., makes the matter more serious.

The suspension of one other comrade we know of also was very serious and a mistake. A comrade with thirty years experience as an organizer of workers, who more than anybody else built the org., in ~~this~~ his area with great energy and enthusiasm, who expressed a desire to stay in the org. and struggle out the differences was suspended on factually questionable charges of violations of centralism.

SECURITY

The attitude of security that exists is much more suited to work under illegal conditions. Comrades are generally not open members in their work except with close friends. Instead of openly representing the org. we even apply this "need to know" to the masses knowing we're in a communist org. In many work places and union situations conditions at the present time make much of this necessary but its developed beyond that to a general principal of having mostly secret members. This is especially harmful where there is the opportunity to work more openly, such as United Front work, and student work, because its not necessitated by present conditions gives the effect of a manipulative style of work. The lack of playing an open enough role in this work has been recognized, but instead of seeing this, the secrecy, as the problem, the problem is seen that the org. should be more forceful in imposing its line.

Some security measures are needed, such as not discussing illegal work, if any is being done; members who do need to be secret should be known by very few; meetings should be held as discretely as possible and some things should not be said over the phone.

Again, an equally harmful aspect of the misuse of security, is the use of the "need to know" principle within the organization to cover over political questions, label all sorts of necessary factual information classified, making it impossible for any comrades to have anything but a "fog in the well" view point.

questions, that has lead the org. into making some serious mistakes and has isolated us from many honest forces. In addition, we believe the policy on questions of security and dem. centralism has facilitated these mistakes by limiting the necessary thorough examination of political questions throughout the whole organization.

The heart of these mistakes, as we've said, is sort of an impatience, organizationally and politically, that considering our still weak roots among the people, produces some sectarian, often left sectarian mistakes. Not long ago we made, if anything, economist mistakes (much less serious mistakes however than the present ones), and so there are some carryovers and are often the flip side of sectarian mistakes as we showed in regard to some of the political campaigns.

The org. has made headway in various area of work, we don't deny that-- spreading to some nes areas, involvement of more workers in activity close to the org., some better organized and spirited rallies, the abilities of some cadres and leadership have developed considerably. Frnakly we think some comrades tend to be swept off their feet by some success and decide it's all or nothing proposition, the org. just be doing everything right. We've seen success mized with serious mistakes before, the success can even be said to be the foundation for the mistakes, if it is overestimated or misinterpreted; "Dizzy with Success", as Stalin put it.

If we're already dizzy with success, we get dizzy rather easily. The other side of the ledger is that for the six years we've been trying to build a base in the working class we have't made a great deal of headway, we haven't recruited many workers at all. We've recruited bery few Blacks and ~~XX~~ have virtually no base in the Black Liberation Movement. (Some say tha's alright, that movement is petty bourg..led anyway, but that's completely off the wall; What mass movement isn't at this point?) Far from giving leadership to other radical individuals or groups, we're quite isolated from these forces. The development of out cadre into communists solidly bsd in the theory of ML has not gone forward over the lasst three years; considering the good beginnings after the Franklin split.

Dialectics teaches us that the important thing is the direction things are movâng in, not the appearance of things at any particular time. The direction out TU line is moving in, is toward a subtle separation between the political and economic that sets various tasks for this work arrived at abstractly that do not flow from a concrete analysis of the contradictions in that work. In United Front work the direction is to build the U.F., but only in so far as it can be securely led by the RU, to put down all other forces as opportunist, bourg. nationalist etc. Our attitude to the Black Liberation Movement seems to be to keep a safe distance. On Democratic Centralism, the tendency seems to be to trust cadre to discuss things only after the line is settled. A beuraucratic style within the org., a sectarian style in relation to other forces, idealist and subjective approach to political tasks--these do not completely characterize the RU, but we are afraid things are moving in that direction.

H,H, AND H.