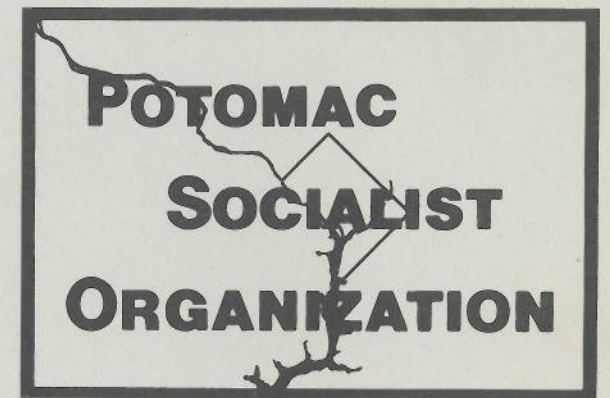


**More Than Patches**  
**A Study Of The Trade Union Question**



MORE THAN PATCHES

A Study of the Trade Union Question

Potomac Socialist Organization  
August 1978

We need much more than patches  
We need the whole coat  
We need much more than breadcrumbs  
We need the loaf itself.

We need much more than jobs  
We need the factories and the land  
And the power of the state!

Berthold Brecht

## THE POTOMAC SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION

The Potomac Socialist Organization (PSO) is a developing Marxist-Leninist organization which grew out of the civil rights, anti-war, women's rights and trade union struggles of the 60's and early 70's. We formed in the summer of 1976 after many of us had worked together informally for several years in the Washington area.

Our earlier work had been marked by spontaneously throwing ourselves into the important struggles of the day: the rights of Black people and women, the effort to stop U.S. attacks on Vietnamese people, and the daily fight of workers in their trade unions. We tended to rush into each new struggle with no strategy and no long-range organizational goals.

In summing up our work in anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-sexist and working class struggles and comparing it to the theoretical lessons which have been developed in the international science of Marxism-Leninism (or scientific socialism) we have become convinced of three major objectives for our work: (1) the complete overthrow of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class and its agents -- the current ruling class in our society; (2) the need for a revolutionary party to provide theoretical, political and organizational guidance to the working class and its allies to accomplish this task; (3) the consolidation of political/economic military power in the working class by stripping the capitalists of all present and potential power.

For the past several decades there has been no party in the U.S. which stands and fights on these principles.

At the same time we became convinced of the need for a revolutionary party; however, we were equally convinced that the route to building such a party taken by some of our friends was incorrect. They were holding

forums, shouting revolutionary phrases at each other, and forming THE new communist party left and right. They were doing everything but developing the theory, strategy and mass movement of the working class which they claimed to lead.

We formed the PSO in 1976 because we believed then, and still believe, that the main stumbling block to forming a new party is the separation between communist ideology and the working class itself. As much as we desire otherwise, the process of overcoming this separation has only just begun. This process we call fusion.

We have joined with other forces around the country who have general agreement about the path to building a party. This agreement takes the form of 18 points of unity. Write us for a copy.

We welcome readers' criticisms and suggestions for improving our understanding of these critical issues. Please forward them to:

PSO  
P. O. Box 696  
West Hyattsville, Maryland 20782

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Those readers familiar with the work of Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee (PWOC) and the Socialist Union of Baltimore (SUB) will recognize the influence of their thinking here. PWOC and SUB have helped to pave the way for current theoretical understanding, not only on the Trade Union question, but in a number of other areas as well. For this we are deeply grateful.

In the final analysis, however, "More Than Patches" is the work of the PSO. We bear full responsibility for its weaknesses and errors.

In this regard we strongly desire your comments and criticisms. We know all too well that this document is not "THE Revolutionary Programme" for communist work in the trade unions. It is a beginning. Our next step is to take this theory and test it out against the reality of the union struggles we face -- deepen and refine it -- and test it out again. In this anti-dogmatist, anti-lazy-bones manner, we will bring our theory closer to the objective reality faced by working people.

This paper must become more than our collective abstract understanding of communist work in trade unions. It must be a living polemic against dogmatism.

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MORE THAN PATCHES

A Study of the Trade Union Question

By the

Potomac Socialist Organization  
August 1978

INTRODUCTION

Why There Is A Trade Union Question for the  
Washington Area

Objective Conditions

In cities where heavy industry prevails there is frequently one key industry. Other industries are often dependent on it for their economic well-being. In Detroit, it is auto. In Pittsburgh, steel. Although Washington is not an industrial city, it too has a key sector. It is the Federal Government which plays a pivotal role in shaping the rest of the economy of our metropolitan area.

The Federal Government, together with its ancillary economic activities, form what might be called the core of the area's economy, and therefore is a critical factor in determining a strategy or mass line for this area.

The key ancillary functions are (1) finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE) with a projected growth rate of 26% by 1980; (2) retail trade, third in employment with 205,000; (3) state and local government; and (4) the "service" sector.<sup>1/</sup>

Because Washington is an international city, finance (banking) is important. The real estate business has traditionally flourished here because of the transitional nature of much of the population. As administration and

programs change, so do the people. They come and go and as they do, they buy and sell homes at a rapid rate.

Retail trade strength is largely due to a high level of disposable income in the area. The D. C. Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) has the highest disposable income per family in the U.S.<sup>2/</sup> Retail trade is becoming more capital intensive as employment is falling while capital investment increases.<sup>3/</sup>

Population movement to the suburbs has resulted in a three-fold increase in employment by State and local governments since 1960. Most of this increase in demand for social services is in education.<sup>4/</sup>

It is the so-called "service" sector, however, which will probably predominate the ancillary functions, even to the point of numerically surpassing the Federal Government in numbers of employees by 1980.

It is useful for the purpose of analysis to divide the working class into different sectors and this is what the Council of Governments (COG) and the Department of Labor do in their statistics. But there is a difference between the approach of these bourgeois analyses and the analysis of Marxists. Other than the "service" sector, the categories of workers examined by the bourgeois analysis do make some sense. The particularities (characteristics which define their essence -- their relationship to the means of production) of the other sectors do, in fact, define them as socially or economically homogenous units.

The particularity of the "service" sector, on the other hand, is that it has no particularity of its own. Its defining characteristic is that it "services" the other sectors. Here this means, in large part, servicing the government. So it is not surprising that this sector is numerically large. But what does this mean? This so-called "service" sector is not a socially or economically homogenous unit. Let us look at its subparts. Included in this "sector" are domestic workers and "misc. professional services" (engineering, architecture and accounting),

laundry and cleaning and "misc. business services" (including business management and consulting), teachers and janitors, lawyers and barbers.<sup>5/</sup> Further, those portions of this "sector" deemed most significant to bourgeois analysts by reason of their growth potential (hinging on the influence of the federal sector) are "private consultants, research organizations and business services."<sup>6/</sup> For the most part these areas are of little interest to us in terms of potential concentrations in our work.

There are, of course, advanced workers in this sector. This does not imply, though, that the whole service sector requires our full attention. Hotel and restaurant workers, hospital workers and educational services (teachers) are qualitatively different from those workers (such as consultants and lawyers) thought to be so significant by COG and the Department of Labor. Differences exist in the degree of socialization, history of struggle, number of minority workers and, of course, overall class perspective.

One of the particularities of this area's working class is the lack of an industrial proletariat. So why should we be trying to build an organization here? For trade union militants, liberals and social democrats it is sufficient to say that there is a working class that needs to be organized. For anti-revisionist, anti-dogmatist communists trying to build a revolutionary party, it is not. For us, party building is primary. Therefore the trade union question is primarily a party building question.

#### Why the Washington Area?

U.S. communists are few and far between. We are isolated -- both from each other and from our class base, the proletariat. In this period of party building, we should be concentrating our efforts in those localities which are most important for communist organizing. Certainly a communist current can be built here. But other areas support such activity at least as well.

A party worthy of the name must be national in scope. It must be able to affect or have the potential to affect many people. Hence, the fifteen to twenty largest metropolitan centers must have active organized communist elements. At the same time, a special emphasis must be put on the industrial proletariat to build a strong communist party. This is based on its history of struggle, degree of organization and socialization. These two propositions immediately raise a question. Do we concentrate on the 15-20 largest populated centers which will include most of the large industrial centers, but will also include areas which have large working classes which are not industrial? Or do we concentrate on the largest centers of the industrial proletariat?

What are the objective factors? Washington, D. C. is the 7th largest metropolitan center by population. Within the District, the Black population is approximately 78%, and in the metropolitan area it is about 30%. Out of a total area workforce (1975) of 1,372,000, over 950,000 were in working class jobs. The area's workers are predominantly public employees and service workers.

An important factor to consider is the growing significance of service workers and their relationship to the industrial proletariat. There are several factors in this group's growing importance: (1) its growing numbers, (2) although they might not usually create surplus value directly, the role of service workers in its creation is indispensable to the capitalist class, (3) the inevitable proletarianization of service workers,<sup>7/</sup> (4) recent attacks on public service workers in the name of fiscal responsibility, and (5) the high proportion of minority workers in certain subsectors.

As basic industry becomes more capital intensive workers are forced out of this sector and into ancillary activities like service. Although the strategic role of the industrial proletariat as the vanguard of the class remains unchanged, certain types of service workers, such as hospital workers and those engaged in human services in various levels of government must not be ignored.

Yet there is more to the Washington area than the objective state of the working class. Of deep significance to the working class and communist movement is this area's strategic location as the nation's capital. Having a local communist organization rooted in the local working class is important for the development of political actions against the ruling class.

But the factor of greatest importance is the struggle of the Black community and its significance for the building of the united front between the working class and oppressed national minorities. The District of Columbia represents the nation's largest concentration of Black people in a single geopolitical unit. There is a rich history of struggle and growing independent political power. Historically, the Federal Government has used the Washington area as a testing ground for racist policies which are later implemented in the rest of the country. The Black Liberation movement has many roots here and the working class has much to learn from its historical and continuing struggles. The communist movement, in particular, should view our area as a crucible and a focus for building strategic alliances with Black peoples' fights for democratic rights.\*

Strategic location, the struggles of the Black community, the fact that we have roots here and the significant size of the working class make the building of a communist presence here an important task. That presence must be based in the proletariat. Thus the trade union question takes on significant importance.

Additionally, the negative objective condition of the existence of practically no industrial proletariat makes the subjective factors more critical. The lack of an industrial proletariat significantly weakens the level of working class consciousness. This makes the need for proletarianization of communists particularly important.

Given the above and given that the tasks of party building can be accomplished here, that is, winning the

advanced to Marxist-Leninist ideas, building a communist current, developing revolutionary theory and proletarianization, then building a communist organization in the Washington area should occur.8/

### Proletarianization

Mao TseTung made repeated reference over several decades to the need for intellectuals to integrate themselves with the masses. In "Rectify the Party's style Work" written in 1942 he links dogmatism with the intellectuals who tend to be subjectivist, looking at things one-sidedly, and seeing only theory and not practice. The cure:

"Therefore, I advise those who have only book-learning but as yet no contact with reality, and also those with little practical experience, to realize their own shortcomings and become a little more modest.

"How can those who have only book-learning be turned into intellectuals in the true sense? The only way is to get them to take part in practical work and become practical workers, to get those engaged in theoretical work to study important practical problems." 9/

But even several years after the Communist Party of China led the working class and their peasant allies to power, Mao again raised the issue of the intellectuals in "On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People."

"[The intellectuals] must continue to remold themselves, gradually shed their bourgeois world outlook so that they can fit in with the needs of the new society and unite with the workers and peasants." 10/

Proletarianization is the only sure cure for dogmatism.

"But the intellectuals will accomplish nothing if they fail to integrate themselves with the workers and peasants. In the final analysis, the dividing line between revolutionary intellectuals and non-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary intellectuals is whether or not they are willing to integrate with the workers and peasants and actually do so." 11/

The briefest possible definition of proletarianization would be that we "are willing to integrate with the workers. . . and actually do so." But brief definitions suffer from being too general and vague for practical use. What does it mean to "integrate" oneself with the workers?

The essence of this integration is to learn to apply on a daily basis the philosophy of the proletariat-dialectics and historical materialism. This philosophy stands in opposition to the idealism which the ruling class foists on us, regardless of class.

To gain an understanding of the philosophy of the working class, it is necessary to struggle against the bourgeois individualism which we have all been taught. An essential step in doing this is to train ourselves to listen to members of the class and empathize with their experience. In fact, this means to make their experiences our own. This identification can be accomplished only in the context of the class struggle, which takes place, of course, in the workplace and the community.

We have learned that the class struggle also takes place within each of us. Thus, an important aspect of furthering proletarianization is paying attention to the ways in which individual cadre relate to each other and to other working people.



We are critical of, and caution against, an approach to proletarianization which we call "workerism." This approach equates proletarianization with getting a job in a factory, imitating the dress and mannerisms of co-workers, and developing a "good" relationship with them. Our co-workers and neighbors often have racist, sexist and anti-communist ideas. Our goal is to give them the respect and understanding they deserve, while struggling against these ideas -- which are against their own interests.

### TRADE UNION STRATEGY AND TACTICS

As we have seen from the past, unions have been the first line of defense for working people. But today we see that most unions not only fail to improve the lot of workers, they don't even try to defend what working people have gained over many years of struggle.

Unions should be a hotbed of socialist activity, given that they are centered around working peoples' relationship to the means of production. But we cannot deal with shoulds. We must decide what our objectives are in regard to transforming the unions during this period and we must assess the conditions which presently exist in the trade union movement.

The primary task of communists in the U.S. in this period is fusion of the communist and workers' movements. Fusion has four aspects: (1) recruiting advanced workers to communism; (2) building a communist current in the working class; (3) developing workers' communism (revolutionary theory); and (4) proletarianization of cadre.

In order to further this process of fusion we need to make the unions into schools of communism where workers learn about communism and communists learn about working class life and the class struggle; where we can build the communist current and develop our revolutionary theory. These are essential steps on the road to making the unions into the defense organizations they should be.

### Criteria for Our Trade Union Work

To do anything about transforming the unions, we must be in them. But we cannot leave it at that. Any communist work must be based in concentrations. The first task then is to begin to build up concentrations in union situations. If this had not yet occurred, decisions must be made as to where this should occur. During this process, people will be employed at different workplaces, but it must be understood that not all workplaces are equally important. Discussion should be concentrated on those places which have precedence in terms of strategic planning. We believe the criteria used in selecting workplaces should include:

- \* the workplace being organized
- \* a significant number of national minority workers
- \* a high degree of socialization
- \* a history of struggle
- \* a stable workforce (most like where the workplace has been organized for some time)

Washington is obviously not a union town. The percentage of workers organized is approximately one-half the national average (12% vs. 25%). Most national and some local unions do not believe that it is necessary to organize new workers. To try to organize an unorganized workplace without union help is difficult at best -- but when we are met with opposition from the union itself, it becomes an overwhelming task. We believe that it is better strategically, during this period and given our limited forces, to go into already organized shops -- where workers have at least some union identity. Organizing the unorganized will be more successful if a militant, organized rank and file puts pressure on its own union leadership to take on the task. Our present job is to organize that rank and file pressure.

A significant number of national minority workers in a shop is crucial, given the need to build class unity and to overcome white chauvinism and fight racism.

Convincing white workers to unify with Black workers and to be willing to accept their leadership is essential to moving the overall working class struggle forward. Also, in terms of winning the advanced, Black workers, because of their dual oppression, are important potential communist forces.

We have seen both the difficulties and opportunities faced by women cadre working in male-dominated jobs. However, we have not yet developed an organizational position on how the struggle against sexism within the working class is best carried out. We hope to develop our position on this in the coming year.

The degree of socialization speaks to the direct interconnectedness of work between co-workers who are dependent on each other on a daily basis. An example of this is an assembly line where a conveyor belt passes one station and then another. If the belt is accelerated, as soon as one station is affected, another will be too. In other words, a change in management policy from above affects all equally and leaves little room or time for individual workers to solve the problem by themselves. When a high degree of this exists, people tend to view their work conditions collectively, and tend to act and react more as a unit, understanding that they are dependent on each other. Thus, the level of socialization is directly related to the potential for militancy and class struggle unionism.

The history of struggle and the relative stability of a workplace are the fourth and fifth criteria. Working people move off of their own experiences -- including trade union experiences. If people took part in a strike five years ago, they at least know they can walk off the job. But why is going into a union with a militant history more advantageous than going into one without such a history? There are few examples of class struggle unionism in the Washington area. As communists and as militant trade unionists, we want to point to positive models. To see a fighting union, a union that begins to see beyond its own demands to the needs of the class as a whole, is helpful to other unionists under the sway of bourgeois ideology

in the form of company unionism and class collaborationist leadership. The closer we are to positive models and the more we can draw on the direct experience of our co-workers, the easier our job will be.

Of course we must be careful not to view these criteria mechanically or metaphysically. They are guidelines, not dogma. We must evaluate each potential concentration area in the light of our objectives in the trade union movement in the next period [see the next part of this section]. We must see each potential area of concentration as a process -- in motion and changing -- coming from somewhere and going somewhere. A potential concentration area may not meet all the criteria. But these guidelines, we believe, will help us key on those areas that will move us forward in our trade union work during this period.

Finally, in order to be scientific about our work we must evaluate and re-evaluate it periodically in the light of these guidelines and our accumulated experience, to determine if our commitment of forces to each concentration is still correct.

### Objectives

We are in a party-building period. That is why the trade union question is a party-building question. To say that this is our central task signifies that building the party is organically connected to all other subordinate tasks, and that it is the main link in all of our mass work. We must therefore approach our work in the trade unions primarily as party-builders and not primarily as builders of the rank-and-file movement. To do otherwise would not only undermine the fight for socialism, but it would also undermine the development of a strong rank-and-file movement.

In this party-building period, our objectives in the trade unions are two-fold: 12/

- \*building class struggle unionism.
- \*recruitment of advanced workers to communism

Class struggle unionism recognizes the antagonistic nature of the relationship between workers and capitalists (management), recognizes class allies outside the workplace or particular industry, and anticipates the necessity of raising the level of struggle to attain victory. A class struggle unionist approach relies on organizing the workplace and the class and not on negotiating with the boss. Winning the advanced to communism means convincing working class leaders to adopt the world outlook of dialectical and historical materialism; to see that the union struggle is not simply for a piece of the pie but for the pie itself; and to see the historic role of the U.S. working class and its objective ties with the workers of other countries and with oppressed peoples everywhere. This does not mean taking advanced people out of their class with this deeper understanding, nor does it mean changing them from being militant trade unionists. On the contrary, they will deepen their class ties and their ability to lead union struggles with this international, scientific perspective about the larger nature of the struggle. We must merge the communist and workers' movements which are still generally distinct. In essence, we want to enhance the positive aspects both movements have to offer -- and destroy the negative.

It is important to remember that we are working in the trade unions not simply to build the workers' movement. As communists our most pressing task is the formation of a communist party to lead the struggles in the trade unions and elsewhere. This task has implications in all our work. An essential precondition to the formation of such a party is at least a minimal level of fusion, as defined above. But while fusing these two movements, we must also be building each of them. This is why the two related objectives of our work in the trade unions must be to recruit advanced workers to communism (building the communist movement) and to transform the unions from collaborationist institutions into organizations of class struggle (building the workers' movement).

The class nature of the communist movement in this country, still largely intellectuals from outside the

proletariat, is a major stumbling block in the fusion process. Attacking this problem cannot await the transformation of the class base of our movement by recruiting advanced workers, but must begin now with the subjective transformation of our own cadre through proletarianization. This makes proletarianization a key task for communists. But in saying this we must not lose sight of the forest for the trees. Our objective is to build both movements and bring them together. Proletarianization must always go on because the outlook and behavior of intellectuals (as we described them earlier) holds us back in our efforts to achieve our objectives.

The communist movement in this country is woefully underdeveloped in our theoretical understanding of the revolutionary process. We believe that the development of theory -- what we call workers communism -- can take place only in conjunction with the building of a current of communism among the advanced workers. It is within this developing current that our theories can be tested and further developed. We must increase the number of communists available to this work by recruiting our co-workers. And, of course, all the while we must be proletarianizing the communist movement.

All of this is a large order, not to be fully accomplished by a small local organization. Our immediate goals are much more modest. We propose to make a beginning -- by recruiting some of our co-workers to our organization and making a start toward building a communist current by working for class struggle unionism.

#### CLASS STRUGGLE UNIONISM

There are three main areas holding back the development of class struggle unionism: 13/

- \* company unionism (v. fighting unionism)
- \* small group interests (v. class unity)
- \* bureaucratic control (v. union democracy)

Within the trade union movement as a whole the principal contradiction is the class struggle approach v. the class collaborationist approach, with the latter the primary aspect at this time. The main thing holding us back from turning this situation into its opposite is the contradiction between small group interests v. class unity, with the main problem being racism.

It is crucial to understand that any one of these could be primary at any given time. Further, one that is secondary during one period can quickly become primary in the next. To understand such changes requires scientific investigation and the use of dialectical materialism. We cannot be satisfied with a surface reading of the situation. Some possible analyses follow which illustrate the point. The following examples from our work show how each of these three contradictions can be primary in a given situation.

#### Pressmen's Local 6

What was the principal contradiction holding back the development of Local 6 of the Pressman's Union into class struggle unionism? It clearly was not company unionism v. fighting unionism. And it was not union democracy v. bureaucratic unionism, although there were some problems in this area, such as a lack of a strong effort to educate and activate some of the rank and file to bring further democratization to the union. But clearly the main problem was a lack of class unity. There were many examples of this, but chief among them was the problem of craft unionism. Workers who are organized along craft lines tend to put narrow craft interests ahead of labor solidarity, and this is exactly what happened at the Post. Although the pressmen and some of the advanced workers from the other unions overcame this mentality, most did not. Labor solidarity was broken and the strike lost as union workers crossed a union picket line. Another example of this contradiction was the problem of racism. Local 6 had expressed a rejection of blatant racial discrimination, and was instrumental in the hiring of some Black pressmen. But it had not taken the fight to the

Post management by demanding strong affirmative action programs against the Post's institutionalized racism. If the union had a strong program against racism, it might have been easier to garner community support when the strike began.

#### Teachers' Associations (Prince George's and Montgomery Counties)

The hiring of national minorities and affirmative action programs have been sought and won by these unions. This is not the primary problem. Union democracy v. bureaucratic unionism is a problem, but not the main one. There is an open avenue to elect building representatives (shop stewards) even though there is still bureaucratic control at the top. The major problem is company unions v. fighting unionism. It is crucial to solve this problem before moving on to the other tasks. Solving this contradiction will make it easier to take on the contradiction between democracy and bureaucratic union control. Of course, these contradictions are linked. The bureaucratic control perpetuates the company union approach, but in fact the company union perspective is seen all through the ranks of the union. One reason in particular is the class nature of the job and who it attracts. There is an ongoing conflict among teachers, and within each individual teacher, about whether they are "professionals" or workers who have no more status or freedom than other people in this society. Increased work (speed-ups) and loss of benefits (which at one time teachers thought were undeniably theirs) have caused them to feel less secure in considering themselves "professionals."

#### Local 1906 of BRAC (Clerical Workers at AMTRAK headquarters)

This Local appears to have the contradiction between democratic v. bureaucratic unionism as the primary contradiction. This is manifested in the control of the Local being taken over by the most consolidated form of

bureaucratic control -- the International. Until that contradiction is solved it will be very difficult to build class unity or fighting unionism. But once again, some of these contradictions are interrelated. We must continue to analyze the situation to pinpoint what is primary at any given time.

After the primary contradiction is isolated, a program must be developed that stems from the problems of the workplace and which best articulates the primary contradiction. The following are some examples taken from a conference on trade union strategy and tactics:

1. Fight for union democracy

- elected shop stewards
- union orientation for all members
- right to strike at local level
- strong shop steward system with councils and stewards having the ability to lead struggles themselves on the shop floor
- no union official to make more than the highest paid worker in the industry
- right of ratification of all officers and contracts
- elimination of probationary period

2. Fight for class unity

- equal pay for equal work
- plant-wide seniority
- affirmative action in hiring and upgrading
- back pay for discrimination and back seniority in cases of discrimination
- 24-hour child care
- on-the-job training
- equality of union leadership reflecting composition of membership

3. Fighting trade unionism

- fight against speedups
- improve grievance procedure
- right to strike
- cost of living allowance
- fight for job security
- fight to end all discrimination in hiring

## Labor Bureaucrats

Another barrier standing in the way of the working class in its fight against capital is the labor bureaucracy. These misleaders of the working class do the bidding of the owners, preaching that the disputes between labor and capital can be solved under capitalism. The differences, workers are told, are non-antagonistic and both groups have it in their interest to solve any problems that arise.

These are people who are full time labor "overseers" who supervise labor and "run" their organizations. They are not part of the working class. Their interests lie with the bosses, not the workers. Prime examples are the two most recent leaders of the United Steel Workers of America. Both Abel and McBride state the position clearly. Abel signed away the right to strike (the Experimental Negotiation Agreement) and McBride justifies the steel crisis and the loss of jobs because the owners are not making enough profit.

They do not see beyond getting a bigger piece of the pie. In fact, they frequently do not even fight for a bigger piece of the pie. They rationalize to workers why we must accept a tiny piece after the capitalists have taken their share.

As long as the bureaucrats support programs that make it possible for workers to organize, their efforts should be supported. As soon as they become a fetter they should be criticized and isolated and brought up as an example of class collaboration to workers while the fight against capital goes on. In most mass struggles, bureaucrats are not the main enemy. When dealing with internal union struggles, however, they often are.

## How to Implement These Demands?

The role of communists must be to raise the level of struggle. Thus, there is a reason that a particular target is chosen -- whether it is the cost of living,

the shop steward system or affirmative action. That reason is that it reflects the primary contradiction -- that which is holding back further development toward class struggle unionism.

After isolating the principal contradiction and organizing some of the advanced workers around it, a concrete analysis of the particular workplace must be made in order to develop a concrete program for that workplace. This means not only demands, but a plan of action. This plan might call for a rank-and-file caucus to be formed (see below), an anti-racism committee, a "right to strike" committee, or a "community outreach" committee. Then begins the most fundamental task -- winning the rank and file to the plan. As long as our cadre and a handful of advanced co-workers remain isolated from the middle forces, a plan, even if exactly correct, will remain just words on paper. It will be difficult, if not impossible, for our cadre to become open as a communist or even to establish a basis for fighting anti-communism. The vital task of winning the advanced to communist ideas and recruiting them to communism will be weakened as the isolation from co-workers tends to intimidate the advanced from moving closer to communism.

Essentially, the process we are describing involves the use of united front tactics in order to win over middle forces, even those who may disagree strongly with our politics. This has been referred to by the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee (PWOC), the Socialist Union of Baltimore (SUB) and other as building the left-center alliance or building the united front between Left and Center forces.

#### UNITED FRONT TACTICS AND THE TRADE UNION QUESTION

There is some confusion around the concept of the united front and how that concept is applied to work in the trade unions. The term has been used repeatedly in our tendency to describe the alliance we intend to

build between left and center forces within the trade union movement. It has also been used to describe the alliance between the multi-national working class and oppressed national minorities. The former is an alliance between groups within the working class with differing political perspectives and goals. The latter is an alliance between the working class and its allies, the multi-class oppressed national minorities.

The concept of the left-center alliance was followed by the Communist Party, USA (CPUSA) in the 1930's in order to bring together the forces needed to build the CIO. The experience of the radical IWW organizers had proven beyond a doubt that simply bringing together radical forces is not enough. In order to accomplish any major tasks on the road to building the working class movement, a tactical alliance with non-radical forces is necessary.

What is the united front? Georgi Dimitrov describes it as ". . . unity of action of the proletariat on a national and international scale.<sup>14/</sup> Unity of action does not require political unity. In fact, the concept of the united front originally developed from the realization that under certain conditions, tactical alliances are imperative, even though political unity within those alliances is impossible. Such were the conditions of the struggle against imperialism. And such are the conditions faced today by the U.S. working class, confronted with the contradiction between class struggle and class collaboration within its ranks. Dimitrov saw unity of action through the united front as a prerequisite to the development of political unity.<sup>15/</sup>

How does the united front differ from the Peoples Front? Al Richmond says, of the CPUSA in the 30's:

"As initially formulated United Front and Peoples Front described precise class alignments. United Front meant united action of the working class, and in the first instance of its political parties, Communist

"and Socialist. The Peoples Front was originally defined by Dimitrov as 'a fighting alliance between the proletariat on the one hand, and the toiling peasantry and the basic mass of the urban petty bourgeoisie, who together form the majority of the population even in the industrially developed countries, on the other.' (In other renditions he included intellectuals in this formation.) In the United States the Dimitrov formula was modified to read: 'a coalition of the working class, the toiling farmers, Negroes, and middle classes against capitalist reaction, fascism, and war.' This was the constant formula and it should be noted did not include capitalists, liberal or otherwise." 16/

The Peoples Front, then, is a form of the united front between the left and center forces within the trade unions; we also have to build a united front (Peoples Front) between the multi-national working class and the oppressed national minorities. This means making alliances with national minority petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals and politicians who are engaged in organizing their people from an essentially bourgeois perspective. These are just two examples of how united front tactics are used.

Richmond compares and contrasts the approach of the Chinese Communist Party toward the "Anti-Japanese National United Front" and the approach of the CPUSA toward the "left-center bloc" which built the CIO. The two principal errors made by the CPUSA which he isolates and which we need to avoid are (1) failure to understand the dialectical relationship between cooperation and antagonism within the united front, and (2) building the left-center bloc from the top rather than from the bottom.

Significantly, Chinese Communist assessment of their own history does not regard the united front with the Kuomintang in 1924-27 as a mistake despite its catastrophic finale. On the contrary, they refer to the period as the

"First Great Revolution." What they do regard as a tragic mistake is that toward the end of that period their policy, as Mao put it, "was one of all alliance and no struggle."18/

The left-center bloc was instrumental in building the CIO. It was not a mistake. What was a mistake was the CP's tendency toward "all alliance/no struggle." Toward the end of the alliance, Communists sponsored anti-communist resolutions at CIO conventions. Mao, on the other hand, recognized that Communists must maintain their autonomy and independence within the united front, for it is only through struggle that the unity of the united front is maintained. Without struggle there can be no unity. This is the dialectical unity of opposites of the contradiction between cooperation and antagonism within the united front.

Another error made by the CP was building the alliance from the top down. Tactical alliances were made through agreements with labor bureaucrats Hillman, Murray and Lewis. Thus it was not possible to build an autonomous, independent left strength within the trade unions. Instead the left was absorbed by the center in much the same way the Communists were absorbed by the Kuomintang in China in 1924-1927.

In addition to recognizing and trying to avoid yesterday's mistakes, we must also realize that today's left-center alliance must be built on today's concrete conditions. What are those conditions?

The labor bureaucracy has completely knuckled under in the face of the current assault on the working class. Their logic is: "Don't make too many demands during a recession or you'll chase your job right out of the country." These misleaders and a tiny handful of labor aristocrats<sup>19/</sup> have their bread buttered by the superprofits drawn from U.S. Imperialism/racism.\*

But it is becoming increasingly difficult for this tiny handful to sell their self-interest to the rest of us, the masses of U.S. workers. In order to meet the growing resistance of the rank-and-file, the labor bureaucrats have increased their personal control over the unions by attacking trade union democracy. Their tactics have included increasing centralization of control by the internationals, extension of their terms in office, and red-baiting.

Although rank and file movements have been growing in response to all this, they have been largely spontaneous formations. They generally lack a program or strategic orientation and many fail to attack white chauvinism. Lacking a class conscious strategy and program, they sprout and die around specific issues.

Simply stated the contradiction we face is class struggle trade unionism v. class collaboration trade unionism. We recognize that building class struggle trade unionism cannot take place in isolation from the rank-and-file movement and the center forces that lead it at present. Class collaborationism is the primary aspect of this contradiction at the present time, and the left alone cannot solve this contradiction. This is why we advocate the building of an alliance between the left and center forces. As PWOC stated at a recent conference:

"The concept of the united front is basically a very simple one. The united front is the conscious coming together of workers from all political persuasions in order to accomplish specific, well-defined, political goals. The united front does not demand unity of political belief, nor does it necessarily demand unity of motives. A united front is a principled agreement to act together to accomplish a specific goal -- a goal dictated by the urgent demands of the masses."20/

The role of communists within the left-center bloc is to provide the glue which binds it together. This comes in the form of a concrete and politically correct program. This program will involve making compromises without being tailist. "Communists of course cannot and must not for a moment abandon their own independent work of Communist education, organization and mobilization of the masses."21/ Such a program must include the dialectical relationship between the need to move the center forces to the left and not allowing the left forces, including non-communists, to get so far ahead of the center that they isolate themselves.

#### CAUCUS BUILDING

One form used to move the unions to the left and to open up fertile grounds for possible recruitment is a caucus. A caucus is not an official committee of the union, but comes about because workers see ways to make changes when met with resistance and frustration within the union. At first people might want to meet informally to talk out an issue -- some problem not being handled right, or not being handled at all. This might be a small number of people who just want to hash out some ideas. Some people might want to end this informal grouping at that level, but if workers feel a need to keep meeting because of a particular issue, the grouping should continue. The need for an ongoing caucus, when appropriate, should be explained and struggled for by communists. But, by going through the initial process of consciousness raising, others (probably the advanced) will have also realized the need to continue.

Formation of a caucus should come out of a struggle. Although we realize that caucuses are important and frequently needed we cannot set up a caucus for its own sake. To urge that some form be given to informal discussion over an issue is a correct action. As organizational voice is given to workers' anger and willingness to fight, the significance of the form itself will become clearer.



Although initiated by just a few people, a caucus -- or its embryonic form -- should not stay small and select. Unless the caucus is made up of left forces and middle forces, it will prove ineffective and most likely become isolated.

Leaving a caucus without a clear focus or direction is leaving it to spontaneity, loss of effectiveness, and premature dissipation. After it is formed and plans of struggle are developed, the members should set down why they are meeting, the purpose, the basis of unity. On one hand, this unity should not be so narrow as to make people think that the group should end when the struggle is over, yet it should not be based on broad, unfocussed goals that will allow the group to wander all over the map. Another approach is to focus on narrow demands or problems at first, and then the group will be forced to come up with something else when the immediate struggle is over. For example, a concrete program would focus on two or three problems, such as the union not effectively fighting grievances, general harassment of employees, or racism on the shop floor. Later, the caucus would develop a more general basis for unity, such as anyone can join, we stand for equality and a democratic union, etc.

#### Red-Baiting

Such a caucus will come under attack as "red." It will be race-baited as well if it is multi-national. This makes it all the more crucial that unity be reached around not excluding anyone in regard to their politics, race, etc.

Most likely, at first, our cadre will be fighting for these things as closed communists, but the success or failure at this stage will clearly affect their later actions in coming out openly as communists. From the beginning of caucus work, we should teach that the company or union leadership will most likely resort to divide and conquer tactics to split the developing unity.

The PSO has very little experience in dealing with red-baiting. But what experience we do have, and the valuable advice of other comrades give us some ideas about how to deal with this problem.

First and most important, we must build a firm base in the workplace. Only when we have won the respect of our co-workers as a worker and a fighter will they be ready for our leadership. When open red-baiting begins, it is too late to start building a base.

Second, it is important to have a preconceived strategy for dealing with such an attack. In developing such a strategy it is important to focus on three things: (1) expose red-baiting for what it is, an attack on militant, class struggle unionism; (2) fight for the democratic right of communists to participate (everyone can join as long as they want to help the struggle); and (3) educate the advanced and others as to the positive content of the communist program. The third aspect can only be achieved if our cadre have built a strong base and begun to make progress on the first and second points.

#### WINNING THE ADVANCED TO COMMUNISM

What determines whether someone is left, right or center within the trade union movement is where they stand relative to the rest of the class, not some abstract definition. Today "left" is not synonymous with communist. All advanced workers are left forces. The key characteristic of left forces, and the one which distinguishes them from the center, is that they are self-motivated leadership of the class. These workers are those who have learned the need for a systematic and programmatic approach to their problems, and that strength lies in numbers -- that workers must be organized as well as led.

Center forces are those workers who are basically issue-oriented. They are not initiators and have little

understanding of the need for class struggle. Around individual issues they can be militant fighters. But without conscious leadership, they tend to become silent again once the issue dies. These forces tend to vacillate and can be won over to leadership from the left or the right.

The right consists of the labor bureaucracy and their supporters who believe that working people can improve their situation only by collaborating with the ruling class.

Most advanced workers will be open to communist ideas and willing to study. They can usually be won to anti-racist and anti-sexist positions as well. It is important that these criteria for identifying the advanced workers not be applied rigidly or mechanically. Some advanced workers are initially racist, sexist and anti-communist due to ignorance. But as we work with them to build class struggle trade unionism, they should quickly see that these backward ideas are against their class interest -- otherwise they are probably not advanced workers.

In order to build a communist current, it is necessary to win advanced workers to communism. We are presently very few, and we must understand that a communist current is not based on militant trade unionism, but rather workers who are open to communist ideas and direction. We know how difficult it is even putting out an anti-imperialist idea when one is working alone; there must be other communists assisting in this process. A concentration or cell cannot be solely based on conscious communists who transport themselves to a workplace.

Two general areas of emphasis stand out when considering winning the advanced in a workplace situation: participation in the shop struggle and propaganda. Of course they are interrelated and, generally both are necessary.

### Propaganda

We distinguish two forms of propaganda: personalized (tailored to fit the individual worker) and formalized study groups. If, for instance, no momentum or movement is occurring at the workplace, and there are few advanced workers then the situation might call for individual reading. This calls for careful analysis of the person to receive the material. Reading level, particular interests, level of development in understanding the class struggle, etc., should all be taken into account. On the other hand, we do want to raise the level of understanding. Follow-up discussion should be planned. It might be useful to plan a series of articles or readings for an individual which broadens perspective, step by step.

The other form is study groups. Here, we have yet to analyze our experiences. Is it good to have people from different sectors in the same group? How important is it to teach basic M-L concepts? What should happen after the group? How does study fit into ongoing work in the shop?

### Participation in Shop Struggles

One way to win the advanced is through the day-to-day struggle in the shop, particularly if there is visible communist leadership. Raising issues that call for action -- whether writing letters, confronting a foreman or administrator, or just meeting can be the main arena used to develop political relationships with advanced workers. This has been the main focus of PSO cadre in our work so far.

Of course, neither of these approaches can go on very long without the other coming into play. If someone is being won over through propaganda at some point, the education has to be translated into action. So it is with people coming from solely workplace involvement. We must try to win them to a broader perspective at some point, or else we are not doing our job as communists.

### Historical and Material Basis of Racism

"White racism is not only the belief that black people are inferior to whites. It is a whole system of material inequality that is woven into every institution of American life."<sup>22/</sup> That is because racism has been essential to the development of U.S. capitalism from its early stages up to the present. A shortage of free labor inhibited the development of U.S. capitalism in its infancy. This contradiction was resolved with the importation of large numbers of Black people from West Africa. At about the same time, bourgeois ideology developed the pseudo-scientific theories which alleged to prove the genetic inferiority of non-white people. These ideas then gained wide currency among European settlers and were used to justify the institution of chattel slavery. Later, faced with severe competition from its more highly developed European counterparts, American capitalism developed into its monopoly stage. This period was marked by the accumulation of large masses of capital through the intense exploitation of the millions of non-white peoples in the working class. Chief among these were the Afro-American people. Recently freed from chattel slavery by the Civil War, Black people were banded together to complete their struggle for full democratic rights. However, this democratic movement, which was allying with white small farmers, had to be broken up by U.S. capitalism, in order for capitalism to develop into monopoly. This was done by reinforcing the white supremacist ideology through both legal (governmental) and illegal (Klan and other terrorists) means. Today the super-exploitation of Black people continues to be necessary to monopoly capitalism, because of the increasing severity of the problem of the declining rate of profit due to the contraction of U.S. imperialism's sphere of influence.

### Discrimination

Today Black people are discriminated against relative to white people both on the job and as consumers of

goods and services. As consumers, Black people pay more for less, get poorer health care and poorer educations. As a result, they have a shorter life expectancy. Discrimination and abuse by law enforcement agencies strikes them particularly hard.<sup>23/</sup>

On the job Black workers are discriminated against in three ways. First they suffer greater unemployment. Second, they generally get the worst and lowest-paying jobs. And third, even when they are in the same job categories as white workers, they often get lower pay and worse working conditions.<sup>24/</sup>

Because this discrimination is against Black people relative to white people, it appears that the contradiction is between Blacks and whites. But as is often the case with contradictions under capitalism, appearance and reality are two different things. An example that helps clarify this is the situation with unemployment and the workers' struggles. At all times Black workers suffer higher unemployment than white workers. But in times of economic crisis, this discrimination becomes particularly acute. Frequently where a predominantly white workforce has gone out on strike, owners have deliberately brought in Black workers to scab. In such a situation it is easy for Black and white workers to see each other, rather than the owners, as the enemy. Add to this years of ideological conditioning of white workers in white supremacy, and you have white chauvinism.

The result of this white chauvinism is that white workers, seeing Black workers and Black people as the enemy, often end up siding with the boss. The result has been profitable for the capitalist, and disastrous for both Black and white working people.<sup>25/</sup>

### Racism, Fascism, Imperialism and the Trade Union Movement

Our generation lives and struggles in the last stage of capitalism -- imperialism or monopoly capitalism. The foremost ideological support of this world-wide economic

system is white chauvinism, or racism, which has been used for centuries to justify the super-exploitation and oppression of non-white peoples here and abroad.

Therefore, in this period, communists must be always conscious of our internationalism and our fight against racism. Our trade union work must be guided by a scientific understanding of monopoly capitalism, and by the spirit of proletarian internationalism.

Under imperialism, the working class of the U.S. faces an international system of exploitation which impoverishes the masses of the non-socialist world, while enriching the tiny capitalist class. Through the super-exploitation of the underdeveloped nations, U.S. monopoly capital seeks to postpone as long as possible the final uprising of the U.S. working class. What is objectively a matter of U.S. workers being exploited relatively less is masked by bourgeois ideology to appear as a situation in which U.S. workers are partners with capital and have a stake in "keeping America (*i.e.*, the imperialist system) strong." Workers are taught to be "thankful" for their "high" standard of living, to blame foreigners (be they undocumented workers or "cheap" foreign labor) for the loss of jobs, and to serve as cannon fodder in imperialist wars.

Racism, central in the development of U.S. imperialism, takes on new forms in capitalism's last stage -- imperialism. As "neo-colonialist" policies at home and abroad are refined to present the picture of a non-racist system, when in actuality the super-exploitation and oppression of the great majority of non-white peoples is worsening, the centrality of the struggle against racism within our own working class movement becomes even more important and more difficult.26/

We need only look at the use of fascism in Germany to understand what becomes the basic choice when the imperialist system is in crisis: the working class must choose between proletarian internationalism and national

chauvinism. The Nazis gained power by appearing to side with the proletariat against the monopolists and politicians. A key argument fascists use against communism is that the latter takes a stand for internationalism and democracy and against racism and bourgeois nationalism. Adolf Hitler wrote:

"The Jewish doctrine of Marxism rejects the aristocratic principle of Nature and replaces the eternal privilege of power and strength by the mass of numbers and their dead weight. Thus it denies the value of personality in man, contests the significance of nationality and race, and thereby withdraws from humanity the premise of its existence and its culture."27/

Neo-fascists exploit the superficial analysis that accepts the appearance of things, such as the contradiction of racism is between Black and white workers, and argue that white workers should make common cause with the monopolists and against oppressed people. An example is George Wallace, who rose to infamy on a wave of white racism, the so-called "white backlash" of the late 60's and 70's.28/

We have already shown how racism was central to the development of U.S. capitalism in its early stages, and as it grew into its monopoly stage. But it is equally important to the international manifestation of monopoly capital -- imperialism.

"Since the subordination of foreign nations proceeds by force, that is to say in a very natural way, it appears to the dominant nation that it owes its mastery to its special natural qualities, in other words to its racial characteristics. Thus in racial ideology there emerges a scientifically-cloaked foundation for the

"power lust of finance capital, which in this way demonstrates the cause and necessity of its operations. In place of the democratic ideal of equality there steps the oligarchical ideal of mastery."29/

Hilferding, who wrote the above words in his classic, Das Finanzkapital, then goes on to explain how the ideological weapon of racism must be used more extensively and intensively as capitalism transforms itself into monopoly capitalism-imperialism. He writes: "In place of the democratic ideal of equality" that was a key ideological principle with the early capitalists in their struggle against feudalism, there steps the oligarchic ideal of mastery" -- the principal of racial and national chauvinism which is essential to the imperialist to justify his worldwide plunder.

Communists must expose the central ideological aspect of both fascism and imperialism which is racism. Communists must lead the struggle against racism and white communists must win white workers to this struggle. To view our work in the trade unions as strictly limited to narrow economic struggles would be to abdicate our responsibilities under proletarian internationalism.

The crisis of world imperialism deepens with each success of national liberation movements. These successes have led imperialism to rely on terrorist methods in many countries, as the "sophisticated" neo-colonialist tactics are exposed for the masses by the resolute liberation fighters. This, in turn, has helped expose the lie that the government is neutral in the fight between labor and capital. Events like the strike at The Washington Post and more recently the courageous struggle of the coal miners have exposed the government's role.

It is difficult at first to raise international issues and the struggle against racism at the workplace and in the trade union context. But, as communists we must not view "international" work as separate from "trade

union" work. In fact, learning how to tie the struggle against racism/imperialism into the daily economic resistance struggles of our co-workers goes to the heart of our work as communists -- and it is of particular importance that we struggle against opportunism on these critical issues as we strive to consolidate advanced forces politically/organizationally. Learning how to give relevance to the struggle against racism/imperialism in the trade union context gives life and meaning to the phrases "communist current" and "fusion" of Marxism-Leninism with the working class movement.

We must convince our co-workers that the murder of Steve Biko of the destruction of trade unions in Chile is a blow against all of us. We must expose the systematic relationship between auto layoffs in Detroit and the General Motors-Ford plant openings in Chile. As we build and organize in the course of our workplace struggles, we must show that the workers and oppressed peoples of the world are neither inferiors or competitors, but sisters and brothers -- that the peoples of the underdeveloped nations mean no more and no less to the capitalists than we do -- things to be exploited.

An issue communists face increasingly in our work, especially in basic industry, is runaway shops. Export of jobs is only one aspect of the imperialist system, and probably not the most significant source of superprofits to the monopolists. Yet this issue has immediate and direct impact in the lives of many workers and is widely addressed by the bourgeois media. Correctly addressing this issue will allow us to address the broader issues of imperialism.

The AFL-CIO leadership has taken a national chauvinist line. In collaboration with part of the U.S. capitalist class, they call for the imposition of high protective tariffs on steel, clothing, shoes and other commodities. ILGWU sings: "Look for the Union label . . . It shows that we were able to make it in the USA." Posters on the walls of steelworkers union halls show an ugly Asian

worker standing on a bloodied white worker, with the slogan: "This man no longer wants your job . . . He has it." Even some of the relatively progressive union leadership has allowed itself to fall into the trap of seeing "foreign" workers as the enemy.

Are we in favor of ignoring union labels? Of course not. Workers fought and died for the right to sew that label into the product they produce. But so, too, today, for example, the people of Nicaragua, who are paid a fraction of what U.S. workers are paid to produce the same product, are fighting for democratic rights including the right to unionize. We must raise within the unions the issue of the role of the U.S. government and business in aiding repressive, anti-union regimes. We must also struggle against the active collaboration in such aid by the union movement through such organizations as the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD).

In addition, communists should demand that U.S. unions cooperate with unions in other countries against the same multi-national employers. Here is what Dollars and Sense reports about such cooperation among rubber and chemical workers of Western Europe, organized in the International Federation of Chemical and General Workers (ICF):

"A 1971-72 ICF campaign against Michelin, including workers from 12 countries, forced the tire company to negotiate with strikers for the first time in its 83-year history. First Michelin workers in Germany and Italy refused to work overtime during a strike at a French Michelin plant; later sympathy strikes and demonstrations in Britain and France aided the company's workers in Italy, who had occupied one plant and shut down four others. Faced with such tactics, Michelin could no longer shift production to other plants around the world, as it had in the past.

"Another ICF-coordinated effort in 1972 prevented Akzo, a Dutch-based chemical firm, from shutting down three plants in the Netherlands, West Germany and Belgium. Workers occupied the Dutch plant, and the next day workers at the German plant held a sympathy strike. After talks with the unions involved, Akzo cancelled the shutdowns 'in view of the strong reactions.'" 30/

The rank-and-file caucus of the USWA in Youngstown, Ohio raises the slogan: "Don't Cry About Imports, Fight For Every Job." A militant slogan, but how do we fight for every job? Such reforms as reducing military expenditures while channeling funds into human needs projects and higher taxes on corporate income from runaway shops will create some new jobs, or preserve some existing ones. But it is our major task to convince co-workers that we are not fighting for every job unless we are fighting for socialism.

The connections between imperialism and runaway shops, unemployment and lack of funds for human services must be clearly drawn. Communists should support and encourage the work of anti-imperialist research and educational organizations and persuade them to address the materials they produce specifically to such issues. We should search out and use good written, oral and visual material about imperialism. We should strive to break down the isolation between those doing "anti-imperialist" research, education and organizing on the one hand, and those in "trade union" or "community" work on the other.

#### Affirmative Action

The civil rights movement led to important victories for Blacks, other minorities and women. One of the most important was the establishment of affirmative action programs and quotas, which have proven to be the only effective means of putting bite into the notion of affirmative

action. The opening up of workplaces and schools to Black and other national minorities and women is a direct result of these struggles and programs. Over eight years of affirmative action, the percentage of Black medical students has increased from 2% to 8%, where it has levelled off. The medical schools predict that if quotas are removed by law that the percentages will drop back down again. The figures show that although some gains have been made, they are precarious, and require the bolstering of continued quotas.

For the vast majority of Black (or white) workers, however, medical school is not in their "career picture." Black workers have won few gains at all since affirmative action programs were instituted. Unemployment among Blacks, more than double that among whites, is higher now than at any time since World War II. Wage differentials between Black and white workers (and between men and women) are increasing. It should be clear to all progressive people that now, more than ever, we need to take up the fight for affirmative action and quotas.

The PSO supports quotas in hiring and upgrading across the board. For working people, however, there is a problem in trying to unite around a pro-quota position. When it comes to hiring or admittance to college or professional school, there is not much resistance in putting forward the interests of minorities who have historically been excluded. But the situation we find ourselves in now is that in a number of industries it is a time of layoffs, and the question of who gets the ax? No matter how coherently the historical argument is made, when the decision is between whether a white worker or a Black co-worker will lose their job, the issue is unavoidably divisive.

Full employment is unattainable under capitalism in the long run. Therefore, the question of who will get the job -- or keep them -- is always potentially divisive. Posed in this way, the contradiction between Black and white workers is unresolvable under capitalism. For this reason, support of quotas, pure and simple, is not enough

The PSO takes the position that the dual demands of quotas for oppressed minorities and full employment must always be linked together. Black and white workers must fight together for jobs for everyone. This can only be done if Black workers are represented in workplaces and in unions, and if their white co-workers fight for the rights of minorities to keep and upgrade their jobs. We should fight for affirmative action programs and demand that if, in a particular situation the fight against any layoffs cannot be won, that minority and women workers not be affected disproportionately. In specific situations, whether these demands can win mass support or not, the larger question of jobs for all, which leads ultimately to the necessity of socialism, must be raised.

We should not fall into the trap, however, of arguing for full employment, pure and simple -- thereby liquidating the central struggle against racism. Affirmative action is necessary now, to compensate for the past discrimination against minorities and women and to remove to some degree the material basis for the deep divisions within the working class which weaken it in its struggle for full employment and socialism.

#### Black Liberation and Socialist Revolution

"The Black masses and the masses of white working people in the U.S. have common interests and common objectives to struggle for. Therefore the Afro-American struggle is winning sympathy and support from increasing numbers of white working people and progressives in the U.S. The struggle of the Black people in the U.S. is bound to merge with the American workers movement, and this will eventually end the criminal rule of the U.S. monopoly capitalist class." 31/

The fusion of these two struggles is a key communist task, especially for us in this area which has such a large concentration of Black people and a mostly Black city government.

To "merge the struggle of Black people with the American workers movement" is the strategic aim -- the path to Black Liberation and Socialist Revolution -- the key to "ending the criminal rule of the U.S. monopoly class."32/

What is holding back this fusion? It is the two-edged sword of white chauvinism and bourgeois nationalism. The task for the working class revolutionary movement, then, is the breaking of the hold of these ideas over the masses of the workers. "While the struggle against white chauvinism and bourgeois nationalism stand in dialectical relationship to each other and must go hand in hand, it is the struggle against chauvinism that is primary and decisive."

"And," PWOc asserts, "It is the active struggle of the white workers against racism that will generate confidence in the power of the united proletariat on the part of Black workers."33/

Thus it is our firm roots in the multi-national working class that is the key to building this united front.

"The firmest foundation for this merger exists in the emergence of a multi-national proletariat that has concentrated large numbers of Black workers in basic industry. It is here in the factories, mines and mills where the most mature and favorable conditions exist for merging the national and class struggles. . . . Communists must make work among the Black proletariat, particularly in basic industry, the main priority." 34/

### Our Communist Work

But we do not have any "basic industry" in this area. Instead we have a large Black community with a long history of struggle against racism oppression and with much organizing experience. Thus, while we still must base ourselves primarily in the working class movement, the struggles of the Black community are also important communist work, because it furthers the fusion and the building of the united front between the two movements.

So we have two key areas of communist work at this time. One is work within the trade union movement -- building the united front between left and center and fusing the workers' and communist movements. The other is work within the struggles of the Black community as an aspect of building the united front between the multi-national working class and the Black Liberation struggle, and fusing the struggles of Black people with the struggles of the working class. In both these areas our work must be based on the working class and working class ideology.

Up until now PSO has implicitly taken the position that its cadre would be involved in the trade union movement. Although this informal position has had its value, it has outlived that value. We are now moving to a new level -- to understand the role that the Black Liberation movement (and the movements of other oppressed peoples) should play in the party-building process.

The struggle with the white radicals to get into trade union work and proletarianize themselves has been correct and should continue. Black radicals are likely to be the ones designated for work with the struggles of the Black community. Cadre in general should continue to be based in the trade unions.



## AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA

Agitation -- what is it? It is giving one or a few ideas to many, the masses, while propaganda is giving many ideas to a few (or even one).

Agitation is used to agitate around specifics, concrete issues, and is frequently used in fighting for reforms. It is also used for educational purposes, but the educational purposes are inherently short of socialism due to the single issue, narrowness of the materials.

Most of the work the PSO, as an organization and as individuals, has been involved in has been agitation. ACTION, the attempt to put out a prototype newspaper, columns within union newsletters and most if not all of the material around the Post strike are examples of this. So our experience in developing both propaganda and agitational material is still very limited.

Why is agitation used? (1) For reforms which will better the everyday life of working people. (2) To bring people together to realize and act off of their own strength. (3) To move from raising economic demands to political demands. (4) To use as a jumping off point to illuminate other more broad struggles showing the leadership of communists and communist ideas. And, (5) to point out the unity of class interests and the inherent differences of interests between the working class and the ruling class.

This method does not attack bourgeois ideology directly, but begins to promote proletarian ideology to the extent of understanding worker's power, though not to the extent of seizing power. It must be understood that it basically fights for reforms within the bourgeois framework, although other illuminations about bourgeois ideology occur. A current example will point this out. The essence of the agitation (to the masses, not the left) around the Post strike was that people's jobs were

taken away and that the union should be supported by the masses. The strike should win and the workers be reinstated. Of course this was broadened as to why Graham wanted them out -- profit -- but again the answer was to "lower her profit rate and hire them back." One very important lesson learned by the masses was that the courts and the bosses work hand-in-hand. Now a few workers saw beyond this -- whether because of leftist propagandizing or in spite of it -- understanding in a rudimentary way the relationship between workers international and monopoly capitalism and Graham's role in it.

And what is propaganda? Marx's Capital and the Communist Manifesto are both examples of propaganda. The PWOC has made extensive use of propaganda, including pamphlets such as "Racism and the Workers' Movement" and its newspaper, The Organizer. This kind of writing can be considered popular propaganda for workers. Much of what we consider scholarly and intellectual writing today was read by workers in the 19th and early 20th centuries. So we can see, in considering propaganda, time and place must be analyzed.

Today in the party-building period, we approach the task of developing both propaganda and agitation with a new seriousness. In the sixties and early seventies, the left tended to separate organizing into pro-socialist, anti-imperialist work on the one hand, and trade union, community organizing work on the other. Anti-imperialist agitation seldom had a class perspective and trade union-community work stuck to narrowly defined sets of issues. As some sixties radicals moved toward an understanding of the science of Marxism-Leninism, there developed a tendency to want to put a "message" into mass agitation. This sometimes merely led to narrowing the audience that would receive the agitation.

Our work as Communists must include both agitation and propaganda. An over-emphasis on agitation, that is struggles for reforms in the economic realm at workplaces

and in communities reflects workerist or economist errors. On the other hand, depending solely on propaganda reflects a left sectarian error. Plekhanov said, "A sect can be satisfied with propaganda in the narrow sense of the work; a political party never."

Greater emphasis must be placed on developing creative approaches to propaganda. This should include individualized propaganda for advanced contacts, continuing work with study groups, position papers, and possibly pamphlets.

An essential part of developing good propaganda is investigation of concrete conditions among the people that the propaganda is designed to reach. There are two ways of approaching this task. Either it can be on a particular industry about which we can generalize our experience and write a pamphlet which relates directly to work in that situation, or we can take a more specific approach dealing with specific workplaces in the metropolitan area.

Either way we should include the thoughts and feelings of people in the industry, in addition to our analysis. Such material should tie the short term demands of groups of workers with a projected long-term program.

FOOTNOTES

1. Figures from the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), Metropolitan Washington Employment -- Analysis and Prospects to 1980, p. 11.
2. Ibid., p. 18.
3. Ibid., p. 11.
4. Ibid., p. 11.
5. The Source Collective, Washington Area Workers -- A Beginning Analysis and Research Guide, 1977.
6. COG, Op. Cit., p. 9.
7. For a lucid discussion of the inevitability of the proletarianization of the service sector, we recommend Labor and Monopoly Capital, by Harry Braverman, Monthly Review Press, N.Y., 1975.
8. Based on the concepts presented in the paper "What is a Communist Party and Why Do We Need One" by the Socialist Union of Baltimore.
9. Selected Works of Mao TseTung, Vol. III, p. 40.
10. Mao TseTung, "Four Essays on Philosophy", p. 108.
11. SWMTT, Vol. II, p. 38, emphasis ours.
12. See "Trade Union Question -- A Communist Approach to Strategy, Tactics & Program" by the Philadelphia Workers Organizing Committee, as well as S.V.B., op. cit., for background analyses and ideas. The points presented here do not coincide in all respects with those papers.
13. Ibid.
14. Dimitrov, Georgi, "The United Front Against War and Facism, Report to the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, 1935." p. 7.

15. Ibid., p. 33.
16. Richmond, Al, A Long View From the Left -- Memoirs of an American Revolutionary; p. 227. See also Dimitrov, op. cit., p. 17.
17. Ibid., p. 233.
18. Ibid., p. 238.
19. For a theoretical discussion of the "labor aristocracy" see Lenin's "Imperialism and the Split in Socialism."
20. PWOC, op. cit., p. 40.
21. Dimitrov, Op. Cit., p. 16.
22. PWOC, "Racism and the Workers' Movement", p. 5.
23. See, for example, "The State of Black America, 1977" by the National Urban League, an extract of which was published in The Black Scholar, Sept. 1977.
24. Ibid, p. 11ff.
25. Ibid., p. 15.
26. See Robert Allen's Black Awakening in Capitalist America, Anchor, New York, 1969, for discussion of the development of a non-white "native administrative stratum" to administer imperialism's investments in the Black Community at home, and in the emerging non-white nations of the world.
27. Hitler, Adolf, Mein Kampf, p. 45.
28. PWOC, op. cit., p. 15f.
29. Hilferding, Rudolph, Das Finanzkapital, p. 295f, as noted in The Theory of Capitalist Development, by Paul M. Sweezy, p. 310.

Footnotes (cont'd)

30. Dollars and Sense, A Monthly Bulletin of Economic Affairs, Somerville, Mass., No. 33, January, 1978, p. 14.
31. Mao TseTung, "Statement on the Death of Martin Luther King", as quoted by PWOC (see note 32 below), p. 51.
32. PWOC, "Black Liberation Today, Against Dogmatism on the National Question", p. 51.
33. Ibid., p. 51.
34. Ibid., p. 51f.

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any of the concepts that we use in this trade union paper  
se ideas from the following two papers and we highly  
recommend them for a better understanding of assertions  
we make:

Trade Union Question -- A Communist Approach to  
Strategy, Tactics & Program by PWOC

What Is A Communist Party And Why Do We Need One? - by SUB

In addition, the following readings contributed to our  
understanding of particular questions and all are recommended:

Boyer & Morais, Labor's Untold Story (particularly chap-  
ter 10, pp. 290-328  
on the years 1935-  
1945 and the CIO)

William Z. Foster, American Trade  
Unionism (particularly the  
chapters on  
a. dual unionism  
b. the TUEL, pp. 136-154  
c. the TUUL, pp. 177-180  
d. Communists in trade  
unions, pp. 280-288)

Weinstein, James, The Grand Illusion (this is a pamphlet re-  
view of the book Them  
and Us and the covering  
up of the roll of com-  
munists in the T.U. mvmt.)

Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly  
Capital  
also the edition of Monthly Review  
devoted to criticisms of Braverman's book

Al Richmond, Long View From the Left (This is a critical his-  
tory by a former CP  
member.)

Bibliography (cont'd)

6. PWOC, Racism and The Worker's Movement and  
Black Liberation Today
7. Steve Zeluck, Toward Teacher Power (an IS pamphlet)
8. SOURCE Collective, Washington Area Workforce pamphlet
9. Council of Governments Metropolitan Washington  
Employment Statistics pamphlet 1975