

# crisis in the schools teachers & the community

TEACHERS ACCUSE  
DIRECTOR OF DECEIT;  
SCHOOL BROKEN OFF  
Parents Resorting to Legal  
Action to Open Buildings

Seeks Reprisals Against  
Ocean Hill Officials

Teachers Oppose Weak Measure  
On Locally Controlled Schools

BROWNSVILLE HAS  
SCHOOL AS USUAL

The school situation grew  
worse than ever today, with  
no talks scheduled and post-  
ions on all signs hardening  
as disputants dug in for a  
long, bitter fight.

SPLIT THREATENS  
TEACHERS' PARLEY

Teacher Strike Called

Teacher Union Demands

community control and the black movement  
the AFT at the crossroads  
the New York City teachers' strike  
the radical opposition in the UFT  
education for revolt

FOR  
TEACHERS  
Shanker Denies 'Smear'

CLASSES BEGUN,  
SCUFFLES OCCUR

UNION SECURITY



35¢

an IS publication  
International Socialists

# IS Program in Brief

**We stand for socialism: collective ownership and democratic control of the economy through workers' organizations, established by a revolution from below and aimed toward building a classless society. We stand for an internationalist policy, completely opposed to all forms of class exploitation and in solidarity with the struggles of all oppressed peoples.**

**We believe in socialism from below, not dispensation from above. Our orientation has nothing in common with the various attempts to permeate or reform the ruling classes of the world, or with the idea that socialism will be brought to the masses by an elite. Socialism can only be won and built by the working class and all other oppressed people, in revolutionary struggle.**

**We oppose capitalism as a system of class exploitation and as a source of racial and imperialist oppression. In the interests of private profit and corporate power, it presents itself in the United States as a liberal/conservative "welfare state," based on a permanent war economy. It promotes unemployment, poverty, and racism; it violently suppresses militant opposition. As an international system of imperialism, U.S. capitalism struggles to contain and absorb the colonial revolution, and continually deepens the underdevelopment of satellite economies.**

**U.S. is an activist organization which seeks to build a mass revolutionary movement in the United States, to train revolutionary socialists, and to develop socialist theory to advance that movement. We see ourselves, not as the revolutionary leadership, but as part of the process of developing it; we work toward the building of an American revolutionary socialist party—a party, based on the working class, which can provide the leadership necessary for the revolutionary seizure of state power by the working class.**

**We regard the working class, female and male, black and white, blue collar and white collar, as potentially the leading revolutionary force in society. We see great promise in the new militancy of the labor movement, including the emergence of black workers organizations.**

**We support uncompromising struggles by rank and file forces against racism and bureaucratism in the labor movement, and against the subordination of the workers' interests to the demands of the state. In places of work, we fight to build workers' political consciousness, and to link their movement with the struggles of oppressed peoples in this society and internationally. We regard the development of a new radical party based on rank and file workers' organizations as a giant step in the political independence of the working class and in the coordination of all insurgent forces.**

**Workers, organized as a class, can stop bourgeois society dead in its tracks. More importantly, they can organize society on a new basis, that of revolu-**

**tionary socialism. In the course of doing so, they will create new instruments of democratic power, just as the workers of Paris created the Commune in 1871, the workers of Russia the Soviets in 1905 and 1917, and the workers of Hungary the Workers' Councils in 1956. Our conception of socialism is bound up with such organizations, which embody workers' control of industry and the state.**

**We stand together with the struggles of black people and other oppressed minorities for liberation. We support armed self-defense, independent self-organization of the ghetto, and the right of self-determination for the black community. We look to a future coalition of black and white workers; however, blacks cannot allow their struggle today to be subordinated to the present level of consciousness of white workers.**

**We work to build the movement for women's liberation, both in society at large and within the radical movement. We support the formation of independent women's organizations, in which women will work out the organizational and programmatic forms of their struggles. Within these organizations, we push for an orientation towards organizing working class women.**

**Women's oppression is bound up with the exploitation of labor in all class societies; thus the struggle for women's liberation can only be won as part of a broader struggle for a socialist society. We do not counterpose women's participation in their own liberation movement to their participation in revolutionary socialist organizations. But women's liberation will not result automatically from socialist revolution; women must build their struggle now, and continue it after a revolution, if they are to be free under socialism. This struggle, like that of other oppressed peoples, will itself be one of the forces which will begin to shake the capitalist order.**

**The struggles of students and young people against imperialist wars, and against education and training designed to make them the agents or passive victims of oppression, likewise are shaking society. We participate in these struggles not only for their own sake, but also because they will help bring other sections of the population, including young workers, into motion.**

**We are part of the international movement against imperialist exploitation and aggression. We support popular revolution against American domination, and fight for the withdrawal of American troops from all foreign lands. In Vietnam, we favor the victory of the NLF over the imperialists—but we believe that the new regime will establish bureaucratic class rule, not a socialist society.**

**We believe that no existing regime can be called socialist. On a world scale, the "socialist" countries constitute a system of regimes and movements in different stages of development, but with a common ideology and social origin. In place of capitalism,**

**this system has achieved, and now aims at, not the abolition of class society, but a new type of class system.**

**In some areas (e.g. France and Indonesia), the official Communist parties—"Soviet" and "Chinese"—have held back mass energies, in a search for power through maneuvers at the top. Elsewhere, these movements have been able to organize immense popular energies in revolutionary opposition to the capitalist state; but the leadership of these movements does not organize the working class to seize power for itself, nor does it intend to establish a regime in which the masses themselves rule.**

**The revolutionary struggle expels capitalist imperialism and expropriates the native capitalist class, but the leadership aims at a social system in which that leadership constitutes a ruling class through its control of the state which owns the means of production, and through the repression of independent workers' organizations. Thus, where successful, these movements have placed in power, not the working class, but a self-perpetuating bureaucratic class.**

**Taking power in backward countries, these regimes have based their attempts to industrialize (successful or unsuccessful) on the crushing exploitation of workers and peasants. In all such cases, popular discontent reappears, but the struggle of the masses cannot be carried forward through the ruling party, but only in revolutionary opposition to it. This system is no less class-ridden, and in its fully developed form (as in the USSR) no less imperialist than capitalism.**

**In these countries we support and identify with the struggles—sometimes organized, more often not—of rank and file forces for their socialist birthright. We believe that socialism cannot be achieved in these countries without the overthrow of the ruling groups.**

**In all countries we advocate revolutionary struggles as sparks for the world revolution—it alone offers the solution to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment, which cannot be overcome in the framework of a single country. But this internationalist perspective itself depends on the mass struggles for liberation in individual countries, whether against capitalist or bureaucratic regimes. In the bureaucratic states as under capitalism, socialism means only a revolution in which the working class itself overthrows its exploiters and directly rules the state.**

**Basing its work on the ongoing worldwide struggles against oppression and the ideas of revolutionary Marxism, I.S. seeks to build a socialist movement which is both revolutionary and democratic, working class and internationalist: an international struggle in which the world's masses can fight for power and win a new world of peace, abundance, and freedom that will be the foundationstone of classless communist society.**

# Community Control and the Black Movement

David Friedman

The movement for community control of the schools is in a transitional stage. UFT leaders claim that the transition is toward a reign of terror against teachers. New Left radicals tend to envision a grass-roots upsurge for democratic control of all local institutions. Black revolutionaries speak of liberation of an oppressed colony. Left-sectarians warn of cooptation and diversion of the movement in a 'reformist' direction. Leaders of the community governing boards claim that all they want is the same authority and autonomy possessed by rural townships and suburban communities throughout America.

It is not surprising that the moderate conceptions of the community control leaders are credited by neither their reactionary opponents nor their radical supporters. In the context of America's racial crisis and the radicalization of youth, the educational system is a stabilizing institution which will not lightly be handed over by the ruling Establishment, even to moderate local leaders. Even in suburbia, 'community control' means control by the top stratum of the community. In the ghettos, rife with agitation, incubator of a growing movement, direction of the schools might quickly pass out of the hands of moderate governing boards and become a force for revolutionary change. This explains the mutual - though opposed - concern of radicals and reactionaries about a struggle whose leaders seem to be demanding so little.

There is another dimension to this complex situation. The urban school systems are a nexus at which masses of white teachers are involved with the black community in a hostile environment controlled by neither group. Teachers and students share a basic goal: effective teaching and learning. For the students (and their parents), an education is essential to future employment and individual development. For the teacher, self-respect and morale depend on the progress of his students. The tragedy of the school system is that teachers and students are stifled in the learning process. Idealistic young teachers become callous and cynical after a short period in the schools; ghetto students become apathetic, as a psychological defense in a situation where failure seems inevitable. Locked together in an impoverished institution, the black students are abused and the white teachers feel threatened. Teachers turn to their union for protection against 'extremists'. Black parents seek control over the teachers, whom they hold responsible for miseducating their children. This is the social context which has given rise to a three-cornered struggle over community control. This is why Albert Shanker has won the support of a majority of teachers in his campaign against the black community, while the city and state power structure plays both ends in opposition to both community control and teacher unionism.

## *Sources of hostility*

The community control movement is working class in the broad sense that most black people work for a living. However, the leadership is middle class, the action takes place in the atomized neighborhoods where people live rather than at their place of work, and the participants are not particularly conscious of themselves as 'workers' (if, indeed, they are workers -- no one knows very much about the social background of the people who have demonstrated at ghetto schools or helped keep them open during the strike). Looking at the teachers, we see a newly unionized group which is part of an entire sector of the population becoming 'proletarianized' under the changing work-conditions of modern capitalism. Just as black people comprise a special section of the working class (at the bottom), the teachers also are atypical in the sense that they are just entering the working class, as a group, from out of the ever-changing middle strata of the society.

This is important to an understanding of why the racial conflict in the American working class has broken out in sharpest form at the point of the school system, where two of the most dynamic sectors are concentrated in a complex relationship. We will now look a little more closely at this relationship, with particular concern for the objective and subjective sources of conflict between teachers and the black community.

Let us leave aside for the moment the 'subjective' sources of conflict, such as racial prejudice, and the blind political liberalism which causes teachers to misunderstand and therefore to fear and oppose the Black Power movement. Unfortunately, there are certain aspects of the educational system which create conflict regardless of the good will or momentary attitudes and mental states of the people caught in the system.

Chief among these is the hostile and authoritarian relationship between teachers and students, exacerbated by racism and cultural differences, and taking place within an impoverished and decaying institution. A full discussion of this relationship would take us too far afield, but two points can be made here. First we must be aware of the role of education in preparing and indoctrinating the general population for their place in the workforce. Attitudes of submission - mental and physical - are drilled into the child through the authoritarian (almost totalitarian) school routine, as well as the classroom instruction. This is a fundamental function of mass education, and will never be changed so long as the system is controlled by the employer-sector of the society, although modifications and minor victories are possible. Secondly, the very impoverishment of the schools forces teachers - even radical teachers - to restrict the freedom of their charges, mentally as well as physically. No one could do otherwise with a class of thirty-five children, in a situation where meaningful activities are lacking.

At the present time, this relationship must be regarded as an 'objective' factor, which will condition the behavior and attitudes of teachers, students and parents. Of course, a powerful coalition of teachers and community would modify the coercive and authoritarian role of teachers, in the process of struggle. We can make a comparison with workers in the steel industry, whose everyday work results in the production of war materials which are used against the Vietnamese people. Even a socialist movement with a base among steelworkers would be unable to substantially change this, short of challenging the ownership of industry. However, steelworkers could engage in political demonstrations and temporary work stoppages in opposition to the war. The point to be made here is that struggles go on within the limits set by objective conditions, until such time as the movement grows strong enough to burst those limits.

Teachers, of course, must be far more concerned with the product of their labor than industrial workers. Moreover, the 'product' in this case can play an independent role, as a valuable ally. The difference between teaching and most forms of labor shows itself in our attitude toward 'job security' for racist or incompetent teachers. Socialists have always been for defending and shielding less capable workers, because their welfare is our concern, rather than the employers' profits. For teachers, this position must be sharply modified, since the children's welfare is a primary consideration.

Radicals should not avoid becoming teachers on the ground that they are thereby placed in an authoritarian relationship to children. This may be valid as a personal reason, but politically (as a principled question, that is) it makes no more sense than refusing to become an industrial worker because your output strengthens American capitalism. The logic of this position is to become a hermit, or a parasite on the economy. On the contrary, only by being present within the productive processes in all sectors of the society can socialists spread the ideas which advance the struggle of the working class.

### *What is community control?*

Our starting point must be the movement as it exists today. We propose to make the strongest possible case for support of community control, but this cannot be done by glorifying the movement in its present stage or reading into it a radicalism that does not exist.

In New York City, the movement occurs in two forms.\* Three areas have been designated 'Experimental School Districts' and have elected governing boards with limited and ill-defined powers. These are Ocean Hill-Brownsville, Twin Bridges, and the I. S. 201 complex in Harlem. Elsewhere throughout the city, the movement is crystallized in local groups demanding power over their schools.

For the most part, there is nothing radical about the demands made by these groups. They want essentially the same powers that the Central Board now exercises (although they would settle for less), but they propose no sweeping changes in the nature of education or the organization of the schools. This is little consolation to top school administrators, many of whom would get the axe very quickly if their local community had hiring power. More than anything else, these groups want black (and Puerto Rican) administrators, sympathetic to community sentiment and the popular movement in the ghettos. Curriculum reform and an atmosphere conducive to the education of ghetto children is a part of the program, and one can hardly blame the movement for not spelling it all out in advance. Basically, community control as articulated by the current leaders means the right to place professional educators and administrators of their choice in charge of the schools.

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\* The new state decentralization bill will change much of this, specifically abolishing the existing local boards. It is too early to tell what effect this will have on the movement.

This hardly justifies the often hysterical fears of teachers that community 'extremists' will be constantly running around the schools, harassing teachers and issuing orders. The fact of the matter is, real control of the schools - day-to-day control by the parents or local residents - is not possible except with the involvement and cooperation of the people who inhabit the schools every day: the teachers, the students, and the (community-selected) administrators. In a sense, this is regrettable - one wishes that neighborhood groups could be more powerful - but it is a fact of life flowing from the manner in which our society is organized.

The composition of the local governing boards pretty well reflects the spectrum of opinion within the black community and is more moderate than one would guess from the rhetoric with which many white radicals discuss the movement. The boards are heterogeneous, ranging from local Democrats to solid indigenous militants. Heavily represented are careerist and opportunist types, like those found around the War on Poverty, and militant professional people like Rhody McCoy.

This hardly sounds like a formula for revolution or radical change. But these leaders are subject to a dynamic outside their control. The community which they (sincerely) want to represent grows impatient. The school system is not amenable to moderate reforms. The resources necessary to transform the schools, as well as power over local administration, can be won only in a militant and radical struggle against the political and economic Establishment. Relations with radical teachers (and ultimately with the majority of teachers) must be worked out on the basis of a coalition conception that is beyond the present moderate politics of the community control leadership. This means that even the limited goals of the current movement lead inexorably toward a radical approach that can unleash forces substantial enough to shake the control of the power structure,\* and this is why the movement in its present form should be supported as a transitional step toward a more viable struggle. There is, as always, an alternative to radicalization: the movement might simply die or succumb to cooptation. Support for community control should not include support for the tendencies within the movement which lead in this direction. For example, radicals should oppose the notion that 'teachers are the employees of the community', which is counterposed to the coalition approach.

Even the limited demands of the local groups, if granted, would create enormous waves in the institutionalized relationships surrounding the educational system. We have already noted the anticipated shake-up of administrative personnel. The UFT leadership is well aware of the problems that would be raised for their bureaucratic control of the teachers union under decentralized conditions. It is not rank-and-file teacher unionism that would suffer under decentralization, given a degree of teacher sympathy and cooperation with the community efforts. On the contrary, local units of the union, strengthened by the possession of independent collective bargaining responsibilities, would immensely democratize (and probably radicalize) the UFT. Citywide questions, such as salaries and pension plans, could be negotiated centrally between representatives of the UFT branches and the local governing boards; working conditions and local grievances, now mostly ignored by the union, would be negotiated between local boards, union branches, and independent organizations of students and parents. It would not take long for all sides to realize that their mutual needs call for a joint campaign to double and triple the funds allocated to the school system.

Within the schools, new concepts of education would flourish or at least have a chance to survive. (This is not to say that the local boards today are sufficiently innovative; so far they have not had much opportunity.) Radical ideas might be allowed to compete with the indoctrination which pervades the standard curriculum. Local boards and their administrators, though themselves politically liberal, would not have so much of a vested interest in using the schools for the ideological defense of the system. The desire to build racial pride among black and Puerto Rican children would encourage a link with the black movement, itself a hotbed of new ideas and ideologies. Here, too, we see why the Establishment resistance to community control has been so great.

It is possible, of course, that local boards will remain conservative and become unresponsive to the needs of their communities. A new bureaucracy might try to entrench itself. In this case, it would become necessary for community groups to depose their former representatives, a job which, while difficult, would be easier than deposing administrators selected by and responsible to a remote Central Board backed by the police power of the state and majority support in the white population. There is an analogy with wars of national liberation: once a nation frees itself from outside domination, it then becomes possible to eliminate indigenous despots and undesirables from government.

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\* One such force is the growing rebelliousness of high school students, black and white. This growing movement was triggered unintentionally by the more moderate struggles of the adult movement.

The present struggle, limited as it is, has gone far toward exposing the undemocratic nature of the society. In the ghettos, government is by police coercion, not by 'consent of the governed'. This has been exposed by Lindsay's use of police to enforce the strike settlement, arrived at without the consultation or agreement of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board. The 'community imperialism' exercised over the ghettos has never been so clear. The hostility of politicians to independent action by the oppressed, while paying lip service to their needs, has again been demonstrated. Even a struggle that does not win its demands is worthwhile if it educates masses of people about the nature of their oppressors. (Of course, struggles that lose can also teach a false lesson leading to apathy: the idea that people can never win without Help From Above. Thus we must be wary about glorifying struggle for the sake of struggle.)

In the period of the civil rights movement, radicals and decent-minded people did not sit on their rumps and grumble about 'reformism'. We supported that movement\* as a progressive step in the fight for a better way of life. So it is today with the movement for community control of the schools.

### *The potential of community control*

We have pointed out that the present movement must transcend itself in order to move forward. What is needed is a coalition of teachers and the community (in which the older students would constitute an independent force) -- stimulating the labor movement and the black movement in the direction of a national drive for decent education and a transformed society. Elsewhere in this pamphlet we discuss the teachers union movement, which is not nearly as bad as one might think judging by New York City.

The material basis for such a coalition is the decay of the school system in physical and human resources and the resulting dehumanization. The human basis lies in the ten thousand New York City teachers who - in active cooperation with parents - kept the schools open during the 1968 strike, and the thousands of others who stayed home during the strike but were against it. In terms of social origin, there is little difference between the teachers who struck and those who opposed the strike; youth is probably the main dividing line. Depending on events outside our control, and also on how well radical teachers do the job of convincing their colleagues, such a coalition as we propose is possible, at least in the foreseeable future.

The force inherent in such an alliance would be immense. The teachers are strong precisely where the community is weakest: in organization and in day-to-day involvement in the workings of the schools. The black community is strong numerically in all the urban centers (over one million in New York City) and provides a potential base for independent political action. Such a coalition could, for example, take over and run the schools for an indeterminate length of time, to back up strong demands. (Permanent seizure is impossible without a change in the social stratum holding state power -- that is, a revolution.)

In this context, local governing boards could involve both teachers and community in the control of school administration. Teacher rights would be guaranteed, but curbs would be placed on the behavior of prejudiced teachers. Negotiations would be no bed of roses, but we have never had a passive conception of working democracy.

Teachers and the community would maintain their independent organizations, outside the governing boards, so that neither constituency would be at the mercy of a majority held by the other on the board. Governing boards would serve as instruments of struggle, directed against the politicians and protected by the combined strength of the coalition partners. The boards would fight for adequate financing of the schools as well as administrative power, and would maintain close contact with the mass movements which they represent.

This conception goes far beyond the present movement for community control. We do not present this model as a utopia which will be handed to us on a silver platter. On the contrary, this form of community control can only be won by a movement of immense power and vision. Such a movement could not be limited to the schools, but would of necessity embrace every institution in the society and every oppressed and exploited group. In particular, large sections of the working class, black and white, would be involved. This model can be viewed as the projection of a revolutionary program onto one important arena. With such a program, we know in what direction to go. We know that community control can transcend itself, that this is not a dead-end road. We can demonstrate to those teachers who are prepared to listen - and this

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\* Our support did not prevent us from criticizing the shortcomings of the civil rights movement, such as middle class demands, reliance on liberal politicians, and the nonviolent strategy.

number can be expected to grow as the school system deteriorates - that the crisis of education is solvable, albeit only through a transformation of the entire society. With such a possibility before us, we need not succumb to cynicism or demoralization in the face of immediate setbacks and temporary impotence.

One more point needs to be made, and this deals with the basic purpose of mass public education in today's society. The men who make basic decisions of resource-allocation at city, state, regional, and national levels, see education as an integral part of the socio-economic system. The general level of education must produce people capable of fitting into the job market, at all levels. Apply this criterion to black people, who fill the unskilled jobs in the economy, and you see the underlying reason for rotten ghetto schools. More generally, you see that an increase in resource-allocation for the educational system appears as a luxury from the viewpoint of the decision-makers (except insofar as the level of technology rises, and increases the demand for a better educated workforce). In fact, too much education can be a positive danger if the society has no way of satisfying the aspirations that are raised by education. Remember that much of the momentum of the civil rights movement came from skilled and educated black people faced with a discriminatory job market. (The 'equal opportunity employment' campaign, which really has attained large proportions, is designed to absorb such people into the economy in a productive way. Of course, it affects only a small stratum of the black community.)

Following this logic, not only must the school system produce a workforce capable of meeting the needs of modern technology; it must also train children in discipline, regimentation, and intellectual docility. The school atmosphere duplicates the workplace environment, and this is no accident but rather a deep conditioning process. Teachers, in this analogy, are the foremen -- which is why it is so disturbing when teachers form unions and act like workers. Even the reactionary UFT strike had one beneficially disruptive feature that will aid in movement-building: the strike taught the students that classroom authority and the social sanctity of their teachers is artificial. 'If my teacher can break the law, why should I have to follow rules and regulations?'

It is clear that our conception of school control by teachers, parents and students would entirely change the function of education. The coalition that we project would press for better education regardless of the minimal needs of the economy, and if the better-educated students had higher aspirations, so much the worse for the social structure that could not satisfy those aspirations. There would be no need for classroom regimentation, for indoctrination and the barring of new ideas. This would indeed be 'education for revolt'.

Before leaving this section, we must deal with a question that is frequently raised by opponents of community control. 'How would you safeguard the rights of teachers?' In particular, recognizing that racist attitudes are common among teachers to one degree or another, would not community control mean that no teacher's job is secure?

In most jobs, we consider it justified for incompetent workers to be protected by their fellows. The employer is our enemy, we care nothing for his rate of profit or production, and the lackadaisical worker is our brother. In the schools, we care very much for the 'product', for this is the education of children. As teachers we wish to encourage competence in our colleagues, and discourage bad attitudes toward the students (which is not the same as favoring 'speedups' or overwork for teachers). Racial prejudices must be prevented from taking on substance through the actions of teachers. In cases where a teacher's attitude prevents a decent relationship with ghetto children, other teachers should favor his transfer, not for punitive purposes, but to relieve an intolerable situation. This does not mean condoning excesses, or the use of blanket racial charges as a method of terrorizing white teachers. Job security requires, as a minimum, the rights of due process before a governing board or hearing committee containing teachers as well as representatives of the community. In order for such a system to work, both sides must have the coalition attitude so that each case does not become an unsolvable barrier to further cooperation. This is not utopian, given a sophisticated radical consciousness among teachers and members of the black community. At the present time, with both groups so limited in their horizons, such cooperation does indeed appear to be impossible.

### ***Fighting racism***

The best way to attack the racism of white workers is by pointing out (in terms of their own experience) that it is detrimental to their self-interest. We have seen the potential advantages of coalition for teachers. They can also be made aware that continued conflict with the black community will weaken their union and

make it vulnerable to the real bosses, the city and state governments. For the sake of their own survival, teachers had better set aside their racial impulses and liberal politics. Such a course, based initially on self-interest, would in the long run significantly reduce racial prejudice in large numbers of individuals.

There are radicals who think that the most effective way to fight racism is by simply denouncing people. Presumably, if a group of white people is acting according to racial prejudices, their behavior can be changed by exposure. Perhaps, if the general social milieu prohibits such behavior. But this is not the case among teachers or any other sector of the white working class. Some teachers will even admit hostility toward blacks, and then justify it on grounds of self-defense. The appeal to self-interest, in terms and language sympathetic to the audience, is the only way to fight racism effectively; in the long run, it is the way that the working class attains revolutionary consciousness.

### *Critics from the 'Left': the threat of co-optation*

Our own view of the community control movement is far from uncritical. However there are organizations on the Left (the Progressive Labor Party is one) that oppose the movement and regard it as a diversion and a trap. Basically, the argument runs as follows:

Community control was initiated by the power structure as a sop to the black movement, and in order to co-opt the leadership. The concept is basically reformist, not analogous to 'Workers' control', and leads to local communities assuming the blame for the failure of education that is ostensibly under their control. Community control turns teacher against community and vice versa; it is divisive of the movement and the working class. As evidence, one can cite the fact that the Bundy Commission and the Ford Foundation, both representatives of the ruling class, support decentralization. The movement is counterposed to the necessary fight for more money, better facilities, more teachers, etc.

We can dismiss part of this argument as demagogic. The charge of 'reformism' begs the question, since revolutionaries have always supported and worked in reformist movements (e. g. the trade union movement). The decisive consideration is the potential of the movement, rather than its immediate stage. There is, moreover, no reason to think that the right for community control (even in its most limited form) must necessarily preclude or divert attention away from the parallel fight for more money, etc. Nor is the latter any less 'reformist' than the former.

It is true that community control bears little resemblance to the notion of 'workers' control'. Community control is sometimes discussed as a part of the socialist society that we hope to build. Certainly, community control of local institutions would be necessary, for real socialist democracy. Indeed, the notion of a society run by workers' councils and other cooperative bodies can be considered the ultimate extension of community control. At the same time, if one is to draw a parallel between the present movement and our aims under socialism, it is important to indicate the qualitative differences between the two conceptions.

Even if the local boards were given substantial powers, more than they are now asking for, they would still only represent their constituents in the sense that any locally elected body does in a bourgeois democracy. Periodic elections by an atomized constituency permits for only minimal control. Here we run up against the fact that the ghettos are not organized the way workers (including teachers) are organized -- and we are not speaking simply of trade unions, but more fundamentally of the way that the job itself brings workers together, day after day, for coordinated activity. Furthermore, the difference between local control 'in the context of collective working class control of the state and the means of production', and local control within the capitalist state, is precisely the difference between reform and revolution.

The question of cooptation is more serious, and deserves a complete reply. There is no question that the Bundy Commission and the city fathers hoped that their decentralization plan would serve as a sop to the ghetto movement, which has been a disruptive factor in the school system for several years (ever since the promise of school integration failed). The strategy was similar to an earlier plan adopted in New York City, when the Poverty Program was decentralized and a host of community poverty boards were set up. Fortunately, our opponents are far from omniscient, and a scheme that worked in one case (co-opting the indigenous leaders in the Poverty Program and separating them from their rank-and-file, as well as dividing the black and Puerto Rican communities), failed miserably in the school situation.

The Bundy Report, rather than appease the black community, raised its sights toward the goal of real power in the schools. This is true also of the money spent by the Ford Foundation in the Experimental Districts. Only a political primitive would argue that everything supported by our enemies must automatically be op-



posed by us. The implicit assumption (very conservative, in its respect for the ruling Establishment) is that our enemies are monolithic and never make mistakes. The Ford Foundation, in supporting decentralization, may have had something quite different from simple cooptation as their main goal. The most progressive sectors of American capitalism have begun to realize that racial turmoil could be reduced (or channelled into competition between black and white workers) and the economy given a boost, if skilled job training were available for black people. It is possible that the Ford Foundation saw its grants in this area as legitimate experimentation with improving the quality of ghetto education at relatively little cost. (This is consistent with our earlier remarks about the maintenance of ghetto education at low levels corresponding to the needs of the economy. The Ford Foundation simply disagrees with other ruling class institutions about the current needs of the economy and social system.)

When the Bundy Plan was first made public, a number of black organizations and white radical groups rallied to its support. That was a wrong response, for the Bundy plan did not give real power to the local communities -- only the appearance of power. For radicals and genuine militants, this was an opportunity to raise the cry for real control, as counterposed to the Bundy proposal. The Establishment made the mistake of promising a significant reform which it had no intention of delivering, and the movement proceeded to demand the fulfillment of the promise. Thus, the rhetoric of the politicians was exposed, and the issue converted from a worthless plan to a radical demand. This is the proper way to treat cooptive gestures by Establishment forces. Simple denunciation, as advocated by some sectarians on the Left, is not nearly so productive as demanding that the liberals live up to their own rhetoric.

Why has the school decentralization program, so far at least, had an effect opposite to that of the Poverty Program? The results reflect the differences in the institutions. The Poverty Program is a collection of artificial projects, totally dependent on government financing and subject to arbitrary change or cancellation. Such projects tend to isolate leaders from a mass base, and make them dependent on the projects and their government fund sources.

The school system, on the other hand, is far from artificial. The schools are an integral part of their communities, and absolutely necessary to the functioning of the social system. The schools bring together masses of people and force them into organized activity. Education is seen as a prime determinant of a person's success or failure in the society. The schools themselves are massive physical structures, involving high financial outlays for construction and maintenance. For all these reasons, control of the schools is far more meaningful than control of Poverty Program projects. As centers of struggle, the schools did not lend themselves to bureaucratic plans aimed at coopting the movement.

We should note that the city's decentralization plan succeeded in placing 'administrators' at the head of the black movement. Thus Rhody McCoy becomes a major public spokesman for the ghettos in New York City. But this resulted not so much from the diabolical planning of the Bundy Commission or the Ford Foundation, as from the all-but-total vacuum of leadership that now exists in the black movement. Aside from the Black Panthers, there is not a single radical membership organization in the ghettos in New York (leaving aside tiny sects), and the Panthers themselves are too sectarian to provide political leadership in the school struggle.

It bears repeating that the presence of moderates in leadership of a movement does not automatically signify cooptation. The real test is whether the movement operates as an independent force based on mass support. If the movement had passively accepted the Bundy plan, that would have meant cooptation.

### *Partial victories and co-optation*

The 'left' critics of community control have at least a germ of truth in their arguments. The movement might be defeated and demoralized if its moderate leaders fail to mobilize the full forces available (which, however, is not the same as being coopted). It is also possible for administrators like Rhody McCoy to make deals with the politicians, in order to retain their positions (to Do Good, of course). It is a weakness of the movement that the local boards have little control over their own administrators.

If we are to understand the problem of cooptation, we must view it in a somewhat more abstract setting. Every movement makes demands of government, including demands for control over various institutions, or aspects of their operation. If the movement is strong enough, it may force the state to grant such concessions.

Concessions are always designed to undercut militancy. People are told that they are 'given' reforms

which they have in fact wrested from the power structure by their own efforts. Concessions may be combined with reprisals against the leaders of the struggle. The combination of carrot and stick is used to re-enforce feelings of dependency and subordination to authority.

Movements based on liberal idealism usually succumb to such methods. Their militancy is like a fixed pie -- after a certain number of slices it is exhausted; the movement mills about in confusion, and the dynamic is lost. Often, after the movement is gone, the concessions are withdrawn (gradually, to be sure). Radicals, on the other hand, will emphasize the independent strategy that led to victory. When people learn this lesson, their militancy increases and their appetite is whetted for further victories.

Thus, the very same concessions may co-opt a movement, or spur it on to further independence and militancy, depending on the response of the leadership and the rank-and-file. The key factor is political consciousness; it is meaningless to try to classify reforms according to which are cooptive and which are radicalizing.

One form of concession, as we have seen, is the granting of legal powers to a community governing board. The board is not legally controllable by the ghetto movement that called it into being (which does not preclude social pressure and other forms of control).

The danger is that the movement will come to depend on the legal power, and neglect to build its independent strength. Such a course is all too easy, for the maintenance of voluntary organizations is a strain on human and financial resources. In a crisis like the recent strike, when the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board urgently needed the backing of a mass movement, there was no organized movement to help them. With the legal powers stripped from the board it is helpless, for it has become isolated from its base. Likewise, if local board members become unresponsive to community demands, the community has no effective way of disciplining its representatives.

The key is the maintenance of independent organization, so that legally-granted concessions do not transform the movement and channel it into forms determined by the state. That is why our program for community control involves independent community groups and an independent teacher group working in coalition, with the governing board as a vehicle. Aside from the question of cooptation, this idea distinguishes the 'movement approach' to community control from what we term the 'administrative approach'. We will discuss this distinction next, in examining more closely the shortcomings of the present movement.

### *Problems of the movement*

It is not enough to criticize community leaders for being too conservative (that sounds like radicalism for the sake of radicalism). We must show the inadequacy of the actions that flow from their political outlook. On the practical level it is sufficient to point to the events of the past year, where the public stance of the movement (as expressed by Rhody McCoy and other leaders) played into Shanker's hands (we refer to his demagogic use of the 'due process' issue), and their neglect of movement-building left the community governing boards with no organized mass base to defend them against UFT and state attack.

In discussing this movement, we must bear in mind that it is not monolithic and the established governing boards (which receive most of the publicity and set the tone of the movement) are not the only forces involved. Nonetheless, it is fair to characterize the prevailing approach as 'administration-oriented', rather than movement-oriented. We do not mean that local leaders sympathize with the administrative appointees of the Central Board. On the contrary, their solution is to replace them with administrators responsible to local boards.

The administrative approach runs approximately as follows: The main reason our children are not being educated is that the schools are being run by callous bureaucrats who are not concerned with the children. In particular, they do not understand how to teach black students, and they maintain an atmosphere uncondusive to the development of racial pride. We want to turn over the running of the schools to better administrators, more sympathetic to our children's needs. All we want is to be left alone to run our own schools. As for teachers, all we ask is that they accept the same relationship to us that they had to the Central Board and its administrators. We are the bosses, and they are our employees.

There are several things wrong with this approach. First is a tendency to neglect the political struggle for financial improvement of the school system -- i. e., for aid from the society outside the ghetto. This neglect is in no sense inherent in the movement (we have pointed out that the fight for more money runs parallel

to the fight for control), but there is a tendency among moderates to avoid fighting for more than one thing at a time. Perhaps the governing boards (and local groups that wish to become governing boards) feel that their administrative powers will be granted more easily if they 'come on soft' about the decrepit facilities in ghetto schools and the need for immense increases in school system budgeting. Whatever the reasons, community control leaders have not been sufficiently vocal in this area.

We should be clear about the relation between impoverishment and the attitudes of teachers and children. Under the present conditions, even the most idealistic young teachers tend to become cynical and uncaring about their jobs. They are overworked and given an impossible task: at the higher grade levels this includes teaching science, literature and other subjects to students who have not learned to read. There are not enough teachers, inadequate textbooks and supplies, too few classrooms. None of these ills can be cured by local administration, no matter how enlightened or sympathetic. A parallel can be drawn with the all-black school systems in the South, which are educational failures.

Another aspect of the 'administrative orientation' is neglect of the mass movement, and reliance on legal powers. Community governing boards, such as the one in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, are in a position to build strong organizations among parents. With such groups as a nucleus, widespread ghetto organization and a citywide political fight would be possible. Somehow, none of this was done in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, or in the other 'Experimental School Districts'. Our sympathy with the movement should not blind us to the fact that their demonstrations and other organized activities have been tragically weak. Only in keeping the district schools open did the governing boards display any strength, and this job was done by the teachers working in those schools. Throughout the city, parent organizations slowly developed as the strike continued, but for the most part, they collapsed after the strike.

A movement orientation would point toward a coalition with teachers, and include strategies whereby the governing boards could undercut Shanker's base of support. Instead of asserting that teachers are employees of the community (and, it is implied, should take off their hats to the new bosses), Rhody McCoy would have done well to point out the advantages for teachers in a less bureaucratic situation. Local boards have yet to come up with proposals giving teachers in their districts a 'better deal' than other teachers, a move that would go a long way toward forcing the UFT to negotiate with local leaders. (McCoy did come up with a 'due process' proposal, but only late in the strike, when it looked like capitulation to pressure.)

Of course, there has been nothing in the actions of the majority of teachers to encourage sympathy on the part of blacks. But the coalition strategy has nothing to do with sympathy -- it is a formula for survival, in the best interests of all parties. Furthermore, the ten thousand teachers who did cross the picket lines were surely a potential basis for coalition. The governing boards made no attempt to establish a new form of relationship with those teachers; jealous of their miniscule powers, they maintained the stance of a benevolent boss and ignored or overlooked the new possibilities that were open. This reflects the conservative attitude of people struggling over slices of a fixed pie, lacking a broader perspective aimed at enlarging the pie.

We have seen that the administrative approach is based on a militant, but relatively conservative, political outlook. Another important failing of the present movement also flowing from conservatism, is the attitude toward student action.

Following the strike settlement, there was a wave of strikes and demonstrations by high school students, protesting the added school time (45 minutes each day) and loss of vacations. They felt, quite rightly, that they were being put through an educationally useless work speedup, so that striking teachers could make up in overtime pay for money lost during the strike. (In addition to a lengthened school day, students had to put up with extra homework assignments. School was supposedly optional on vacation days, but some teachers deliberately scheduled exams on those days. This was particularly unfair to students whose schools had been open during the strike.)

The student upsurge was city-wide, not confined to black students, generally sympathetic to community control, and far more radical in tone than anything that the adults had done. Unfortunately, many adults who had fought against the strike could not relate to the student actions. Some of the community control leaders even urged students to call off their protest and go to school.

We are for a coalition of teachers, parents and students, one of whose main benefits will be the liberation of students from the coercion, intimidation, physical and intellectual conformity of the school atmosphere. To this end, all self-organization and independent activity by students is to be encouraged. Better education cannot be confined to classroom instruction, better texts, etc. The habit of independent thinking and self-reli-

ance cannot be handed down from Above, in the paternalistic manner of the local governing boards. The 'community' must itself be democratic, which includes the right of students to assert themselves in disagreement with their parents and community leaders. From the point of view of building a ghetto movement, such an attitude is essential. Here too, the community control leadership has failed to lead.

In summary, it is fair to say that:

A. The leadership is 'administration-oriented' rather than movement-oriented; overly dependent on their legally-granted powers; dependent on the mass media for access to their own people.

B. The leadership makes no effort to organize black parents, or any other kind of mass base. This is bad enough in the normal running of the schools, but it is a disaster when the local boards come under attack and have no organized base to defend them.

C. The leadership holds an 'educator's view of education', apparently oblivious to the potential for autonomous student activity, as an aspect of education and community struggle. Thus, the local boards have given little or no encouragement to student demonstrations, and certainly no direction.

D. The leadership has relied on liberal 'friends' in the Democratic and Republican parties, thus mirroring Shanker's policy of forming coalitions with elements of the power structure. In Shanker's case, the method may work, since his goals are reactionary (though the ultimate result may be the destruction of the UFT, which is not one of Shanker's goals). But no progressive movement can hope to attain its ends through such dependency.

### *The job of white radicals*

Despite our support, it is clear that we have a highly critical approach to community control in its present form. There are those who assert that the 'radical thing to do' is support the present movement without qualifications or criticism. Such people are totally incapable of really supporting the movement, for they will never build a base of strength among their own constituents. If one is to be successful in arguing for a coalition between blacks and whites, then one must speak to the fears and hesitations of the whites. We are not speaking of rabid racists, but of ordinary people who share the racism of the society, but whose actions are governed by other considerations as well.

We do not believe that the best interests of any popular movement are served by silence about its shortcomings, or uncritical acclaim of its leadership. We support community control in this spirit, and believe that this is the most effective way to build a movement.

# The AFT at the Crossroads: teacher unionism and community control

**Steve Zelnuck**

Seven years ago, the United Federation of Teachers won a collective bargaining victory that made its parent organization, the American Federation of Teachers, a significant force on the American educational scene. Today, the policies of this same United Federation of Teachers have precipitated a crisis in the AFT of such proportions that the existence of the organization is threatened. The current UFT strike over the issue of community control and last year's UFT strike, largely over the issue of the 'disruptive child', have led to a confrontation between the union and the entire black community which both sides now see as a struggle for survival.

How have such issues as these become the key to the survival of a trade union? To understand this, one must be aware of several unique aspects of teacher unionism.

The American Federation of Teachers is unquestionably the dominant voice of the teachers of urban America. Its chief competitor, the National Education Association (NEA), has become more militant (mostly in response to the militance of the AFT), but each collective bargaining election finds the NEA increasingly reduced to a rural and suburban base, and even that base is being hotly contested. Its numbers still exceed those of the AFT but the difference is qualitative: in losing the cities, the NEA has lost the center of social weight and power in modern society. Today the AFT, and not the NEA, is the key to the schools.

But at the same time that the AFT has been winning urban teachers, the cities themselves have been changing. In particular, the black urban population has grown enormously and the black movement has emerged as an aggressive force determined to win a measure of the power so long denied it. In this way, the growth of the AFT has won it new power but it has also placed the union at the vortex of the crisis of the American society. Every decision of the union has effects far beyond its membership or the 'industry' in which its members are employed.

Given this situation, the union must choose between two alternative strategies. It can enter into genuine and close cooperation with the insurgent forces of the ghetto around a wide range of issues, forging an alliance against the establishment whose interest in educational improvement or the welfare of the ghetto is minimal. Or it can form an unacknowledged bloc with the status quo and the educational bureaucracy against the ghetto community (and ultimately against the students). It may be said that the second alternative is reactionary and unthinkable, that it could lead ultimately to the destruction of the union. Reactionary and destructive, yes, but in the absence of a carefully elaborated alternative, hardly unthinkable. There are powerful forces in the AFT now, many of them quite unaware of the implications of their position, who by both action and inaction are driving the union in precisely this direction. The unity and strength of the AFT will be decided in the immediate future by the clarity and decisiveness with which it chooses between the two courses open to it.

## *Coalition*

If a bold and comprehensive alliance with the civil rights movement is essential to the survival of the AFT, it is equally the only road to significant educational change in the United States. Public education, especially of ghetto and working class children, has historically been starved for funds, and there is no reason to believe that this is about to change in any meaningful way. In fact, there are 'good' reasons for this social indifference. The American establishment sees education mainly as providing the skilled personnel necessary to maintain the economy; that is, the American educational system is an indirect subsidy to business. Inasmuch as the economy still needs pools of unskilled, menial labor, it is considered wasteful, if not actually dangerous, to try to educate everyone. In addition, the deep reservoir of racism in our society leads to the belief that such an attempt would be not only wasteful but futile.

The civil rights movement, by its own efforts, has already stimulated some very significant changes in education. But for all their significance, these changes have been at best token, paralleling the 'success' of anti-poverty programs. A coalition of civil rights forces, teachers and the trade union movement is needed if demand

if the demand for educational change is to be taken seriously.

Such a coalition is also needed by teachers in their daily work. Students, after all, are not commodities. Few people would think of blaming an auto worker for the wasteful or unsafe design of a car. But teachers are held responsible for their 'product'. The first person blamed for the obvious failure of our schools is the individual teacher. It is not hard to point out that teachers' responsibility is at best derivative and subordinate, that the failure lies with those who hold the reins of power, that teachers are only their front men, the instrument of their indifference, and that attacks on teachers, individually or collectively, even when justifiable, are scarcely able to effect any substantial change in the situation.

However, the teacher is so visible and so vulnerable, and the daily pressures are so intolerable, that such attacks are becoming the central concern of teachers in urban schools. Once again, the only way out is to redirect the resentment of the community toward the real culprits. This means that the union must not only face the facts of the monstrous conditions in the schools, but must take the lead in exposing them and placing responsibility for them where it belongs, with the real decision makers and wielders of power -- those who determine the allocation of resources in our society. It also means that the union must commit itself fully to the struggle for equality and not be content with tokenism -- convention resolutions, trips to the South and conferences on Negro History. (It should not be forgotten that the AFT did make one real act of commitment when it expelled many of its locals for refusing to integrate immediately after 1954.) Only such policies can be effective and successful in defending teachers against abuse and unwarranted attacks by a frustrated and resentful community.

Another important gain from such a coalition would be the realization of the demand for teacher power. The historically legitimate demand that teachers, and not the educational bureaucracy, control the schools (by means of election and recall of principals, the determination of curriculum, etc.) has never, given the unquestionable failure of the schools, been more pertinent than it is today. At the same time, it is today totally unrealizable, especially in the cities, without the consent and cooperation of the black community.

If effective education and practical democracy require that authority be wrested from the establishment-dominated city boards of education, the aim of 'teacher control of the schools', it must be obvious that the means to this end have to be modified to fit the new context of an erupting ghetto mobilizing to gain control over the institutions that dominate their lives. The movement for community control in the ghetto is aimed at taking power away from the boards of education, paralleling the aim of the teachers' movement. The two efforts are inseparable; neither can be won alone or at the expense of the other.

Abstractly, of course, community control of schools does not necessarily lead to educational progress. There are thousands of middle class schools with de facto community control without any positive educational consequences. Less abstractly, the extension of community control to urban schools entails obvious dangers. If the teachers' movement remains isolated from this development, it will be all too easy to focus on teachers as the core of the failure of the schools. Further, if the movement for community control fails to produce significant changes (as is likely in the absence of vast sums needed for schools and urban reconstruction), the most probable result will be demoralization, desperation, and cynicism.

But in action these dangers can be averted. Community control that is the product of mass activity and involvement, especially if it is won in cooperation with the teachers' movement, is quite different from the sort of control that is handed down (and strictly limited) by a beneficent bureaucracy. Such control contains the potential for the self-mobilization of teachers, students and community to bring about serious, constructive changes in the educational system.

Today, in the cities, to counterpose teacher power to community control is to sabotage both and to surrender a great opportunity to shift the center of power in the schools in the direction that the teachers' movement has long sought.

To all these urgent reasons for an alliance between the teachers union and the ghetto and working class community must be added the fact that recent years have seen a great increase in the number of black teachers in Northern urban schools -- one-third of the staff in Detroit and Chicago, three-quarters in the District of Columbia (New York City's 8% is anomalous) -- and that this trend is continuing. These figures, large as they are, understate the actual weight of black teachers in the AFT. The union is still, in most cities, actively opposed by the NEA and any significant defection of black teachers could easily destroy the union outside New York City.

For all these reasons, the AFT has been forced by historical circumstances to face the question of its rela-

tionship to the black movement, not as an abstract moral issue but as a matter of the life or death of the union. Given these pressures and needs, transcending those facing any other union in the country today, it is hardly surprising that the AFT is the first union to have developed a significant opposition on a national scale, one which has proposed union recognition of the ghetto's right to self-determination with all that implies for the schools and the union and which won 25% of the vote for its presidential candidate. The existence and growth of this caucus gives hope that the proposed course toward the community that has been discussed here will be adopted. If so, the teachers' union could begin to have the same healthy vanguard influence in society and in the labor movement that is shared by the teachers' unions of France and Japan.

### *The UFT*

If there are forces pressing the union to move in a more progressive, more democratic direction, there are also, unfortunately, powerful counter forces. The first of these is the current social and political climate. Teachers, even union teachers, are not immune to the current demand for 'order über alles' or to the unacknowledged racism endemic in our society. Nowhere does this problem, and the dangers implicit in it, appear more clearly than in the recent history of the single most important unit of the AFT, the 50,000-member United Federation of Teachers.

For many years the UFT was thought of as the 'left wing' of the AFT. The origins of its leadership in the Socialist and Liberal parties and its relatively democratic structure and operation gave it an air of progressiveness, personified by its former president, Charles Cogen. Even after the UFT failed to support the school boycotts of 1964 (a failure not due to any criticism of the boycott as a tactic or softened by the offering of any alternative), the black and liberal movements continued to see the UFT as fundamentally 'on our side'.

In the last fifteen months, this attitude has been completely shattered. The UFT's totally punitive approach to the 'disruptive child' in the strike of September 1967 and its adamant opposition to any meaningful community participation in the schools (hiding behind its legitimate demands for 'due process') have embittered relations between the union and those who should be, and once were, its closest allies. The breach has reached the point where both black and white teachers are ready to engage in strikebreaking on a scale that threatens the future of the union.

This crucial development in the UFT can be traced to two factors, the objective work conditions for teachers in ghetto schools and the subjective needs of the leadership of the UFT. The objective factor is all too well known. The complete lack of meaningful and relevant education for the poor of all races, combined with the increasing consciousness of blacks, have produced an explosive mixture that makes teaching, especially conventional teaching, a frustrating, demoralizing and at times even hazardous occupation. The role of leadership in such a foreboding situation can be all-important. It can organize and direct the frustration and indignation of the teachers at those who are responsible for the crisis of the schools. But to do so, the leadership must be prepared to offer an alternative to the status quo, one which poses the need for drastic educational changes, recognizes the necessity for a vast mobilization of forces to effect these changes and commits the teachers union to take the lead in beginning such a mobilization.

Without such an alternative, teachers will increasingly fall prey to reactionary notions. The destructive tendencies within the union will grow, pressing the union leadership and the schools farther to the right and leading to a debacle. This is what has occurred within the UFT. Unwilling to fight for new alternatives, the leadership capitulated to the growing destructive climate and by striking in September, set into motion a chain of events of which it is no longer the master.

The first overt step in the capitulation of the leadership was taken in the spring of 1967 when the UFT demanded the right of classroom teachers to expel the 'disruptive child'. No measure other than this was proposed by the union to deal with these children. Once the UFT adopted this demand, the fissures between the union and the community widened into a chasm. The demand was later dropped, but the damage had been done. The remaining ties between the union and local civil rights organizations were all but severed. (For ceremonial purposes, the UFT retains the services of Bayard Rustin.)

This was predictable and presumably was considered and weighed by the UFT leadership before adopting the demand. But to the surprise of the leadership, the black community went farther, for the first time making aggressive efforts to break the strike and gaining the support of a number of black and white teachers. Still more ominous, a sizable number of black teachers, in New York and across the country, quit the union.

Unfortunately, the leadership disregarded this warning signal. Instead of reconsidering its posture and strategy, \* the union plunged into an even more direct confrontation with the black movement six months later. Local black communities, dissatisfied with the Board of Education's performance, sought to assume some of the Board's authority (a transfer of authority that had been promised to the three experimental community governing boards by the Board of Education but never actually granted). None of these demands involved any diminution of union rights.

Instead of encouraging and associating itself with this democratic movement and thus being in a position to influence it and prevent its possible transformation into an anti-union movement, the UFT launched a bitter campaign in league with the Board of Education to block any effort at community control of schools. With this decision, the union's divorce from the civil rights movement was complete. The union was headed for a confrontation that could only end in the present strike.

### *Fact and fiction about the strike*

The current strike, reams of speeches to the contrary notwithstanding, is not over the issue of due process or teachers' rights. Here is some of the evidence:

1. After six years, the UFT's contract still contains no provision whatever controlling the involuntary transfer of teachers, a provision which is common in other school contracts. In New York City, involuntary transfers are governed solely by Board of Education rules. The UFT has always lived by these rules and permitted involuntary transfers on a mass scale without objection, much less active opposition. Even worse, the UFT has remained totally passive in the face of transfers and firings of hundreds of teachers for opposition to the war, support of community control, or attempts to teach in the manner proposed by Paul Goodman, Kozol, Kohl, and others.
2. The attempts of the local governing boards to transfer involuntarily were an issue solely between the Board of Education, which had been doing so all along, and the local boards, which had been promised that right. At no point did the actions of the local boards violate the union contract.
3. Since under the existing Board of Education rules, teachers may be transferred without charges being filed, with the consent of the Superintendent, the local board was acting in accord with existing rules in not filing charges originally.\*\*

Unquestionably the Board of Education rules cited are a gross and indefensible violation of due process and must be fought. But for six years the UFT leadership has accepted these rules with remarkable equanimity. Their sudden concern with due process (a concern that does not extend to the many teachers involuntarily transferred by the Board of Education) is, under the circumstances, less than convincing. In view of the bitter campaign the UFT leaders have waged against community control, it becomes clear that the due process issue is merely a dodge.

Those who still had doubts about the UFT's goals in the strike should have been convinced by an event just prior to the third resumption of the strike on October 11. Several labor leaders brought Shanker a proposed basis for settlement which had the tentative approval of the Board of Education and the local governing board. The main points were: 1. Recognition of agency shop for the UFT; 2. Restoration of the disputed 83 teachers to their teaching positions in the district; 3. Written guarantees of due process; 4. The UFT to publicly

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\* It is always difficult, but necessary, to consider the role of individual and subjective forces in social processes. Such considerations are important, especially in explaining the UFT's drift to the right during the past year. In the Spring of 1967 it became clear that the UFT would have to strike for a contract. At the same time, the leaders had serious doubts about the membership's response to a strike call. It was in this context that the explosive (and rallying) issue of the 'disruptive child' was raised. The issue was dropped before the strike was settled but there was open dissatisfaction in the ranks over the terms of the new contract; in fact, both secondary school vice-presidents urged a 'no' vote on sound grounds.

The widespread discontent continued to pose a grave problem for the leadership in the Spring 1968 election and this undoubtedly contributed to the decision to take a further step to the right. Seizing on tactical errors by some community leaders, the union launched a massive campaign against community control of the schools, in the name of 'due process' and the defense of teachers' rights.

\*\* Documented details of points 2 and 3 can be found in the brochure 'The Burden of Blame', issued by the New York Civil Liberties Union.



recognize and support community control and decentralization; 5. The UFT to join the governing board in demanding funds from the Board of Education to assure the effectiveness of the experimental districts as well as for general educational purposes; and 6. The details of the previous points to be negotiated between the UFT and the local governing boards. The UFT rejected this proposal.

### *A look at the record*

The UFT is on record as favoring decentralization. That record is purely ceremonial. Its actions have included deliberate sabotage of the experimental districts, an unparalleled lobbying effort, deals with anti-labor forces, and ultimately the strike.

From the inception of the community control program the UFT has collaborated with the Board of Education to undermine and sabotage the program. The UFT made no protest when the Board of Education refused to grant the local boards any real rights or powers. The UFT was silent when the experimental districts were short-changed in supplies and staff. The UFT participated in the Board of Education-inspired attacks on the experimental districts on the grounds of 'chaos' and 'racism' at I. S. 201. The UFT tried to negotiate a special agreement last Spring which would have encouraged experienced teachers to leave the experimental districts. One result of this campaign, by the way, is that by the Spring of 1968, despite public appeals by David Spencer, the chairman of the local governing board, for teachers to stay in the UFT, less than one-fourth of the staff at I. S. 201 were union members.

Politics has its own logic of development. As the union moved constantly to the right, it was thrown into closer and closer collaboration with forces it had always opposed in the past. The UFT joined the city-wide supervisors association, the spokesman of the educational bureaucracy, in a court action to bar the introduction of more black and Puerto Rican principals in the schools (five out of 900 principals in New York City are black). A few weeks later, the union, looking for support in its effort to prevent passage of any significant decentralization bill, found it among the same state legislators who were responsible for the anti-strike, anti-labor Taylor Law. The UFT not only formed a bloc with them and won the first round in its fight to prevent community control, it paid its debt by officially extending electoral support to them.

None of these efforts gained a definitive victory over community control. The confrontation really began when the Ocean Hill-Brownsville governing board tried to transfer the disputed teachers (despite persistent stories in the New York Times, no one was fired), and it began on this issue of 'due process'. It is tragic that the local board should have used the question of teacher transfer as the focus of its struggle with the Board of Education. But given the UFT's position on community control, even prior to the strike, it is not surprising that the weakest aspect of community control - the notion that the ills of education can be attacked through 'teacher inadequacy' - should have come to the fore. An implacably hostile UFT was hardly in a position to help correct the sometimes erratic course the ill-defined movement for black self-determination has traveled. In this way an historic opportunity to pose to the black movement a set of demands which could unite all those seriously interested in better schools and a better society was destroyed by the parochial, intellectually provincial, and politically bankrupt leadership of the UFT. (Of course the UFT is not the sole example of this provincialism; witness the decision of the UAW leadership to cease its efforts to register white auto workers for fear they would vote for Wallace.)

At this writing, with the third strike still on, it remains to be seen if the UFT can compel the abandonment of the community control program, its real - and at last, publicly admitted - goal in striking. Given the political climate and the relative disorganization of the black movement, the union may well win, possibly with the eager help of those same anti-labor, reactionary legislators whose aid they have had before. But in winning, the union will take on itself the blame for the death of community control. In winning, the union will be blamed for the inevitable increase in racism and decrease in education in the schools. In winning, the union will have contributed heavily to the black-white polarization that is taking place in this country, with all that portends.

The UFT has also placed a powerful weapon in the hands of its enemies. Many leaders of the establishment have favored decentralization for their own reasons, as a pacifier to an aroused black community (a concession which may have gotten 'out of hand' once the black people seized hold of it) and secondarily as a way of weakening the union, a tactic which the union could outflank only by a bloc with the community. If decentralization is killed, the establishment can put the blame on the union. If, on the other hand, some significant decentralization is achieved, the union will be faced with hostile, and now anti-union, local boards as well as the still-powerful Board of Education.

### ***The AFT***

The situation in New York is not unique. The same issues are bound to arise in other cities. However, the large numbers of black teachers in urban locals outside New York will provide considerable resistance to any efforts to adopt the UFT approach. In the District of Columbia the union has actively supported community control and even sees the movement as an aid to teacher defense and authority.

The near state-of-war between the UFT and the black community even before the strike had its effect on the August convention of the AFT. Community control became the single most prominent issue of the convention. But though the delegates were unhappy, they were also uncertain and hesitant. As a result, a compromise resolution was passed which is not likely to settle anything.

Now the issue must be faced squarely. If the AFT is to move forward or even maintain its current strength, it must act clearly to recognize and welcome community control as a blow at establishment control of the schools and a step toward better schools and a greater teacher voice in the schools. The union must affirm its natural alliance with the civil rights movement and commit itself to consultations on all issues of vital concern to both movements. In particular, the AFT should adopt a policy of consultation with the community in drawing up contract demands and in planning joint campaigns and united actions. In line with this new commitment, the AFT should stop temporizing with the AFL-CIO and demand that the Federation launch a real campaign against racism within and without its ranks.

This is a choice point for the teachers union. One path leads toward a new alliance and a unique role in American education and the American labor movement. The other, the path of conventional wisdom, and 'unionism-as-usual', leads only to bitter defensive struggle, fragmentation, and the dissipation of the store of ideals joined to power that is implicit in the union of teachers.

# Ocean Hill-Brownsville vs. the UFT

The following article first appeared as a pamphlet by the New York Civil Liberties Union. It contains an accurate account of the events leading up to the 1968 UFT strike, and a perceptive analysis of the goals and policies of the disputants. We have reproduced the document because of its clear and honest portrayal of the facts. Nonetheless, we find serious deficiencies in the NYCLU report, primarily due to the limited perspective from which it views the events.

The article quite rightly points out that 'the chaos was not a result of local community control', but on the contrary, 'resulted from efforts to undermine community control of the schools.' The conclusions are correct, the case is meticulously documented, but somehow something is missing.

What is missing from the NYCLU account is an analysis of the deeper causes of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville dispute, the major social forces and political tendencies operating, and the important divisions within the ranks of the contestants. Consequently, the road toward a real and lasting solution of the school crisis is, quite simply, beyond the scope of the NYCLU article -- and this is regrettable because of the mounting pressures for reactionary 'solutions'.

A. The article points out that, 'although the Planning Council was asking for effective community control, it was by no means demanding complete independence. Indeed it was merely seeking powers already possessed by every suburban or rural township in New York State.' From the point of view of an attorney trying to establish the reasonableness of his client, this is certainly a good argument. In the context of the needs of the black movement and the condition of the ghettos, it shows the inadequacy of the present movement for community control, except as a step in a certain direction.

B. 'The role of the UFT' is discussed as if the teachers union were a monolith. Were this the case, there would indeed be little hope for a progressive resolution of the conflict. In fact, the UFT is deeply divided and contains a strong opposition party, the New Coalition (described elsewhere in this pamphlet), which stands opposed to the strike and for a militant union allied with parents and students against the central Board of Education. An entire section of the NYCLU article deals with 'The Future', yet the main progressive force inside the teachers union is left unmentioned.

C. The NYCLU pamphlet is addressed to the general public. In all fairness, we cannot expect them to deal with questions of purely internal concern to the UFT. But the closing plea for 'a massive act of good faith on the part of all parties to the dispute', might carry more weight with teachers and their sympathizers if the NYCLU pointed out that the UFT leadership has pursued its opposition to community control in a fanatically self-destructive manner. Teachers who support Shanker out of fear for their 'job security' might be interested to learn that their union supported for re-election 70 out of 93 State Assemblymen who voted for the Taylor Law (outlawing strikes of public employees), and opposed 29 out of 53 who voted against the Taylor Law -- because it was more important to elect legislators opposed to decentralization.

Pro-Shanker teachers, and the public as well, might be enlightened to learn that the UFT leadership did virtually nothing last Spring, when some 2800 non-tenure teachers were 'excessed' out of their jobs because Mayor Lindsey cut \$140 million from the education budget. Class sizes were increased and services cut. Surely this massive blow to education and job security deserved a serious response: massive demonstrations by teachers, parents and students -- perhaps a combination strike and boycott.

The NYCLU pamphlet makes no such points, and the omissions seem to flow from a traditional liberal conception of the problem in the schools. There is no underlying conflict of interests (at least none worthy of mention in their pamphlet), merely an escalating series of acts of 'bad faith' and hostility; one need not aim for a teacher-parent-student alliance against the educational bureaucracy and fund-allocators. Indeed, the pamphlet closes with an appeal to the central Board of Education to take steps (support for 'effective community control', and 'due process' for teachers) which, as is clear from the NYCLU pamphlet itself, the Board has no intention whatever of taking.

In our view, there is a basic source of conflict in the school system -- between those who try to teach and learn in the schools, and those who presently control them. All other conflicts, such as the hostilities between white teachers and black communities, are avoidable, indeed run counter to the main needs of teachers, students and parents. The tragedy of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville strike and UFT policies is that they have exacerbated the unnecessary conflicts and increased racial hostilities, thereby driving a wedge between all the victims of a decaying school system.

# **Report on Ocean Hill-Brownsville**

## **New York Civil Liberties Union**

Reflect how you are to govern a people who think they ought to be free, and think they are not. Your scheme yields no revenue; it yields nothing but discontent, disorder, disobedience; and such is the state of America that, after wading up to your eyes in blood, you could only end just where you began. . .

Edmund Burke, speaking in the House of Commons, April 19, 1774

The current school dispute in New York City has yielded no revenue; it has yielded nothing but discontent, disorder, disobedience. It has been a dispute with no heroes, and many villains.

### I. Summary of Conclusions

The New York Civil Liberties Union supports school decentralization as a means of giving ghetto communities equal access to the process of making decisions vitally affecting the education of their children. We are also deeply committed to due process of law and academic freedom. We do not find any inconsistency in our support for decentralization and our commitment to due process and academic freedom. Indeed, we find the charge that existing standards of due process are seriously threatened by community control unfounded, both in theory and in fact.

The New York Civil Liberties Union is issuing this statement at this time because we believe that it is crucial to set the record straight regarding the causes of the chaos in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. Our examination of the record has persuaded us that the chaos was not a result of local community control. On the contrary, we are persuaded that the chaos resulted from efforts to undermine local community control of the schools.

Specifically, our research leads us to the following basic conclusions:

1. That from the beginning, the central Board of Education attempted to scuttle the experiment in Ocean Hill Brownsville by consistently refusing to define the authority of the Local Governing Board;
2. That the United Federation of Teachers has used 'due process' as a smokescreen to obscure its real goal, which is to discredit decentralization and sabotage community control;
3. That there are serious shortcomings in existing Board of Education standards of due process, which have long permeated the entire school system; and that to the degree that the Ocean Hill-Brownsville violated due process, it did so only by following normal standards and procedures of the Board of Education;
4. That the major burden of blame for the chaos in Ocean Hill-Brownsville must fall on the central Board of Education and, lamentably, the United Federation of Teachers.

These conclusions are entirely supported by public documents that have been generally available but largely ignored or distorted. These include: the Niemeyer Commission's Report to the Board of Education; the Report and Recommendations of Special Trial Examiner Francis E. Rivers after the administrative hearing of charges brought by Rhody McCoy against ten Ocean Hill-Brownsville teachers; a special pamphlet on decentralization published by the United Federation of Teachers; the contract between the UFT and the central Board; and the official by-laws of the Board of Education.

### II. The Role of the Board of Education

Ironically, the demand for decentralization or, more properly, community control of the schools began with the failure of the central Board to effectively implement integration.

In explaining their failure, Board of Education administrators often said that they could not and would not

'tell the principals how to run their schools'. Integration failed at least partly because it was resisted by many principals, and because the system was already administratively decentralized to the point where recalcitrant principals were not forced to comply with Board policy on integration.

The growing sense of betrayal among ghetto leaders who had been repeatedly promised integrated schools came to a head during the I. S. 201 controversy. Intermediate schools, embracing grades five or six through eight, were specifically designed to further integration by getting children out of elementary schools a year or two earlier and into intermediate schools which would draw their students from a wider community to produce a greater racial mixture. To do this, the intermediate schools were supposed to have been built in areas that bordered on both black and white communities, and built to accommodate large numbers of children.

I. S. 201 fulfilled neither condition. It was built in the middle of Harlem and its capacity was no larger than a normal junior high school. As a United Federation of Teachers pamphlet published early in 1968 said:

Having been promised by the Board of Education that the school would be integrated, parents of children there soon found they had been betrayed, and that the school would remain segregated. Mounting frustration coupled with the increasingly obvious fact that children were not learning soon led to a translation of the original demand for integration into one for 'local control'...

Disenchanted parents decided that since they were once again stuck with a segregated school, they might at least run it themselves. Thus was born the movement for community control of black schools. It is crucial to remember that integration was not abandoned by black parents but by the Board of Education, which consistently failed to deliver on the promise of integrated schools. It is also crucial to remember that the demand for community control was a direct response by ghetto residents to the lack of access to decision-making processes that vitally affected the lives of their children. In that respect, 'community control' came to symbolize the struggle for democratic power just as 'no taxation without representation' symbolized a similar struggle by the founders of the American republic.

In the wake of the disorders that followed, the Board of Education, with financial assistance from the Ford Foundation, established I. S. 201 as part of a somewhat autonomous experimental school district in Harlem. At the same time, two additional 'somewhat autonomous' experimental districts were launched, one in lower Manhattan and the other in Brooklyn in an area known as Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

From the start, no one knew what 'somewhat autonomous' meant. Certainly the Board never said. For whatever reason, the Board simply never defined the powers of the local governing boards of the experimental districts.

According to the Niemeyer Report, a broad spectrum of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville community began to meet in February 1967 to plan 'for some means to participate more directly in school affairs'. For five months, the group continued to meet, was in contact with the Mayor's office and held exploratory discussions with the Board of Education's administrative staff.

In early July 1967, the Ford Foundation gave the local planning group \$44,000 for the specific purpose of completing the planning phase of the experiment according to a 26-day timetable.

On July 29, 1967, at the end of the 26 days, the Planning Council produced a written set of proposals which was submitted to the Board of Education in August. These proposals clearly defined specific powers, responsibilities, and functions of the Local Governing Board. Among other things, the proposals provided that the Local Governing Board would be directly responsible and answerable to the New York City Superintendent of Schools and the State Commissioner of Education.

Thus it is clear that, although the Planning Council was asking for effective community control, it was by no means demanding complete independence. Indeed it was merely seeking powers already possessed by every suburban or rural township in New York State.

The Planning Council's proposals also included the following provision:

The (local) Board shall make provisions for periodic evaluation of the total program. Such evaluation will include the project administrator, principals, teachers, community workers, etc.

This is not to be construed as meaning the (local) Board will do the evaluating. Existing Board of Education procedures for evaluating teachers will remain intact.

and substituting for those procedures arbitrary standards of its own. Indeed, at this point the Planning Council did not see any conflict between existing standards of due process and effective community control. But as events would soon make clear, the Board of Education had little intention of going through with a genuine experiment in community control.

The first indication of this came when the Planning Council attempted to elect parent representatives to the Local Governing Board. According to a recent study of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville dispute, the Planning Council needed the names and addresses of students in order to register the parents who were eligible to vote. The Planning Council asked the Board of Education for help. But the Board refused:

The Board told them the community groups could get the necessary names and addresses only by hiring two Board of Education secretaries to go into the files. When the community leaders agreed to do this they were informed that the two secretaries had gone on vacation and that no one else was available. The Ocean Hill leaders were dismayed, but they got sympathetic teachers to canvass students for their addresses. Then, by going from door to door, they finally got 2000 parents registered by August.

Although this patchwork approach produced several unorthodox practices in the election which followed, the Niemeyer Report concluded that 'no charges were made or misdeeds observed' and that 'there was no evidence of coercion during the nominating process or during the election period itself.'

By August 1967 the Local Governing Board had been elected and, in addition, Rhody McCoy, an acting principal with 17 years of experience in the New York City School system, had been selected as the Project Administrator.

As the opening of school approached, the Board of Education had still not acted on the Planning Council's proposed delineation of the specific powers, responsibilities and functions of the Local Board. As September grew closer, no one yet knew who was going to run the schools, who had the power to do what, and exactly what the content of the experiment was supposed to be. Despite repeated urgings by the Local Governing Board that it simply could not operate - much less conduct a valid experiment - unless it knew what its powers and responsibilities were, the central Board of Education consistently refused to define those powers. In fact, according to the Niemeyer Report, 'both parties [were] still awaiting the specific delineation of powers and authority to be granted' as of July 30, 1968, when the Niemeyer Commission concluded its work.

Apparently, once the Board of Education understood that what Ocean Hill-Brownsville really wanted was an experiment in genuine community control, it backed off even before it had begun. Almost immediately, the Board began to talk about community involvement as opposed to community control. And then, in January 1968, more than five months after the Planning Council had submitted its proposals, and four months after the 'experiment' had 'begun', the central Board suggested its own guidelines. These guidelines completely emasculated the experiment in community control by stripping the Local Governing Board of virtually all of its substantive powers. Moreover, it left blurry and vague the lines of authority between the Local Board and the central Board. The Local Board met with the central Board and again asked for more specific delineation of authority and for the restoration of significant powers. But the central Board refused to act.

Thus as the school year passed its mid-point, it became clear that the Board of Education had, in effect, scuttled the experiment. It had refused to delegate significant powers and it had refused to specifically define administrative authority. It is an abiding mystery how an experiment in community control is supposed to proceed when no control is given and no authority is defined.

As the Niemeyer Report noted, the ambiguity about operational powers raised the critical question of who has authority to run the schools. It is a question the Board of Education has never answered.

Vacuum created by the absence of clearly defined lines of authority are usually filled by individual discretion, arbitrary action and administrative abuse. Only chaos can then result, as it has in Ocean Hill-Brownsville. The burden of blame for that chaos must fall on the Board of Education for leaving lines of authority undrawn and governing power undefined. If the central Board deliberately set out to discredit decentralization by insuring chaos, it could not have done so more effectively. It freely predicted that decentralization would be chaotic and by its actions it made certain that its predictions came true.

### III. The Role of the United Federation of Teachers

In the beginning, teachers were involved cooperatively with the Planning Council. At the time of the Ford

grant, teachers were participants in the planning of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville experiment, and according to a statement by the teachers quoted in the Niemeyer Report, they were quite happy with the Planning Council.

At some point in September 1967, the teacher representatives began to complain that they had been bypassed in the planning stage and no one was listening to them. At first, the teachers' annoyance seemed to be directed primarily at the Ford Foundation and the central Board of Education for having initiated the planning phase in early July when most teachers would have left for summer vacation. Soon, however, the focus of teacher complaints was the Planning Council itself for having 'begun expanding on the plan without our presence'. As disagreements grew between the teachers and the Planning Council, open, bitter and hostile exchanges apparently took place. In the context of previous grievances between the teachers and the community, it did not take much to develop the disagreements into hostile mistrust on the one side and mounting fear on the other.

On September 2, 1967, the new Local Governing Board held its third meeting and appointed five new principals for their schools.

The appointments were made necessary when five incumbent principals left the district at the beginning of the experiment. Although the five new principals all had state certification, they were not chosen from the approved 'waiting list'. As Richard Karp put it:

What irked (the teachers), and what frightened a large number of union members, was the fact that the principals chosen by the community were not on the approved Civil Service list. No one denied the merit of the elected principals, but the sight of educators chosen with no regard for bureaucratic procedures seemed to strike symbolically at every teacher's job security. . .

The next week, the UFT called a city-wide strike. Although the union claimed that the strike was designed to extract city-wide pay increases and smaller classes, the Local Governing Board perceived the strike as a show of power aimed against Ocean Hill-Brownsville and specifically in reaction to its hiring of the five principals. The UFT asked the Local Governing Board to support the strike, but was refused. At this point, the teacher representatives resigned from the local Board, never to return. It was this incident that marked the beginning of the escalation of rhetoric between the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Board and the UFT, and exposed the deep fears and hostility that existed between the white, middle class educational establishment and the black community. The community began to accuse the teachers of scuttling the experiment, and the teachers, having resigned from the Local Governing Board, began to talk about black extremists and black racism.

Given the enormous social and psychological pressures inherent in the situation and given also the Board of Education's refusal to clearly define the powers of the Local Governing Board, it is difficult to sort out the equities in the dispute between the teachers and the Local Board up to the September 1967 strike.

It is enough for the purposes of this report to note that at some point in late September 1967, the UFT grew very fearful of community control and determined to block it, discredit it, and if need be, defeat it.

In the months that followed, the UFT began to fan the flames of racial fears as it increasingly harped on 'extremism', 'the militants' and 'black power'. This much is a matter of public record. The UFT was soon joined by the Council of Supervisory Associations, which sued to remove the five principals appointed in September, and which encouraged its members to abandon the experiment. To be sure, on November 1, 1967, all eighteen assistant principals left Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

Then, in the December 20, 1967 issue of the United Teacher, a periodical publication of the UFT, it was announced in an article on Ocean Hill-Brownsville that:

The UFT has been negotiating with the (central) Board of Education for a transfer plan which will enable teachers to leave, although the union has encouraged them not to leave their schools. . . The transfer plan being settled upon would give teachers the option of transferring at two points during each school year for as long as the experiment continues.

It must be pointed out that transfers are not ordinarily available to teachers on such an easy basis. The procedures and regulations are complicated and require twelve pages of the contract between the UFT and the Board to explain. In general, the normal contractual procedures are designed to discourage teachers from fleeing ghetto schools. According to the Board of Education, 'the present contract with the UFT provides that teachers must serve five years on regular appointment before being eligible for transfer; after

this, their names are listed in order of seniority.' There are other limits as well, including an absolute prohibition against transfers at teacher initiative of more than five per cent of the teachers at any one school during any one year.

Yet, in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, the UFT sought to ignore all these procedures and gained the right for unlimited numbers of teachers to transfer out at will for the duration of the experiment, to abandon the experiment for as long as it continued and then to be free to return, presumably when 'normal' conditions had been reinstated.

Apparently, the UFT was not very concerned about the disastrous consequences to the experiment that might occur if large numbers of teachers were allowed to leave. Significant numbers of teachers did leave, sometimes in groups large enough to cause serious shortages.

Months later, when the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Local Governing Board attempted to exercise a similar unilateral right of transfer, the UFT cried foul. Yet quite apart from the issues of due process raised by the manner in which the Local Governing Board attempted to transfer 19 teachers and administrators, the UFT appeared to take a position of startling inconsistency. On the one hand, the UFT claimed that due to special conditions in Ocean Hill-Brownsville, teachers should be allowed to bypass all the contractual procedures and transfer out at will. On the other hand, when the Local Governing Board made the same claim (that due to the special conditions of the experiment, it should be allowed to transfer teachers to another district), the UFT expressed indignation and pleaded for strict fidelity to established procedures.

In trying to appear to the public as if it was only seeking fair procedures for teachers, the UFT has consistently claimed that it is in favor of decentralization. Yet it is a matter of public record that during the last session of the state legislature, the UFT carried on intensive lobbying activities against the Board of Regents' plan to implement decentralization and institute community control.

When school opened on September 9, 1968, the UFT went out on strike. NYCLU supports the right of teachers to strike. Unfortunately, the UFT chose to use the strike not only to demand the reinstatement of the transferred teachers, but also as an extension of its lobbying efforts to defeat decentralization. By this time, the UFT was predicting that local community control would lead to chaos. By striking, the UFT proved its point by creating chaos.

#### IV. The due process issue

By early spring 1968, the following was clear:

1. The Board of Education, by refusing to delegate power or define authority to the Local Governing Board, had ruined the experiment and set itself squarely against community control.
2. The United Federation of Teachers, by its special agreements involving transfers and by its emerging lobbying position against the various proposed plans, had set itself squarely against community control.
3. The Council of Supervisory Associations, by its suit challenging the appointment of non-Civil Service principals and by encouraging assistant principals to leave Ocean Hill-Brownsville, had set itself squarely against community control.
4. The \$44,000 of Ford Foundation planning money, which had run out in the fall of 1967, was not going to be followed up by the previously promised \$250,000 to fund substantive programs until the local Board was formally recognized by the central Board.

Thus, by the spring of 1968, without funds, without power, without authority and with serious opposition in the ranks of its teachers, the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Board was virtually unable to run its schools or conduct its experiment.

It is against this background that in April the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Board decided to transfer 19 of what it called the 'most uncooperative' teachers and administrators.

At first - and this appears to be a fact that is not generally known - McCoy tried to reassign the 19 within the experimental district. According to the Niemeyer Report, McCoy had the authority to do that based on oral information he had received. Yet when some of the teachers refused to be transferred, the Board of Education refused to back up McCoy's authority. Apparently it was clearly within McCoy's authority to transfer personnel within his district until he actually tried to exercise it.



Next, McCoy requested that the 19 be transferred to another district entirely. This request was denied by Superintendent Donovan. Finally, in early May 1968, the Local Governing Board sent notices of transfer to the 19, referring them to Board of Education headquarters for reassignment. This transfer was interpreted by the professional staff, the community at large and the press as dismissal.

In attempting to understand why the attempted transfer was so widely perceived as an attempted firing, it is important to examine the distinction between transfer and dismissal in the Board of Education By-Laws.

Dismissals must be accompanied by the requirements of due process, including written notice of charges, right to a hearing, right to confront witnesses, right to call witnesses, right to introduce evidence, right to receive transcript, right to appeal, etc. The By-Laws mandate these requirements for regular teachers and the UFT contract extends the requirements to substitute teachers. But neither the By-Laws nor the contract mandate the requirements of due process for mere transfers. Article II, Section 101.1 of the By-Laws says:

Transfers of members of the teaching and supervising staff from one school to another shall be made by the Superintendent of Schools, who shall report immediately such transfers to the Board of Education for its consideration and action.

The purpose of this provision is apparently to allow the Superintendent maximum flexibility to move teachers around for a variety of reasons.

Implicit in the provision is the assumption that the right to a job does not include the right to choose your assignment within the system. In fact, many hundreds of such transfers take place during every school year, apparently without the UFT's objection. Why then did the UFT make such a fuss in this case and insist on due process when it knew that due process was not required under existing procedures?

The answer is clear: the UFT demanded due process because it wished to create the impression that the teachers had been fired and because it wished to discredit the Local Governing Board. This conclusion is hardly speculative. In many of its advertisements, the UFT has used the word 'fired'. Furthermore, the Niemeyer Report bluntly states the UFT motive:

...the UFT demanded written charges, thus placing the request for transfers (for which no charges are required) into the realm of dismissal.

Thus, at least by existing standards, the entire due process issue has been from the beginning a myth created by the UFT and swallowed whole by practically everyone. Eventually, McCoy yielded to the pressure to bring charges. As a final irony, it must be noted that in exonerating the teachers of the charges, Trial Examiner Francis E. Rivers noted in his opinion that:

Perhaps if the Unit Administrator (McCoy) had sent to the Superintendent of Schools a simple request to transfer, the teachers, without assigning any supporting charges, he (the Superintendent) may have been able to do so without a hearing by virtue of Article II, Section 101.1 of the By-Laws of the Board of Education.

Which is, of course, precisely what McCoy had done.

It is by now not difficult to guess what the motives were behind the game being played by the central Board and by the UFT. The Niemeyer Report makes it clear:

Under normal circumstances the Demonstration Project might have been able to accomplish the transfer of 'unsatisfactory' personnel informally, but a larger struggle was being waged in the New York State Legislature over a general proposal to decentralize the entire school system.

For almost precisely at the time that the UFT decided to create the due process myth, UFT representatives were in Albany lobbying against community control. It certainly seems abundantly clear that the due process issue as used by the UFT was nothing but a smokescreen behind which the effort to discredit and destroy community control could go on.

#### V. The future

It is clear that under present standards, the Superintendent of Schools has the power to transfer teachers without due process. If the Superintendent's powers are transferred to Unit Administrators under decentralization, as they should have been in the experimental districts, then the Unit Administrator would have

the power to transfer teachers without due process. There is no question that under present standards, the UFT created the due process issue out of thin air.

But in looking toward the future, the New York Civil Liberties Union urges the adoption of stricter standards than those that exist today. We admit that whoever the administrator is, he ought to have the flexibility to transfer personnel administratively. But we also know that in many instances this power is used punitively. And since the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Board admits that at least four of the teachers it wished transferred were guilty of 'opposing openly the Demonstration Project', the power to transfer appears to have been used punitively in Ocean Hill-Brownsville.

We cannot condone such action. We insist that those who exercise power do so with full respect for due process of law and the right of dissent. 'Due process of law' is not a mere technicality unrelated to the substance of power. On the contrary, it goes to the very heart of the procedures by which free men regulate their affairs. Freedom is truly indivisible; if the Ocean Hill-Brownsville dispute proves anything, it proves that unless decisions are made and disputes resolved through fair, honest and equitable procedures which respect individual rights, everyone will suffer. We are firmly and unbendingly committed to this view.

But we are also committed to the view that while fair procedures are necessary, they are not sufficient. The main goals of decentralization must be to provide black and Puerto Rican children with equal access to quality education and black and Puerto Rican parents with equal access to the process of making decisions that affect their children's lives.

As of now, the Board of Education's decentralization plan makes no mention at all of specific grounds for transfer. Standards for evaluating teacher performance in ghetto schools must be spelled out specifically and known in advance by administrators, teachers, and parents. If such standards are not set, we can expect to see charges made against teachers by local boards which, even if substantiated, will be considered illegitimate by the central Board on appeal. Fair procedures will be useless if what those procedures are supposed to determine is irrelevant.

The achievement of those goals may well inconvenience many of us. Teachers and administrators may have to be transferred for reasons that seem to them improper or unusual. Yet it is entirely possible that a teacher may be competent to teach in a white, middle class school and incompetent to teach in a black or Puerto Rican ghetto school. Recent studies have clearly shown, for example, that a student's achievement is directly related to his teacher's expectations. The effect of teacher expectations of the academic achievement of black and Puerto Rican children thus appears to be a crucial factor in assessing the effectiveness of ghetto schools. It may be necessary, therefore, to re-evaluate the criteria for transfers to include the legitimate grievances of ghetto communities. If teachers who are otherwise competent are ineffective with black or Puerto Rican children, then perhaps such ineffectiveness should be seen as a legitimate reason for transfer to another school.

In order to avoid chaos in the future of the sort that we have suffered in the recent past while proceeding with decentralization, NYCLU calls upon the Board of Education to take the following steps:

1. Make the adoption of a plan for effective community control its first priority. Such a plan should precisely set forth the powers and responsibilities of Local Governing Boards and the rights of administrators, teachers and students.
2. Spell out the criteria for transfer and expand such criteria to include standards of effectiveness and establish, for the first time, standards of due process for punitive transfers.
3. Appoint an educational ombudsman to serve as an independent office of review of all local and central board decisions under decentralization. The ombudsman, who must have impeccable credentials of integrity and impartiality, should have the power to receive complaints from students, teachers, administrators or parents. He should have the power to subpoena witnesses, inspect records and hold hearings. His powers of action, however, should be limited to recommendation and publicity. In view of the dishonesty and duplicity that characterized the recent dispute, an office of ombudsman would seem to be a useful mechanism to provide the public with independent information and analysis.

If the due process standards suggested above are clearly spelled out for the future, all legitimate fears of the UFT should be ended. If the powers and responsibilities of local boards are clearly spelled out for the future, then all legitimate fears of the local communities should be ended.

Finally, we suggest that intensive meetings be held with representatives of the three local experimental districts, the UFT, the central Board, and such civil organizations as the NAACP, the UPA, the Citizens Committee for Children, and NYCLU to work out standards for due process and community control. We need a massive act of good faith on the part of all parties to the dispute. Certainly we have had enough bad faith to last a century. How long must we continue to 'wade up to our eyes in blood'?

(For documentation, we refer the reader to the original NYCLU pamphlet, available from:  
New York Civil Liberties Union, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10010)

# The Radical Opposition in the UFT

Gretchen Mackler and David Friedman

The New Coalition in the UFT has become, in the space of six months, the strongest radical opposition party of any major American union. Its fraternal national counterpart, the New Caucus of the AFT, won 25% of the votes at the 1968 AFT National Convention.

The situation of teachers at a nerve center of the urban racial crisis, and in the vanguard of white collar and public employee unionism, has blasted the viability of traditional trade union methods and policies, sooner but no less inexorably than for other sectors of the working class.

In New York City, the result has been a turn to the right by the union leadership and a majority of rank-and-file members, but also the growth of a large left-wing of radical teachers seeking an alliance with the black community, and flexing its muscles within the UFT.

Never before has the bankruptcy of union policy been so clear. But there have always been radicals in the teachers union, and plenty of legitimate issues on which to organize. Results, in the past, have been dismal. Numerous tiny groups have formed, usually around a single issue, unable or in some cases unwilling to present an overall challenge to the UFT leadership. Perhaps the greatest stumbling block has been the tendency for radicals to 'leave the union', either literally or in political perspective, after failing to win an early victory. Albert Shanker, with his sophisticated social-democratic brain trust, has had no trouble resisting his short-term, single-issue and half-hearted opponents.

The New Coalition is more serious. Based on a radical program of teacher-parent-student coalition and militant trade unionism, the New Coalition has come out strongly against the war in Vietnam, and demanded that the UFT lead the fight for the right of public employees to strike. New Coalition members saw no contradiction between working within the union and opposing the reactionary strike against community control, joining with parents and leading dissident teachers in opening the schools.

The New Coalition did not form accidentally or spontaneously. It was made possible by the hard work and clear thinking of a handful of teacher radicals, drawing upon New Left experiences and based upon an orientation toward the labor movement. This article examines the major political and organizational problems encountered in the development of the New Coalition. Both authors have been active in TANA and the New Coalition since the beginning. Gretchen Mackler was UFT Chapter Chairman in her school before the strike, and is a member of the Independent Socialist Club.

The UFT political scene early in 1967 was bleak. Albert Shanker's Unity party dominated the union, ceding an occasional seat on the Executive Board to Staff, the liberal opposition party. The leaders of Staff were high school-based militants who had built the teachers union in New York City, and retained the loyalty of thousands of dedicated members. In the midst of a mounting educational crisis, racial turmoil, the war, government strikebreaking, Staff continued its 'safe' policy of opposing the Shanker leadership on the issue of 'union democracy'. Nobody was much interested, the Staff membership was inactive, and (as we shall relate) the 1968 strike saw the destruction of Staff.

The UFT did contain a fluctuating array of opposition organizations, with an unenviable, but accurate, reputation as 'splinter groups'. All you needed was a leader, twenty members, and an issue. The Teachers Committee for Peace in Vietnam was quite substantial, but they received a certain amount of cooperation from the Shanker leadership, and therefore were unwilling to oppose the Unity party. The Teachers Freedom Party, with a black militant chairman and largely white membership, took strong stands on black issues but also called for the destruction of the UFT. The TFP tended to write off the vast majority of white teachers as incorrigible racists; they favored a teacher-parent coalition, but this meant a handful of white teachers putting themselves at the service of the black community. Despite its militancy the Teachers Freedom Party was not an effective opponent of the Shanker leadership.

## *1967: the AFT national convention*

The main event at the AFT National Convention in the summer of 1967 was the formation of the national New Caucus. At previous conventions, the Progressive Caucus served as an umbrella for the best elements in

the AFT, together with more traditional liberals. But the demands of black trade unionists and anti-war forces were intolerable to liberals who were still loyal to the Democratic Party National Administration.

Strong resolutions on the war and on ghetto schools were drawn up by militants who had come to the convention prepared for a fight. The militants soon discovered that they were being boxed out bureaucratically -- most of their resolutions would not even come to the floor. Black militants and white radicals, having come to the convention separately, each with their own list of grievances, joined forces in a bloc, as the only effective way of pushing their demands.

The New Caucus forced the convention to pass an anti-war resolution, although the convention statement was watered down at the urging of Al Shanker, who did not defend the anti-war stance of his own local (passed against his wishes, and subsequently unpublicized). The New Caucus declared itself a permanent organization and elected as its Chairman Edward Simpkins, vice-president of the Detroit Federation of Teachers, and leader of that local's powerful black caucus.

### *1967: the UFT strike and the 'disruptive child' issue*

New Yorkers returned from the AFT convention to a city on the verge of its second big teacher strike. The first UFT strike had lasted only a few days, and won the first major collective bargaining victory for teacher unionism. The 1967 strike occurred simultaneously with several AFT strikes in other parts of the country, and could have been a healthy and militant development. The main demands centered on teacher salaries and improvement of the schools.

However, Shanker chose to strengthen his base of support among the more conservative union members, at the expense of relations with the black and Puerto Rican communities. One of the most difficult problems for ghetto teachers is the handling of class disruption by 'problem children'. This in turn flows from the empty and stifling experience of children caught in a decaying school system. Under the conditions prevailing in New York's ghetto schools, almost every student could be considered a 'disruptive child' at one time or another -- yet the UFT 'solution' was based entirely on more punitive power for teachers.

The 'disruptive child' issue won the support of many teachers, particularly in the elementary schools, who might normally have opposed a strike. But it ran directly counter to the demand for self-respect and quality education, sweeping the ghettos. Parents realized that a detention house atmosphere was incompatible with a transformation of the educational system, and moreover, they were justifiably suspicious about the callousness of white teachers toward black children.

Although the question of the disruptive child was virtually dropped in the final strike settlement, it had done its job. The growing rift between the UFT and the black community was out in the open, with a number of black organizations engaging in strikebreaking, and AFT spokesmen characterizing their opponents as 'extremists'.

The other major factor in the 1967 strike was the union's response to the Taylor Act. Rather than mount a campaign against the new state anti-strike law (aimed at all public employees), the UFT leadership sought refuge in the gimmick of 'mass resignations'. Of course, this failed in court and the UFT eventually lost its dues check-off, was heavily fined, and saw Shanker in jail for 15 days. The UFT could afford such penalties at the time, but weaker unions could not. The UFT enjoyed a great deal of public support and Shanker received a large amount of space in the mass media, which he could have used to educate the public about the right of public employees to strike. A political fight might have been waged -- as was done for a reactionary cause a year later, when the UFT campaigned vigorously against state legislators who supported the decentralization bill.

Thus, on both the racial question and defense of the right to strike, the Shanker leadership demonstrated its bankruptcy in 1967. The membership, on the other hand, exhibited militancy and solidarity through a poorly organized strike (Shanker kept assuring them that a settlement was around the corner), despite their misunderstanding of the 'disruptive child' issue.

For radicals observing that strike, it was tremendously frustrating that none of these criticisms were made in organized form, by any of the opposition groups in the UFT. Many of the union militants were very critical of the leadership, particularly after the settlement, which achieved very little in terms of improving the schools (a major piece of strike rhetoric), and was rammed down the throats of the membership in blatant disregard of union democracy.

Staff chose not to make an issue of the manner in which Shanker obtained a contract ratification (using bureaucratic manipulation to stifle dissent, despite substantial opposition on the negotiating team and the Executive Board). The Teachers Freedom Party chose not to explain the disruptive child issue, despite the opportunity afforded by several giant strike rallies which could have been leafleted. At the crucial moment, the opposition was silent.

The performance of the Afro-American Teachers Association (the old Negro Teachers Association, with a new name but, apparently, the same moderate politics) was also dismal. Aside from muttering threats about black teachers leaving the union - which in this context meant withdrawing from the field of battle without firing a shot - that organization did little or nothing. Quite a few black teachers did leave the UFT, but the exodus was not organized, and hence had minimal political impact.

### ***Teachers for a New Alternative (TANA) is formed***

After the September strike in 1967, it became clear to a number of teachers that the volatile issues facing the UFT, the bankruptcy of the leadership, the militancy of the rank-and-file, and the presence in the union of a substantial number of young radicals (many fresh out of the student movement) -- that all these factors called for the formation of a serious radical opposition group in the union.

Teachers for a New Alternative (the name was not arrived at until a month later) convened its first meeting in late October, with about fifteen people in the room. There were several experienced political activists, but most of the people were fresh young radicals, anxious to fight for their political ideals on issues related to their everyday work in the schools.

The hard question of perspective faced us right from the beginning. The entire first meeting was spent discussing whether or not to work in the union. This was decided in the affirmative, but the question was to crop up again and again, every time the UFT took a reactionary step. Most of the people attracted to TANA in the beginning were young teachers, unimpressed with the past gains won by the UFT, slow to distinguish between the union leadership and the rank-and-file, and not very confident of our ability to win over teachers who were not already radical. Nonetheless, it was clear after discussion that we had little choice: If teachers were to play a progressive role in society, they had to be won over to a radical program, and they had to be organized. The organization already existed; a politically conscious and militant membership would have relatively little trouble disposing of Albert Shanker and other millstones. Furthermore, if we as radicals were to be of aid to the black movement, it could only be through base-building among our own constituents. This meant working with teachers despite their liberal politics and despite their racial prejudices. Our job was to change those ideas, which stood in the way of the needs of teachers and community alike.

Two more meetings were required to adopt the basic statement of purpose of TANA. In brief, we stood for the building of a strong and militant union, oriented toward an alliance of teachers, parents and students. We saw the UFT as a potential link between a revitalized American labor movement and the struggles of black and other minority peoples for a better life and control over the institutions that dominate their communities. As open radicals, we took a stand against the war in Vietnam, for vigorous defense of the right of public and private employees to strike, in favor of rank-and-file student insurgencies within the public schools, and for independent political action.

We were determined to challenge the UFT leadership and the consciousness of the 60,000 teachers on every major issue, thus demonstrating that there was a consistent alternative road for the UFT. At the same time, we recognized that an organization as radical as TANA could not hope to take power within the UFT in this period. We would not hide our politics in order to win union elections; indeed, we made no commitment to run candidates -- that was to be a tactical question. Teachers for a New Alternative was to be a 'ginger group', a prod to teacher consciousness and a gadfly for the UFT leadership.

### ***TANA: action program and internal development***

To the extent of its physical resources, TANA would work on many fronts in many ways. Working in the union did not preclude joint demonstrations and public statements with groups in the black community. We paid special attention to the monthly Delegate Assembly meetings of the UFT, which brought together a thousand teachers (the normal attendance of the 5000-member body) from all schools in the city. It was possible to pass out leaflets, raise motions and speak from the floor, even to throw up a picket line -- and one

could always confront Albert Shanker at these meetings: he was the chairman. In brief, working in the union meant working to radicalize teachers so that their organization could become a progressive instrument -- it did not mean preoccupation with 'parliamentary' forms of struggle, or normal union 'channels'.

It should be noted that TANA could not possibly address itself, on any regular basis, to the mass of 60,000 teachers. Mailings of that size were prohibitively expensive, and we did not have the school-by-school, or even district-by-district organization that might have engaged in direct political work among the teachers.

TANA's first public action was a forum on the newly aroused controversy over school decentralization and community control. As the first political act of a new and loosely structured organization, it required considerable preparation. We had begun an intensive discussion and analysis of the issue shortly after the Bundy Commission issued its report calling for (in effect) decentralization of the administration of the school system, but with very little power given to the local communities. After three or four meetings, we adopted a position opposing the provisions of the Bundy Report as insufficient, but urging all teachers and parents to take advantage of the fact that the issue had been projected onto the public consciousness, to press for real community control. We also made it clear that, in our view, effective community control was only possible through a coalition of teachers and community in which power would be shared. The question of teacher protection was taken up, and teacher rights were regarded as indispensable. Armed with an analysis consistent with our overall program, we began to propagandize inside the UFT. First, with a short pamphlet addressed to the Delegate Assembly. Then the first TANA public forum.

The forum would serve a dual purpose, for we were determined to bring to bear the weight of pro-community control forces in other locals of the UFT. In some cities where the percentage of black teachers is higher than in NYC, the local AFT chapters have good positions on black questions. There, too, the strength of the national New Caucus is highest. As the chief speaker for the forum on community control, TANA invited Ed Simpkins, Chairman of the New Caucus. Other speakers represented the Teachers Freedom Party, the Teachers Committee for Peace in Vietnam, the Afro-American Teachers Association, and TANA itself. The meeting was a bit of a circus, since every point of view ranging from the TANA program to a call for 'the destruction of the UFT and the rest of the labor movement' was expressed. But over 200 teachers were present, and many reacted favorably to the TANA point of view. The meeting established the desired connection between the national New Caucus and our own as yet small efforts in New York City.

The forum was held as late as February of 1968. TANA was still loosely organized, but it was gradually taking on the structure of a serious group. For a long time, members resisted the idea of an elected steering committee, regular dues structure, etc. The more experienced people, without rushing things, had continually pressed for more organization, for democracy based on votes (rather than the 'consensus' which either paralyzes activity or is attained through small group social pressure). The hostility towards organization reflected people's background in the New Left, where defiance of authority is often extended to a refusal to establish lines of responsibility within radical organizations. Unfortunately, only a small social group can exist in a totally amorphous state; a political action organization either organizes itself on a democratic basis, or it slips into some undemocratic form based on 'the people who do the work' (i. e. the bureaucracy) or some other clique. But the people in TANA were serious, they had a clear job ahead of them, and gradually people shed their prejudices against organization.

Within a few months, TANA had produced and distributed a body of literature on the major issues facing the UFT. Short pamphlets on community control and on the Taylor Law were printed. Leaflets were handed out at the D. A. attacking George Meany for advocating binding arbitration as a means of avoiding public employee strikes, and demanding that the UFT criticize this stand by the top AFL-CIO bureaucrat (an embarrassment to Shanker, who was a Meany man in the Reuther-Meany split). TANA took a stand opposing the 'community strike referendum', in which the Executive Board asked the membership for permission to call district-wide strikes for the protection of teachers' rights. This was a complicated issue, for most teachers thought they were voting simply for a more militant union position vis-a-vis their employer. Only the teachers well-versed in union politics understood that the referendum was motivated by hostility to the newly-emergent local community boards. The referendum was designed to confuse teachers, to divide union militants from radicals, and it certainly helped to do that. (The writers were against TANA taking a position on the referendum.)

The UFT runs an annual Spring Conference, consisting of panel discussions and workshops on questions of interest to teachers. Over a thousand teachers usually attend, and the 1968 Conference came at a key time in the development of the UFT. TANA members leafletted the Conference and then went in to participate in the relevant workshops. We also supported a picket line aimed at the Union's policy on community control but only on condition that the pickets not urge teachers to boycott the Conference. For TANA, the meeting

was an opportunity to reach teachers and change their heads. Teachers were our constituency, not to be treated as an enemy -- even when their attitudes and actions had to be opposed as reactionary.

One of TANA's last acts before the UFT Spring election, was to picket UFT headquarters demanding that the union come to the defense of two black teachers who had been fired for taking their children to a Malcolm X memorial held at I. S. 201. Shanker had given wide publicity to the case of a white teacher allegedly fired under community pressure, but the UFT showed little interest in the case of the two black teachers (nor does the union customarily contest the arbitrary transfers that occur so frequently in the school system, under Supervisors hired by the central Board of Education). The picket line was small but well-publicized in the mass media.

TANA had gone through an internal debate over picketing UFT headquarters, the Board of Education, or the Delegate Assembly. We were convinced that a demonstration at the Board would be ignored (so often are they picketed), whereas a demonstration demanding that the UFT use its considerable power on the teachers' behalf, would be more effective. We also felt that a picket of the Delegate Assembly might be construed by Delegates as hostile to them, whereas a protest at the UFT office was clearly aimed at the union leadership. Rather than picket the D. A., we leafleted it, informing the Delegates why we had picketed the union office.

By this time, TANA had some forty active members. Significantly, our strength had increased in the high schools, which are the centers of union militancy. The membership was no longer new and inexperienced. Several TANA people had been involved in fights with their school administrators as a result of political outspokenness, and others had begun to build a small base by taking the lead on teacher grievances. Beyond the forty members, there was a large periphery of teachers who felt politically close to TANA, but had not yet become actively involved (beyond attending a meeting or two).

### *The Spring elections: formation of the New Coalition*

As the school year drew to a close in the Spring of 1968, radicals began to see the upcoming union elections as an opportunity to challenge the Shanker leadership on a broad range of issues, with a consistent political alternative. However, none of the radical opposition groups, TANA included, had the strength to run a serious campaign (by which we do not mean running-to-win); in order to take full advantage of the platform provided by the election, the radical groups would have to unite. We do not mean to imply that most radical teachers belonged to one or another of the small organizations; on the contrary, it was precisely the atomization of the opposition that made it so difficult to mount a campaign.

Ironically, the idea of running candidates was first broached to TANA by leaders of Staff. Several of the top Staff leaders considered themselves radicals; they felt that they could radicalize the Staff campaign platform to the satisfaction of the left-wing groups, and they offered us one or more positions on their slate. Unfortunately, they retained the hope of 'doing well' in the election (winning a number of seats on the Executive Board, at least), and this was the determining factor in the kind of campaign that Staff was prepared to wage.

In TANA, we dismissed out-of-hand the idea of running-to-win. It was clear that the political consciousness of the overwhelming majority of teachers was liberal, not radical. Most teachers did not support the black movement or see the need for coalitions. Many were not very militant on bread-and-butter union issues. The UFT rank-and-file would grumble at Shanker's leadership, but they were not prepared to vote for a radical alternative. Given this evaluation of teacher attitudes, what would it mean for TANA to 'run-to-win'? Obviously, we would have to conceal our true program, mute our criticisms of UFT policies, and generally try to sneak our candidates into office by fooling the voters. The very purpose of the campaign would be lost. (The technique of 'taking over' unions by capturing the top offices was widely practiced by the Communist Party in the '30s and '40s, contributing to the discrediting of the manipulating 'Old Left' and making that movement easy prey for the McCarthyites.)

TANA was not satisfied that the Staff leaders were willing to really fight Shanker, despite their offer to include more radical points in their platform. Staff was afraid that we might split their vote if we ran independently, so they wanted a deal. This was not a 'turn to the Left' by that organization.

We would have welcomed a real turn to the Left by broader groups in the UFT, for the election campaign was no easy project. The positions contested in this election included President (Shanker's post), various union offices, seats on the Executive Board, and delegates to the AFT National Convention. In order to get a candidate on the ballot for President or officer, we needed 1,000 signatures (paid-up UFT members, of

course). For Executive Board members, we needed 100 signatures. TANA also wanted to take advantage of the 'slate voting privilege', which would give our candidates a place on the ballot as a bloc, and entitle us to publish our full platform in the Special Election Issue of the United Teacher, the UFT newspaper. In order to qualify, we would have to run a full slate of candidates. Including AFT convention delegates, this meant over seventy candidates, which was more than the entire membership of TANA.

We need hardly point out that other radical organizations in the UFT were having similar thoughts. Groups like the Teachers Freedom Party had run individual candidates before, but only Staff had the resources to field a full slate. The painful task of welding a coalition, at least for this election, began.

There were programmatic differences among the radical groups, disagreements on emphasis, and ego problems involving the leaders. Of necessity, the single-issue approach was precluded, and this was a long step in the direction that TANA advocated. At this point, the reader might appreciate a brief description of the organizations that were brought together into the New Coalition.

Teachers Freedom Party. We have already described this group. For awhile, it looked as though the unity discussions would founder because of their insistence that Ralph Poynter, Chairman of the TFP, be the candidate for UFT President. We were unwilling to choose as head of the ticket a man who had publicly and frequently called for the destruction of the union (although at other times Poynter argued for working within the UFT). TANA argued that none of the groups should demand the top spot on the ticket.

UFT Teachers for Community Control. This group was originally organized to support the Bundy Report on school decentralization, and later developed into an agitational group for community control in general. TANA had refused to support the Bundy Report, while welcoming the opportunity to fight for real community control. As the inadequacies of the official city proposals became clear, more and more people ceased to support the Bundy Plan, and this became a consensus among radical organizations.

Puerto Rican Teachers for Community Control. A grouping of bi-lingual teachers with varying backgrounds working in support of their own plan for community control.

Equality. A small organization centered on the demand for equality for substitute teachers. If this seems like a narrow issue, bear in mind that there are thousands of substitute teachers in New York City, and their rights are minimal.

It was agreed that the head of the ticket would be Keith Baird, a black radical educator, who favored a strong militant union and community control of the schools. With each organization assured that none of the others would insist on dominating the coalition, we were free to call together all radical activists, and constitute the New Coalition. With our combined strength, we had 70-100 teachers at each meeting, and these were workers rather than spectators. Early meetings hammered out the platform (reprinted in part at the end of this article), and chose the candidates. Once we had overcome the initial problem of finding a presidential candidate acceptable to all the groups, the rest of the slate was easy. Nobody was under the illusion that we could win, so our only concern was that the candidates run on the New Coalition platform.

The New Coalition immediately set to work publicizing its program, and gathering the petition signatures necessary to obtain slate voting privileges. We needed money, we needed teachers, and we needed exposure in a large number of schools. The campaign included three parties, where teachers could meet our candidates and discuss the New Coalition platform. Literature was distributed, and teachers were urged to take bundles back to their schools. During the election campaign, the New Coalition distributed a total of 60,000 pieces of literature, always emphasizing the NC platform.

The New Coalition held several successful press conferences, sent spokesmen to election meetings of many teacher groups (not only political groups), and debated with Shanker's caucus and with Staff candidates at a special UFT Chapter Chairman meeting.

It would have been too much to expect Shanker's clique to conduct a fair election. We had already seen the manipulation with which Shanker guaranteed a contract ratification vote in the past strike: most teachers voted before they had a chance to see the contract, or hear any debate. The same tactic was used against us, indicating that Shanker viewed the radical opposition as a threat despite our small size. In short, the Special Election Issue of the United Teacher, containing the New Coalition platform, was sent out late so that thousands of teachers received it after the election. UFT election rules specify that this issue must be sent out together with the ballots, and for many teachers this would have been the only source of information about the minority parties. But we had no recourse, except to issue a press statement denouncing the fraud



The New Coalition could not challenge the election in court (despite the fact that the UFT violated its own rules), because we would have had to demonstrate that this violation made the difference between victory and defeat. Of course, the election was not close at all.

Approximately 25,000 teachers voted out of 55,000 eligible. Shanker's Unity party received 80% of the vote (20,000), and the remaining 20% was split evenly between Staff and the New Coalition (2500 votes each).

It is important to understand the significance of these results, for the radical opposition embodied in the New Coalition and for the 'loyal opposition' of Staff. The election meant the end of Staff. When an organization bases its activities on the perpetual hope of winning the next election, or increasing its strength within the union leadership, it cannot survive on 10% of the vote. After the Spring elections, Staff's perspective could no longer be taken seriously, given the increasing polarization among teachers. Staff could move to the Left, or it could dissolve. There was no room for a 'moderate' opposition. (The next crisis in the union demonstrated that Staff could not be radicalized; its leadership had lost touch with the base. Much of the Staff rank-and-file was to support the reactionary 1968 strike against community control, leaving their 'radical' leaders isolated and demoralized, and proving the bankruptcy of their brand of permeationism.

For the New Coalition, the 10% vote was a strong encouragement. Because we had run a principled campaign, we knew that there were 2500 teachers who agreed with the New Coalition program. Teachers who were merely disgruntled, hostile to Shanker but not convinced of the need for a radical approach, would have voted for Staff or not voted at all. The New Coalition had a base, probably the largest base of any radical trade union caucus in the country. Although the coalition had been formed with no prior commitment to lasting beyond the election, no one proposed to disband the New Coalition or to have each small group go its own way. The next step was to continue the struggle on a day-to-day basis, using political education and direct action in the period between elections, working both inside and outside the union, with teachers and community organizations.

As for TANA, that organization had achieved its main purpose. When TANA was formed, we understood that our limited resources and support precluded anything so broad or presumptuous as a 'caucus' competing for UFT leadership. We would be a ginger group, pressing a viable program and working toward a more powerful, organized movement with our program. Such a development was embodied in the New Coalition. It was not so much that TANA people had convinced other teacher radicals that we were right. Rather, the necessities of opposing Shanker in the elections, and the conjunction of so many issues, led people to a radical, multi-issue opposition party. TANA played a leading role in that development, probably a decisive role. But it was only possible because the broader events taking place in the communities, influencing the entire union and all radical teachers, pointed in that direction. Here, on a limited scale, we see the proper role of leadership in providing direction to a mass movement.

Now the New Coalition would play the leadership role. By common consent, TANA was never to meet again. (TANA was not formally dissolved because it only gradually became apparent that the New Coalition had, for all practical purposes, become a permanent organization with the TANA perspective. Organizations rarely bother to call meetings in order to dissolve themselves, particularly when the members are too busy continuing the struggle.)

### ***The New Coalition: post-election activities***

One of the first New Coalition activities after the election was a public forum on community control, with Ocean Hill-Brownsville Administrator Rhody McCoy as the featured speaker. The 'Experimental School District' in Ocean Hill-Brownsville had already become the center of controversy over school decentralization. By holding this forum, which was attended by some 700 people, the New Coalition demonstrated that when the lines were drawn in this fight, a sizeable force within the teachers union would take its stand in coalition with the black communities.

The New Coalition distributed literature at the May and June meetings of the UFT Delegates Assembly, and organized for a floor fight on the issues. Our arena would shift, from public activities to union activities and back again, always in pursuit of the same goals.

During the June D. A. meeting, we supported the 'minority report' presented by a dissident member of the UFT Executive Board, and fought to defeat Shanker's motion to 'endorse those legislators who voted for our bill in Albany' (the Marchi Bill, designed to curtail decentralization). The New Coalition lost by a vote of

274 to 270. It was clear, however, that we had impressed many delegates with the fact that Shanker's 'friends in Albany' were the same legislators who had voted for the union-busting Taylor Law the year before.

Suddenly the Delegate Assembly had become 'unsafe'. Shanker responded by instituting tight security measures to guarantee that only bona fide delegates were voting (and they had better not come late). Later, Shanker would propose the elimination of the Delegate Assembly altogether. (That fight is approaching as this article is being written.)

When some 2800 teachers were 'excessed' in June (due to budget squeezes resulting from the September strike settlement), the union refused to fight for their jobs. (So much for Shanker's deep concern about teachers' rights.) The New Coalition held a large rally and did all that we could do for those 2800 teachers. The UFT had the power - the force of 60,000 organized teachers - and that force would eventually have to be channeled in the right direction, if we were to attain any of our goals.

We finished the school year with many vivid impressions of unrest among the teachers. The UFT leadership had planted the seeds of further conflict with the ghetto communities. The New Coalition predicted disaster if these policies were continued. But few of us guessed how quickly the predictions would materialize, how sharply the majority of teachers would be stampeded into a stance of racial chauvinism, and how strong would be the community reaction. The September strike awaited.

### ***The AFT national convention: summer of 1968***

The lines were drawn, at this convention, according to one's attitude toward the events in New York City. The New Coalition sent five members to the week-long Cleveland meeting, and formally affiliated with the national New Caucus (described above). We took the opportunity to exchange ideas and information with teachers from all over the country. In particular, we found that in many areas the UFT locals were supporting community control. For the most part, these were the urban centers with a high proportion of black teachers.

We distributed the New Coalition newspaper to all the AFT delegates, explaining the New York City issues from our point of view, and exposing the policies of the Shanker leadership. (Shanker is respected by many AFT militants throughout the country because of the strength of the UFT, and the impetus given to teacher unionism when the UFT won the first collective bargaining victory in the nation. Shanker's conservatism, not only on racial questions but also in the struggle for the right of public employees to strike, is not generally known within the AFT.) The New Coalition held a press conference in Cleveland, and received wide coverage.

In the election of AFT national officers, the New Caucus received about 25% of the vote, again confirming that the teachers union has the most powerful radical opposition in the labor movement. On the main issue, the convention passed a 'compromise' resolution, urging 'community involvement' in the school systems. Even this watered-down statement was opposed by Shanker, who is becoming something of an embarrassment to his colleagues in the AFT national bureaucracy (which has not stopped them from fully endorsing his campaign to sabotage community control).

### ***The New Coalition and the 1968 strike***

The UFT leadership began the school year, in the Fall of 1968, with an all-out campaign against community control. Earlier efforts had been mainly propagandistic, involving public statements and lobbying in the state legislature. This time, we were faced with the prospect of a full-fledged strike.

The New Coalition fought on every level against this strike. First within the union, to prevent the walkout; then outside the union, in coalition with parents (and with the support of thousands of teachers), to end the strike and open the schools. The results were mixed: although we could not prevent the strike, there is no question that the opposition restricted Shanker's freedom of action and precluded a total victory on his part.

The reader must understand that for most of the UFT teachers, the issue of 'due process' and job security was a real one. They were wrong in this belief, as we have demonstrated in other articles in this pamphlet, and their willingness to follow the Shanker line was undoubtedly influenced by racial prejudices and double standards. Nonetheless, the fears were real, and not substantially different from the fears of industrial workers who find their seniority and other rights threatened by black demands. In both cases, the only way out is to join forces with the blacks to demand a larger share of the national economic pie. Unfortunately, the limited political consciousness of white workers and white teachers leads them to a different conclusion, a false solution: keep the blacks out!

It was not easy to fight these prejudices and fears, especially since the spokesmen for the community control movement, Rhody McCoy in particular, projected a public image of total disregard for teachers' rights. We do not say that they had such an attitude, but they gave that impression in mass media interviews, apparently as a way of expressing 'militancy'. Actually, the local boards were demanding the same more-or-less arbitrary powers over teachers that the Central Board already had, and still has. We have pointed out elsewhere, that this is contrary to the spirit of a teacher-community coalition, and that community control can not work without teacher cooperation and a change in the boss-employee relationship which now exists. White radicals who accepted the formulation that the community was to be the boss of the teachers, did little service to their cause. Rhody McCoy, in claiming this power, guaranteed a stampede of teachers behind Shanker's 'get tough' policy. Teachers who had tolerated the arbitrary powers of status quo administrators, were terrified of the same powers in the hands of hostile parents. The result was to pit the two movements against each other, in one of the most reactionary strikes of recent history.

During the fight, the New Coalition took several specific actions. At the first Delegate Assembly meeting, we distributed literature and argued for a NO vote on the strike. When we were defeated in the D. A. , we immediately held a press conference attacking the decision and explaining the real policies of the UFT leadership, as distinct from their rhetoric about 'due process'. At the same time, the New Coalition called for a picket line at UFT headquarters, at which over 200 teachers appeared, demanding that the union negotiate with the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Governing Board (which the UFT leadership has refused to recognize, in much the same manner that the United States denies diplomatic recognition to governments against which it has aggressive designs). The following evening, we held a rally to begin the mobilization of the growing number of teachers opposed to the strike.

The New Coalition co-sponsored a mass rally with the Council Against Poverty, attended by some 5000 people. Representatives of all community agencies spoke, as well as two members of the New Coalition Executive Committee. Our aim was to make this more than a one-shot demonstration rally: we stressed the fact that the New Coalition was a permanent radical opposition party in the UFT, that the bankruptcy of Shanker's direction would become apparent to more and more teachers, and our party could serve as the rallying point for such opposition.

As a result of these activities, the New Coalition began to receive large numbers of telephone calls from concerned teachers, and hundreds of teachers expressed agreement and asked to be put on our mailing list.

Shortly thereafter, the New Coalition held an all-day conference at I.S. 201 in Harlem, to which teachers and members of the community were invited. The conference began with district action workshops, and ended with a panel discussion. Speakers on the panel included: William Kunstler, attorney for the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Governing Board; Leslie Roberts, member of the Executive Board of District 65, AFL-CIO; Don Merit of the Joan of Arc community Governing Board; Rev. Donald Harrington of the Community Church; and Father Donald Powis of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Governing Board.

The value of these educational activities should not be underestimated. This was a strike over a false issue, and as the strike progressed, more and more teachers became open to our arguments. Shanker's propaganda against the local boards became more and more overt, and the movement to open the schools increased. Toward the end of the strike, some 12,000 teachers were in the schools, and thousands more remained out only because of a misguided sense of 'union solidarity', or in many cases, fear of social ostracism by strikers.

The New Coalition made it clear that one did not have to choose between teachers' rights and community control: we favored, indeed demanded, both. We pointed out that Shanker's 'militancy' involved collaboration with the school bosses (the Council of Supervisory Personnel) and the tacit support of at least part of the city and state power structure. The New Coalition opposed the use of the Taylor Act to break this strike -- that was a job for the teachers and community. Specifically, we publicly opposed the jailing of Shanker. We would not support the 'class enemy' in its zig-zag interventions against both union and community, as Shanker himself was doing. During all three strike votes, we urged a NO vote, and explained the alternative open to the union. Although Shanker had the majority of the 60,000-member union, our response was massive. The two phones at the New Coalition office were ringing (literally) continuously, day and night, throughout the strike, as teachers and parents called for aid and information.

A major activity involved sending informed speakers to meetings, large and small, that were held all over the city for the period of the strike. These involved civic, political, social, religious, parents' and other groups concerned about the strike and the schools. We found that, speaking as militant unionists, we could make a strong case against the strike. Our impact was so impressive that the UFT leadership adopted a

policy of refusing to send a speaker to any meeting where a New Coalition spokesman would share the platform. In the few cases where they accidentally found themselves in debate with New Coalition members, the UFT speakers made a poor case for themselves. These meetings went on daily, and were an important medium for the transmission of our point of view outside the union, among people sympathetic with teacher unionism.

During the strike, New Coalition meetings were held weekly. The entire organization was devoted to the job of ending the strike and providing the political basis for a progressive solution to the conflict.

### ***Transition politics and 'strikebreaking'***

This article would be incomplete without some discussion of the New Coalition attitude toward the opening of the schools, and crossing of UFT picket lines during the 1968 strike.

Radicals and revolutionaries learn, almost as a tenet of faith, that one does not break strikes or cross picket lines. It is true that the principle of labor solidarity is one of the greatest accomplishments of the labor movement. This notion of class solidarity (independent of the particular details of a labor dispute) is an element of political consciousness that directly contradicts the official ideology of the corrupt labor bureaucracy, and points the way to more sweeping acts of solidarity among exploited people. IN THIS SAME SPIRIT, IT WAS ABSOLUTELY CORRECT, AS WELL AS ESSENTIAL, TO BREAK THE U. F. T. STRIKE AND TO CROSS THOSE PICKET LINES. For this 'strike' was not an action of workers against their bosses, in which one's class loyalty was the decisive factor. On the contrary, the UFT strike was class-collaborationist from its inception, a coalition between the teachers union and the school bureaucracy (who are most directly threatened by the advent of community control), against the parents and students in the black communities. As a matter of fact, since the union was only threatened in the minds of the conservative leadership, it is accurate to say that the UFT was intervening gratuitously and provocatively in a struggle between the black community and the power structure, on the wrong side. In such context, it is hopelessly dogmatic to assert that radical and progressive teachers are bound by union discipline or 'labor solidarity' to take the side of the UFT, or to abstain from the struggle. This the New Coalition understood, as a result of healthy radical instincts.

Having made our decision about the strike, we still had to work out ways to approach other teachers. We recognized a distinction between the UFT strikers who manned the picket lines, and the bulk of those who simply stayed home. For the most part, no communication was possible with the picketers, at least after the first couple of weeks. Feelings ran too high, and the picketers (many of whom had opposed all previous strikes, out of conservatism) had found a 'cause' worthy of their unstinting militancy. But among the stay-at-homes were many who sympathized with us, and might be counted on in the future, to oppose such strikes. Even among the picketers were many who were sincerely misled by Shanker's arguments (although after several weeks of striking, many picketers came to identify the issue of teachers' rights with automatic opposition to black community control; i. e., they came to agree with Shanker's actual point of view). The New Coalition has always addressed itself sympathetically to all teachers, rather than denouncing them as 'racists', etc.

At the risk of repetition, we can summarize the New Coalition attitude as follows: White people in general, and teachers in particular, are partially motivated by racial prejudices. Sometimes, these prejudices coincide with real fears or hardships caused by the socio-economic system (e. g. the decay of the schools), and at such times the racial attitudes become dominant. Under other conditions, prejudices may be subordinated to other considerations (i. e. racism is not a constant). In hard fact, the basic needs of teachers can only be attained if they overcome their racist inclinations. The job of the New Coalition is to unceasingly point out this fact, thus using teachers' legitimate concerns for their own interests as a weapon against prejudice.

The fight for this perspective is only one year old, in the UFT. The situation is polarized, with a substantial majority of teachers on Shanker's side. But that is not the last word. Traditional bureaucratic trade unionism is unviable in this situation, as the UFT leadership has already discovered. The logic of his position, in the context of the growing black movement, has pushed Shanker into the political arena in a massive way, with a relatively undisguised conservative position. The intense divisions in the union can be expected to increase, as the implications of this position work themselves out. Meanwhile, the city and state politicians await the most favorable opportunity to break this union, or humiliate it, as evidence that public employees do not have the rights of free workers. The future is murky, but the fight is not over.

### *The future of the New Coalition*

The struggle goes on, but the fate of a specific organization can be decided by particular and short-range factors. As this article goes to press, the New Coalition is in deep trouble, owing to its own mistakes and shortcomings as well as conditions beyond its control.

The New Coalition was one of the leading forces in the drive by thousands of teachers to keep the schools open during the strike, but that movement was largely unorganized and spontaneous. In a sense, Shanker did what the New Coalition could not accomplish, providing an issue and an action for the black community and sympathetic teachers to unify around. Unfortunately, the New Coalition did not take proper advantage of this opportunity to build organization for the long haul. Hundreds of teachers became involved in ad hoc 'district organizations' set up by New Coalition members during the strike, but little effort was made to integrate the district groups into the New Coalition. People felt that it would be 'sectarian' to urge spontaneously-activated people to join the existing opposition party. The result of this passivity was that most of the district organizations sank into oblivion when the strike ended, for lack of a unifying center and program. At meetings of the New Coalition Steering Committee, the prevailing attitude was, 'we will build the New Coalition when the strike is over'. By that time, of course, everybody was exhausted (strikers and non-strikers alike) and nothing could be built.

A particular barrier to organizational growth was the thoughtless swelling of the 'Steering Committee' to the point where it literally became the organization. We have seen this sort of thing before, in the New Left. People dislike the idea of an elected leadership with clearly delineated powers and responsibilities (it conjures up images of bureaucracy and top-down control), so they co-opt every active member onto the Steering Committee (whoever comes to the meetings can vote). Naturally, the body quickly grows too large to do any planning or steering (or anything else except talk), and the overall organization goes to pot. The group stops having membership meetings as such, making all decisions through the giant Steering Committee. In the New Coalition the Steering Committee (with upwards of 40 members) met weekly, at people's apartments. No more effective barrier to growth could be imagined. Excluded from control or involvement were the people unable or unwilling to attend weekly meetings (this is true of most people, once you move outside a limited circle of radical activists). When an occasional full membership meeting was called, it tended to be a rally or strictly a work meeting (i. e., the people who came did not feel that they were meeting to determine the direction and politics of their organization) because the Steering Committee would make no preparations. Shortly after the strike, the 'super-democratic' Steering Committee woke up to the fact that the membership had faded away. This tendency was accelerated by lack of attention to recruiting new members and educating them in the politics of the organization.

Despite this criticism, it would be a mistake to pin our troubles primarily on organizational failures. The overriding problem is the political atmosphere among teachers, resulting from the strike itself. Unquestionably, Shanker has strengthened his hold on a large majority of the teachers. Hostility to 'scabs' in the union is equalled only by the thinly disguised racist sentiments that are expressed more frequently than ever before among teachers. Although many thousands of teachers are still open on the issues, the polarization is intense for a majority of union members, and the prospects are exceedingly dim for a radical group like the New Coalition to succeed in getting its perspective across in the near future.

Our prospects are made dimmer by the exodus, now occurring, of dissident teachers from the UFT. Some people interpret this exodus as a healthy development, and have great hopes for working with the ex-union members. The writers consider the exodus from the UFT (whose magnitude is not yet known) a tragedy, signifying retreat from struggle rather than renewed radical opposition. Certainly, many of the teachers leaving the union consider themselves radicals (probably most are not, if we take, for example, a vote for Hubert Humphrey as a test). Regardless of their self-conception, leaving the union means, in fact, giving all power to Shanker and relieving the pressure of internal division which has been one of the few limitations on his freedom of action. For radicals, it means cutting themselves off from the only possible source of teacher power (for progressive or for reactionary ends), and therefore giving up on the idea of organizing our own constituency for an eventual coalition with blacks. The teachers who leave will not organize themselves (nor can anyone else do that job), and they do not constitute a significant force (unorganized as they are) which can be of aid to the black community. They are doing what Shanker must hope and pray for: removing themselves and their radical ideas from the organization of the majority of the teachers, whom Shanker must manipulate and persuade.

In this situation, the job of the New Coalition is clear -- and it is not being done. The New Coalition should urge teachers to stay in the union and fight (as we have fought, unrestricted in our methods), making it hot

for Shanker even as a minority, and working to win over the other teachers (starting with those who were ambivalent toward the strike). It is not clear, as of this writing, if the New Coalition will meet the challenge. Basically, it is a test of leadership. It has been argued (on the N. C. Steering Committee) that we should urge teachers to leave the union, because they are doing so anyway, and we would then gain their respect. Yes, by acquiescing in a useless act of mass personal witness, leading nowhere. It is argued that paying dues to the UFT is corrupt -- but why more so than paying taxes to the U. S. government, or working for General Motors, or...? These arguments are accepted only by a minority in the New Coalition, but the majority cannot afford to remain passive on this question.

Generally speaking, there is a demoralization resulting from the fact that, in this period, the New Coalition must be primarily a propaganda organization, too weak to immediately threaten Shanker's control of the union. The urgency of the strike and the horrendous character of UFT policy have created feelings of frustration that leave people dissatisfied with a propaganda group. Nobody expects the New Coalition vote to grow in the next UFT election, especially with so many radical/liberal teachers leaving the union. These are problems that may or may not be overcome.

In order to hold together and grow, the New Coalition must temper its expectations to the nature of the period. New York City teachers will have to go through some shocking experiences (no one can predict the form that they will take) before they become open, en masse, to a radical approach. This is true, more generally of the entire American working class. The weakening of the UFT due to Shanker's policies will be one lesson, but only if the rank-and-file do not fix the blame on radicals (rather than Shanker) for their hardships.

This is a time of immense impatience for radicals and revolutionaries. We must never grow tolerant or moderate toward the social system and its rulers that are responsible for injustice and oppression. But we must have infinite patience with exploited masses who in turn are tricked and conditioned into cooperating with the system, in its oppression of those still further down on the social scale. Even as we oppose their actions, we must work to recruit them to our cause.

## platform of the New Coalition

*The New Coalition, an opposition party within the UFT, ran a full slate of candidates in the recent UFT elections. It was the first time that a meaningful alternative was presented in opposition to the policies of the present UFT leadership. Excerpts from this platform are presented below. For the full text, see the Special Election Issue of the United Teacher.*

### Introduction

We believe that our educational system, as all other social institutions, is shaped by the total society within which it functions. It would therefore be disastrous for the educational system to try to divorce itself from the current social crisis that is permeating American society. As individuals and collectively, teachers as well as students are inevitably affected by the increasing dehumanization and violent nature of a society which breeds diseased human relationships. Insofar as the learning process is fundamentally a social one, we contend that serious educators must regard the political tensions and social chaos which beset our country as a major area of concern.

### Community Control of Schools

It is universally admitted that our schools are deteriorating and that poor and ethnic minority group children are not getting the education they desperately need. The Board of Education and the City of New York have proven incapable of solving this problem. The UFT leadership is not qualitatively different. It has no solution and is not willing to commit the union to an all-out fight for better schools. In fact, by its inaction on critical issues, the UFT leadership only further assures continued decline. At the same time the UFT leadership has persistently resisted all efforts of the black and Puerto Rican communities to exercise control over those decisions which are vital to the lives of their children. In so doing, the UFT is placed in the unjustifiable position of denying to minority groups those same democratic rights which are enjoyed by most communities in our country. In this context, we categorically reject the UFT's continual characterization of the efforts of the community to control their educational institutions as "vigilante," "unrepresentative," and "extremist."

### Community Initiative

UFT must welcome the initiative developing in communities which to this point have been estranged from the decision making process. We must seek to develop an alliance between the only two forces which are directly concerned with education and the needs of children, i.e., the community and the union. So long as we continue to oppose ourselves to the concept and practice of community control, the gap between the community and the union will widen, thus endangering even the existence of the union as well as insuring that educational change will be further postponed. The NEW COALITION believes that the movement for human rights in the United States has been the most dynamic single force for educational change. The UFT must ally itself with this force. Under President Shanker's leadership however, the UFT has assumed a hostile stance to this movement. Its proposals for "decentralization" amount to little more than giving the community the "right" to rubber stamp those same decisions which have led to the present state of deterioration. Meaningful community control and decentralization can best be achieved

when an alliance is formed between the union and the community. We must support the right of the community to control their own schools in the same manner as is done in the rest of the United States. Community control of schools may be properly defined as vesting in the local school boards chosen by the community the right to determine all matters concerning educational policy. This must include the right to hire and dismiss personnel, the right to determine allocations for school construction, curriculum, as well as the whole range of rights necessary to properly administer an educational system. It is just as important that the UFT support the right of the community to control its schools as it is for the UFT to oppose the racism and apathy which has led us to our present state in education.

### Community Control & Teacher Protection

Many teachers are concerned that under a system of decentralized and community controlled schools, teachers will not be afforded the same protection from arbitrary and indiscriminate firing which now prevails. The NEW COALITION affirms the right of teachers to be protected from these evils. Nevertheless, we cannot overlook the fact that so long as there is a feeling on the part of the community that some teachers and the UFT are hostile to their aspirations and efforts to improve education for their children the problem of teacher protection will remain with us. In the last analysis, real protection will come in the process of cementing an alliance with the community.

### No Teacher Protection

It must not be overlooked that lack of teacher protection is not a new phenomenon in New York City. The present UFT leadership has never fought to attain contractual rights for the defense of non-tenure teachers. The Board of Education's present power and practice of dismissing non-tenure teachers is just as arbitrary as that which the UFT leadership accuses the community of claiming. But President Shanker has never seen fit to oppose the Board during contract negotiations on this issue. He has fought only against the so-called arbitrary action of a community which at this time has absolutely no power over the matter. It is common knowledge that hundreds of teachers are either summarily dismissed or given involuntary transfers by the Board of Education every year. Aside from what amounts to an arbitrary hearing for these teachers, they have no protection whatsoever.

### Taylor Law

President Shanker's policy of "mass resignation" as a substitute for a strike in September was inevitably unsuccessful as a gimmick to evade the strike-busting Taylor Law. There can be no substitute for a forthright attack on the Taylor Law in alliance with the rest of the labor movement. The position of the UFT in refusing to call for a referendum of the membership on this question further demonstrated that the UFT leadership is not concerned about conducting a real fight against the Taylor Law. The NEW COALITION reaffirms the right to strike without subterfuge and without apology. Instead of relying on the good will of the legislature and men like Anthony Travia to fight the Taylor Law, we must seek to build action stemming from the powerful and united forces of the labor movement. Instead of following such a course, the UFT administration, even refused the support of other public em-

ployee unions in our schools. Only when the UFT in alliance with the labor movement as a whole, begins to exert its own independent political and economic power, can we expect to carry on a real fight against legislative and other attacks on our union.

### Union Democracy

The NEW COALITION views with great concern the recent statements of President Shanker indicating that disciplinary measures are in the making for opposition groups within the UFT. We affirm the right of minority groups within the union to speak out in support of their ideas. When this right is denied to the minority the strength of the UFT as a whole will be severely undermined. The UFT has grown considerably in the past several years. Because of its great size it has developed a bureaucracy which is fast becoming as depersonalized and disinterested as the Board itself. For this reason it becomes imperative that the UFT maintain democratic structures within the union that provide for the maximum participation of the rank and file.

### Black Teachers & UFT

Hundreds of black teachers have left the UFT in the past year. There is no doubt that the union needs these teachers and that they need the union. If we expect to win them back, we must develop policies and activities which demonstrate that the UFT understands and supports their aspiration. Unionism must not appear as placing them between the community and the UFT. The UFT's support to the black movement in the South is not sufficient. It has for too long ignored the problems of black people in our own city. When in 1963 the UFT refused to support the school boycotts organized by the black community, it was but a first sign that it was not concerned with the real problems with which it was confronted. Since that time the attitude of the UFT leadership has changed little. Teachers in New York need one united union which is willing to fight for all its members as well as the student and the community. If the UFT administration does not reverse its present attitude of hostility towards the efforts of minority people to control those institutions which affect their very lives, we cannot expect black and Puerto Rican teachers to remain in the UFT.

### Aggressive Foreign Policy

The UFT must call for a renunciation of an aggressive foreign policy which forcibly attempts to impose the will of the United States on those underdeveloped nations of the world which seek to shape their economic and political life in ways that do not correspond to our liking.

We regard the present war that the United States is waging in Vietnam as an immoral, illegal action which has now reached genocidal proportions. This war has already produced the unspeakable slaughter of more than a million Vietnamese and 25,000 Americans. In addition, it has diverted much of this nation's human, financial and technological resources to promoting death and destruction, rather than utilizing them to create the conditions for the elimination of poverty and racism and for building a more humane society.

It is our firm belief that teachers, both as trade unionists and members of the general community have a responsibility to call for the immediate termination of American intervention in Vietnam.

# Education for Revolt

**Jules Greenstein**

The following article was written in January of 1967, but the analysis and conclusions are so sharply relevant to the crisis in the New York City school system today that we reprint it with no apologies and no changes. Two years ago, no one could predict that 'community control' would become one of the most volatile issues in America's urban centers, or that the New York City teachers' union would play a major reactionary role in opposing the ghetto movement. Greenstein scarcely mentions the teachers' unions, implicitly assuming that they would play a passive role, neither supporting nor opposing radical teachers. Nonetheless, the actions of radical teachers in the UFT -- opposing the strike, forming a working coalition with parents and community organizations to keep the schools open, organizing the New Coalition in the UFT, against the Shanker leadership and for real union militancy -- demonstrates conclusively the viability of Greenstein's perspective. The current crisis lends urgency to the call for radical college graduates to enter the public school systems, and to enter the teachers' unions.

To anyone who has participated in the rent strikes, construction site demonstrations, or any of the many other community action programs in the Northern ghetto, the difficulties of organizing and sustaining action there have become only too painfully clear. The model of industrial union organization which at first glance appears so attractive as a paradigm for action fails at crucial points. It soon becomes apparent that, while the factory integrates people, bringing them together for a common purpose and placing them in a common plight, poverty atomizes people and turns them against each other. The factory worker is faced by a specific force, management, which he must confront directly if he is to improve his wages or working conditions. Regardless of background or ideology, he soon realizes that he can only confront this opponent effectively through union organization. To the 'poor', however, it is by no means so clear as to who the enemy is and how to combat him. There is no 'boss' to point a finger at; the ghetto inhabitant perceives, not a single enemy, but rather enemies all around him. He sees the enemies above him: the mayor, the bureaucracy, the slumlord, the cop, the school board, the welfare department, and the entire power structure. But the tragedy is that he sees not only these real enemies but others as enemies: the family on welfare, the junkie, the unsanitary tenant, and even his neighbor's children. When the enemy is a clearly identifiable person or group, one can organize and attack; when the enemy seems to be the world, it is hard to avoid retreating in despair and frustration. While the structure of the factory leads workers towards organization, the social dynamic of the slum tends to lead people into disunity and despair.

All this is not meant to imply that community organization on a neighborhood basis is impossible or even fruitless. Such projects have had and will continue to have important consequences in the ghetto, sustaining the vitality of the Movement, and engendering the atmosphere of hope and self-confidence which is the precondition for social change. Rather, what is meant is that without a more cohesive social force to provide the nucleus around which the welfare clients, unemployed, and poor can organize, efforts at community organization are little more than holding actions. The failure of today's labor movement to act as such a nucleus has been a chief disorienting influence on the American left. And more than one radical organization has sought a means to fill the vacuum created by this failure.

There is, however, one neglected institution in the ghetto which does integrate rather than atomize people, which can provide an organizing nucleus as well as indirectly affecting the level of consciousness of the workers and poor. That institution is the school.

In many ways, the school resembles the factory: large groups of individuals are brought together and confronted with a power source which frustrates them and appears omnipotent, but which is nevertheless sharply defined, clear to see, and susceptible to pressure from below. The school even goes beyond the factory in providing a social milieu, the classroom, in which the expression of ideas is, to a limited extent, allowed. Young people have traditionally served as a catalyst for social action by their elders, and it is in the schools where young people are brought together. If students in the ghetto secondary schools can be organized to demand a voice in the decisions which govern their lives, they can certainly provide a powerful force in organizing the entire ghetto.



Perhaps even more important in the long run is the fact that all workers must first go through the school experience. It is in the school that society tries to precondition the young worker-to-be for life in the shop by teaching him the habits, attitudes and values required for the smooth functioning of the economic system: dutiful obedience to a group presumed to operate with his welfare at heart but over which he has no direct control; aspirations to a view of success which is presumably reached by the proper manners, speech, and dress; consent to spending a day in enforced activity which may appear meaningless; and the sense of one's own importance in changing the fundamental way in which the system is organized. To at least some extent, the failure may be attributed to the school experience. This is not to say that the school is some all-powerful conditioning agent. In fact, the school is grossly inefficient even in its pursuit of its repressive goals. Rather, it is the absence of an experience of successful revolt against irrational authority, with the self-confidence and organizational sophistication that such an experience brings, which is the millstone about the worker's neck. It might make a considerable difference in the future if a generation of young workers were to enter the shops with a background of school experience which had radicalized rather than demoralized them, which had taught them to question constantly rather than to obey uncritically, and which had convinced them of their own ability to control the forces which determine their destinies.

In brief, there are numerous advantages, both short and long term, which could be gained if radical college students directed more of their efforts to organizing in the secondary schools. What is not immediately apparent is how such organizing should proceed. Young radicals today, perhaps more than ever before, are aware that social change must come from within the institutions affected and from below, not from outside or from above. But, whereas the New Left student might choose to become a worker in a shop, he cannot become a high school student again. How, then, is organization from within and from below to proceed? The answer is through teaching.

The failure of large numbers of radical college students to become secondary school teachers is, to some extent, surprising since so many have made great personal sacrifices to participate in the Movement and many are desperately seeking post-college jobs where they can contribute most effectively to fighting the establishment. It seems likely that this failure is due to some fundamental misconceptions about teachers and their potential role.

Perhaps one misconception about teaching is a consequence of carrying the factory-school analogy too far. The teacher, like the factory foreman, is viewed as part of the establishment and teaching is perceived as merely another of the numerous traps by which the society transforms young radicals into its wardens. There is no doubt that this picture fits present-day realities and that many teachers may perceive themselves in this role. But the current level of consciousness of teachers should not be taken as limiting the potential of the teacher's role. A foreman is explicitly hired by the employer to coerce workers into producing more than they are otherwise willing to produce, but the teacher's social role is broader and potentially more constructive. A humanistically oriented society could dispense with foremen, but not with teachers. American education is based on many contradictions and hypocrisies. Democratic values are professed while the curriculum is autocratically imposed on the teachers. The development of intrinsic motivations in students is espoused while the school is structured so as to impose primarily coercive motivating procedures. The teacher is in a position either to go along with the taskmaster role imposed by the system or to rebel against it in the interests of really meaningful education. The latter alternative may jeopardize his job but, with organization and support from students and others, is at least possible.

### *Education factory*

Another misconception about teaching held by New Left students may stem from their intuitive, and quite healthy, distaste for elitist solutions. To young radicals who have learned through bitter experience on the campus to distrust the conservatizing forces of age, there is something naturally revolting about teachers leading or organizing students anywhere. This leads to sentiments in favor of extending a formula of 'Student Power' to the secondary schools and to some embarrassment about how to deal with the problem of student control at the elementary level. The fact is that whereas students may lead their teachers into action in the Universities, teachers usually have to take the initiative at the secondary school level because of the organizational inexperience of the students. What is required, of course, is neither a 'follow me because I know better' approach nor indoctrination, but rather a genuine effort to help students formulate and develop their own ideas about how they can make the school meaningful in their lives and in offering whatever advice and leadership the students may call for. Democracy and frankness, when pulled out of the educational cliches, are potentially radicalizing forces in and of themselves.

At least as damaging as the notion that education is intrinsically a swindle has been the liberal myth that it

is a panacea. To many liberals, such social evils as poverty, ignorance, war and prejudice can only be eradicated by education. The causes of poverty are located by them not in the exploitative economic system but in illiteracy and the failure of the ghetto home to provide children with middle class attitudes, values, and motives. Their solution has been to focus their attention on preschool programs of 'compensatory education' to counteract 'cultural deprivation'. This approach has attracted many New Left college students who are interested in education to the Headstart projects and elementary schools. Insofar as these programs have misled teachers into the belief that early education alone can change society and that the remodeling of ghetto children along middle class lines is desirable, they have performed a disservice. Even where these attitudes have not prevailed and the teaching programs have been successful in humanizing the school experience and raising literacy, the gains are soon washed away by the deadening and punitive procedures the child encounters as he goes through the elementary grades. Most dangerous of all, insofar as such a philosophy of education views the parents and community solely as sources of 'cultural deprivation' which must be 'compensated for', it leads the teacher into viewing the parents as enemies. Since, in the elementary grades, the children do not represent an independent force with which the teacher can ally himself, he finds himself isolated and opposed to the educational bureaucracy and parents alike.

### *Insurgent alliance*

The past failure of a radical movement to develop among teachers has disoriented parents and other community organizations which are attempting to transform the schools. Not only are teachers and students forced into opposition to each other by the educational system, teachers and parents are also forced into mutual distrust and antagonism. If truly democratic control over an institution means participation in the decision making process by those whose lives are directly affected, then three groups must share power and control of the schools: teachers, students, and parents. Without such a tripartite alliance, the likelihood of any meaningful struggle against the educational establishment is slight. Yet, in most school boycotts and demonstrations, there has been little consultation with students who, unfortunately, have been largely viewed as objects of education rather than as participants. Not only are teachers typically not consulted; quite often they, rather than the school administration, are viewed as the enemy. Such an attitude on the part of parents is understandable. As black parents, for example, seeking to take control of their schools away from a white power structure that controls them in a semi-colonial fashion, they are faced with a predominantly white teaching staff which has thus far been the most apparent agent of that power structure.

In the absence of enough Negro teachers to staff the schools, the community groups seeking black power are placed in a quandry. To change the schools, it appears to them that they must first fight against the white teachers who appear as the establishment's representatives. But if teachers are the enemy and education cannot proceed without them, then all hope must be lost. In demanding the right to hire and fire teachers, the community groups further alienate the teachers by threatening their just rights to job security. Their approach has been to restrict their demands to changes at the top, at the level of the school board or the local school administration, rather than to develop a program which might win teachers over into an alliance with them against the educational power structure.

The failure of the tripartite alliance to develop cannot, however, be laid at the doorsteps of the parents. Quite a different program of community demands would be raised if there were a strong, militant group of teachers willing to work together with parents in fighting the bureaucracy and, at the secondary school level, willing to work with their students in fighting for their demands. The teachers must provide the cement of the alliance. Without their active support, parent struggles for improved education are doomed. Without their active participation, student rebellion against the school is directionless. Teachers who share their students' distaste for the hypocrisy of the power structure and their anger over the meaningless curriculum and punitive rules can have considerable weight in transforming isolated acts of vandalism, rage, and defiance by students into organized, directed protest. Just as the parents need the support of teachers to press their demands for control from within the school, so do radical teachers need the support of the parent and community groups to support them from outside. Since time immemorial, students and teachers have rebelled against the inanity of the system in sporadic, isolated actions. The result has usually been expulsion or the sack. The only hope the student has is the support of the teachers and the only hope the teacher has is the support of the community.

What is required, then, is not isolated but organized action. College students must prepare to teach in the ghetto secondary schools and must coordinate their placement and activities so as to maximize their effects. Radical Teacher Organizations must be developed to discuss the ways of implementing the tripartite alliance by contributing their ideas for action to community groups, developing their own ideas for effective educa-



tion, and assisting in the self-organization of student groups.

It must be kept in mind during the development of such a movement that the chief goals are the radicalization of the three groups affected: teachers, parents, and students. In the course of the struggle, education is bound to be improved. But the situation cannot be improved by a romantic view of educational reform as the cure for all the problems of an exploitative society. Such a program of developing a cohesive group of radical teachers and the formation of parents and student alliances cannot be developed overnight. A start must be made, however, for the radical college student looking for a useful role in the Movement combined with some creative expression of his own interests. Preparation to teach Social Studies, English or some other secondary school subject which would permit him to genuinely encounter his students' thought about school and society, can provide that start. In the most fundamental sense, these are times in which only radicals are fit to teach.

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