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Black Liberation Perspectives

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the Transformation Caucus

Black liberation is inextricably linked to the socialist revolution. Racial oppression in America is based on capitalist exploitation. There can be no end to black oppression without an end to capitalism. Only socialism provides the possibility of constructing a society free of racism, a society in which blacks can live in equality.

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The struggle for black liberation is a prerequisite for the attainment of the socialist revolution. At present the divisions between black and white workers are so great, black oppression is so all-pervasive and as a consequence black distrust of whites stands so much in the forefront of black consciousness, that unified working class revolution is impossible. Unity of black and white workers is a prerequisite for proletarian revolution. That unity can occur only on the highest possible level, on the basis of raising black's to full equality with white's. Unless the bridge is made--- unless the working class takes up the banner of black liberation--- there will be no socialist revolution in America. It is vital for both black and white workers that that bridge be made.

Finally, there can be no bridge, no unity of the class except in the class struggle itself. Outside that struggle the inevitable tendency is toward isolation and parochialism of the various sectors of the working class. It is the struggle itself and the conscious intervention of revolutionaries in that struggle that tends to expose to the workers their real interests, the nature of the state, and their need to link up with other sectors of the class. It is through that process of struggle and through that process alone that new social relations can begin to take shape, attitudes change and a sense of class consciousness can develop--- meaning a conscious understanding that the battle is one of class arrayed against class, oppressed against oppressors, and that the only resolution to that battle can be the overthrow of the ruling class and the end to all class exploitation. The role of revolutionaries today is to further that process and press the necessity of a determined working class struggle for black liberation and the socialist revolution as the only means of accomplishing it.

EXPLOITERS AND OPPRESSORS

What stands out foremost in black consciousness is the history and present existence of racial oppression--by all class and all political forces within white society. The whole history of blacks in America is one of shared oppression. All blacks have been common recipients of that oppression, though slavery of black workers and farmers who suffer both national and class oppression have gotten the worst of it; and virtually all whites, irrespective of class have participated in and benefitted in one way or another from black oppression.

Exploitation of black labor by ruling class whites is at the root of

black oppression in America. It was for the purpose of constructing and maintaining a social system based on the exploitation of labor that the ruling class created and developed an elaborate system of racial oppression that included the vicious ideology of racism. Racist ideologies and institutions were established, strengthened and extended, usually in response to challenges to the right or ability of the ruling class to exploit labor. It is the exploiters who were primarily responsible for and beneficiaries of the system. Nor was it simply a case of their having initiated a system which then went outside their hands. It is true that racism -- both ideas and institutions took on a life of their own over which no one had control. But it is also true that at critical periods in American history the ruling class has been responsible for massive increases in the depth, character and extent of racist oppression that blacks have been forced to suffer. The main periods in which this process has taken place were the enslavement period, the revolutionary war period, the abolition movement, the Civil War-Reconstruction period, the populist movement, and the period of industrial class conflict. Following the enslavement period, during which racism was developed as an ideology to legitimate the degradation of black labor, these increases were a reaction to the threats presented to the ruling class' control over labor for the purpose of countering attacks on the exploiters' right of ability to carry out exploitation. They were instituted specifically for the purpose of either suppressing the blacks or of doing that and in addition of dividing the work force and thereby degrading both black and white labor. In either case these attacks on black people also tended to involve an attack on white workers and farmers as well, and insofar as they were successful, to degrade the latter and to worsen their standard of living.

The historic significance of all of these efforts is not only that the ruling class is primarily responsible for the creation, maintenance and extension of racist oppression; not only that it derives the greatest benefits from that oppression. It is also that the racial hostilities which have come to divide the working class are a crucial tool in its efforts to maintain itself as the ruling class. Thus, although they might make gestures to alleviate the racist oppression blacks face when confronted with a militant mass movement, they are fundamentally committed to its maintenance. That is so particularly in times of class upheaval when the necessity to prevent class unity becomes all the more crucial to them.

White workers have had a contradictory relation to blacks. They have been both oppressors of blacks and opponents of their oppression. Neither of these contradictory actions was simply a mistake or error; they both follow from the relation of white workers to exploitation.

The tendency toward intra-class conflict is one of which Marx was aware. He knew that a competitive social system like capitalism not only tended to set class against class, but to set individuals against individuals in a continual battle for jobs, prestige, income, etc. As he put it

in one place: "The separate individuals form a class only in so far as they have to carry on a common battle against another class; otherwise they are on hostile terms with each other as competitors." (The German Ideology, pp.48-9) And just as capitalism provides the material basis for pitting individual workers against each other, so it also provides the basis for pitting entire sections of the working class against each other. Thus, the racism of the white working class is not simply the result of racist education or ruling class ideology. It is that; but it also reflects an awareness of real benefits gained by it. The existence of these benefits and of the awareness of them on the part of the white working class tends to inhibit class struggle on the part of white workers, which is the aim of the ruling class.

But what is also true and is usually lost sight of is that white workers have and fight for these benefits as a way of alleviating their exploitation in a social and economic system based on exploitation. Because capitalism tends to maintain a pool of unemployed the job security of all workers is threatened to varying degrees. One response of white workers has been to protect their jobs by artificially restricting competition for the available jobs. In this context racial restrictions and the racism which was developed to defend the very system of exploitation against which they are fighting are quite naturally adopted.

Racist practices shield white workers from fears of unemployment and lay-offs because the disproportionate burden of these is carried by the black working class. Last hired and first fired for blacks means greater job security for whites. Similarly, within the plants racism means that whites get the better and easier jobs; the skilled trades, whether in craft or industrial unions are still overwhelmingly white.

Furthermore, the ideology of the society maintains that people get just rewards for their ability and efforts. A person's measure, then, becomes how high he or she has ascended in the social scale. Workers and lower class people generally are able to derive satisfaction from knowing that they are not on the bottom, that there are people below them. Thus, racism serves the purpose of providing white workers with a perverted sense of worth and dignity in a society that otherwise denies that sense to them.

All of this means that because of racism there is an artificial floor which keeps whites as a group from sinking to the bottom and prevents blacks as a group from rising. But the divisions between blacks and whites have kept the bottom for both of them lower than it might have otherwise been. Insofar as white workers have tended to accept the structure as a given (or felt no alternative possible), or were satisfied with it they have tended to act in a racist way. Furthermore, because of the more direct control that lower class whites had with blacks, particularly after slavery; and because of the more direct threat that blacks represented to the prestige and economic well-being of the lower class whites; and of the more di-

rect and apparent gain to the lower class whites of racist ideology and practices, relations between the two were particularly explosive and tinged with deep and bitter hatreds.

At the same time there has been an important counter-tendency running through American history. Capitalism pits individuals against one another in a continual war of each against all, with each person and group attempting to do its best within the exploitative system. Capitalism also tends to unite all workers in a struggle against exploitation. When white workers have fought their exploitation -- whether by attacking the exploitative system as a whole, or partially by attempting to change the terms of exploitation -- they have tended to see the necessity to reach out to blacks.

Thus it was only those white workers who did not take a craft but rather a class point of view, who opposed the whole system of wage slavery, that also opposed the slave system and favored black emancipation. Organizationally, this tendency was manifested in varying degrees in the National Labor Union which fell apart shortly after it was formed, the Knights of Labor, the IWW and the CIO. In particular the last three organizations found it necessary to take up questions of black oppression that went beyond trade union questions, or those pertaining directly to work.

Thus, for example, The Freeman, a black paper in New York City, reported in 1886: "The Knights of Labor in session at Richmond (Va.) at their opening session last Monday took Southern prejudice, arrogance and intolerance by the throat and gave it the most furious shaking it has had since the war." What caused the remarks was that a New York delegation which had one black miner was refused entrance into a local hotel. All the delegates then determined to stay with black families, stating "...they would only go where their colored brother was admitted on the same footing." (Damm, The Black Press, p. 222)

Acts such as these which began to address themselves to the broader aspects of black oppression were both forced upon the white workers by the blacks as the price for black cooperation, and they were an expression of the ideological commitment of the more conscious sections of the working class to black equality. In fact, for all its vacillations it has been through the agency of working class struggle against exploitation that the greatest advances against black oppression have been made.

Although these movements were able to register real gains for blacks they were ultimately either thoroughly defeated, or only able to make small (though significant) inroads for the working class. The basic system of exploitation remained intact, and the momentum of the movements broke down. As a consequence the basic fact of a brutal system of exploitation within which each individual and group was thrown on its own resources remained. The political significance of these facts was that, the movements to the contrary notwithstanding, the dominant tendency in American history among

white workers in their relations with blacks has been racism and racist oppression.

It was the derailing of the last of these movements -- the CIO-- that set the stage for the current situation. The CIO made real gains for blacks. But the movement very quickly began to be tamed under the wartime regime. It rapidly stopped being a crusading movement which promised significant social transformations; its leaders, under the guise of a national emergency entered government control boards and forbade strikes, etc.

As the economy tightened during war production, a few blacks were upgraded to fill vacancies. The frequent response of white workers was to strike in opposition to this change. The employers sought to break the strikes and frequently took the opportunity to blacklist strikers, a practice with which the trade union officials at times cooperated. Few union leaders made any positive efforts to get blacks in (in auto they only began going into the plants in large numbers in the mid 1960's; there are still virtually no blacks in the skilled trades) or to win white workers over to support for upgrading blacks. (For the union leaders and for the Communist Party such an effort was not possible, given that they were supporting the status quo).

The result of the failure of the CIO to go beyond trade unionism was its inability fundamentally to alter racial politics in America. The post-war period saw a working class conservatized by prosperity and disillusioned by Stalinism. The result was the acceptance of the status quo, the return to the dog-eat-dog existence under capitalism which, as argued, promotes racist tendencies among white workers: racism became again the dominant current within the American working class.

The problems created by this history were only compounded by the actions of the most conscious sections of the working class, the revolutionary socialists.

The attitude of even the revolutionaries within the Socialist Party was quite simple -- and thoroughly inadequate. Blacks were merely workers. The black question was only a labor question and the solution to black oppression was synonymous with the solution to class exploitation. In fact, the socialist movement considered any special appeal to black people as contrary to the spirit of socialism. Debs, the best of that tradition stated: "... there is no Negro question outside of the labor question -- the working class struggle. Our position as socialists and as a party is perfectly plain. We have simply to say: 'The class struggle is colorless.' The capitalists, white black and all other shades, are on one side and the workers, white, black and all other colors, on the other side." (Eugene Debs Speaks, p. 93)

As should be obvious, this attitude at best disarmed the socialists and made it impossible for them to come to grips with the totality of black oppression, or to develop the strategy that could develop a united class

movement. At worst, it failed systematically to campaign against either racist oppression or racist ideology. As a result, racism ran rampant, even within the Socialist party.

The Communist Party had a better position on blacks, having been instructed by the Communist International to adopt the Bolshevik method toward oppressed nationalities to blacks. But the Stalinized party was no more capable of carrying through this line with integrity than it was any other. The line toward blacks shifted and changed according to the needs of the Russian bureaucracy just as it did toward the whole of the working class. The result was that a whole generation of black workers and intellectuals became disillusioned and cynical not only toward Stalinism, but toward revolutionary socialism, with which they identified Communism.

C.L.R. James recounts the story of how George Padmore, the highest black official in the Comintern broke with the Stalinists when they announced their popular front line in 1935: "And George told me that they had now told him that they were going to make friends with the democratic imperialists, Britain, France, and the United States, and that future pro-Negro propaganda should be directed against Germany, Japan and Italy, and played quite softly in regard to the 'democracies'. Padmore said, 'But that is impossible.' He said, 'Germany and Japan have no colonies in Africa, so how can I say that the Negroes in Africa must be emancipated, but they have friends in the democratic imperialists of France and England?' They say, 'Well, that is the line.' He said, 'Well, that may be your line, but that is a mess; and packed up and left.'" (Radical America, Vol. II #4, 1963, p. 25)

For all their failings the revolutionaries generally fought most consciously and consistently against the oppression of black people. Unfortunately, their consciousness on this question was backward. The overall impact of these experiences could only serve to deepen the antagonisms and distrust that divided black and white workers, and to carry any hopes of black-white unity even further from realization. The result was defeat for the working class, victory for the ruling class. Acceptance by white workers of racist ideology and failure to appeal to blacks for class unity meant worse living and working conditions for all workers, as well as the inexcusable history of misery for black people.

AN OPPRESSED NATIONAL MINORITY

It is this history of racist oppression which has welded black people into an oppressed national minority. Blacks were marked by their color, and that color made it possible to develop a whole ideology of racial inferiority. In its most developed form that ideology even proclaimed that black people were a distinct species from whites. This notion helped to legitimize the continued enslavement of blacks, and the slavery experience itself served to reinforce the idea and to further stigmatize blacks. Their color made assimilation impossible and thus has forced blacks into an historic condition of continuing oppression which can only end by ending the conditions that gave rise to it: the racist capitalist system. Thus, black people have been shoved into the position of being a permanent racial minority.

For political purposes the meaning of this experience is fundamentally the same as that of an oppressed national minority. The shared experience of all blacks of racist oppression and the shared participation of all classes of whites in that oppression created the basis for blacks to view themselves as a distinct people set apart and in opposition to another people: the white racist oppressors. They share a consciousness and an experience not fundamentally different from that of the Irish in relation to the British, or the Poles in relation to the Russians. Their history is completely different from and runs in opposite directions from that of the rest of Americans.

It has been through a continual effort to end and overcome their racist oppression that blacks have created a political history -- a history that has made them the vanguard and most militant fighters of many progressive social movements in this country.

Unlike the general tendency that Lenin observed for America to "grind down" nations and create a homogenous society, the opposite tendency occurred among blacks. They did not arrive in this country with a group identity; their separate individual cultures were purposely broken up to prevent concerted action. What took place was the welding of the black groups together in opposition to the white oppressors: beginning with slavery was the process of building a culture and consciousness.

That process built upon certain basics that pervaded African culture (in much the same way that it is possible to speak of European culture). It was extended in the post-slavery period in which many of the earlier forms of oppression and repression were retained. As blacks moved into the more central sections of the economy they had totally different experiences from the immigrant ethnic groups. For the latter the ghettos served as way stations on the road to acculturation and assimilation. But, for blacks they are permanent fixtures into which they are forced. Tremendous struggles are required either to get token sections out of the ghetto or to expand the ghetto itself and thereby at least ease some of the congestion.

Blacks in America have gone through a whole set of historical experiences during the past three and one half centuries which have created a national self-consciousness. The black community has its base in and is fundamentally created by the racist oppression of blacks and their resistance to it. It is necessary to begin with that understanding.

In the North blacks are usually forced into ghettos because they cannot move wherever they want. In Chicago black migration outside the ghetto is met with a wall of fire bombs. Public housing is overwhelmingly black because whites refuse to live in intergrated housing (except for the liberal middle class). The resulting tremendous overcrowding and high rents for worse facilities are the result of the fact that the white community in its entirety -- state realtors, bankers, building contractors, bourgeoisie, middle class and working class -- do not want to live with blacks and force blacks to live in ghettos.

In the ghettos blacks receive an inferior education in the schools with less spent per pupil for racist reasons, with an education taught by racist teachers. They face an occupying foreign army, the police force, which self-consciously represents white people, which lives outside black communities, which oppresses blacks in ways entirely different from the oppression of white working people. Black people face a welfare system designed to demean them, to split up their families, and to put them in a subservient position fitting to the white conception of black subservience.

In the economy blacks still participate to an extent in a separate, racist labor market with a job ceiling to it. They often do not get jobs in the same way, are not eligible for the same jobs, enter different job channels, are barred in reality if not in law from the highest, best paying, most prestigious jobs. Even when the economy expands blacks do not get their due share of the new jobs, but they do get twice their share of unemployment.

What black people are forced to cope with are not simply overtly racist acts of discrimination and oppression, though there are plenty of those. They also face what the black movement of the 1960's called institutional racism. Independently of individual racist ideas and actions, the economy and social, political and cultural institutions function so as to specially oppress black people. Given the widespread existence of racist attitudes in America today and the position of blacks at the bottom of the society, racism is built into the very marrow of the bones of this society and this fact is graphically demonstrated in any number of ways.

Malcolm X provides us with examples of this phenomenon in his autobiography: the social workers who destroyed his family and who were partially responsible for driving his mother insane did not necessarily do so because they were "evil" or self-consciously seeking to maintain black subordination. The pursuance of their own cultural values, which they not only assumed to be superior but saw as the only possible arrangement led them constantly to pressure Malcolm's mother. "The monthly welfare check was their pass" says Malcolm X, the key which gave them the power to enforce their will and to demean his mother, and ultimately to drive her insane.

Similarly, the teacher who told Malcolm to forsake his plans to be a lawyer ("...you've got to be realistic about being a nigger. A lawyer -- that's no realistic goal for a nigger. You need to think about something you can be.") was not only expressing his racism, He was also expressing his view of the overwhelming reality of the society. One must either accept that reality or attempt to smash through it.

The very nature of the institutions encourages racist attitudes and behavior, and makes it difficult to resist them. For example, teaching in a ghetto school tends to foster racist attitudes, even among "idealists". The individual teacher who accepts the framework of the educational system, does not oppose it, and thereby ends up taking responsibility for it is pressed in

a racist direction even if the school administration does not intentionally foster racism.

Moreover, the results of past generations of racism makes the institutions function in a racist manner as well. Thus, blacks have been for years systematically kept out of the job market. As a result, when lay-offs take place, because blacks have low seniority they tend to get laid off first. Thus the economy, in its normal ups and downs is racist (to take one example).

The machine grinds on in such a way as systematically to degrade and oppress black people and to maintain that degradation and oppression. As a result, black workers bear the same relationship to white workers that Lenin spoke of in comparing the workers of the oppressor and oppressed nations:

"Economically, the difference is that sections of the working class in the oppressor nations receive crumbs from the superprofits the bourgeoisie of the nations obtains by extra exploitation of the workers of the oppressed nations. Besides, economic statistics show that here a larger percentage of the workers become 'straw bosses' than is the case in the oppressed nations, a larger percentage rise to the labor aristocracy. That is a fact. To a certain degree the workers of the oppressor nations are partners of their own bourgeoisie in plundering the workers (and the mass of the population) of the oppressed nations.

"Politically, the difference is that, compared with the workers of the oppressed nations, they occupy a privileged position in many spheres of political life.

"Ideologically, or spiritually, the difference is that they are taught, at school and in life, disdain and contempt for the workers of the oppressed nations." (Lenin, "A caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism", Works, Vol. 23)

The black response has been two-fold: on the one hand a history of heroic resistance punctuated by frequent angry outbursts of mass upheaval; on the other hand the creation of a network of closely-knit relations that created a solid community even in the urban ghettos.

Especially important in this regard is the black church, which has never had the same function in the black community as it has in white society. The church has always been and remains to day at the center of the black community. To a significant extent social life revolves around it. It has historically been and remains today one of the few black institutions thoroughly controlled by the black community, and as such at least some church leaders have been continually involved in resistance.

The very material basis for the popularity of black capitalism derives from the cohesiveness of the black community. Success in this society derives from success in capitalist enterprises. Poor blacks often feel an obligation to strengthen black capitalists, their people, as part of the success

Of the black community. ~~Notofuabp~~that they should succeed in the white community but develop their own economy.

Because black culture is largely a culture of resistance to oppression, organizations of resistance have had a wide currency in the black community and have tended to help knit that community together. The ideology of "soul" which expresses a common experience of oppression and the efforts to surmount that oppression is one conscious formulation of the apathy that blacks feel for (and often act out toward) one another.

Moreover, the history of black people has been characterized by increasing self-consciousness. As their power in the society increases, and as they come more into the center of the society both geographically and economically their sense of national oppression does not decrease. Rather, their consciousness of their racial oppression and their resentment against it become greater, not less. And it has been and will be precisely in the periods of the greatest social tumult that black consciousness will come to the fore.

The result of all of this has been to weld blacks into an oppressed national minority. In any but a mechanical sense, black people possess most of the characteristics of a nation (though not a nation state). Specifically, they have a separate and distinct culture, common traditions, a community and a self-consciousness of themselves as members of a distinct people set apart from the rest of society, as well as an awareness of their common plight, as distinguished from the rest of the society. All of this is based upon objective conditions which created these phenomena and continue to reinforce them: the all-pervasive, all-inclusive, living reality of racist oppression which no black person can escape in this society.

Does this mean that blacks are a fully finished nation? No. They are not. Lacking a common, separate territory and a separate economy they are not a nation (and certainly not a nation state), but an oppressed national minority. Moreover, because of the lack of these important characteristics the tendency is not toward becoming a finished nation, though that possibility is by no means excluded, including their taking territory.

DuBois described the situation as one of two warring souls: "One feels his twoness -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings . . ." (Souls of Black Folk, p. 17). The sentiment was echoed in harsher tones by Malcolm X: "Being born here in America doesn't make you an American . . . No, I'm not an American. I'm one of the twenty-two million black people who are the victims of Americanism . . . And I see America through the eyes of the victim," (Malcolm X Speaks, p. 26).

The question of which direction for blacks is as yet unresolved. But the fact that national self-assertion and even nationalism is not today in the forefront of black struggle is not necessarily a happy circumstance. It reflects, as much as anything else, the current backward state of the whole black movement. As Trotsky put it: "When today the Negroes do not

demand self-determination that is naturally for the same reason that the white workers do not yet advance the slogan of the proletarian dictatorship. The Negro has not yet got it into his poor black head that he dares to carve out for himself a piece of the great and mighty States. But the white workers must meet the Negroes halfway and say to them: "When you want to separate you will have our support." (On Black Nationalism, pp. 17-18)

As the class struggle intensifies black consciousness will not collapse into a generalized class consciousness -- not should socialists urge it to do so. Rather, blacks will make the greatest demands in those periods upon the society in general and upon white workers in particular. Revolutionary socialists should encourage and support this healthy tendency, and lead it because it provides the only possible basis upon which the white workers can be forced to confront black oppression in all its dimensions even if doing so initially intensifies racial hostility. It provides the only possibility of constructing an understanding among white workers of the necessity for the complete liberation of black people, and thus for attaining the unity between black and white workers which is a prerequisite for the socialist revolution.

In the long run what determines the outcome is the actions of the whites. To the extent to which black oppression continues, or increases, the likelihood of the historic option of separatism being taken increases. To the extent that white workers adopt a position of championing black interests as part of a class-conscious strategy, and thereby present a real solution to black oppression this alternative is likely to be avoided.

A SUPER-EXPLOITED SECTION OF THE WORKING CLASS

Black workers face a dual oppression. They share the national oppression to which all blacks are subject, but that oppression is compounded and intensified by their class oppression as workers. They are a part of the working class but because of their national oppression their class experiences are qualitatively worse than those of their fellow workers. Not only do they face prejudices, discrimination, degradation and the deprivation of their rights, but poverty, poor health and huge unemployment rates as well. Not only do they suffer the speed-up, unsafe working conditions, and the political powerlessness of their class, but their oppression as a people means they are the least likely to get jobs, and when they do get them they get the worst, and they are the most frozen out of the political system. It is the oppression of blacks as a people that forces black workers to sell their labor power at less than its value as a commodity, i.e., forces them to be super-exploited.

It is their dual oppression, combined with their social weight inside the black community and inside the working class that makes black workers into a key agency for the black liberation struggle, and for the socialist revolution.

The social weight of Black workers is even greater in the black community than is the weight of the working class in American society as a whole.

The black petty-bourgeoisie is quite small (though it has grown substantially over the decades) and the bourgeoisie is almost non-existent. Their own independent strength is correspondingly small.

As a result of the overwhelming dominance of the working class in the black community the locus of struggle for black liberation has an inevitable tendency to move to the working class. That was the direction of the black movement of the 1960's before it crumbled. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers, which was born out of the Detroit insurrection was the most significant organizational manifestation of this tendency. It was Martin Luther King's recognition of this tendency that led him to lend his active support to striking sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, where he was murdered.

Moreover, the black petty-bourgeoisie can be won to support for working class leadership precisely because it has a shallow base and is not, in most cases, based on the exploitation of black labor, and because its existence depends on the economic health of the black community. It can be so won when the working class presents itself as a viable leadership with a program for solving the social crisis (which is only beginning to emerge) and when it demonstrates the determination to carry through its program against all opponents. This is true of the petty bourgeoisie in general; it is even truer that the black petty bourgeoisie can be won over to the leadership of the working class because socialism opens the door to liberation from racist oppression. When glimpses of that liberation were presented by the social dynamism of the CIO movement many petty bourgeois leaders and institutions rallied behind it. The NAACP and many black leaders who played a significant role in encouraging black workers to join the movement.

In previous working class upsurges blacks were on the fringes of the economy, both in their geographical concentration and in the jobs they occupied. Today, because of their changed geographical and occupational concentration, blacks are more powerful than they have ever before been.

They are concentrated in the cities, the political, economic and cultural centers. One third of the whole black population of 22 million is concentrated in the 15 major cities. More and more, central cities are coming to have black majorities.

During the 1960's blacks began moving in large numbers into the basic production industries: auto, steel, packinghouse, electrical. They constitute significant percentages of the work forces of those industries. In many places they are majorities, even huge majorities of plants; elsewhere, they often constitute large majorities. Moreover, among civil service workers, teachers and other public employees, blacks are a large part of the work force.

In the CIO upheavals white workers were forced to take into account the needs and desires of black workers. Their failure to do so in previous occasions had led to disastrous defeats, most notably in the great 1919

steel strike and the lesson of those defeats had been learned. Unfortunately, even in this relatively favorable situation black workers did not put forward and demand of the whole working class a program to end all aspects of the national oppression of blacks. Nor was the labor movement likely to develop such a program independently of blacks advancing it.

Today, in their far more powerful position, with their heightened consciousness due to the black struggles of the 1960's, it can be expected that blacks will be unwilling to compromise on black questions and that they will be unwilling to limit their concerns to the job. Rather, as the class struggle intensifies, they will advance and demand support for a program to end the national oppression of blacks.

Black workers, with their strategic situation in production and services, are capable of fighting for community needs, such as housing, by using their organized power as workers. They can more effectively defend the black community, both by building workers' militias and by carrying out job actions and strikes that threaten the power of the corporations and government to keep things running. Such actions, of course, require political organization.

Black workers can, should and must take the lead in the struggles against national oppression. They are the only class capable of leading that struggle uncompromisingly, and of enlisting the active aid of white workers in order to carry through that struggle to its completion -- i.e., through the socialist revolution.

White workers can be won to those struggles through the class struggle because no movement of the working class can get anywhere unless it comes to terms with black needs and demands, and because the dynamic of that struggle tends to raise their consciousness, tends to create a class consciousness that overrides the racist consciousness, particularly if there are revolutionaries there to draw the lessons. In the class struggle white workers are forced to work with black workers, to recognize them as allies and to understand the need for their support. But black support doesn't come free. Its price is the espousal by the white workers of the cause of black liberation.

Furthermore, blacks are in the position to be the vanguard of the workers' struggle, and in doing so to direct it toward black liberation.

Black workers, feel both their oppression as blacks and, as part of the American working class feel their oppression as workers most intensely. Because of their advanced social and political consciousness, they are in a position to articulate the needs of the whole working class, and to take the leadership of the working class struggle. They must do so, welding the struggles together and building a united movement committed to black liberation and the socialist revolution as the only way to attain it, committed to the socialist revolution and black liberation as the only way to reach it.

The necessity is to win black workers to an understanding of their task; for that a strategy is required.

THE RIGHT TO SELF DETERMINATION STRATEGY

"The worst crime on the part of revolutionaries would be to give the smallest concessions to the privileges and prejudices of the whites. Whoever gives his little finger to the devil of chauvinism is lost." (Trotsky, On Black Nationalism, pp. 62-63)

". . .if the white man doesn't want us to be anti-him, let him stop oppressing and exploiting and degrading us." (Malcolm X Speaks, p. 25)

Given the history of black oppression in America, the role of the working class and the revolutionary left is the struggle against that oppression, and the consciousness of blacks regarding that history, the problems that face revolutionaries are the same as those which have historically divided workers of the oppressed and oppressor nations. White workers and the revolutionary left have an enormous historical legacy to overcome in order to attain working class unity.

It is that history and its continuation into the present which create the nationalist tendencies among blacks. Consciousness of that history is, if anything, exaggerated by the absence for the past thirty years of a working class movement fighting against racist oppression and ideology. Seeing whites -- all classes of whites -- as their oppressors, a natural tendency is to opt for a political strategy, nationalism, that encourages reliance solely upon blacks, and on all blacks at that, and that sets them in struggle against all whites. Various expressions of that strategy have included tendencies toward separatism, pan-Africanism, black capitalism, or other efforts to carve out a black colony; or black 'exclusiveness' toward whites -- the belief that it is white workers who are the real enemy or the refusal to act in class solidarity with white workers or to appeal to whites to join blacks in a class struggle and in the struggle against racism.

All of these are unacceptable to us. They are utopian and/or reactionary, or simply thoroughly inadequate, and we must say so to blacks. These nationalist strategies and ideologies compete with the point of view that blacks can and should lead and ally themselves with white workers. They are counterposed to our perspective of black workers leading in the class struggle and winning white workers to support for black liberation. At the same time we recognize that nationalism has an important progressive character: it is and has been the vehicle in which black struggle against oppression has been carried out, the healthy black rage against oppression has been carried out, the healthy black rage against their oppressors expressed, and black pride developed.

Our task is to devise a strategy which can break blacks from those nationalist tendencies and can win them to a class approach. It must be a strategy which can unite blacks and whites on the basis of full equality, on a basis that does not, in any way seek to maintain the subordination of

blacks to whites. Any such strategy must, as Malcolm X stated, "see America through the eyes of the victim" and address itself to the issue of black oppression in such a way as to guarantee to blacks that any movement of the working class will take the issue of black liberation as seriously as do blacks themselves.

The appropriate starting point for any such strategy must be that developed by Lenin for overcoming the divisions between the Great Russian workers and workers of the Ukraine, Poland, Georgia, Armenia and all the other nationalities imprisoned within the Russian empire. That strategy of the right of nations to self-determination was articulated by Lenin in dozens of works. Briefly, the main points of that strategy are as follows:*

It was necessary to break workers of the oppressor nation from their nationalism and win them to support for the national struggles of the oppressed nation. That would then make it possible to win the workers of the oppressed nation away from their nationalism and from their own bourgeois oppressors.

The problem is that the oppression of workers of the oppressed nation is both national and class. The bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation puts forward a program of struggle along national lines to end their oppression, a program which would permit it to become the exploiter of its working class.

Insofar as the working class of the oppressor nation benefits from and participates in the national oppression, appeals to the working class of the oppressed nation to reject nationalism and to adopt working class internationalism will ring very hollow. But, insofar as the working class of the oppressor nation breaks with its bourgeoisie and clearly and forthrightly supports the national rights and struggles of the oppressed nation against its own bourgeoisie (that of the oppressor nation) it points out to the working class of the oppressed nation that it has international allies and that its enemy is not the oppressor nation but the international bourgeoisie. Under those circumstances the working class of the oppressor nation then has the right and the credibility to say, "you shouldn't do 'that' but rather 'this'. You shouldn't be for unity with your national bourgeoisie but rather for unity with us -- overthrow your bourgeoisie." But without having proven oneself such statements are the statements of an enemy.

It is important to note that Lenin's policy was to win the working class of the oppressor nation to internationalism as a way of winning the working class of the oppressed nation. That was because the nationalism of the oppressed nation was based on that of the oppressor nation and not vice-versa. Unlike the nationalism of the oppressor nation, that of the

*Note: The strategy is presented here in summary form; for a more complete exposition see the Trautman "Black Liberation" document in Bulletin # 36.

oppressed nation was based on its perceiving a unified national oppressor -- the working class of the oppressor nation being implicated in its national oppression. This can only be broken through by ending that unified national oppression.

Furthermore, the nationalism of the oppressor nation is only reactionary: it is the fight for privileges, for the right to subject other peoples. For workers of the oppressor nation it is the fight to participate in the spoils that come from the oppressed nation. But the nationalism of the oppressed nation has a dual character. It has a reactionary character, as do all nationalisms. But it is also a vehicle for struggle against oppression, during the struggle against national oppression, even when the socialist revolution is imminent or taking place this progressive role is its dominant and overriding characteristic.

The recognition of this distinction which was the basis of Lenin's policy is vital. Trotsky made it clear that it applied even in regards to Spain in 1931 when a revolutionary situation existed: "At the present stage of developments, with the given combination of class forces, Catalan nationalism is a progressive revolutionary factor; Spanish nationalism is a reactionary imperialist factor. The Spanish Communist who does not understand this difference, ignores it, does not advance it to the front rank, but on the contrary comes up its significance risks becoming an unconscious agent of the Spanish bourgeoisie and being lost to the cause of the proletarian revolution." (The Spanish Revolution, p. 110)

What follows from this analysis is that the working class of the oppressor nation, including the right of self-determination, the right to secede. For them not to do so would be to put themselves in the camp of the oppressors, and to drive those workers into the hands of their own national bourgeoisie. On the other hand, if they do it it means that they are rejecting any benefits garnered off the backs of others and have placed themselves firmly in the camp of the oppressed.

It means further that they have the credibility to politically urge the working class of the oppressed nation to break from their nationalism and to adopt a class approach. In order to do this, however, their support must be unconditional (but not, of course, uncritical). Otherwise the old chauvinist relation is maintained: that is, whites say to blacks, "we support your struggle only when you struggle over what we think you should be struggling for." Once again, as Trotsky said in regards to Spain:

"What is the danger of petty bourgeois national illusions? That they are capable of dismembering the proletariat of Spain along national lines, which is a very serious danger. But the Spanish communists can successfully fight against this danger in only one way: by pitilessly denouncing the violence of the bourgeoisie of the ruling nation and in that way winning the confidence of the proletariat of the oppressed nationality. Any other policy would be tantamount to supporting

the reactionary nationalism of the imperialist bourgeoisie of the ruling nation against the revolutionary democratic nationalism of the petty bourgeoisie of an oppressed nation." (Ibid)

The main outlines of this strategy for building a united class movement are directly applicable as a strategy for uniting blacks and whites. Whereas we oppose black nationalism as an ideology or as a strategy for black liberation, we recognize that it is based upon white chauvinism. Black nationalism has been and still can be the vehicle for mobilizing the black masses in struggle for democracy and against their oppression. But white racism is only reactionary: it is the basis for black nationalism. Therefore, from the point of view of revolutionary socialism we direct our main fire against white racism as the means of breaking down black nationalism. Not to understand that and to act on the basis of it would be to capitulate to racism; it would be, to paraphrase Trotsky, (see p. 16-17) becoming an unconscious agent of the bourgeoisie and being lost to the cause of the proletarian revolution.

The white working class must be broken from its chauvinism, racism, and brought to the understanding of its unity of interests with the black working class, and it must become the champion of black equality, openly spurning all efforts to grant it small advantages at the expense of blacks. It is on that basis that it will be possible to counteract the nationalist tendencies in the black movement. It is no accident that, for example, at a time when the Garvey movement was sweeping the country it found no response among black longshoremen in Philadelphia organized by the IWW on the basis of full equality with whites.

The key task that guides our activity in the present period and which is an absolute necessity for building a mass revolutionary socialist movement in this country is that of building a black liberation tendency in the working class. Such a tendency could then give working class leadership to the black liberation movement and could win white workers to the struggle for black liberation. More specifically, what is necessary is the creation of a tendency among white workers that consciously understands the necessity for themselves and all white workers to join in the struggle for black liberation and which does join that struggle and seeks to involve the other white workers.

Such a movement will fight for all black as well as working class demands, no matter how small, that improve the conditions of the black masses. It will put forward and fight for a full program for the end of all black and working class oppression. This program will consist of the full range of demands: from democratic and partial demands to broader class demands. In keeping with the right to self-determination strategy the aim of this activity is a dual one. It is to begin to provide a solution to black oppression and to point to a full solution: class solidarity and socialist revolution. It is also to create the basis for black workers to see white workers as their allies and thus to create a unified working class movement.

The right to self-determination strategy implies more than the workers

of the oppressor nation fighting to end national oppression. As Lenin clearly argued, the right to self-determination means nothing if it does not include the right to secede and to form an independent state: ". . . 'self-determination of nations' in the Marxists' Program cannon, from a historico-economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self-determination, state independence and the formation of a national state". (The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, Works, Vol. 20, p. 400).

The reason for this should be obvious. Self-determination is a mockery if it does not include the right to rule oneself, or to determine under what state one will be ruled. Without such guarantees no oppressed nationality could take the claims of camaraderie advanced by the working class of the oppressor nation seriously.

The necessity for the support for this demand which is the ultimate extension of the strategy of the right of nations to self-determination is no less applicable to black people than it is to any other oppressed nation or national minority. The fact that blacks do not constitute a majority in any state or group of states, or that they are not concentrated in any one part of the country does not fundamentally alter things, though it certainly affects the outcome. It is more difficult for blacks to separate, and they are less likely to wish to do so. But, as the Jews proved, such circumstances are not precluded.

We expect it to be unlikely that the black population will opt for separation as an alternative. We encourage them not to do so, pointing out that such separation will not end their oppression and their exploitation, that their real ally is white workers. If nonetheless, despite our efforts blacks demand political independence we stand by them and fight for this right, even while we oppose this exercise of it. We state our willingness to do this today, and we attempt to convince white workers to state their support for this position today. This propaganda is not, however, our dominant theme today because of the greater salience of the other issues of black liberation.

Adopting this perspective as our task does not mean we are adopting the white-skin privilege theory or methodology. A political program oriented toward white workers which is based on asking them to 'give up their white skin privilege' or on smashing their living standards or organizations so as to destroy 'the material base for their acceptance of the white skin privilege ideology' indicates a lack of understanding of the exploitation of the working class. Racism is embraced by white workers as a primitive means to ease that exploitation. A successful program requires focusing worker consciousness on their exploitation by the bosses and not in reinforcing the false consciousness that they are privileged. A successful fight against racism among white workers requires them to begin struggling against their own exploitation.

The very act of collective struggle which is denied by capitalist ideology begins to strip away false consciousness. Workers begin to recognize

themselves as a class against the bosses and as the struggle deepens, the recognition of this distinction overshadows racial differences. The enemy also shows himself to be powerful and unrelenting. The success of the struggle then comes to depend on winning more mass support and allies. Overcoming barriers which divide the working class (such as racism) in this context turns from an idealist's dream into an immediate necessity for those involved. There is, of course, no guarantee that this will happen; certainly not automatically. Here, as in other circumstances, revolutionaries can play a crucial role of leading, helping to expand consciousness of the nature of society, pointing to the need for a united class struggle and fighting racism, but all within the context of supporting and expanding a struggle which the white workers can see and feel is their own in the immediate sense. Indeed, what advances have been made against racism have occurred when the American working class itself was locked in militant struggle. In large part, the racism of the white working class today is testimonial to its failures to engage in militant struggle in its own interests.

But, perceiving the above to be the case does not mean that we do not commence forthrightly, from the beginning, the propaganda and agitational battle for black liberation. We must initiate struggles on all levels insofar as possible, and support (and attempt to win white workers to support) all struggles for black liberation initiated by blacks.

The unique set of historical events that occurred in the post-war period have presented us with peculiar problems. The conservatism and apathy of the working class as a whole led it to drop out of the scene as a leader in struggles for human liberation. Internationally, this development set the stage for the emergence of the peasantry, under the leadership of the Stalinists as the leading opponents of capitalism. In the United States a whole series of movements developed, sparked by the black movement, that grew up outside the working class.

Even today in a period of general lull the black movement is still the most dynamic, most militant. While the consciousness of black workers has been enormously affected by the black movement, white workers remain quite backward. Thus, black workers will tend to be in the leadership not only of black movements but of the working class as a whole.

This phenomenon, however, should not blind us to the fact that the task remains to win the white workers to the struggle for black liberation. While the road to accomplishing this task is leading the white workers through the struggle against their own exploitation, the basic task remains. Black workers, more advanced than whites, are in a position to play a major role in implementing this strategy -- without subordinating their just demands to the conservative consciousness of whites. Our perspective is to win black workers to this strategy. But the fact remains that the conservative, racist consciousness of white workers is the biggest single obstacle to blacks being won to the socialist revolution. Until white workers demonstrate tangibly to blacks that they stand unequivocally for black liberation there is no reason to believe blacks will fight for a new revolutionary regime in which they will be a minority, subject to control

and potential oppression by the whites. Trotsky phrased it correctly: "The Negro can be developed to a class standpoint only when the white worker is educated." (On Black Nationalism, p. 17)

At the same time, simply putting forward the strategy (and actively attempting to implement it) provides us with a means of winning the most advanced blacks to collaborate with us in carrying it out.

THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM

The struggle on the part of blacks for their democratic rights, for political, social and economic equality is a necessary part of the struggle for socialism. The former struggle helps to enrich the socialist movement, to raise the consciousness concerning black oppression. It serves also to raise the consciousness of the black masses concerning the nature of capitalist exploitation and the capitalist state. That struggle tends to impel the black masses against the capitalist state.

Any attempt to reduce the struggle for black liberation to the class struggle or the struggle for socialism -- to say that the one ipso facto is the other -- is incorrect. It is only by means of waging the struggle for democracy in the most uncompromising manner that it is possible to guarantee that the working class socialist movement will take up its banner. Anyone who thinks otherwise must explain away the whole history of the working class movement, including its revolutionary socialist wing, in relation to black people.

Some comrades claim to side with Johnson (C.L.R. James) in his discussions with Trotsky on this topic, in which Trotsky advanced basically the position in this document. They would do well to examine the position he advanced to the Workers' Party in 1945. In that document James had advanced the Leninist method regarding oppressed nationalities as the key to the black struggle in America, and he stated the correct relation between the struggle for democracy and the struggle for socialism. His position was as follows:

"Such is the development of American capitalist society and the role of Negroes in it that the Negroes' struggle for democratic rights brings Negroes almost immediately face to face with capital and the state. The Marxist support of the Negro struggle for democratic rights is not a concession that Marxists make to Negroes. In the United States today this struggle is a direct part of the struggle for socialism.

"All serious problems arising from the Negro question revolve around the relationship of the independent mass actions of the Negroes for democratic rights to the working class struggle for socialism.

"In the 2nd Congress of the Communist International, Lenin's theses singled out as examples of the national and colonial question the Irish question and the question of the Negroes in America. This Leninist approach was based upon close study of the economic situation of the Negroes in the United States and the Irish Rebellion in 1916. The whole historical development of

the Negro struggle in the United States and its relations to the social struggles of the revolutionary classes show that the Leninist analysis of the Negro question as part of the national question is the correct method with which to approach this problem. It is necessary, therefore, to have a precise and clear conception of the application of this method. The most concentrated example of it is Lenin's treatment of the Irish rebellion during World War I.

"Lenin wishes to illustrate the specifically nationalist struggle of the Irish rebellion in its relation to the socialist struggle of the British proletariat against British imperialism. He uses the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905 which took place exclusively within the national boundaries of Russia. He uses also, not the struggles of the nationally oppressed minorities, but the struggles of the petty bourgeoisie, the peasants and other non-proletarian, non-class groups in relation to the struggle of the Russian proletariat. We have therefore a very concrete illustration of the applicability of the method to environments and classes superficially diverse but organically similar.

(a) "'The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a bourgeois democratic revolution. It consisted of a series of battles in which all the discontented classes, groups and elements of the population participated. Among these were masses, imbued with the crudest prejudices, with the vague and most fantastic aims of struggle; there were small groups which accepted Japanese money, there were speculators and adventurers, etc. Objectively, the mass movement broke the back of tsarism and paved the way for democracy; for that reason the class conscious workers led it.'"

"Within the United States the socialist revolution will ultimately consist of a series of battles in which the discontented classes, groups and elements of all types will participate in their own way and form a contributory force to the great culminating struggles which will be led by the proletariat.

(b) "'The socialist revolution in Europe cannot be anything else than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry of the oppressed and discontented elements. Sections of the petty bourgeoisie and of the backward workers will inevitably participate in it -- without such participation, mass struggle is impossible, without it no revolution is possible -- and just as inevitably will they bring into the movement their prejudices, their reactionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But objectively they will attack capital, and the class conscious vanguard of the revolution, the advanced proletariat expressing this objective truth of a heterogeneous and discordant, motley and outwardly incohesive mass struggle will be able to unite and direct it, to capture power, to seize the banks, to expropriate the trusts, hated by all, though for different reasons....."

"In the United States social revolution is impossible without the independent mass struggles of the Negroes, whatever the prejudices, the reactionary fantasies, the weaknesses and errors of these struggles. The proletarian composition of the Negro people and the developing labor movement offer great opportunities for a continuing reduction of the prejudices of the Negro people.

(c) "'The struggle of the oppressed nations IN EUROPE, a struggle capable of going to the lengths of insurrection and street fighting, of breaking down the iron discipline in the army and martial law, will sharpen the revolutionary crisis in Europe infinitely more than a much more developed rebellion in a remote colony. A blow delivered against the English imperialist bourgeoisie by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more effective than a rebellion in a remote colony.

by a rebellion in Ireland is a hundred times more significant politically than a blow of equal weight delivered in Asia or Africa.'

"Blows delivered by an oppressed national minority so entangled in the social structure of the United States as the Negroes, possess a political significance of greater importance in this country than a blow delivered by any other section of the population except the organized proletariat itself.

(d) "The dialectic of history is such that small nations, powerless as an INDEPENDENT factor in the struggle against imperialism, play a part as one of the ferments, one of the bacilli, which help the REAL power against imperialism to come on the scene, namely, the SOCIALIST PROLETARIAT

"Within the United States, the Negroes are undoubtedly powerless to achieve their complete or even substantial emancipation as an independent factor in the struggle against American capital. But such is the historic role of the Negroes in the United States; such today is their proletarian composition and such is their interrelation with the American proletariat itself that their independent struggles form perhaps the most powerful stimulus in American society to the recognition by the organized proletariat of its real responsibilities to the national development as a whole and of its power against American imperialism.

"The ideal situation is that the struggle of the minority group should be organized and led by the proletariat. But to make this a precondition of supporting the struggle of non-proletarian, semi-proletarian or non-class conscious groups is a repudiation of all Marxist theory and practice. Thus it is utterly false to draw the conclusion that the independent struggle of the Negro masses for their democratic rights is to be looked upon merely as a preliminary stage to a recognition by the Negroes that the real struggle is the struggle for socialism." (Emphasis original) (James, minority resolution to Workers Party, New International, January, 1945, pp. 15-16)

We concur with James' exposition. It has been graphically vindicated through the black struggles of the 1960's and the social impact they had. In the future we expect the black movement to again stimulate others to move into struggle and to reach revolutionary socialist consciousness.

We anticipate that the black movement will be rebuilt largely through the struggle for democratic demands. Indications of this tendency have already appeared: the "trouble" in the Navy, the "disturbances" at Southern University, the continued efforts of blacks to terminate school segregation and inferior schooling for blacks, continuing clashes with the police and the appearance of movements to curb their power.

Today these movements are indications of the fury that continues to seethe, unorganized in the black community. They also set the stage for the more organized movements of tomorrow.

We can expect such struggles to be one of the main focuses of battle. Whether they occur in the community or in the workplace (for equal access to jobs and job security, equality in working conditions, etc.) we support and encourage and lead such struggles. Our attitude toward such struggles is the same as last

same as it is toward all reform struggles. We participate in them not because gains won through these struggles teach the masses their power and thus whet their appetite for more gains; because such struggles raise their consciousness and understanding of the society; because such struggles set an example for other segments of the society to engage in struggle; and because we are not indifferent to the fate of the masses of oppressed blacks.

Often democratic struggles which begin under the leadership of the petty-bourgeoisie can and do have the same impact. But the petty-bourgeoisie are today representatives in the black community of the interests and ideology of the ruling class. They tend either to steer movements in a reformist channel (remaining within the confines of bourgeois democracy) or away from and assault on the heights of power (as in separatist or "cultural-nationalist" movements). Recognition of this tendency does not, however, lead us to avoid participation in movements for democracy which are under petty-bourgeois leadership, so long as we are able to maintain our independence. As Lenin said,

"It is particularly in regard to the political struggle that the 'class point of view' demands that the proletariat give an impetus to every democratic movement. The political demands of working-class democracy do not differ in principle from those of bourgeois democracy, they differ only in degree. In the struggle for economic emancipation, for the socialist revolution, the proletariat stands on a basis different in principle and it stands alone (the small producer will come to its aid only to the extent that he enters or is preparing to enter, its ranks). In the struggle for political liberation, however, we have many allies, towards whom we must not remain indifferent. But while our allies in the bourgeois-democratic camp, in struggling for liberal reforms, will always glance back and seek to adjust matters so that they will be able, as before, 'to eat well, sleep peacefully, and live merrily' at other people's expense, the proletariat will march forward to the end, without looking back.... The party of the proletariat must learn to catch every liberal just at the moment when he is prepared to move forward an inch, and make him move forward a yard. If he is obdurate, we will go forward without him and over him." ("Political Agitation and the 'Class Point of View'", Collected Works, Vol. 5, pp. 342-3)

The aim of revolutionary socialists must be to promote the class independence of black workers and to encourage them to become the leading force in the struggle for black liberation. This task can only be accomplished by the participation of revolutionaries in these struggles. Otherwise we abandon the leadership to the petty-bourgeoisie.

We wage a continuing attack on the petty-bourgeois black leaders not on general grounds but because they do not carry on a consistent fight for black liberation; rather they betray the struggle whenever it conflicts with the confines of the bourgeois economy or state. Black workers, precisely because of the nature of their oppression, are impelled to disregard those limits, and to press the struggle for black liberation regardless of its implications for the status quo. The problem now is to liberate them from the stranglehold of bourgeois ideology which the lengthy quiescence of the whole working class has helped to maintain.

THE STRATEGY APPLIED

The key strategic conception that guides all of our work in the present period is building a black workers organization.* Such an organization is a vital necessity for carrying out the tasks we have outlined. It is the vehicle through which black workers give leadership to the class struggle and press for specifically black demands. Through this process blacks can win white workers to the black liberation struggle. It is the means by which black workers can take leadership of and give class direction to the struggles in the black community.

Given the racism of white workers it is insufficient for black workers to play an unorganized leadership role in a broader caucus: black faces leading a class movement. That is so because there will be no specific means to press for black demands, nor will white workers be forced to confront the self-assertion of blacks as blacks. Independent black organization is our strategic tool for building a movement to end black oppression and to win white workers as allies in that struggle, and to give leadership to the class struggle.

Today and in the past black workers have participated in, even led community struggles. But they have not been politically or ideologically struggles led by the working class or with a working class direction. What is necessary to attain this development is black workers organized as workers. It is only with such organization that the struggles in the black community -- struggles which are necessary, desirable, supportable and led by us -- can become part of the struggle of the working class movement.

As a consequence, our efforts are today directed toward building such an organization. Once again it is the main conception that guides and informs our work. We must regularly propagandize for it in our press. We do so not merely by tacking on a call for it at the end of an article, but by having special articles devoted to it, and by organically building it into our analyses of black oppression and the currents in the black community. We raise it in our leaflets where appropriate. We must produce a pamphlet for mass circulation arguing for such an organization, describing it and its tasks as we see them, laying out the direction which we believe it should take, and presenting our program for it. We attempt to convince our black contacts and associates of the necessity and desirability of such an organization.

Of course, we cannot start such an organization today: at present the state of consciousness, organization and movement is not such to create the basis for it; and our resources are not great enough and we do not have sufficient contacts. Nonetheless, we should project such an organization to our contacts, encourage them to think in terms of it and should look for promotion. Note: many of the ideas and specific formulations regarding the black workers' organization were provided by Kevin Bradley.

sing black recruits who could play the role of travelling, putting out a newspaper, etc. It is likely that such an organization would grow out of the struggles of the black community and of black workers, but not spontaneously. Active intervention, including prior propagandizing for such an organization is necessary. For example, had the Abolish STRESS campaign been made into something real it might have been possible to pull together a black workers coalition out of the various auto plants as a step in the formation of the organization; certainly that would be the line we would be pushing.

The organization should have its roots in local plant caucuses which would in turn be related to city-wide, regional and industry-wide sections. To establish and cohere itself it should publish a regular paper, The Black Worker. With its organized working class base it would be in a position to organize and lead black struggles and broader class struggles in the plants. In doing so it could give concrete leadership to white workers as well as blacks, enter into coalition with white workers, and at the same time appeal for support from white workers for black needs, common respect for blacks, and firmly demonstrate that black oppression can no longer be ignored by white workers.

Such an organization should aim to link up in coalition with white workers and should urge and call for such a coalition. It would lead struggles in such a way as to appeal to whites to join them or at least support them, thus opening the way for future collaboration. It would aim for complete organizational unity when there would no longer be any question of the subordination of black people and black needs or political or organizational domination of whites over blacks, and when blacks themselves no longer felt the necessity for such independent organization. Such unity might or might not take place prior to a socialist revolution.

Short of such complete organizational unity it is desirable where possible without subordinating our political aims in any way to seek out coalitions, united fronts, alliances, etc. with white workers. Included is the possibility of the local affiliate of the black workers organization becoming a caucus within another organization, e.g., a black caucus within the UNC. (In real life, of course, the actual chronological development might well be the other way: that is, a black caucus within an organization affiliating with the black workers organization). We encourage such developments, with the condition indicated above, and recognize that when they become possible they are a step toward the organizational unity of the working class on a principled basis.

In our local work we are in general for the formation of black caucuses for the same reasons given for a national black workers caucus. In some cases (we expect these to be exceptions rather than the general rule, or even frequent occurrences) such independently organized caucuses will not be necessary. That will be the case where the black leadership is recognized, where the blacks are not dominated by whites, and where the blacks feel no need for

an independent black caucus. In those circumstances we encourage close collaboration and organizational unity.

Whether or not a black caucus is formed locally we urge the black leaders in the caucuses in which we are involved to look to being part of one, and to helping one to come into existence nationally and regionally. That is, we should not see the caucus as subsuming black issues into class issues simply because it has whites in it. It should raise, for example, getting rid of racist foremen and ending the assignment of blacks to the worst jobs in addition to waging a general struggle over speed-up. It should be prepared to mobilize black and white workers for community campaigns, such as the Abolish STRESS campaign that never really got off the ground in Detroit. And the blacks should be the local section of the national black workers organization. This is our conceptual direction. Concretely, it may not be possible. Black struggle in the community may require independently organized black leadership; black workers in the plant may have the same attitude. And so a black caucus may be inevitable in all circumstances. We must be sensitive to such possibilities and eventualities.

The basic programmatic goal of the black workers organization is to fight the racist-capitalist system. This phrase expresses the dual nature of black oppression -- racism, the oppression of black people through institutions and the conscious actions of white people; and capitalism, the exploitative system of production for profit at the expense of the working class and inextricably interlinked with racism. Black liberation means the destruction of racism and destruction of capitalism, and its replacement of a classless society where differences of color make no differences to the free interaction and cooperation of liberated humanity. The fight against this system means the strengthening of the black community; it means blacks as a people fighting against their oppression. It means the rebuilding of a black movement.

Blacks have always had organizations of their own, and have a need for them. Whites in this society have shown no sustained interest in fighting for black people. Blacks must organize and wage their own struggle; only when they do this will it be possible to win whites to that struggle. At the same time the black workers organization fights to rebuild the labor movement. Both because they are black workers and because the emancipation of blacks and of the working class as a whole will take the conscious self-organization of the working class, the black workers organization will contribute and take the lead in the transformation of the class collaborationist trade unions into fighting class struggle organizations, dedicated to the uncompromising advancement of the power of the working class.

The black workers organization will organize the black and working class fight through the various organizations it takes part in on the political, economic and social levels, combatting racism on the job, on the part of the company and the union. The black workers organization activists and caucuses they participate in will fight as well to make the unions serve the workers.

The struggle will not be limited to normal trade union demands nor to a narrow trade union focus. Thus the fight for 30 for 40 will be tied explicitly to fighting unemployment, and especially designed and argued for among blacks and whites as a way of bringing more blacks into the work force. There will be an attempt to organize political strikes when feasible. For example, in a case like that of Angela Davis which raised considerable interest in the black community, political defense committees would have been organized in the plants, propagandizing on the issue, holding rallies, collection money, etc. The campaign would have said (assuming it had enough strength to do so) "if she gets convicted we're going to shut this place down." A fight should be raised to make Martin Luther King's birthday a national holiday. Already many black workers take the day off. Committees could be organized a few months before his birthday to propagandize about it, organize political rallies and work stoppages on that day, demanding the company and the government make it a paid holiday for all workers. A real opportunity exists here to build political strikes, much in the way the labor movement built May Day.

In general the black workers organization will fight on economic and race issues in the shops, use the economic power of blacks in basic industry as a political weapon, try to link the various black struggles of the unemployed, welfare mothers, mobilize workers from a caucus to back them up, etc.

The thrust of such a black workers organization is a political one: it poses immediately not merely demanding a reform or a set of reforms, but contesting for power in the society in order to carry those reforms through. The ruling class and its political parties cannot be expected to do so. Rather, the more significant the reforms are the more necessary is the revolutionary transformation of the society. The formation of political parties contesting for power raise the necessity of attaining power and begin organizing and training people to do so. By exposing the limits of the bourgeois capitalist system they help to dispel people's reformist illusions.

We encourage the natural tendency of the black workers organization toward a political formation. The organization should run political campaigns and should aim to set up a political party. Such a party would, of necessity be a black political party. Our aim is that the leadership of the party be the black workers organization.

The programmatic basis of such a party is of a character similar to that of the black workers organization but advances it to the political realm. It advances both a program to end black oppression and takes up the general fight for working class needs: for example it would fight for equal educational facilities for blacks -- upgrade all education -- tax the corporations to pay for it. It will fight to make it illegal to discriminate against blacks in hiring, firing and upgrading and to end all government interference in the workers right to strike. It will launch a battle to end Nixon's multi-phased so-called economic policy and to press for a working class and oppressed peoples' economic policy to end inflation, unemployment and inequality.

Its further aim would be to break down the bourgeois notion that "politics" is voting and that one's relation to a political party is to register in it and to vote for it. A political party is the expression of needs and interests. Its purpose for existing is to get power to attain certain ends. In order to do so it must, if it represents an oppressed section of the society be willing and able to carry out non-parliamentary, even illegal acts as a part of the struggle for power. Thus the black political party, the political expression of the black movement, would call for mass demonstrations, political strikes and other forms of direct action. It would organize the armed self-defense of the black community and armed workers' defense guards.

Needless to say, in the process of the fight for this program the party would split into a petty-bourgeois and working class wings, into a reformist and revolutionary section. Out of that struggle the revolutionary socialist tendency would emerge newly strengthened.

It is key that the party be based primarily on the black workers organization of which it should be the political expression. It should aim and call for a coalition between the oppressed peoples and the working class movement. Our long-term goal is a united working class and oppressed peoples party. But at present such a party is not likely to be a reality. Thus, a transition stage of a black political party (or an oppressed peoples party) is necessary. We should propagandize for both. In the black community our major propaganda is toward a black party which could link up with a working class party in coalition -- and an argument for the necessity of both. So if a possibility for the latter develops we seize upon it as a step toward our goal.

If a break from the Democratic Party comes independently of the black workers organization we participate in it, support it and contest for working class leadership within it. This is so even if the leadership of the party is petty-bourgeois so long as the party represents a genuine break and is not simply a pressure group on the Democratic Party.

Such a political formation is a step in the direction of a working class and oppressed peoples party, a gigantic step forward in the struggle of black people and of the working class. Just as the organization of black workers is the prerequisite for the unification of the working class, so the political organization of black people under black worker leadership provides the basis for a unified working class and oppressed peoples political party. It is a dialectical process in which blacks cohere themselves politically first and then proceed to unity. The step may be skipped just as the labor party step may be skipped by the working class as it comes to revolutionary consciousness and directly forms a revolutionary party. But our perspectives cannot be based upon any such eventuality.

Such a development would aid substantially in carrying out what has been for eighty years and more one of the key tasks of the revolutionary working class movement: the destruction of the Democratic Party, the historic graveyard of social movements

By contesting for power against the Democratic and Republican parties, the black party breaks people from the two capitalist parties, and opens, in the minds of blacks and of whites, the possibility of breaking with that system. By robbing the Democratic Party of its black base the party would seriously undermine the city and state machines which are based significantly on a black vote. By eroding their power and making it difficult for them to elect candidates it would make the Democratic Party less of a force capable of appealing to and capturing social movements. It would force other groups to begin thinking seriously of breaking, and could help to encourage working class independent political action.

Furthermore, in projecting itself as a contender for power, the black party would be forced to confront the question of how it was to be attained, which would raise the question of allies: who and on what basis? Our answer is that it project itself as the beginnings of a working class and oppressed peoples party, that it point the way to a working class movement as the basis for attaining power. This would help to educate the black movement and to catalyze the working class movement by educating and putting pressure on white workers. Once again, of course a fight for this perspective against the petty-bourgeoisie would be necessary.

To limit black independent political action simply to independent campaigns and to oppose the formation of a party is a mistake. In the first place it is a benighted effort which fails to recognize the tendency toward a party formation inherent in such activity. Secondly and more important such a perspective automatically limits itself to educational campaigns rather than being able to project a contest for power. People are aware that it is parties, not individuals, who rule even in this day of exalted presidential power. Simply to run campaigns would be not to project ongoing (including between elections) presence. That would mean an inability to recruit people and reinforcement of the idea that politics is simply electioneering rather than the maintenance of a regular organization which could lead day-to-day political activity, including calling strikes, demonstrations, etc.

The perspective of limiting black independent political action to "independent" campaigns makes the job of destroying the Democratic Party much more difficult. It ignores the importance of crystallizing political sentiments and movements in organizations. It makes it easier for black opportunists to run such independent campaigns which are in reality pressures on the Democratic Party. Once they accomplish their own purpose they collapse their campaign mechanism; their followers then have nowhere to go but back into the Democratic Party. The consequent organizational collapse that follows such an event often involves a political collapse as well. It tends to erase much of the understanding that the Democratic Party is one of the chief agencies of oppression and not a tool that can be reformed. It also tends to stop the dynamic of others being made aware of the oppressive character of that Party.

The black workers organization and the black political party will take up all issues that pertain to black oppression and inequality in particular

and to working class oppression and exploitation in general. Since blacks are on the bottom of the society they experience most intensely the needs of the working class. Thus any fight for black liberation will, of necessity raise and fight around the general questions. But it is an error to think that the struggle for black liberation and black needs are synonymous with the class struggle and general class needs. We raise both, without in any way subordinating special black demands.

We urge and lead blacks to press and to fight for their demands unremittingly. We accept no excuses: not the "poverty" of a corporation of government, not the difficulty of making the changes, not the resistance of whites to their demands -- there is no legitimate excuse for the continuation of an intolerable situation. Our starting point is the needs of the black masses, not those of capitalism.

Excuses that may be offered demand not capitulation but a stepped-up response.

* A corporation claims it cannot upgrade blacks because to do so would require extra training which the corporation cannot afford? Open the books-- let us see if it can't afford it. If not, nationalize it under workers' control.

* A city cannot afford to provide better schooling for blacks? Take the money from the police budget funds, increase corporate taxation, provide state and national funding.

* A union persistently refuses to allow blacks in and insists on maintaining a monopoly on jobs? Form a new union, preferably open to both black and white workers. Fight to open up the racist unions to blacks and for unity with the black unions: for a campaign to organize the unorganized.

Of course, to raise such advanced demands in anything more than the most abstract propagandistic way requires a mass movement. Had the black movement of the 1960's raised and fought for such demands it could have had a significant impact on working class consciousness.

The main areas on which we focus an assault to end black oppression are the social and economic questions which most affect blacks: jobs, working conditions, housing, welfare, city services, education and police oppression. These are the issues ignored by the civil rights movement which are the key to ending black oppression and which blacks can be mobilized around. Even though black workers organized as workers are the key both to the black liberation and socialist movements, we don't limit ourselves to the work place..

Since the oppression of blacks is all-pervasive much of it is manifested in the black community. Struggles launched in and by that community (the civil rights movement, the ghetto rebellions) were the source of the advanced consciousness of blacks today. It was through the consciousness created by

the ghetto rebellions, for example, that revolutionary black organizations, like the Black Panther Party and the Dodge REvolutionary Union Movement were created. We anticipate that these struggles will continue and will continue to give life to the black movement -- in fact, they will be one key source for restoring it to vigor. We do not wish in any sense to discourage this activity or to counterpose to it working class activity by black workers. Rather, our aim is for black workers to take the lead in all facets of the black liberation struggle, including the struggle in the community.

Our aim is, as Lenin stated it, that the revolutionary socialists should be "...the tribune of the people who is able to react to every manifestation of tyranny and oppression, no matter where it appears, no matter what stratum or class it affects...." (What is to be Done, Collected Works, Vol. 5, p.423)

JOBS

Organize the unorganized is a demand which has special significance for blacks who have been left in the worst jobs and often frozen out of the unions. It should be motivated as such in addition to developing its more general class meaning.

Jobs for all is one of the most fundamental of the programmatic points we raise. We wish to develop consciousness in the direction of united class solidarity that this demand implies. In most cases we cannot raise this demand as one for struggle today, especially among white workers. But the direction affects our propaganda.

No lay-offs also expresses the united class solidarity. Thirty for forty is one means of implementing this demand. We demand and must attempt to win the workers of an understanding of the necessity of a shorter work week for all before any lay-offs.

While we are resolutely for jobs for all and no lay-offs, recognizing that the fulfillment of these demands is what is necessary to fulfill the need of black people for jobs, we do not limit ourselves to these but raise specific demands for black equality. We demand preferential hiring for blacks to attain equality in industries, occupations, plants, etc., from which they have been systematically excluded. There are many blacks who are in occupations and industries that they have only recently entered (or will only shortly be entering). When setbacks come to the economy they are the first to be laid-off, and are thus subject to the greatest likelihood of continuing disproportionately high unemployment. We demand super-seniority for blacks to redress this situation.

The construction unions are racist in their policies. As a rule they refuse to admit other than token numbers of Blacks. Those they do admit are often not treated equally in job allocations. We wage a fight inside the unions for admittance of black workers on an equal basis. Organize the unorganized. We tell blacks who are frozen out of such unions and thereby out of

skilled, high-paying jobs, to form new unions which we encourage to be open both to black and white workers, and to fight for admittance into the racist unions.

All construction projects in the ghettos must take on a quota of black workers. It is in the ghetto that blacks have the power to open up jobs and to begin forcing them open more generally. We opt for quotas not because we especially like quotas but because they are a means of opening up jobs for blacks. Demonstrations, including direct action (e.g., sit-ins at contractors, and contracting corporations and governmental agencies to make the demands). All merchants and businesses in the ghettos must hire quotas of black workers. The government should launch a massive public works campaign. Demonstrations, possible march to Washington.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Workers control over working conditions is the direction in which we wish to point working class consciousness and eventually to lead fights around. We take opportunities to develop workers understanding of this demand and what it means by attempting to relate it to day-to-day experiences in our propaganda.

Associated with this fundamental struggle are a number of concrete programmatic points around which it is possible to initiate struggles today, including reform of the grievance procedure, speed-up, the right to strike over unsafe and rotten working conditions, the organizational strategy of a steward for every foreman and a stewards' council.

We also advance special demands for blacks to rectify inequalities. Blacks are usually assigned to the rottenest, hardest, dirtiest jobs in industry: we demand an end to such practices. Blacks frequently encounter prejudice and discrimination in the workplace: supervisors are often racist and use their positions of power to act out their racist tendencies. We demand the immediate firing of all racist supervisors and the right to strike over racist acts.

HOUSING

What is needed is a full-scale massive housing construction program. To finance it we demand conversion of the arms economy. This demand is once again more of a propaganda demand: it provides the opportunity to raise consciousness about the social allocation of resources and the necessity to tear down the war machine in order to raise the standard of living of the masses of the population.

The charging of outrageous rents for substandard housing in which no improvements are made must come to a halt: for a mass tenants organization to build rent strikes to force down rents and secure necessary improvements; for

mass demonstrations at city halls and state legislatures demanding rent ceilings and standards for all housing. Black people suffer the most from these conditions and this program will be of most concern and interest to them.

Blacks have been shoved into the worst housing. More and better housing is needed at reasonable prices. To get it a number of measures are required: Black people should have equal access to all housing. All real estate tactics designed to victimize both black and white homeowners to end -- for a mass action campaign to end block-busting. Rebuild the ghettos and central cities, which are becoming central slums.

WELFARE

Current welfare provisions are a joke -- or would be but for the human tragedy involved. For complete reform of the welfare system to guarantee a decent standard of living for everyone. No welfare recipients to be forced to scab: only work at union wages under union working conditions.

CITY SERVICES

City services are deteriorating, destroying the quality of life of citizens. Much of this deterioration is occasioned by the fleeing of the white population to the suburbs and the corporations with them, thereby robbing the cities of important tax monies and intensifying the already serious fiscal crisis occasioned by the developing crisis of capitalism.

For a massive campaign to "improve city services: improved garbage collection and pest control; increased medical care: free hospitalization and doctor care, a mass campaign of hospital construction; cheap, adequate, rapid public transportation to and from the ghettos.

We demand these be paid for by shifting the tax burden from the working class to the corporations and the rich. Increase corporate taxation, raise taxes on interest, dividends, capital gains, inheritance. Abolish all sales taxes and other retrogressive forms of taxation; for a steeply graduated income tax above \$20,000.

EDUCATION

The quality of education is decreasing for all sectors of the working population. What is necessary to reverse this trend is state and federal funding of the schools on an equal per capita basis and doubling the school financing as an immediate beginning. For mass demonstrations and direct action to win these demands. Again, the burden of taxation must be shifted.

1 Black schooling is consistently and decidedly worse than that available to whites. Though all public schooling is tending to deteriorate more rapidly. Within school districts funds are still allocated on a discriminatory basis. Black schools are prone to have substitute teachers and poorer teachers, worse facilities, fewer supplies, etc.

An extensive program is needed to upgrade substantially all the schools, and in particular black schools. Any such program must be based on a perspective of blacks not having to wait to attain equality with white schools until such time as the deterioration of the schools ends and the whole education system improves.

We are for democratic parent-teacher-student control of the schools. The black community should have the right to get rid of undestorable teachers (i.e. racists; those who use corporal punishment), in the context of teachers having normal trade union rights. Teachers, especially black teachers in ghetto schools are in a particularly good position to initiate a coalition of teachers, parents and students. They can do so by combining a struggle for quality education with a fight over their own working conditions, both of which are currently on the defense.

We support bussing unless it is opposed by the black community. White bussing is no solution to the miserable education afforded to blacks the fact is that white schools, particularly in the suburbs, are qualitatively superior to the black schools. They are a result of whites leaving the cities and the corporations following them. Blacks should be permitted to partake of the advantages of these schools until better arrangements are made available. We urge the whites to join the blacks in a fight to prevent any deterioration of standards that might occur as a result of the bussing program, and to extend the fight for an improvement in standards.

POLICE

The police are nothing more nor less than an occupying army on the black community. It provides no protection; instead, it is simply the agency of oppression. The proliferation of green beret type squads in the police forces of the major cities together with the stockpiling of advanced military weapons is simply further evidence that war is being waged on the black community because it refuses docilely to accept its subordinate position. We demand an end to this policy.

All police but of the black community. We will manage it ourselves.

Abolish the special "elite" units (STRESS, Tac Squad, etc.). Demilitarize the police: get rid of all armored cars, tanks and special weapons whose sole purpose is to make war on people.

Abolish the independence of the police from the people; for independent citizen's control of police through elected boards and independent elected commissions to investigate and punish charges of police brutality.

For armed self-defense of the black community.

The above is not an exhaustive list of demands for which we fight around the issue of black subordination and class exploitation. It does indicate some of the most central, most important issues. But, no demand to end black oppression is too small for us to champion and fight for.

In the struggle for these demands our perspective is to advance the struggle against exploitation and by means of it to win white workers to black liberation while at the same time waging the struggle for black liberation and not subordinating it. Therefore, in the struggle against unemployment we attempt to win black and white workers to the broader class demands (jobs for all, no lay-offs, 30 for 40, shorter work week for all before any lay-offs) while at the same time advancing the specific black demands (preferential hiring -- which we are for even in the context of jobs for all, and super-seniority, which is unnecessary if the broader class demands (any or all of them) become the focus of struggle and victory.

In carrying out the struggle we employ what we have called the right to self-determination strategy. Take, for example, the demand for preferential hiring. We support and lead struggles for that demand. In addition, we attempt to win white workers and any workers' organizations of which we are a part (caucuses, unions) to support of that struggle. Indeed, a major part of our propaganda is directed at white workers, attempting to win them to support of the demand. We show them the validity of the black point of view and we argue that they should support it from their own point of view. Such an argument can only be made within the framework of the class struggle (the necessity to fight for jobs for all, 30 for 40, etc., the impossibility of doing so without black support; the prerequisite of united, solid black support is equality). We pose such struggles to white workers and point out the necessity for blacks and whites to be allied against their common enemy, the capitalist exploiters. We point out the historic subordination of blacks and their legitimate refusal to continue to tolerate it, and the necessity of white workers to champion black demands if unity is to prevail and workers are to get what they need and want.

Strategically, to win, blacks must move whites. Blacks must form alliances based on self-interest, not love. Out of such alliances mutual respect can develop. We urge blacks to raise class demands in addition to the black demands which have the potentiality of setting the white workers in motion around their own needs, for example jobs for all. If this is successfully accomplished under black leadership the possibilities of winning the whites to support for the black demands are greatly enhanced. However, we should have no illusions and should foster no illusions that advancing demands that directly appeal to the interests of white workers, like jobs for all, will be a talisman that will bring them into motion and/or win them to support for the black demands.

Blacks, however, may refuse to raise the demand of jobs for all. They may feel that they have no obligation to fight for jobs for white workers who often have jobs at the expense of blacks. For blacks to take

this attitude is wrong, destructive of class unity and in an error for the black struggle because it unnecessarily pits whites against blacks where there was a possibility of unity in the fight for jobs for blacks and jobs for all. We say all of this.

But our criticisms are not a reason for failing to support their struggle for preferential hiring or for failing to attempt to win white workers to support for that struggle, although the job is made more difficult.

To refuse to support their struggle because they are refusing to fight for jobs for all is to put the burden on blacks for ending the divisions in the working class. The working class is divided by the racist subordination of blacks, not by blacks fighting for equality. The burden is on the white workers who for years have participated in the exclusion of blacks from jobs and who often continue to do so, and who refuse to fight for jobs for all, including blacks.

To refuse to support their struggle for preferential hiring under those conditions is to perpetuate the old chauvinist relationship that whites only side with blacks when the blacks are fighting to end their own oppression. Particularly at a time when there is no working class struggle for jobs for all taking place it is to subordinate the legitimate demand of blacks for equality to the conservative racist consciousness of white workers. It is to guarantee that in the future blacks will not be won to such an approach. Only unconditional support to the struggles for black equality can provide a bridge to working class unity.

Thus we never ask blacks to subordinate their struggle for black equality to the backward consciousness of white workers in order to obtain class unity. (Such "unity" would be phoney anyway since it would involve one section of the working class being subordinated to another section.) Furthermore, we never make our support for the struggle for black equality conditional upon their raising class-wide demands.

A number of the demands mentioned here have been fought for in one way or another previously under the rubric of "community control." That was the fighting slogan of the late 1960's under which the black masses were frequently mobilized into struggle against their oppression. It reflected the blacks coming to a consciousness of their oppression as a race and their rejection of the white racist domination of every facet of black life. It was a healthy extension of the black power movement which rejected white control over blacks.

Around the turn of the decade, at the time when the black movement was ebbing, the call for community control at times became the cover for attempts to chain the black masses to capitalism through the agency of the black petty bourgeoisie. That tendency became most manifest in Newark when the slogan was used by Baraka as a cover for his efforts to cooperate with the city administration in their efforts to break the Newark teachers' strike.

The slogan, then, like any nationalist slogan of the oppressed nation, has a dual character depending on who is wielding it and for what purposes. We therefore must exercise care in our use of it and never support it when it is used as it was by Baraka in Newark. (What facilitated Baraka's use of the black community in Newark was the failure of the AFT to forge an alliance with and to fight for the just aspirations of the black community, and its narrow trade union conceptions which allowed it to accept support from racist forces).

But caution does not dictate abandoning what was a fighting slogan of the blacks against racist oppression. To do so would be simply to grant an important tool to the bourgeoisie in the same way that giving up the term "socialism" because the Stalinists have so misused it weakens substantially our position, or that counterposing socialism to the black liberation movement needlessly isolates us and strengthens the efforts of the petty bourgeoisie to take the leadership of the movements against oppression. We support community control struggles that are real struggles for black liberation which have the potentiality of developing the consciousness and self-confidence of the black masses. We call for such struggles, putting our own content into them, and thereby enabling us to link up our political conceptions to the slogans which have currency in the black community. In our propaganda concerning community control we must be careful not to pander to illusions about power resting in the community and stress that the fundamental conflict is one of class.

Our general approach to the struggles for equality of the black community is the same as that for black workers. We urge them to extend their struggles to include not only black demands but class demands as well and to urge white workers to join them in the struggle for both. But our support for such struggles is not conditional upon their acceptance of that advice. We support them and we independently appeal to white workers to support them, and we continue to offer our point of view as we struggle alongside of them.

In all of these issues we strive for black workers organized as black workers to take the leadership. In no case, however, do we make black working class leadership a condition for our initiating or supporting struggles over such issues so long as a real battle for black needs is being waged. In those cases we participate in those struggles and fight for working class leadership. We are for this leadership because black workers are best able to carry out a sustained, organized struggle without betraying it and because of the strength they have as part of the working class. This strength is manifested in their own ability to affect production, especially where they are concentrated, and in their ability to involve the whole of the working class in the struggle for black liberation.