

International Socialists
Bulletin - #53 June, 1975

Contents:

Some Information about the Pan-Afrikan and Black Nationalist Left--Kay S.
Perspectives on Black Work and Recruitment in Cleveland--Mike F.
On Responding to the Current Period--Mike P.
Revising the Constitution--E.C.

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE PAN-AFRIKAN AND BLACK NATIONALIST LEFT Kay S.

(Be aware that this information is based on a casual following of newspapers and periodicals for several years. No claims are made for its depth, and quite possibly its accuracy. To say that we have been isolated from the events described is an understatement. KS)

RECENT HISTORY

In the early seventies the left was isolated from mass activity and defeated. For the black left there were two significant differences.

The first is that the defeat of the black liberation movement was much more thorough-going and vicious than that of the anti-war movement.

The second is that this defeat gave new life to nationalism and pan-Africanism in the movement. Pan-Africanism justified and reinforced the isolation and despair of the black left. It said that there could be no solution to racist oppression here in the US without fundamental change on the African continent, and that the only role for US black was to support and assist the continental national liberation movements through anti-imperialist actions.

Through 1971 and into ~~1972~~ 1972 there was very little organized broad activity. It was a period of reaction; the nationalist left was fragmented. It developed study group perspective consistent with its isolation. It had, by and large, a community organizing, serve-the-people perspective.

By mid-72, however, people began looking for activity. Under the banner of the Pan-African Liberation ~~Day~~ Support Committee an African Liberation Day rally was organized in Washington, KC. Over 20,000 people participated.

Out of that action the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) was organized. It became a national coalition of pan-African and nationalist groups. There were several national organizations which belonged, but the depth of the organization was based on the small study groups and local collective that joined in city after city. It appears that at its height ALSC had 40-50 chapters. Most of these chapters were organized through the south and up the East Coast.

Black Southern colleges such as Howard, Fisk and Southern provided a middle-class black intellectual milieu which, for the last 4-5 years, has been the primary and most stable recruiting ground for the nationalist movement.

The important national organizations in ALSC were:

Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBU). YOBU was centered in Greensboro, North Carolina, with a news service out of Wash DC. It has recently moved to DC entirely. It publishes "The African World" which focused on ALSC reportage, student anti-racism struggles, the continental liberation movements, and the boycott of South African exports movement.

YOBU appears to have been the organization which provided both the national leadership and the Southern cadre for ALSC.

Congress of African People (CAP) CAP was centered in Newark, NY J. with small chapters throughout the midwest, mainly industrial areas. Their focus was on the cultural aspects of African liberation, with dance and martial arts troupes, and on community organizing efforts. In Newark, where CAP had an actual base in city politics, there was a conscious and open orientation toward the black middle-class, particularly shop-keepers and other independent businessmen, as well as professional blacks. Throughout this period, however, CAP's leader, Imamu Baraka

(LeRoi Jones), was occupied with his leadership of the disintegrating National Black Assembly, and CAP appears to have only participated in and built ALSC in a haphazard fashion. The Congress of Afrikan People's newspaper is "Unity and Struggle."

Republic of New Afrika (RNA) The RNA was the third national pan-Afrikanist group with chapters in many of the cities ~~xxx~~ where there were ALSC chapters too. However, through-out this period the RNA has been plagued by state forces ripping off their leadership and has ~~xxx~~ run up huge legal bills. They appear to have pulled their entire cadre into organizing an agricultural cooperative among black Mississippi farmers. They have had little impact on the movement since summer, 1974. (Recently the RNA has been making appearance in some Norther cities--Detroit among them. This may mean a change in strategy.)

Black Workers' Congress (BWC) The BWC has maintained a minimal presence in ALSC since its beginning. Its impact, by and large, has been to attend meetings and quote Stalin.

The All-Afrikan Peoples Revolutionary Party (AAPRP) the AAPRP is led by Stokely Carmichael. It is the most conservative organized wing of the movement. The AAPRP says only the liberation of Africa can liberate black people; anti-imperialist struggle is the only struggle. Recently Carmichael spoke to an American Indian Movement group and stated that North America belonged to the red man and that Africa belonged to the black man, so AIM had nothing to fear from black struggles.

The African Liberation Support Committee never had the character of a national organization. The local coalitions character were usually determined by the relative strength of the national groups in each city, and the level of participation of local independent groups. Beyond pan-Afrikanism, which was defined very broadly, most of the groups were ideologically hostile. To develop perspectives that would break through the isolation either locally or nationally meant making decisions that would split the coalition. The ALSC chose isolation from broader political layers of the black community over the previous fragmentation of the black left.

The only types of activities that could be agreed upon were anti-imperialism activities. This generally meant Afrikan Liberation Day activities and specific support to the continental liberation movements, such as the boycott of Gulf and the South African imports boycott movement. Although geographically restricted (mainly cities with port facilities), the boycott ~~xx~~ movements offered the rare opportunity for involvement with black workers, notably New Orleans' longshoremen.

In 1973 the ALSC organized local Afrikan Liberation Day educational and fund-raising activities. Their success is presently unknown to us, although indications are that over \$75,000 was collected for the continental liberation movements.

BREAKING THROUGH THE ISOLATION

The level and nature of activity in the movement could not remain where it was. The previous year, 1972, had seen the remaining fragments of the old movement begin to pull together. The next question, which had to be answered,

was pull together to do what? The black nationalist left began discussing perspectives for liberation in the US. At the same time, the national political crisis and the deepening economic recession began to demand answers and activity.

From fall of 73 to spring of 74 the level of political discussion and debate in the movement intensified tremendously. The result has been the development of Marxism-Leninism as a legitimate political pole in the black left.

The Afrikan Liberation Support Committee planned a national conference at Howard University in Washington DC as its main 1974 Afrikan Liberation Day activity.

There were five main political ~~XXXXXX~~ discussions.

1. Struggle in the United States versus the African Continent. can there be an African solution to imperialism, or must there be an domestic anti-capitalist revolution to defeat it? What is the relationship of national liberation struggles to class struggle? Are US blacks more responsive to the US working class or to world-wide African peoples? Is the solution to the national question a matter of class struggle?

2. Class analysis of US blacks. This was an extraordinarily abstract debate. It didn't rest on what a class analysis of US blacks would be, rather what the effect would be if there was such an analysis. There were essentially 3 positions. First: a class analysis would be divisive and therefore harmful to the unity of the liberation forces. Second, a class analysis of blacks should be divisive because of the existing class antagonisms. Third, a class analysis would be helpful in explaining the dynamic inside the movement.

3. Role of the Black Petit-bourgeoisie. It seems generally accepted that there is no black bourgeoisie. ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~, comparable to the white bourgeoisie. Imamu Baraka, CAP, discussed a "pseudo-bourgeoisie," and believed class formations among blacks were new and probably not reproducible. (NOTE: This is not Baraka's position today.) Owusu Sadaukai, ALSC and YOBU, divides the black bourgeoisie between "national" and "comprador" bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisie is an ally of the black liberation forces, the comprador bourgeoisie is a clear class enemy.

4. Necessity for a national black revolutionary party. Abdul Alkalimat, of People's College in Nashville, Tenn, and --most likely--YOBU, argued for a Leninist Party, democratic-centrally controlled, to lead the entire US revolution. Baraka was pushing Boggs' "Manifesto for a Black Revolutionary Party." Others argued either for a decentralized party modeled on Tanzania's TANU or an international black party.

5. The Land Question. was quickly demoted, in part reflecting the healthy development of a dynamic wing that understood the unimportance of this question. The positions at the Howard University conference were simple. Sadaukai (ALSC & YOBU) argued land is key to struggle when land is key to production; in US capital is key, not land. Baraka (CAP) argued land could become key to production once liberated by black people (again, not his present position). The RNA argued that the land question is actionable today: blacks should seize the land.

Six-PAC

Six weeks later the Sixth Pan-Afrikan Congress was held in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania. The US delegation was quite large, about 100 people with another observers. It could not come to sufficient political agreement to submit proposals or papers on any question. The Nationalist wing of the delegation far outnumbered the "Marxist" wing and apparently refused the debate to the level of "ridding the movement of the scourge of Marxism". Over their objections, however, the congress passed a resolution declaring white workers an ally of black liberation.

The assessment of 6-PAC by the Marxist wing was that the PAC was in danger of stagnation, and of becoming an affair for neo-colonialist heads of state. As the 5th Pan Afrikan Congress in 1945 had taken up the most timely question--colonialism--so the 6th PAC should take up neo-colonialism and imperialism. Two specific criticisms were 1.) no provision to invite "progressive liberation movements to end neo-colonialist regimes" unless recognized by the Organization of African Unity and 2) that a very small amount of agenda time was to be spent discussing non-continental struggles.

CLR James refused to attend 6-PAC because delegation that were in opposition to black heads of state were not seated.

CAP

Throughout this period of intensifying debate the Congress of Afrikan People was organizing for a two day conference on the Pan-Afrikan women's role in the liberation struggle. Through late winter and spring 74, they held several regional meetings which projected organizing a black women's united front or coalition.

The two day conference was in Newark, New Jersey. Over 600 people attended. It was the first major event after 6-PAC. The first session of the political workshop had relatively open debate on the significance of 6-PAC, but afterwards CAP ran the conference with a heavy hand.

In that discussion the RNA waged a fairly effective floor debate, raising the role of land liberation in the struggle today. YOBW was the primary responder, saying the whole strategy was irrelevant to the masses of blacks, and impossible besides. CAP said it wouldn't work because it would just replace colonialism with neo-colonialism. the SWP said nothing.

Most of the discussion was low-level, with many questions from the audience about both terms--neo-colonialism-- and persons--Nkrumah.

In addition, through this period, local CAP's were being re-vitalized. In Detroit CAP quickly became a pole in the left because it was black and it was willing to do the ground work required to bring already political people into activity. It has failed, however, to recruit new forces. This seems to be a pattern.

Anti-repression work is common, often in conjunction with the October League. Community services work--schools, health, anti-inflation--is also common in addition to the Black Women's United Front work.

CAP has attempted work aimed at black workers, but they have been clumsy and ineffectual. They held local "Workers' Solidarity Day" rallies throughout the country that were failures. They appear to have no on-going working class work.

(NEXT: More on Baraka, Karenga, the February First Movement, the "Rip The Covers Off Imperialism" coalition, and the boycott movement.)

Perspectives on Black Work and Recruitment in Cleveland

I) Brief History of Cleveland's Black Community Since 1965

This will not be an attempt to give an exhaustive history of Cleveland's black community, but simply an effort to highlight those events which have led to the present predicament. I say predicament because the political situation in Cleveland's black community presents us with some specific problems. It also provides some outstanding opportunities. We must understand both.

In 1965, Carl Stokes, an up and coming state legislator ran for mayor of Cleveland against the Democratic incumbent, Ralph Locher; the Republican candidate, Ralph Perk; an independent lawyer supported by the anti-integration of the schools forces, Ralph McAllister. Stokes ran as an independent. In 1964, the Rev. Bruce Klunder was killed at the construction site of a new school building in an area close to Little Italy during a civil rights demo and the issue of school integration was a hot one during the mayoralty race. Stokes came in second (Locher-87,833; Stokes-85,375; Perk-41,109; McAllister-22,660). Stokes was supported neither by the Democratic Party nor the AFL-CIO, whose campaign focused around Locher as the only "safe" candidate, i.e., the only white candidate with a chance of winning.

After this close election, Stokes picked up some national notoriety. The White House took an interest and began pushing him as something of a national political figure. He was better than Ed Brooke; he even looked like a Negro! In 1966, the Hough Riots hit. Locher was clearly incapable of dealing with the kinds of crises Cleveland was facing. The election of Stokes became a necessity. The Ford Foundation set up, through Cleveland CORE, a voter education campaign to develop a much stronger black base for Stokes and to begin to build the liberal money/black political alliance that could get Stokes elected. The Ford Foundation had been active in Cleveland since 1961, but after the riots a new direction was needed. In July 1967, the Ford Foundation made its first direct grant to a militant group. \$175,000 was given to CORE for "training of Cleveland youth and adult community workers, voter registration efforts, exploration of economic development programs, and attempts to improve program planning among civil rights groups." The reason the foundation gave for the grants was made clear by McGeorge Bundy who said, "it was predictions of new violence in the city that led to our first staff visits in March." This work in Cleveland became something of a pilot project for the kinds of work which was later pulled together in Gary, Indiana and Newark, New Jersey. The New Detroit Committee was a similar plan which failed. The umbrella group which emerged in Cleveland was called Cleveland Now!

Stokes ran as a Democrat and won in 1967. His opponent was Seth Taft, now county commissioner. The push to get Stokes in was enormous. The Detroit riots hit that summer. Even the AFL-CIO supported Stokes this time around. He was believed to be the last hope to cool the ghetto. Also, Stokes had come forward in the state legislature and backed a number of riot control bills and tough law and order measures. Covering himself on both sides, Stokes was clearly a candidate whose time had come.

That time, however, proved brief indeed. In 1968 the Glenville riots tore apart the coalition that put Stokes in. Fred "Ahmed" Evans, whose small group had received some Cleveland Now! funds, ambushed some policemen, setting off another riot. The white population of Cleveland, never very happy with a black

mayor in the first place, freaked out. More importantly, business money freaked out and a large part of the ethnically based portions of the Democratic Party freaked out.

In order to keep it together Stokes formed, along with his brother Louis, who was by then the Congressman from the 21st District, a formation called the 21st District Caucus. This was simply a Stokes political machine which was separate from the Democratic Party, through which a black united front towards the city was maintained, and through which black patronage was dispensed. The caucus, however, maintained a somewhat ambiguous role vis a vis the Democratic Party. It was technically independent of it, but in many ways was simply a caucus within it. It allowed Stokes a measure of independence, but more important a power block with which to bargain. In many ways it was a very effective mode of operating. Almost the entire black community looked to the Caucus to represent them. The Caucus was flexible enough to co-opt some of the more militant, street oriented, nationalist formations. The most important of these was called the Afro Set, led by Harlles Jones. The Afro Set was used as ushers and body guards for local black politicians during public ceremonies in the black community and to help cool things out when close shaves threatened to explode in the ghetto. In return they got some bread to finance their own education and training programs.

The important thing though was that the 21st District Caucus was an effective patronage machine. For the four years of the Stokes mayoralty (1967-71) Cleveland's black community was able to make significant gains through traditional city hall political channels. People got hired or had relatives who got hired. Blacks who worked in city departments found that their conditions of work improved and more attention was paid to their problems. Certain areas of work where blacks had more or less been excluded, e.g. police and fire, opened up somewhat. In short, the prospect for black advancement through traditional channels did not seem hopeless and the spirit of unity that flowed behind supporting the first black mayor of a major city really engulfed the black community.

The key thing, from our point of view, was that in these years where in other cities black discontent was forced to find new, independent forms of political activity, Cleveland's blacks did not. The entire gamut of organizations that grew up in the auto plants of Detroit under the leadership of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers never even got started here in Cleveland. There were efforts at starting them. Mae Mallory, a black political activist who had fled North Carolina with Robert Williams and who had successfully fought extradition back to North Carolina from Ohio, played an active role in the black community trying to get formations of a similar type started and doing defense work for Ahmed Evans. She knew Hohn Watson and Mike Hamill and others from the League and worked closely with them. There was even a version of the Inner City Voice published in Cleveland for a while. But it never took root. Militancy on the part of blacks within the trade unions or on the shop floor often took the form of support groups for the mayor against the semi-official AFL-CIO attitude of non-support or luke warm support. There was a caucus at the Ford Foundry during the 1871 elections whose sole purpose was to back Pinckney (the 21st District Caucus candidate that year) against the union's endorsement of Carney, a rich contractor backed by the Democratic Party machine.

The end result was that for the Stokes years no independent, working-class formations emerged from Cleveland's black community. The Panthers had tried very briefly to establish themselves in 1969, but were shot out of town

by Benjamin Davis whom Stokes had appointed as safety director. Davis was forced to resign over his use of dum-dum bullets in shooting up Panther headquarters. A black administration and safety director was no protection against the police repression the Panthers faced everywhere else. Indeed, in Cleveland the repression was swift and effective. After the Ahmed Evans incident, Stokes had to be "tough" with black militants and the Panthers were sacrificed. The Muslims have quietly built up a community here. Their businesses have expanded and their membership has grown, but they have never been a strong force in Cleveland politics. There is officially a mosque, but it as yet has no building for itself, although this may change soon. In addition to the Muslims, Cleveland has also seen almost every nationalist grouping at one time or another. They have remained small, sectarian, and unstable, but they have always been around. None, however, has ever grown to the point where it could claim to speak for any sizeable sector of the black community. CORE has not really existed in Cleveland for the past few years, though it did play an important role in the late '60's. CORE in essence dismantled its operations here. Black entrepreneurs really didn't need the kind of independent militancy of CORE since they had some clout at City Hall and in Washington through the Stokes brothers. The NAACP exists here as does the Urban League, but mostly among the wealthier black bourgeoisie. Neither has really chosen to take on political struggles here because so many of their leading lights are involved on the boards and administrative arms of precisely the agencies they would be challenging. The one exception to this is the NAACP's court actions around the school integration/busing issue which is still simmering through the courts. The Afro Set, mentioned earlier, never was a left political formation, but did represent a kind of unbridled militancy which always threatened to overflow the boundaries of acceptability established by the 21st District Caucus. Its members were harrassed and hassled by the Cleveland police even while Stokes was mayor. ~~They were~~ After Stokes was no longer mayor, the Afro Set leader, Harlles Jones, was arrested on a murder charge claiming that he had ordered an Afro Set member killed as a disciplinary action. The trial was a bit hokey, with a long line of ex-con Afro Set members testifying against him. Jones was convicted and is now doing life at Lucasville.

This combination of tight patronage, strong push for a united black community, and severe repression for those groups and/or individuals that broke ranks really meant that nothing serious emerged from the black community except the Stokes machine and the 21st District Caucus. The one exception is the grouping around the Black Unity House, a community service center that runs drug programs, legal aid programs, and the like. They have managed to survive as a service institution with a reputation for blackness and militancy. They will sometimes serve as the voice of groups of blacks seeking redress of grievances against employers, e.g., they took up the complaints of black employees of the Xerox Corp. here a few years ago; against the police, e.g., they held a series of community meetings about police brutality about a year ago; and against community service agencies, e.g., they led the fight to make WABQ more responsive to the black community. But with all this the BUH remains service oriented and has never developed a political base. It is tied to outside funding and is run pretty much as a one man show, headed by Brother Diablo. Eddie Collier, an ex-Panther who had spent a lot of time at BUH, recently split with Diablo, calling him an egomaniac and dictator. Terry Gilbert is the BUH lawyer.

In 1971 Carl Stokes decided not to run for mayor. Why is not clear. It is obvious he wanted to head for a national political role, and being mayor of Cleveland was not going to help that. The longer he stayed in office, the worse his record of accomplishments would look. Being a mayor, these days is a losing proposition. Stokes tired to play a moderate role in the National Black

4

Political Convention held in Gary, Indian in 1972, but he was outflanked by more militant voices led by Amamu Baraka. So he drifted off to the oblivion of a New York news announcers job amidst rumors of divorce(now true) and scandal(sleeping with a white secretary, also proven true). So good-bye Carl!

But after Stokes' departure, the question for the black community was how to move. The 21st District Caucus ran Arnold Pinckney as Mayor against a Democratic and Republican candidate in 1971. Stokes dabbled in the race by getting the black community to turn out in the Democratic primary to defeat Anthony Garfoli, then City Council president who was seen as a "racist from Murray Hill", against James Carney, a weakly liberal construction mogul. Carney won the Democratic nomination, but then also went on to win more votes than Pinckney, the 21st District Caucus candidate and head of the board of education, in the elections. They split the opposition vote and Ralph Perk became mayor.

After this, there was a move to bring the 21st District Caucus back into the fold of the Democratic Party. This move was led by Arnold Pinckney, and George Forbes, then a member of city council and an up and comer. Louis Stokes wanted to maintain the independence of the Caucus, as well as the independence of his own machine. Forbes and Pinckney split the Caucus, pulling the bulk of it back into the Democratic Party on the old arguments of pragmatism and using black blocks as a power lever. Forbes became president of City Council as part of the deal and Garfoli was removed as chairman of the Democratic Party in the county and given a sinecure on the election board. The 21st District Caucus was finished in all but name.

So now the black community has neither a black city hall machine, though remnants of one do remain through the power of Forbes; nor a black independent caucus, though the office of Louis Stokes tries to act like one and has some clout beyond that of the single congressman due to his role in the Black Congressional Caucus; and no viable independent, left, or working class organizations at all. The black community has emerged from the last ten years of Stokes politics leaderless, aimless, and totally without organization or grass roots political experience.

II) The Left and the Black Community

So where are we? For what it is worth, not any better or worse off than any other left group in town. Some are better positioned at this point, but none have any real base and their ability to attract and hold blacks is all potential. None have done it. In this regard we are hampered by our general inexperience--especially our shallow roots here in town--and our whiteness, but our politics gives us a long run advantage for holding black members. Our tasks must be to overcome the limitations of our fragile connections to Cleveland's black community. That is crucial. But we will get to that in the next section. Now for the opposition and since you can't tell the players without a scorecard, here goes:

A) SWP--SWP does have a few black trade unionists, mostly lower level bureaucrats and a small black grouping at Cleveland State. At one time they were able to attract many blacks and their Militant Forum was one of the places in Cleveland where blacks and whites came together for political purposes. But that was a number of years ago and the SWP has been a revolving door for blacks. Right now they are weaker than ever in town and this means they have a primarily campus-oriented series of activities, an election campaign

and very little else. They are trying to get into the Collingwood scene via their mayoralty campaign, but it amounts to very little.

B)YAWF--YAWF has had historical relations with certain members of the black community stemming from the days of the civil rights movement. They did very good work around the Ahmed Evans defense efforts. They worked closely with Mae Mallory, know Louis Robinson well, etc. But they have no program or activities which can give them a base in the black community. Their stand is to support black struggles period. So someone is going to have to go to jail, call a march, or stage a prison rebellion for them to get active.

C)PL--PL in Cleveland remains fairly hidden from the left. They have, or at least a few years ago they had, one excellent black member at Ford Walton Hills Stamping Plant and through him a healthy periphery of young blacks. One of their local leaders married a Cleveland black woman and through her they are also in touch with segments of the black community. Many of their members teach in the Cleveland public schools and this provides them with another point of entry into the black community. PL provides most of their black periphery some activity through WAM, which does have a significant non-white membership nation-wide. But WAM is relatively quiet here, PL keeps pretty much to itself, and it is hard to judge what the situation is with them.

D)RU--The RU has almost nothing going in plants, but it stresses third world support and community struggles and seeks to enlist blacks through these efforts. They have been very involved with a rent strike at Rainbow Terrace on the east side of town and have developed some periphery from that work. Their May Day rally had a small black presence, but larger representation from other third world groups. About 10-12 PLO supporters from Cleveland's black community were there as were 4 representatives of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party. Also, many RU'ers live in East Cleveland and probably meet blacks through neighborhood contacts. The RU heavily supported the CAP February 22 rally, but as far as I could tell, not one CAP person attended their May Day rally. The RU has put out a pamphlet on Collingwood and held one demo against press coverage. They clearly want to get into it, but how successful they will be is not clear. They were also involved in the Black Unity House series of public meetings on police brutality. Their public raps are very direct about communism, revolution, building the party, etc., but they have absolutely no conception of a strategy about how to do any of those things and no idea how to build a movement. People become attracted to them because of their raps and their spirit, but the RU has nothing for them to do, no arenas for them to develop in, no struggles with any continuing reality. We should be able to pick up on some of their contacts due to the RU's general confusion about strategy.

E)CAP--CAP has just arrived in town and except for the Feb. 22 rally--a failure by any standards--they have been invisible. We must seek them out, make contact, and see what develops.

F)CP--The CP has not been very active in black affairs here. They do have a presence at Ford Foundry which is drawing in black workers around a rank and file slate. They also pushed the pro-Pinkney caucus formed at Ford in 1971, but it is unclear whether they had any direct presence at that time. Their main strength in this area is in steel and that is mostly in Lorain, Youngstown, and Steubenville. The head of YWLL in this area is a young black whom they recruited a few years ago who is, or was, a CWA steward. The CP has a lot of potential in this area, but has never done much with it.

G)CL--CL is just getting off the ground here. The best of the nationalists that

were active here through the '60's, have hooked up with CL. This is a pattern evident in Detroit as well. They claim to have a fully functioning center in H'ugh. They have launched their unemployment committees here, though what these committees are actually doing is hard to say. They do have some skilled black cadre and can be assumed to be active whether heard from or not. Objectively, the CL is in the best situation to really move in the black community and probably will make some inroads. However, there is one thing standing in the way of their success and that is their politics which are so weird as to really hamper their work. This is crucial, though we shouldn't be too smug about this. They are tough and we must deal with their efforts seriously.

H)The rest--The SL and the North-American Committee of Marxists-Leninists also exist in Cleveland. What else is there to say?

III)Our Tasks: Short Term

So things are wide open, waiting to be organized. The almost total lack of organization in the black community means that if we could begin to pick up a few people and create an organizational presence in the black working class at all, it would have far reaching implications. But that is still some time off. Right now we are at square one. How to move? The following are in order:

A)Our industrial fraction work will have to become the most serious entry point for black recruitment. This means really raising issues in that work which will attract black workers and going out of our way to include them in our trade union activities. Neither RAFT, nor TURF, to my knowledge, attracted many blacks. Part of our building RAFT in its new form and of our creating a post-TURF formation in the IBT will be to bring in black workers from the first and allow them to shape those formations to their needs from the beginning. The creation of a RAFT paper and an area-wide Teamster paper will be of vital importance in our reaching out to black workers.

B)Sponsor public events of interest to the black community and make every effort to get black contacts to attend any and all of our public functions. The Attica Forum was in line with this idea, but we did not really have enough time to build for it properly. The Unemployment Forum also gave us some opportunities. We developed a proposal for African Liberation Day (May 24), but without the aid of the NO we were unable to follow through on it. However, our idea to have a forum on "Black Workers and the Rank and File Movement" will be pursued and, hopefully, we can plan it for another time slot. Also, Dalou might be available for a future date and we could do another Attica event. We must keep generating ideas for events that have an intrinsic interest for blacks. Also, when sponsoring any event we must plan it in ways that will make it easier for blacks to attend and we must go out of our way to attract them, whether the event be a UFW film, a woman's meeting, a pot-luck.

C)The youth fraction could have a major role in tackling issues that can bring IS politics directly to blacks because so many of the key social issues of this period are related to schools. Cops in the schools, integration/busing, Collingwood are all struggles where the interests of the black community, the IS, and the RT merge. Also, unemployment, while a pressing problem for all, is especially hard on youth in general and black youth in particular. Building a strong RT will be one of the most effective ways for moving blacks closer to IS politics. We must realize the opportunities afforded us here. We must also realize the present state of the youth group and its capacities. There will be limitations to this work in this area until a stabler, more politically mature critical mass is built, but our branch must realize that doing

that is important for the whole branch not just because we have a abstract commitment to build a youth group, but because a strong youth group will be one of the most effective channels of black recruitment.

4) Individual contact work with the few blacks we are in touch with is a paramount branch activity. The Westinghouse group of people have primarily a social, not a political, relation to the group at this time, but that is a beginning. Efforts must be made to broaden contacts with them. PROD produced a few new black Teamster contacts. These should be followed up insistently and carefully. Other black contacts have come through individual channels, but we must take our meetings with them and our political relations with them more seriously. This must be seen by branch members as important and we must all be aware of the need to push ourselves in this area.

IV) Our Taks: Down the Road

Those areas mentioned above are the ones we can dig in on now. But there are some other areas of importance where we either do not have the resources or do not yet have a clear idea on how to move. We should keep these in mind and be thinking of ways to integrate them into our work. Some of them are:

A) Increased WP sales in the black community. Realistically speaking, much of the readership of WP is black. But we reach them through plant gate sales. We are not able now to really try and push WP throughout the black community. However, the Call and Post, the black community weekly, is so bad politically and so sensationalist in tenor, that a lot of folks would give it up for something better. We must be thinking of ways to increase WP sales in the black community and of covering black community events better for WP. The one concrete thing we can do now, perhaps, is to concentrate sales at the downtown unemployment office. If we could hit it 3-4 times a week (it only takes one person) that would be a beginning we can handle.

B) We have a few black contacts who are actively involved with certain groups already working in the black community—Peoples' Busing Program, Community Bail Fund, Domestic Workers of America. We should know more about them and figure out if there is any way we can be better known by them and/or work with them. I am not suggesting putting large chunks of time and personnel into these activities, but perhaps rapping to them about what they do, an article in WP if it is warranted, could be a vehicle for becoming known by them and seeing if they can be vehicles for us to meet other contacts.

C) Harlell Jones is to have a habeus corpus hearing this summer to try and gain his release from jail. A number of witnesses against him did not receive the pay-offs they were promised and are now willing to tell the truth. Terry Gilbert is on top of this case and could help us get into it. Also, Connie S. is a good friend of Harlell's from way back and might be able to help us establish a working relationship. It is unclear whether a big defense effort would be worth it, but certainly the hearing will unearth a shitload of info about how the police stomps on Cleveland's black community and we should be on top of that.

D) One aspect of our politics which is important but often overlooked is the way in which our perspective on revolutionary feminism should have a strong attraction for black women. The problem is how to make this concrete. When we can begin to play a role in the CLUW arena, this dilemma will be a long way toward resplution, or at least we will have a real ground for developing a perspective which incorporates these elements of our politics.

E) Metropolitan politics affords us an arena for meeting blacks we totally overlook. Transportation issues, police issues, health issues, school issues are fought out over city budgets, elections, etc. There is little we can do to affect these struggles now, but we can use them to meet individuals and groups. We should be far more aware than we are of public hearings, council meetings, neighborhood meetings, etc, where groups will be gathering to make their views known. It will be a way of familiarizing ourselves with the nitty-gritty of Cleveland politics and perhaps might help us to meet a few good folks.

F) Finally, Cleveland will be having another race for mayor this fall. It will send the black community into turmoil over which black knight to run against "the little people's" hero, Ralph Perkovich. We will be in no position to influence the outcome of this race and should not think otherwise, even for a second. But a mayoral race does afford openings to talking to people about politics. People will be thinking and discussing a lot of issues at work and outside of work. The way in which we can analyze and explain something which is right on their doorstep will help make our political perspective more real for some people. We should try to be in a position by the fall to have a forum on our sense of why capitalist politics is worth what it is and what our alternative would be. We would want to attract a goodly number of workers to such a forum and a lot of black workers. They will be more open to listening now that there is no black machine to bamboozle them and no black unity candidate which can command the respect Stokes did. They will be much more critical of the whole process and more open to our kinds of solutions.

This list does not intend to exhaust the kinds of things we should be doing or thinking about. Initiative from branch members on this critical area of work is not only recommended, but expected. Without all our efforts, the IS in Cleveland will not be able to accomplish what is so necessary to our work--recruiting black members and building a clear working class presence, both politically and organizationally, in Cleveland's black community.

MF
Branch Organizer

The return of open economic crisis to the capitalist system has forced the recognition that the IS must change. The Detroit Commission Report and the National Secretary's Report both refer to this as a "turn from propaganda to agitation." As it is presented this slogan confuses more than it clarifies but I do not wish to get into an unproductive semantic debate. I would like to present my views as to the implications of the current period for our tasks.

Through the period of debates with the Revolutionary Tendency we clarified our views on the role of a revolutionary group. Our conception is that the job of revolutionaries, in whatever period, was to attempt to politically lead workers and others whether they numbered ones, tens, or thousands in struggles big or small. It was this role which made revolutionary politics relevant and helped to provide the conditions where workers would be open to our political ideas.

Our tasks in this leadership are qualitatively different when we can lead small numbers as compared to when we can lead masses of workers. The significance of this period is not a qualitative change in the number that we can lead but in the page of development and its effects on consciousness.

In one sense this period represents a sorting out process for the left. It is in this period that left groups will or will not establish real roots, in the working class and leadership of small but significant sections of the working class. Whether or not they will be relevant at all in the next period is now being determined. Developments in consciousness and struggles have sped up considerably. The consequences for us is not so much a change in the nature of our tasks but that they must now be carried more rapidly, aggressively, and professionally.

The actual numbers we can potentially lead makes an important difference. When we work with, or lead, ones and tens we understand that our role is more in responding to struggles of the working class. We can comment on them attempt to move them or lead them, and in some cases we can succeed. We attempt to lead the ones and tens by demonstrating our method of relating to those struggles, and to utilize the lessons of these struggles to build an opposition leadership which can lead greater numbers the next time.

The qualitative jump comes when we can talk of leading hundreds and thousands. Then we can initiate and lead mass struggles on a program which can both bring real victories to the working class, as well as bring masses of people into political struggles which have a direct and pointed effect on consciousness.

An example of this difference can be seen in the recent UAW Washington trip. We were not in a position to call such a demonstration or even decisively alter its nature. We could respond by raising slogans for it and by exposing the Woodcock leadership by drawing the lessons of it.

A Mass party, writ small, is not a small mass party. The program of demands of a mass party -- able to lead masses -- has an entirely different meaning than the same program of demands for a small group leading tens of workers. In the first case it is a program for immediate action. In the latter case the program serves as an educational tool to begin to convince workers that there is

*This is a slightly revised version of the major section of a discussion letter to NC members 2/7/75. While it was in response to the National Secretary's Report the letter was not counter to the report although there may be some disagreements. Hopefully this will be clarified when the EC submits a draft of its "Turn Roward Agitation" document.

an alternative if and when we can win thousands to fight over the demands. This program of demands also provides guidance or direction for work.

But if a program of demands is not immediately actionable then it is also not sufficient to establish leadership or to win people over to us. Because they are not immediately actionable they cannot be tested in practice and their relevance can be established only by political explanation and analysis.

This should not be taken to mean that a program of demands is unnecessary. It is necessary precisely to begin to convince workers that there is an alternative to Capitalist policies. It is not enough. To make the program relevant we must take the lead in building rank and file struggles even around the most minimal issues in order to establish credibility for leadership to engage people in struggle which establishes a new context for consciousness, and to show those closest to us how to win people to a commitment to fight for a program.

While there are some problems I believe we are doing well at both. We have internalized the method of building rank and file struggles following the debate of two years ago and we have developed confidence in its organic relationship to the struggle for socialism (concretized in the concept of class struggle unionism). After a period of reaction from the debate we are now beginning to develop and put forward programs of demands that correspond to the objective situation in the economy, not as a substitute for the struggles, but as a way of deepening and expanding them. An excellent example of this is the Weinberg Auto pamphlet.

The Socialist Alternative

There is, however, a third aspect of our political work which has been extremely weak. That is putting forward a total socialist alternative and putting rank and file struggles and programs of demands in that context.

The shift in the economy means that significant numbers of workers and others are open to total alternatives to capitalism. In fact for many this is the only solution which makes any sense. The nature of a recession means that only very limited victories can be won without a mass movement. These are on the level of social welfare (preventing an eviction temporarily) or anti-red tape (e.g. demanding that some particular injustices at an unemployment office be settled). We cannot underestimate these kinds of struggles for they are a central part in building a movement. But they cannot get significant numbers of jobs.

One of the consequences of government intervention in the economy is that nobody believes in the invisible hand guiding the economy. Virtually everyone holds the government responsible for the economic crisis (witness recent poll where 86% thought Ford was doing a bad job on the economy).

This consciousness has both positive and negative consequences. It is positive in the sense that it makes clear the necessity for national political struggle to deal with the economy. It is negative in that given the current state of the labor movement the task of challenging the state over basic reforms seems too enormous and therefore reinforces the sense of powerlessness.

One question then is how to build a movement in the trade unions and out. I would suggest that one analogy is the anti-war movement which faced a similar situation in the sense that there could only be very marginal victories short of forcing the US out of Vietnam. This in turn requires bold, imaginative, and disruptive tactics to develop the sense of movement -- tactics which aim at publicity and making political points. But these tactics are not the main point of this discussion.