



# discussion bulletin

Published by the

**SOCIALIST WORKERS PARTY**

116 UNIVERSITY PLACE  
NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK

Vol. 24, No. 13

May 1963

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(P.C. Draft Resolution)

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## FREEDOM NOW:

### The New Stage in the Struggle for Negro

#### Emancipation and the Tasks of the SWP

(P.C. Draft Resolution)

#### I. "Freedom Now:" A New Stage

Under the banner of "Freedom Now," the Negro struggle for equality is entering a new stage. This is comparable in significance to the change that occurred in the 1830's when a wing of the Abolitionist movement, previously dominated by schemes for piecemeal purchase and deportation of the slaves, raised the explosive demand for immediate and complete emancipation.

The most notable characteristic of this new stage in the Negro struggle is the clear and sharp rejection of gradualism, which is the program, method and perspective of capitalist liberalism. Freedom Now is an essentially radical and potentially revolutionary demand. It brings its advocates, regardless of their particular views, into growing conflict with the White House and the Southern Democrats, with the labor leaders as well as the liberals, with Negro as well as white exponents of moderation, compromise and tokenism.

The ruling class of this country cannot grant this demand. Neither can it suppress or sidetrack the movement. That is why a consistent struggle to achieve it will stimulate profound changes not only in race relations but also in class and political relations in the United States.

Freedom Now sentiment is generated from numerous sources: by urbanization, industrialization and migration, as a result of which three-fourths of the Negroes live in cities rather than rural areas, and over 40% outside the South; by inspiration from the colonial revolutions against white imperialist domination in Africa, Asia and Latin America; by the smallness, fewness and slowness of concessions offered to the demand for equality; by the conviction that the rulers of this country will never grant equality voluntarily or without pressure, and that their difficulties in the cold war make them more vulnerable to pressure; by disappointment in the old-style Negro leaders

and the labor bureaucrats. It is spurred by the growth of racial consciousness and solidarity, which flows from common experiences of oppression and is strengthened by historical and contemporary evidence that the Negro must rely on himself first of all if he is to make any progress. This sentiment is bolstered in some circles by a questioning or repudiation of the values of capitalist (white-dominated) society.

The results have been a spread of the Negro struggle into every corner of the country; a sizable increase in the number of active fighters, with the most important new reinforcements coming from the student youth, who are not encumbered by the skepticism, routinism or defeatism of many of their elders and are imparting a new vigor and vibrancy to the struggle; assertions of independence, coupled with heightened self-confidence and growing determination that the Negro will decide his own goals, work out his own tactics and lead his own struggles; more openly expressed feelings of mistrust and suspicion of whites and bitter resentment against paternalism in any form; the raising of new demands and proposals that are unacceptable to the liberals (special consideration or priority for the needs of the Negro to compensate for centuries of oppression and deprivation, adequate and effective Negro representation in all places and at all levels, bloc voting, etc.) This new phase has already witnessed a significant growth of Negro nationalist and separatist sentiment along with the appearance of new national organizations and hundreds of local groups dedicated to equality. This is all part of the ferment, discussion, experimentation, and lively search for ideas, methods, programs and leadership capable of guiding the struggle for equality to victory.

The Freedom Now forces face the task of uniting into an effective movement and equipping themselves with a program, a philosophy and a perspective. Success in these efforts will depend on correct evaluations of the competing tendencies now in the field, of the intentions of their racist enemies, and of the Negro movement's relations with other sections of the population.

## II. The Present Tendencies

The NAACP was for a long time the dominant civil rights organization. But its relative influence has declined and it is today challenged on all sides. Its leadership, middle class and liberal, relies mainly on legal and legislative action and discourages mass action, initiative and struggle.

Afraid of being outflanked and bypassed by more militant organizations, they have attempted to modernize their "image," but the NAACP remains the chief protagonist and symbol of gradualism. The Negro masses may appreciate it as a legal defense arm and legislative lobby, but they do not feel welcome in it and most do not belong to it.

A pacifist tendency has acquired some strength since the late 1950's. Its main organizations are the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed by Martin Luther King, and the Congress on Racial Equality. Their prestige derives in part from the fact that, unlike the NAACP, they have sanctioned and participated in certain kinds of direct action. But King's pacifism also has the opposite effect of restraining the full unleashing of mass struggle and initiative. He preaches "love" of the racist enemy and threatens to cancel civil rights struggles whenever the masses display a readiness to defend themselves against racist violence. Although King speaks the rhetoric of Freedom Now, it is not accidental that the liberals support him as "the right kind of Negro leader" while the Kennedy administration feels he can be used to keep the masses from getting out of control.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee is a tendency distinct from King and CORE. It originated in the desire of militant students to strike out on a road different from that of the gradualists. It does not preach a binding commitment to Gandhism. For its leaders nonviolence is rather a tactic than a dogma or principle, and one that does not exclude the right of self-defense. SNCC is a vanguard-type movement whose main emphasis is on direct action as a means of organizing the Southern masses for independent struggle.

The Negro American Labor Council was formed to fulfill the indispensable function of leading and coordinating the fight against discrimination in industry and the labor movement. Because of their numbers and strategic position as a link between the labor movement and the Negro community, Negro unionists can play a crucial role in enlisting union support for the independent struggles of the Negro people and Negro support for the unions. But outside of a few cities the NALC has so far failed dismally even to recruit Negro workers into its ranks. Partly this failure is due to the tight bureaucratic grip on the organization by the A. Philip Randolph leadership. The NALC is weakened by the fact that most of its leaders owe their union posts to appointment by the union bureaucracy and are afraid to jeopardize these by

undertaking bold actions unacceptable to the Meanys and Reuthers.

The Muslims, headed by Elijah Muhammad, are the most dynamic tendency in the Northern Negro community today. Previously a small, uninfluential religious sect, they have acquired a considerable predominantly working class membership in the Northern cities, a more substantial following, and the respect of millions of Negroes who are stirred by their forthright denunciation of racial oppression and their determination to free themselves from white domination.

Nationalist and separatist, they reject not only gradualism and tokenism, but also the right of their oppressors to control and exploit Negroes. They boldly declare the capacity and right of the Negro people to govern themselves. A major weakness is their lack of a program of action enabling them to participate in and influence partial, immediate and transitional struggles of the Negro masses. In the last year the Muslims have begun to overcome their isolation by greater flexibility in their approach toward other Negro organizations. An important and promising step forward was their recent declaration in favor of political action in the form of election campaigns to elect black candidates.

The most radical tendencies with a social or political orientation have been inspired by the example of the Monroe, N.C. movement headed by Robert F. Williams. Monroe has made valuable contributions to the theory and practice of self-defense. However, the movement has been weakened by the persecution, frameup and exile of its leader.

Significant parts in promoting the struggle against liberalism and gradualism are being played by the newly-formed Harlem Anti-Colonial Committee; the Liberation Committee for Africa; groups of radical Negro intellectuals and artists in several big cities; and local nationalist but non-religious organizations like the Afro-American Association in the Bay Area.

It is from among these groups and currents that the Negro leadership of an effective struggle for equality will be gathered and united. But it is necessary to add that at the present stage none of these tendencies, including the biggest, can claim the affiliation of more than a small percentage of the Negro people. The Freedom Now movement is forming, re-forming, learning, developing, preparing, defining and refining. However, the great mass of the Negroes concen-

trated in the big ghettos of the North and South have yet to be heard from.

### III. Negro Nationalism Today

General definitions of nationalism are inadequate for understanding and explaining Negro nationalism in the United States today. While it has resemblances to the insurgent nationalism in African countries, and to the nationalism of oppressed minorities in the old Russian Czarist empire, American Negro nationalism also differs from them in certain important respects. Moreover, Negro nationalism is still in an early stage of its development and will surely undergo changes in the future. A definitive analysis will have to wait until Negro nationalism becomes a mass movement and acquires firmer and more fixed features than it now displays. Nevertheless, it is already possible to draw a number of conclusions for guidance.

Capitalism segregates the Negroes, confines them in ghettos, builds walls around them and binds them together in common resentment against racial discrimination, proscription, deprivation and abuse. This is the soil in which Negro nationalism is rooted and grows. It is an outgrowth of these conditions, a reaction against them, a way of resisting and fighting them. Remove these conditions and Negro nationalism will wane or flow into different channels. Even the hope that these conditions can be eliminated has tended to weaken Negro nationalist sentiment and suspend its activity. Conversely, the belief that these conditions will exist in this country forever, or for another lifetime, tends to nourish and activate Negro nationalism.

The 1948 convention resolution of the Socialist Workers Party noted the appearance and growth of an embryo Negro "nation within the nation." It is still an embryo today, but bigger and more mature. Racial-national sentiments have been fed and stimulated by the mockery of tokenism at home and the successes of colonial revolution abroad. The Negro is keenly aware that as a second-class citizen he is both a citizen and not a citizen. He sees plausibility in the concept of internal or domestic colonialism, which correctly stresses the many similarities between the capitalist treatment of the Negro people in this country and the imperialist treatment of colonial peoples.

But the American Negro people are in a situation with some unique aspects. They are an oppressed minority without

a clearly defined geographical, language or cultural basis for differentiation from their oppressors. Negro nationalism is at this point a broad medium for "self-identification," a method of differentiating a racially oppressed minority from its oppressors and of uniting it ideologically and organizationally to free itself from oppression. Negro nationalism plays a function for the Negro people here in many ways like that which class consciousness plays for the working class.

James Baldwin's attempt at a definition of nationalism is a useful one to build on. This author said it means "that a certain group of people, living in a certain place, has decided to take its political destinies into its own hands." Applied to the United States, as it was meant to be, this means that large numbers of Negroes have decided, and more are in the process of deciding, that they cannot leave their future in the hands of the white oppressors but must unite with other Negroes and decide for themselves what they want in and from the United States.

This consciousness is the basic feature of Negro nationalism today. It is expressed in various ways -- most commonly in the stimulation of racial pride, declarations of independence, the desire for Negro leadership and control of the civil rights struggle, mistrust of whites -- and it is present to varying degrees in most Negro tendencies, both integrationist and separationist.

Viewed in this light, Negro nationalism, as it exists now, should not be equated with Negro separatism, the tendency that advocates creation of a separate Negro nation. The two are not the same thing. All separatists are nationalists but not all nationalists are separatists. Nationalism expresses the desire of Negroes to decide their destiny, including, among other things, their attitude toward the question of a separate nation. Nationalists want the right to decide their destiny, and to create an independent movement and other conditions that will make it possible for them to decide their destiny. But so far they have not made a choice in favor of a separate nation.

For many Negroes, nationalism is considered and may prove to be a way of uniting the mass of the Negro people and forcing the rulers of this country to grant them equality inside the United States. They leave open the question of separatism for a future stage, neither rejecting nor endorsing it now.



The first big task of the Negro struggle is the mobilization and unification of the Negro masses in an independent movement to fight for their equality -- an indispensable condition for an eventual revolutionary alliance of the working class and the Negro people. Negro nationalism is progressive because it contributes to the creation of such an independent Negro movement. It will remain progressive so long as it fulfills that function, whether the struggle be fought along integrationist or separatist lines.

Revolutionary socialists welcome the growth of such Negro nationalism and give its participants wholehearted collaboration in the fight against our common enemies. For us, Negro nationalism and revolutionary socialism are not only compatible but complementary forces that should be welded closer together in thought and action. The common sympathy and support for the colonial revolution and hostility to imperialist domination is an important bond between the two movements.

Revolutionary socialists must be ready to learn from militant Negro tendencies and to absorb everything progressive in their spirit and ideas; at the same time it must never be forgotten that we have much to teach as well as learn. The nationalist tendencies still lack a comprehensive and realistic program to solve the problems of the Negro people, and many nationalists have confused conceptions. Revolutionary socialists must be simultaneously firm and patient in demonstrating that Marxism, properly understood and applied, is valid and relevant for the Negro struggle -- firm because of our confidence in the correctness of the socialist program, patient because we know that the logic of the Negro struggle inevitably leads it into socialist channels.

Nationalism itself is an empty vessel which can be filled with vastly different contents. The nationalism of Chiang Kai-shek is the opposite of that of a Chinese Communist revolutionist or a Fidel Castro. The ultra-nationalism of the U.S. superpatriots has nothing in common with the nationalism of American Negroes. Militant Negro nationalists can have many wrong ideas and petty-bourgeois illusions. Negro Marxists have to imbue the nationalist sentiments and struggles of their people with a revolutionary, scientific, anti-capitalist content and direction.

They will be greatly aided in this work by the progress of the colonial revolution. The ideas of socialism are



being adopted by more and more of the colonial peoples striving for national and social liberation in Africa, Asia and Latin America. This popularity of Marxist and anti-capitalist doctrines, movements and governments among the non-white races will exert an increasing influence upon the vanguard elements of the Negro struggle here which will lend strength to the positions of the SWP.

Negro socialists must bring forward, as an inspiration and guide for American Negroes, the example of Cuba where the overthrow of capitalism through the socialist revolution has uprooted discrimination and established genuine equality and fraternity of black and white citizens ninety miles from the Southern states.

#### IV. Separatism and a Separate Nation

The theoretical position of revolutionary socialism on Negro separatism was first worked out at the Socialist Workers Party convention in 1939. Now, when Black Muslim influence has made separatism a live political issue among many people, it needs to be restated, adapted to current conditions and made unmistakably clear.

In 1939, we foresaw the possibility that the Negro people, as part of their struggle to end centuries of oppression and exploitation, might some day decide that they want a separate nation, controlled and administered by themselves. We said that if this happened, it would settle the long theoretical dispute about whether or not the Negroes are a national minority as well as a racial minority, and that we, as supporters of the right of self-determination, would support the Negro demand for a separate nation and do everything in our power to help them obtain it.

In taking this position we did not become advocates of a separate nation, as the Communist Party used to be, nor do we advocate it now. What we advocate is the right of the Negro people to decide this question themselves. All we commit ourselves to do is support their fight to achieve whatever they decide they want, whether it be equality through integration or equality through separation, or both.

It appeared to us in 1939 that the mass of the Negro people had not yet expressed themselves on this point, or had not expressed themselves definitely. Nine years later, in the resolution adopted at our 1948 convention, we noted that the growing "feeling of racial and national solidarity among

the Negro people thus far aims solely at acquiring enough force and momentum to break down the barriers that exclude Negroes from American society, showing few signs of aiming at national separatism." It was clear that the vast majority of the Negroes were integrationist in the sense that they favored the abolition of each and every discriminatory and segregationist device and institution in this country. But we did not take that to mean that the Negro masses had reached a conclusive position for or against separatism. We felt both in 1939 and 1948 that the question was still "open" -- that the Negro people might make a different decision about separatism in the future.

By 1963 the situation has changed considerably, but not decisively. On the one hand, the Muslims, the strongest advocates of separatism, have made serious organizational gains, and growth of their general influence has been even greater. On the other hand, more Negroes than ever before are actively engaged in assaulting the Jim Crow barriers. If such activity makes them integrationists, it is necessary to point out that a profound division of feeling agitates many Negro integrationists. They have mixed feelings of attraction and repulsion in relation to the Muslims.

In general, Negro thought and discussion about separatism and related questions is much more intense than 15 or 24 years ago. But the mass of the Negro people have not yet taken any settled stand on these questions, and we must still await their definitive decision.

Until the Negro masses decide, the SWP neither advocates nor opposes a separate nation. We defend the right of the Negro people to make such a decision. This means we defend the rights of separatists to meet, speak, write and circulate their views and be free from government or vigilante assaults and frameups. It means refuting the slander that the Muslims and other separatists are "counterparts" of the White Citizens Councils and the Ku Klux Klan. It means counteracting the widespread but mistaken notion that separation, freely chosen by Negroes, is "equivalent" to segregation imposed by white supremacists.

Our attitude toward separatists, including the Muslims, is a friendly one. We recognize that the mere existence of the Muslims has had healthy effects, pushing rival Negro tendencies to the left and thereby imparting an impetus to even purely integrationist battles. We note with interest that, far from being a hardened sect, the Muslims have shown

capacity during the last year to change in a direction that better serves the interests of all Negroes. However, they have still to develop a program of action for the struggles now taking place.

Where we differ with them, we differ in a friendly way, and we seek collaboration with them on mutually acceptable projects. We make it plain that we are not opposed to separation, if that should be the will of the Negro masses. Instead of attacking separatism as "utopian," we seek to point out the revolutionary implications of the mass struggle for it and urge its advocates to develop radical methods, tactics and programs as the only way to achieve it.

If the Negro people should decide they want to separate, we would openly come out in favor of granting them separation. At the same time we would continue to fight, as we are doing now, to abolish all racial inequalities and the cause of such inequalities in the United States. In that sense, we are and will remain integrationists, whatever else happens.

#### V. The Movement in the South

The civil rights struggle in the South at this stage has some special features distinguishing it from the rest of the country.

a. It is dominated by direct actions of a special type which, with few exceptions (Birmingham), have not yet involved large masses but rather selected militants participating in a sort of guerrilla warfare. By pushing on the most obvious violations of democracy, these Southern freedom-fighters are in a position to expose and dramatize the injustices of Jim Crow, constantly embarrass the federal government, and deepen the indignation against segregation throughout the U.S. While the Northern Negroes are no less angry about the existing setup, they have greater difficulty in throwing off the shackles of the reformist bureaucracies.

b. The struggles of the past few years have produced a cadre, mainly around SNCC, of virtually full-time young militants. Independent both of the older leaderships and of the established radical groupings, they have earned authority by organizing and leading actions.

c. In parts of the South where Negroes are a majority, radical slogans are appearing as demands to be realized soon, and not as distant goals. (For example, a Negro sheriff in

Leflore County, Mississippi.) Such demands have an explosive character because they directly challenge the white supremacist power structure. This is especially true of the voter registration drives in rural areas where the election of uncompromising Negro candidates as mayors, sheriffs or judges would upset the whole balance of power. For this reason the political side of the struggle in the South, particularly in the rural areas, has a far more radical edge than in the North.

d. Today the Southern Negro movement remains largely isolated from the regional labor movement. Union militants must demand that the national unions give more than lip-service to the Southern civil rights fight. The unions should provide all-out material support to the anti-Jim Crow cause, eliminate racist policies from Southern locals, and extend union organization through the South with the aid of the trained cadres and the Negro communities now engaged in direct actions. Whatever resistance these demands may meet, they must be persistently and patiently brought forward until the relations between the civil rights movement and organized labor are transformed into a powerful, close-knit alliance.

e. A defensive pacifism around their actions is today the predominant attitude of the Southern struggle. The need for organized self-defense against white supremacist gangs and officials is as yet recognized only by small groups of militants. Meanwhile this protective pacifism is being exploited by liberals and Ghandists like Rev. Martin Luther King. His approval of the use of federal troops in the South (Little Rock, University of Mississippi) exposes the hypocrisy of this position. The pacifist leaders are ready to rely on government military force while they repudiate in principle the adoption of self-defense measures by Negroes who are menaced with attacks from Jim Crow elements who may be shielded by or even be part of the state apparatus.

f. What happens in Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia has immediate repercussions upon the moods of the movement in the North. Any outrage and outbreak of violence, or any outstanding demonstration, achievement or advance in the South arouses the Negro communities in the rest of the country. Thus the intensification and extension of the struggle in the South is a sharp goad to the national civil rights movement.

## VI. The Capitalist Orientation

The future of the Negro struggle depends first of all

on what Negroes do about it. It depends on what their allies do -- or do not do -- about it. And it also depends on what their enemies do about it.

The ruling rich are the foremost enemy of the Negro people. The capitalist class introduced the system of racial oppression in this country, first in the form of slavery; they continued it under other forms after slavery was abolished; and they maintain it today. The rich initiated and have continued racial oppression because it was and is a convenience in the exploitation of labor, a source of super-profit, and a method for dividing the labor force and disrupting its efforts to unite against its exploiters.

That the responsibility for racial oppression rests on the capitalist class is not at all contradicted by the fact that other sections of the population, including the working class, are infected to one degree or another with racist prejudices and poisons. If this were not so, Jim Crow could never have existed. But the capitalist system injected these prejudices into the white workers and reinforced them by granting the white workers concessions and privileges, real though small, at the expense of the Negroes. The responsibility belongs on the capitalists, not on the workers who go along with racial discrimination and who are themselves more the victims than the beneficiaries of racism. It is necessary to ceaselessly combat the racist prejudices and practices of the workers too, but we must keep in mind that it is not the workers but the capitalists who have the political and economic power in this country and who control the propaganda-information-education-police apparatuses. It is an incontrovertible fact that the capitalists have used their power to perpetuate rather than abolish racial oppression.

Gradualists, even when forced to admit these historical facts, answer that things are different now or soon will be. They claim that steady and substantial progress has been made in recent years; that the gains already made indicate that this progress will continue indefinitely until it results in the total eradication of the color line; and that this process will be accelerated by the government because of its propaganda needs in the cold war. The evidence does not support these claims.

Progress is actually slow, small and uneven. Moreover in some areas there is retrogression rather than progress. Average Negro family income in 1962 was 54% of average white

family income whereas ten years before it had been 57%. While the incomes of both groups rose during this decade, that of the whites rose more, and so the income gap has been growing greater, not smaller. The rate of unemployment among Negroes has been around twice that among whites since the end of World War II. During recessions the disproportion grows bigger, reaching a rate 2 1/2 and 3 times that of whites.

Negro children still receive an average of 3 1/2 years less schooling than white children. The proportion of dilapidated housing occupied by Negroes is more than five times as big as that occupied by whites. On an average Negroes still die seven years sooner than whites; discrimination from the cradle to the grave costs the Negro this much of his life span. There is still not a state in the country where a Negro may not be subjected at any time to humiliation, abuse or worse.

The real trend is exemplified by the school situation in the South since the Supreme Court decision in 1954. Its restricted application is deliberately obscured since schools are classified as "desegregated" if one or a handful of Negroes is admitted. The fact is that after nine years less than 8% of Southern Negro children attend the same school as whites. At this rate it will take another century before the Southern school system is open to Negroes.

Where small gains have actually been made, their benefits have not been equally distributed. Some Negroes have been able to obtain jobs in areas previously closed to them (professional, clerical, white collar) and to attain the income and status of the Negro middle class (which is proportionately smaller, more insecure and less well paid than the white middle class). At the other pole conditions of large numbers of Negroes have deteriorated badly because of unemployment and automation. Negro workers are hardest hit by the effects of automation. Overall, the gains of the more fortunate minority of Negroes are more than offset by the increasingly chronic poverty and deprivation imposed on the majority of the Negro people.

Studying the present trends in the light of the past, revolutionary socialists conclude that racial oppression can be abolished in the United States only if the present capitalist profit system is eliminated and replaced by a system based on production for use. Critics of this position reply that history has provided examples of capitalist countries relatively free of racism. Therefore racism is not an indis-

pensable component of all capitalist societies and so American capitalism can be rid of this feature without necessarily abolishing capitalism itself.

Such thinking is misleading because it is based on generalities. The SWP conclusion is based on a concrete analysis of the nature and contradictions of the specific capitalist structure in the United States. This has had a history different from other capitalist countries, out of which specific economic and political relations developed, out of which specific interests, needs and institutions arose and still flourish. This particular capitalism, the American, may be forced to modify some of the features of its race system. But the ruling class will never willingly abolish it because it has too much of a stake in its maintenance, because it knows that attempts to uproot it in the South would inevitably give birth to a regional political revolution that will tend to become transformed into a social revolution.

American capitalism is not just tarred with racism. Its very roots are inextricably intertwined with racial oppression and it knows that pulling up the latter would endanger the former. To be sure, Jim Crow genuinely embarrasses the American ruling class in its foreign relations and diplomatic maneuvers. But it would rather go on being embarrassed than to risk the consequences of any serious effort to get rid of the cause of the embarrassment.

There is no evidence in anything happening now that the capitalists or their government intend to eradicate racial oppression in our time. Even their spokesmen who deplore the situation do not believe it will be eliminated in this century. Their real perspective is not to abolish racism, but to modify it, reform it, remove some of its secondary features, repeal the laws that make segregation mandatory -- and to do this little at a pace so slow it will extend over several generations in a way acceptable to the Southern white supremacists.

At the very most, the capitalist goal is to establish throughout the country relations between the races like those that now exist in the North -- where formal segregation is not sanctioned or even prohibited by law, but where the rankest kind of segregation and inequality exists in practice. They hope that this gradual process of reform will enable them to claim abroad that American democracy is improving race relations at home; that it will avert explosions in the South that could spread to the North; and that it will



contain Negro discontent and rebelliousness at home.

They are also prepared to grant additional posts and concessions to a thin layer of the Negro middle class in the hope of using them to restrain the Negro people as a whole. The best they hold out for the mass of the Negro people is not the prospect of equality in this generation or the next, but the promise that formal inequality may be removed some time in the remote future.

### VII. The Labor Movement and the Negro Struggle

It is an historic fact that the more radical and democratic its leadership, the more organized labor fights for its own members, the working class as a whole and other non-capitalist groups and classes in society, the more it also seeks to wipe out racial barriers and integrate Negro workers in the unions, to solidarize itself with the Negro people as an oppressed minority and to promote a fighting labor-Negro alliance against their common enemies.

The opposite is also true. When conservative or liberal-sounding bureaucrats dominate the labor movement, their main concern is the preservation and expansion of their own privileges and powers. They do everything they can to avoid fighting the capitalists about anything; they subordinate and betray the interests of the union rank and file, the unorganized workers and all other oppressed groups; and they are indifferent or hostile to the Negro struggle for equality.

The role of the labor movement is one of the crucial differences between the 1930's and the 1960's, and it bears directly on the present moods and activities in the Negro community.

The youth of today find it hard to appreciate how profoundly the rise of the CIO affected race relations. It brought about the 20th century's first major progressive shakeup and reversal in these relations. Until then, discrimination and segregation had been growing worse and harsher in every area, including the old AFL unions, which had always turned their backs on the Negroes. Then, with the coming of the CIO, for the first time in many decades, the Negro worker saw a powerful hand held out to him and an invitation extended to enter the house of labor, or at least one floor. Despite previous painful and discouraging experiences with whites, the Negro workers rallied magnificently to the new industrial unions and played a key role in smashing the open shop in

basic industry. No other group was more loyal or devoted.

This was not because the CIO, even in its best days, fulfilled all its obligations to Negroes. But, unlike every other major force, it welcomed the Negro. This held out the promise that the growing unfavorable trend of race relations in the country could be reversed. Although the Negroes never won complete equality in the unions, through their own efforts and with the aid of the CIO they did gain a strong foothold in the unions and industry, from which they could exert leverage for further gains. Before stagnation of the labor movement set in during the late 1940's, the Negroes had reached their present imposing numbers inside organized labor (1-1/2 million). Equally important, the CIO, by its very existence, served as a shield behind which the Negro community as a whole was able to consolidate its forces, develop new and more independent demands, and lay the ground for the struggles of today and tomorrow.

Much has changed in the last quarter century. With the aid of the government and the employers, the labor bureaucrats have housebroken most of the unions and decimated or destroyed radical influence in them. Militant oppositional groups, which were usually the Negro's closest ally inside the unions, are now absent or impotent. The labor movement has been on the defensive for years. The capitalist-minded bureaucrats are guided by class collaboration, not class struggle. In practice, this means not fighting the employers but seeking deals with them -- sometimes to preserve the conditions of the older, more privileged, higher seniority workers and always at the expense of the weaker and most exploited workers, of whom the Negroes and other minorities form a large part.

The bureaucrats pledged to eliminate racism when the AFL and CIO merged in 1955. But, as with every other progressive task, they have given only lip-service to this pledge. They even blame the rank and file union members, rather than themselves, for its non-fulfillment. They simply cannot understand why the Negroes are demanding more from the labor movement than they did when they first joined it in the 1930's. Some labor bureaucrats harbor racial prejudices, and all of them, like their liberal friends, are guilty of paternalism. When the Meanys and Reuthers instruct the Negroes to take it easy and wait, and this doesn't work, they react to the demand for equality with outright hostility or tokenism. Their only real interest in Negroes is collecting their dues and keeping them tied to the Democratic Party.

Inside the unions some Negro members have become discouraged or demoralized and abandoned the fight against the

bureaucracy, as some white militants have done. Some Negroes outside the unions confuse the labor bureaucracy with the labor movement as such. They fail to recognize that millions of white workers have reason to hate the bureaucrats too and will seize the first chance they get to throw the bureaucrats off the backs of all the workers, white and black.

Some Negro nationalists are disposed to declare the unions "dead" and write them off. They disregard the fact that on the surface the labor movement appeared to be even deadier in the late 1920's and early 1930's, not long before the upsurge of industrial unionism. Also evident is a tendency to counterpose independent Negro organization to a labor-Negro alliance as though these two things were in contradiction, and even to reject the desirability and possibility of a militant labor-Negro alliance. The mobilization and merger of the forces needed to eliminate racism are considerably complicated by these feelings and beliefs, for which the labor bureaucracy must be held primarily responsible.

However, the consequences of the default of the union leadership have not all been negative. Awareness that the labor bureaucracy cannot be counted on to defend the Negro workers or the Negro people has strengthened the desire of Negro workers for their own means of defense and advancement inside the labor movement. This is reflected in the formation of the Negro American Labor Council and in the hundreds of formal or informal Negro caucuses or clubs inside local unions. Outside the labor movement it has been a big factor in stimulating nationalist sentiment and activity, and generally strengthening the feelings of self-reliance and the trend toward independent action and struggle.

Unlike capital, labor has been and is capable of playing differing roles in relation to the Negro struggle, depending on which forces are at the head of the unions. Revolutionary socialists recognize that the labor movement in the grip of its conservative and capitalist-minded bureaucracy is increasingly remote from the rank and file is shamefully defaulting on its responsibilities to the Negro people.

But the unions don't belong to the bureaucrats, who have usurped the power they hold and betray the ranks they are supposed to represent. As happened after the 1920's, we anticipate that the union movement will be transformed and radicalized again, and at a higher level than in the 1930's, by the effects on the working class of the crises and contradictions of capitalism and the failure of non-radical methods to solve the problems of automation, unemployment, speedup, inflation,

insecurity and the war danger.

The coming radicalization of the labor movement will be accompanied by and accomplished through the creation of a left wing in the unions. This cannot be some vaguely "progressive" group interested mainly in winning union offices, but a group that will be distinguished by class struggle policies, an independent labor party orientation, and active support for the Negro struggle inside and outside the unions. Militant Negroes will contribute to this big change both by forming their own groups in the unions and helping to build and be part of a left wing, or closely connected with it. To abstain from either of these tasks would be to insure the continued dominance of the labor bureaucracy, at the expense of the living conditions and rights of 1-1/2 million Negro union members, 6-1/2 million other Negro workers who want to be union members, and the Negro people as a whole.

#### VIII. Independent Political Action

The Negro struggle is above all a political struggle -- that is, its solution requires political action. The coming labor-Negro alliance will operate in many areas and through many forms, but above all it will be a political alliance. And yet it is precisely in the field of politics that up to now practically all tendencies in the Negro movement are weakest and least independent, both in theory and practice.

Some tendencies ignore politics, but politics do not ignore them. The effect of political abstention is to leave the monopoly of political power in the hands of capitalist parties and demagogic politicians who use that power against the Negro people. Others recognize the importance of politics and participate in politics -- but only in the two major parties that are the sworn enemies of Negro equality. Among politically active Negroes are some whose main interest is in electing Negroes to office. But these are repeatedly frustrated because the Negro Democrats or Republicans whom they help elect usually turn out to be captives and apologists for the corrupt capitalist political machines rather than consistent spokesmen for the Negro people.

Most current tendencies reflect, to one degree or another, the desire of the Negro masses to determine their own destiny -- to have their own organizations, their own leaders, their own strategy, tactics and programs. But few of these tendencies have expressed a similarly independent spirit in the vital field of politics by breaking with the parties of their oppressors and organizing to challenge their

political monopoly. Yet such a break and such a challenge are implicit in everything that has happened up to now. It is contradictory and self-defeating to talk about Freedom Now while accepting the right of the white supremacists and gradualists to jointly wield the political power of this country.

The idea of a Negro party, a civil rights party or an equal rights party is not a new one. Representative Adam Clayton Powell has talked about it on and off during recent years. Liberator, the Liberation Committee for Africa magazine, wrote about the need for an "Afro-American political party" during the 1962 election campaign. More recently Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Muslims, has advocated that Negroes run and elect their own candidates to public office because "there will be no real freedom for the so-called Negro in America until he elects his own political leaders and his own candidates." William Worthy has spoken along similar lines.

The basis for such a party already exists. Millions of Negroes are concentrated in the big cities of the country, North and South. United in a party of their own, they are so situated geographically that they could sweep the elections in dozens of congressional districts. They could send a bigger bloc of Negroes to Washington than they did in Reconstruction days and elect a sizable body of state and city legislators who would for the first time be beholden to no one but the Negro community. Both nationally and locally they could hold the legislative balance of power and be in a position to compel bigger concessions from the dominant parties.

The immense implications of such an independent Negro course in politics illustrate graphically the truth of the revolutionary socialist analysis that the independent Negro struggle tends to stimulate, spur and shake up the major forces in the country. The creation of a Negro party running its own candidates would rock the whole political structure to its foundations. It would throw the Democratic Party into a crisis. Without the majority of Negro votes which it now gets, it could never again hope to hold national power. The only place it could go would be down. Organized labor would be faced with an excruciating dilemma too. Its coalition with the Democrats is justified on the ground that the Democrats can "win." But when it becomes plain that they cannot win, the unions would be forced to reconsider their whole political policy. Advocates of a labor break with the old parties would get a bigger and better hearing from the ranks. Thus the creation of a Negro party would benefit not only the

Negro but his present and potential allies.

The Socialist Workers Party contends that racism, like unemployment, exploitation and war, can be abolished in this country only be independent political action aimed at taking control of the government out of the hands of the capitalists and their parties. As a step in this direction, we have long advocated that the unions break from the Democratic Party and form an independent labor party that would seek to politically unite workers, farmers and Negroes and elect their representatives to office. In addition, and for the same reason, we have also endorsed and supported representatives of the Negro community whenever they have run for office independently of and in opposition to the old parties, even when they were not socialists.

Extending this policy in the light of current developments, we publicly express our readiness to support and collaborate with any Negro party or Freedom Now Party that runs candidates of its own in opposition to the capitalist parties and seeks to elect representatives whose primary allegiance will be to the Negro community. Our support of such a party in no way conflicts with our own independent socialist political campaigning or with our continued advocacy of a labor party. On the contrary, we believe that a Negro party, a socialist party, and a labor party would find much in common from the very beginning, would work together for common ends, and would tend in the course of common activity to establish close organizational ties or even merge into a single or federated party. Revolutionary socialists don't care whether capitalism and racism are abolished by a single party or by a combination of parties, just so long as they are abolished.

#### IX. Strategy of the Negro Struggle

In previous convention resolutions, the SWP predicted that the Negro movement would precede and outpace the labor and anti-capitalist movements. This prediction was based on the fact that while the Negro community is predominantly proletarian, the Negro people are more than just another, more heavily exploited section of the working class and the Negro movement is more than just a part of the general working class movement.

As an oppressed minority, the history of the Negroes is different, their position in society is special, their consciousness is influenced by racial, national and international as well as class factors, and they have developed their own

standards, their own methods of action and their own forms of struggle. Although they are a minority numerically, they are a compact minority, knitted together by capitalist segregation in the ghetto and by a common sense of resentment against injustice, and they often play a role disproportionate to their numbers, a vanguard role. This prediction has been strikingly confirmed by recent events, which sees the Negroes in motion and out front while the labor movement is standing still and lagging behind.

Previous SWP resolutions have also analyzed the special factors tending to radicalize the Negro movement. The Negro struggle is the struggle of an oppressed minority for democratic rights, for equality. But because the American capitalist class will not grant equality, it tends to merge with the wider struggle for the abolition of capitalism, for socialism. Under the banner of democratic rights, the Negroes learn to reject the myths about American democratic capitalism, and through their own experiences in fighting for democracy they reach deeply radical conclusions, frequently ahead of other sections of the potentially anti-capitalist forces. This analysis has also been verified and validated by recent developments, which find the Negro movement becoming radicalized, rejecting gradualism and passing beyond liberalism, while it is still the dominant ideology of the labor movement.

These disparities between the Negroes' growing activity and radicalization and labor's relative inactivity and conservatism have at this stage raised a number of complicated problems. In addition, they have produced some questioning and even rejection in certain nationalist circles about a third aspect of the SWP's traditional analysis of the Negro struggle, expressed in the following perspective: while the labor and Negro movements march along their own paths, they do march to a common destination, and the freedom of the Negroes from oppression and of the workers from exploitation can be achieved only through the victory of their common struggle against capitalism.

Our differences with such nationalists do not concern the facts. We both agree that a gap has appeared between the Negro movement and the labor movement and that present relations between them are strained or cool. We disagree over the meaning of these facts, their significance for the future, what to do about them. Since the relations between these two movements are the key to the future of this country, and through it of the world, they deserve the most sober appraisal and searching study.



The fact that the tempos of development of the two movements are uneven is neither new nor really surprising. Since their origins and histories are different, they have rarely marched in step, one usually running ahead of the other, then the other catching up and going out in front.

At the present time it is not the Negro movement that is laggard or out of step but organized labor. The complications occur, not because Negro radicalization is premature or unwarranted, but because labor radicalization has been retarded and is long overdue.

Faced with the disparity of development between the two movements and the frictions generated by it, the liberals don't prod the labor leaders to hurry up, go ahead, ~~initiate~~ initiate a new course. They tell the Negroes to slow down and wait. The union leaders and Negro gradualists offer the same advice. And even some radicals and ex-radicals do the same in effect when they exaggerate the dangers of Negroes "going it alone."

In our opinion the Negro movement will not and should not wait but should push ahead with an expansion of its independent action. To do anything else would set back the Negro cause for many years. We say this without the slightest modification of our fundamental view that the Negroes cannot win their goal of equality in this country without an alliance with the working class.

Although Negro independence and radicalization may not produce large-scale common action with organized labor under present circumstances, it will hasten common action eventually. In previous SWP resolutions, we explained that because the Negroes are doubly exploited, their struggles have exceptional effects on the social and political life of this country. Their fight for simple democratic rights tends to upset the status quo. Their special demands introduce unsettling elements into the consciousness of the working class as a whole, disturbing the relations between the classes and within the class structure. Their independent action serves to spur, stimulate, awaken, excite, inspire, divide, unite, and set into motion other, bigger forces.

Correctly appraised, the independent course, and even the essential nationalist aspects of the Negro movement, do not signify a permanent and principled repudiation of a labor-Negro alliance,\* based on subordination or gradualism in which the Negroes are merely a junior partner supplying manpower but having little to say about the policies and tempo pursued by the team. What they want is an alliance that will include

\* what militant Negroes reject is any alliance based on subordination...

Freedom Now as one of its main demands and in which the Negroes will have an equal voice in setting policy.

There is no inconsistency, in logic or practice, between organizing or reorganizing the Negro movement along independent lines and achieving alliances with other sections of the population. Many Negroes view doing the first job as an indispensable condition for successfully doing the second. They believe -- correctly, in our opinion -- that they must first unite, shape and orient their own movement. Only then will they be able to bring about an alliance of equals, where they can be reasonably sure that their demands and needs cannot be neglected or betrayed by their allies. This does not mean that they cannot begin the forging of alliances even now. But they feel that, if any temporary conflict arises between these two tasks, priority should be given to the imperative need of creating an independent Negro movement.

The strategy of the Negro struggle in the coming period can be expected, if our analysis of the past and the present is correct, to follow the course of uniting, dividing and uniting.

Numerically, Negroes are today about one-ninth of the population. (One-fifth at the time of the American Revolution, one-seventh at the time of the Civil War.) For some, this is a reason or pretext for the feeling that there is nothing much Negroes can do until the white majority changes its racial attitudes; Negroes can only follow, not lead, which is just another way of saying that the Negroes must -- wait.

Revolutionary socialists emphatically reject this approach. Our analysis has demonstrated that the Negro has a vanguard role to play, that his independent struggle will set other currents into motion, and that the worst thing he can do is wait. This is one of the telling differences between a revolutionary approach and a liberal approach, however the latter may be dressed up. Being a minority is not a reason for waiting, but a reason for developing a course of action and program that takes this fact into account and finds ways of overcoming it.

Throughout American history militant Negroes have always understood that their progress depends on their own readiness and ability to struggle. The tactics of today's struggle are necessarily different in this country than in countries like South Africa or Angola or Kenya, where black people are the great majority, and where simple majority rule can mean an end to racial oppression. But here, as in Africa, the liberation of the Negro people requires that the Negroes organize

themselves independently, and control their own struggle, and not permit it to be subordinated to any other consideration or interest.

This means that the Negroes must achieve the maximum unity of their own forces -- organizational unity, in a strong and disciplined nation-wide movement or congress of organizations, and ideological unity, based on defeating, exposing and isolating gradualism and other tendencies emanating from their white oppressors. This phase of the process is now beginning.

Having united their own forces, the independent Negro movement will then probably undertake the tasks of division and alliance. It will seek ways to split the white majority so that the Negro disadvantage of being a numerical minority can be compensated for by division and conflict on the other side.

That has happened over and over again at crucial points in American history. When the whites became divided between revolutionists and Tories in the American Revolution, the Negroes allied themselves with the former, and were able to gain emancipation from slavery in many Northern states. In the first half of the 19th century the independent struggles of the Negroes -- slave insurrections, mass escapes via the Underground Railway, sabotage, etc. -- helped to widen the breach between the North and South and prepare the way for the Civil War. In the Civil War itself the Negroes threw their weight on the Northern side, pressured the North into accepting an emancipation policy, and provided the military balance of power. In the 1930's, when a division among the whites occurred along classic class lines, the Negroes drove in the wedge by giving overwhelming support to the CIO, helping to batter down the open shop and effect their own entry into the labor movement.

In each of these cases, the process of social division was accompanied by or led to a process of social and political alliance in action. That is how we see the future too. United, the Negro people through their independent struggle will help to divide the white population -- between those who most benefit from racism and those whose interests are really damaged by racism. In the process of this struggle, the Negroes will both seek and find alliances. The major one will have to be with the working class.

The general alliance between the labor movement and the Negro fighters for liberation can be prepared for and preceded by the cementing of firm working unity between the vanguard of

the Negro struggle and the socialist vanguard of the working class represented by the Socialist Workers Party. This is the primary task of the SWP in the present period of the "Freedom Now" movement.

X. The Role and Tasks of the Socialist Workers Party

The role of the Socialist Workers Party is to assemble and programmatically equip the forces that will lead the coming American revolution to abolish capitalism and racism. This function is indispensable because American capitalism is so powerful and racism so deeply rooted in it. If the SWP did not exist, it would be necessary to form another organization to carry out this function, which no other existing political party, big or small, now aspires to fulfill.

The SWP operates in an arena wider than the Negro struggle, narrowly considered. For militant Negroes concerned first and foremost with the Negro struggle, this may at first appear as a disadvantage or liability. It is neither.

The SWP agrees that the first task of Negroes is to organize themselves independently. But the Negro movement does not and cannot exist in isolation from other forces and conflicts at home and abroad. The broader perspective and concern of the SWP with the totality of social struggle is an invaluable asset. Its revolutionary activity in the labor and other mass movements provides a means of enlisting allies and neutralizing potential enemies of the Negro movement in both its present formative and its future stages, and of connecting the class struggle with the Negro struggle in such a way as to strengthen both.

The SWP seeks to equip both revolutionary whites and Negroes with the best set of scientific tools yet devised to change society -- Marxism. Drawn from and fusing the lessons of American and world experiences, Marxism is constantly enriched, refined and rendered more effective by the experience of new struggles. It illuminates the causes of racism and points to the method for eradicating them. The SWP seeks not only to "Americanize" Marxism (that is, apply it to American conditions and use American conditions to modernize and expand Marxism itself) but also to apply Marxism to the problems of the Negro people and use the experience of their struggles to enrich Marxism.

The SWP believes and acts on the belief, that the working class cannot achieve its aims without the Negro people achieving theirs. The American revolution for a socialist democracy

cannot succeed unless it is based on an equal and mutually acceptable partnership between the working class and the Negro people. It is this belief, deeply ingrained and expressed in the SWP's program and practice, rather than any written or verbal assurances or pledges, which affords an objective basis for regarding the SWP as different from other organizations most of whose members are white.

Its unblemished record in the class struggle and the Negro struggle during hot wars and cold, its uncompromising attitude toward capitalism and all its agencies and ideas, have earned the SWP the right not to be considered as just another party, or even just another radical party. Unlike the Communist Party, the SWP has never called on Negroes to subordinate, suspend or give up their struggle for any other interest or cause, national or international. Unlike the Socialist Party, the SWP has never urged Negroes to support any of the political parties of their oppressors and its opposition to gradualism in the Negro struggle is matched by its opposition to that same policy in all other fields. Unlike the Socialist Labor Party, the SWP does not belittle, stand aside from and turn its back on the immediate and partial struggles of the Negroes, but views them as a necessary and hopeful link to future, more fundamental struggles and participates in them actively and whole-heartedly. White or black, those who understand the need for a revolutionary socialist party will find the genuine article in the SWP.

The present tasks of the SWP in connection with the Negro struggle for liberation are:

1. To better educate the entire membership; give ourselves a deeper and more sensitive understanding of the feelings, aspirations and needs of the Negro people; become more closely acquainted with their history, their current tendencies and organizations, the obstacles they face; above all, absorb, steep ourselves in, the revolutionary character of their struggle, so that it becomes and remains a central feature of our work at all times. In this way we can inoculate ourselves against paternalism and other conscious or unconscious manifestations of the racial pressures that capitalist society brings to bear on everyone, even within the revolutionary party dedicated to ending capitalism.

2. To provide, through the party leadership, permanent help, guidance, coordination, encouragement and expansion of our work in the Negro struggle.

3. To devote more attention, energies and forces to

the Negro struggle.

(a) While our white members cannot aspire to leadership of Negro organizations, they can play important auxiliary roles there when permitted to join, and can help our Negro members when not permitted to join. Their direct participation in the struggle is doubly important in branches where we have few or no Negro members, since this is one way of contacting and recruiting Negro members. White members have the duty to fight against racism wherever they are and can greatly promote the party's work by fulfilling this duty. White members in the unions have the vital tasks of combating inequality on the job and at the hiring gate, supporting battles for Negro representation at all levels of union leadership, helping to build a left wing unequivocally committed to aiding the Negro struggle, working for labor collaboration with existing Negro movements and wherever possible persuading the unions to initiate such collaboration.

(b) Just as most workers in the party are expected to work in their unions and most students to work in campus organizations, so most of our Negro members will belong to Negro organizations, which they seek to build along militant lines. They work to unite the Negro community around a Freedom Now program. They join and help to promote independent Negro electoral activities. If members of unions, they help to form Negro groups and a broad left wing in the unions, and whether union members or not they propose collaboration between the labor and Negro movements whenever feasible. Negro Marxists have irreplaceable functions to perform in the struggle of their people. They serve as a two-way channel of communication between the movements of the Negro masses and the conscious struggle for a Socialist America. (1) In the Negro community they popularize the ideas and proposals of revolutionary socialism. With the help of Marxist methods, they exercise their rights, as Negroes, to help form the ideology of their race, including its attitudes toward integration and separation. (2) In the SWP they strive to equip themselves for the role of revolutionary leadership in the mass movements and remain alert to see that the party as a whole understands and pays the necessary attention to the problems of the Negro struggle.

4. To expand and strengthen the party's Negro cadre and forces in the Negro organizations and the civil rights movements, by: (a) Recruiting revolutionary Negroes

and helping to train them for leadership in the party and mass movements. (b) Bringing more of our present Negro membership into the party leadership at all levels. (c) Widening our contacts among individual Negro radicals and collaborating with them closely and fraternally if they decide to form radical or socialist groups of their own. (d) Recruiting revolutionary whites, especially youth, like the Freedom Riders who are already engaged in courageous struggles for civil rights.

5. Expand and improve the party press's treatment of the Negro struggle and expand the circulation of our literature among Negro militants.

The seriousness with which we apply ourselves to these tasks will be a test of our capacity as a revolutionary party.