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Contents

	<u>Page</u>
<u>ON TRADE UNION WORK</u> , by Tom Cagle, Oakland-Berkeley Branch	3
<u>INTRODUCTION TO TRANSCRIPT OF OAKLAND- BERKELEY BRANCH DISCUSSION ON 1970 UAW STRIKE</u> , Frank Lovell	22
<u>REPORT TO OAKLAND-BERKELEY BRANCH ON 1970 UAW STRIKE, DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY,</u> <u>September 27, 1970</u> , Tom Kerry	23

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ON TRADE UNION WORK

by Tom Cagle, Oakland-Berkeley Branch

I have over the past ten years raised and probed many questions concerning our party's trade union work with comrades Cannon, Dobbs, Dunne, Kerry, Lovell, etc. with the greatest respect for these comrades' contributions and impact on the class struggles of this period of our party's history. There was never the slightest doubt in my mind when I joined the SWP in 1961 that our party was the inheritor and continuer of the revolutionary traditions in America in the struggle to bring the working class to power, as the vanguard party of the working class. I am a revolutionary proletariat bolshevik and Trotskyist to the core. My ten years in the SWP has only intensified this commitment and is the only motivation of the criticism that I feel compelled to offer in this document. My concern in raising these criticisms is directed at our party's middle-class composition and orientation just at the time that tremendous opportunities are opening up for us in the working class rebellions brewing inside these trade unions requiring our intervention. We are posed on the brink of a massive working class upsurge, strike wave and radicalization due to the sharpening attacks now being made on the working class exacerbated by the sharpening economic crisis on a world scale. The radicalized middle class protest movements that we are so involved in today will either run to join on the side of these working class battles that are now building or will be repelled by these class conflicts and side in with the bourgeoisie in opposition to the working class. The great danger lies in the unstable influence that this petty bourgeoisie will have and the traditional pressure they bring to bear on the middle class composition of the SWP and raises the question -- how well have we assimilated these middle class cadre into the party dedicated to the struggle for Marxist theory? Are they being prepared for a turn to the working class? Will they resist this turn? Has our party gone beyond the point of being capable of making this turn itself? These questions are not raised in the abstract or academically. The radicalization process now taking place within the working class, cannot, and will not be subordinated to, the middle class protest movement. This seems to be the central effort of our party leadership in its approach to its trade union work.

It is with deep concern over these strong liquidationist tendencies

and petty bourgeois currents within our party that I have undertaken to write this document drawing on my 22 years as an auto worker, active trade unionist and ten years in the SWP.

This document will be an attempt to probe the roots, summarize and draw conclusions over many apprehensive doubts and questions that have emerged which is reflected generally throughout the party.

The conclusions that I draw only tend to exacerbate this concern over the future course of our party, raising the specter that our party may succumb to revisionism, abandonment of Trotskyism, Leninist concepts and the struggle for Marxist theory which comrade Trotsky devoted his life to. Comrade Trotsky's hope that our American section could fight off internal adaptational tendencies, overcome the curse of bourgeois pragmatic and empirical outlook and master the theoretical struggle for Marxism so as to go forward and provide a lead in the building of the Fourth International would come as a distinct disappointment to him if he was alive today. I feel that I must briefly establish my credentials if I am to have the unpleasant task of sharpening and participating in the political fight at the next convention in the hopes of effecting a change in our general political orientation.

The past 34 years of my existence has been indelibly linked and interwoven with working class struggles of that period... In an auto town such as Pontiac where I grew up during the depth of the depression provided the most severe school for absorbing class struggle techniques and testing them out... As my father's generation grew weary of the long back breaking pace on the assembly line, speedup, etc; unionism was being whispered throughout the plants, holding out hope for a better life. With massive unemployment and jobs hard to get you get fired on the spot for just thinking unionism, so with all these social pressures weighing heavy on his shoulders, my father took on the task of clandestine in-plant UAW organizer in a futile attempt to organize the plant. Informers were everywhere, he was subsequently fired, blacklisted, impoverished to the destitute level of the unemployed, radicalized and came under the influence of the Stalinists who posed as the revolutionists of those times, launched

into the struggle to organize the unemployed. He was successful in organizing 5,000 unemployed into the "Workers Alliance" which fought against rent evictions, for welfare and Public Works Projects to provide jobs for everyone.

IMPACT

When the full impact and the success of the Trotskyist led general strike in Minneapolis and Autolite in Toledo began to assert itself into these auto towns it began to raise hopes that these GM sweatshops could be "busted" wide open and unionized by a growing army of unemployed, blacklisted, ex-auto workers who were the vanguard of this radicalizing strata. As organizing activities were stepped up inside these plants, management's repression, discharges and goon squad attacks increased also the size of this blacklisted army of unemployed who in the process of radicalizing many joined the Communist party in search of a revolutionary alternative. Those who did not join remained openly sympathetic.

FLINT "GETTYSBURG" 1937

When the electrifying effect of the Flint sitdown strike swept through auto it galvanized massive support for a final breakthrough in the drive to unionize. By the thousands these workers flocked to Flint for it held out hope of becoming the center of the unionizing drive to bust the backs of these auto barons. These workers, not only offered assistance but were studying tactics that they could take back into their own shops. General Motors called for and received national guard troops, set up machine guns on the front lawns of their occupied plants. GM demanded that the Governor order these troops to open fire and clear out these occupied plants, calling it "insurrection" a "revolutionary challenge to the sanctity of private property."

The call went out for working class support as the crucial deadline approached. The Governor and President of GM exhausted all legal maneuvers and subterfuge in efforts to trick these strikers into abandoning their seized plants. All hinged on the outcome of this struggle. The three main threats to this strike. (1) The mounted police in Flint were successful in breaking through the mass picket lines behind which food is passed into the plants, cutting off most of the food. (2) GM turned off all heat to the plants in freezing weather. (3) and were demanding that the Governor give the orders to shoot.

Two tactics were worked out by this Pontiac contingent as they argued late into the night. (1) The picket lines must be made impregnable from mounted police so that food can be passed into the plant. (2) And the strike must be defended from an armed attack. As a fascinated lad of ten I was able to help in the disassembling of a twelve foot iron picket fence in which they obtained approximately 40 12 foot long iron spears in which they attached placards supporting the strike. The tactic was when the mounted police charged the picket line, the holders of these spears were to stick the butt end down into the ground, level his spear at a 45 degree angle towards the charging horse and wait for the foolish cop to impale his horse on these spears. This successful tactic produced an impregnable "picket" line. The second tactic involved armed defense. There was not too much discussion on this subject just a quiet resolve to resort to the ultimate in defense if it becomes necessary. There were forty cars lined up on the street in front of our house that day. About five men to a car -- each man had brought his gun, either deer rifle or shot gun which was to be securely locked up in each car trunk. This comprised the Pontiac strike support committee caravan to Flint resolved to stay until victory. I walked with the leadership that cold morning as they went from car to car repeating the same orders; proceed to Flint on US 10, before entering town turn off and take Old River Road into Flint. They had to take the circular route because of marshal law being declared blocking all main highways into Flint in an effort to prevent support build-up.

The final order was; "under no circumstances are you to touch your guns until ordered to do so." The rest is history. As a boy of ten I was never in doubt of the outcome of this struggle because I had looked into too many determined faces that day. An armed proletarian army that was later to be incorporated into the early UAW union structure as the "flying squad."

Of the thousands that flocked to Flint for the "showdown" the Pontiac story could be duplicated in many of the auto towns, which returned home victorious and proceeded to organize their plants into unions.

I entered the General Motors Truck and Coach Division at Pontiac in 1945 as a conscious proletariat with a copy of Karl Marx's Wage, Labor and Capital under my arm. Upon seeing this basic primer of Marxism, the shop

committeeman promptly appointed me his alternate on the spot, launching me immediately into the Thomas, Addes - Reuther power struggle raging inside the UAW so aptly described in comrade Art Preis' book "Labor's Giant Step."

With a brief intermission for the 113 day GM strike, I again returned to this confused power struggle. Torn between these two factions, I would attend the Thomas-Addes caucus meetings which were supported by the Stalinists and listen and question intently their militant appeal for support and attend the Reuther caucus and hear him openly expound socialist sentiment and call for the labor party. Reuther's appeal corresponded closest to my thinking of that time as I joined his caucus and participated in the struggle to win over the giant UAW local 594 in opposition to the Stalinists who controlled one half of the elected offices and were using noisy slanderous tactics and unprincipled attacks on all who opposed them. As comrade Art Preis correctly points out in Labor's Giant Step; "until Walter Reuther finally succeeded in establishing one man rule in the late 1940's the internal life of the UAW for years was a succession of factional struggles, revolts and attempts to strengthen the top bureaucratic leaders against the ranks."

"The stormy conventions of the UAW became famous -- or notorious, according to the point of view. The members jealously guarded their right to maintain organized caucuses to press for policies and leaders they preferred. Those open factional struggles of tendencies were a source of dismay, indeed of horror, to the old line union officials who dealt ruthlessly with even the mildest opposition and never let a member talk out of turn."

The massive strike upsurge at the end of the second world war also raised the question of political power among the radicalized strata as a natural expression for a class break and the formation of the labor party. I helped organize and attended a union mobilized mass rally in Cadillac Square, Detroit, in 1945 where 100,000 workers shouted themselves hoarse in response to a call for a labor party. Popular sentiment for a political class break was growing inside the shops. In retrospect it is here that I must offer my first serious criticism of the SWP's trade union policy, covering this important period; The SWP, in the face of this massive growth in support for the labor party, could not see a third alternative to the Thomas-Addes, Reuther struggle in the UAW. Our party had an auto faction of 125 which supported the Reuther caucus against the Stalinist

backed Thomas-Addes caucus in the closing days of the war when Reuther favored a more militant trade union policy. This SWP auto faction operated almost totally eclipsed in the shadows of the massive Stalinist movement in opposition of course but in an obscure indistinguishable political fashion in so far as not offering a third alternative that could have attracted and recruited thousands of militants such as myself who clearly wanted to go beyond militant trade unionism by joining a revolutionary party... I as well as thousands of other militant proletarians did not even know that the SWP existed precisely because their politics were indistinguishable from the "progressives" in these unions. This SWP relationship with the Reuther group continued into 1946 and early 1947 when it was becoming more apparent that the Reuther formation was moving to the right and engaging in the most virulent forms of red-baiting against the Thomas-Addes caucus. In 1947 there developed serious differences within the party leadership over whether or not to switch support to Thomas-Addes. The Swabeck-Dunne section of party leadership favored continuing support for Reuther, while Cochran and the auto faction pushed for a turn to Thomas-Addes. It is here that I consider it strange, in the face of rising popular support for the labor party neither group of these comrades even considered going it alone and building a third alternative caucus inside the UAW based on Trotsky's Transitional Program and call for a labor party when clearly the potential and initiative were ours.

This internal party dispute was resolved by having this auto fraction support Thomas-Addes but at a time when the Stalinists were losing control of the caucus. The serious weakness that emerges here is that our party was unable to see itself independent of the militants, the left Reutherites in the Reuther caucus. They attempted to cover up their adaptation to Reuther during the period of the 1946 convention with the statement; "There was no movement in the ranks prepared to push a third alternative to the two presented by the main divisions of the convention." In that simple statement expresses clearly one of the root causes of our party's troubles today -- Lack of vanguardism, inability to see our intervention as a separate entity with a revolutionary Marxist perspective for the working class, opportunistic adaptation to "progressive" trade unionism, waiting for spontaneity to occur and worshipping of the accomplished fact in a subjective un-Marxist manner without attempting to change those facts... It is important to grasp on

to and fully understand why our party, as well as other left militants were never able to transcend left wing trade unionism, never began in the UAW from the point of view of the construction of a revolutionary party, but rather with the "accomplished fact" and "concrete work" in the UAW.

As Trotsky had pointed out in his discussion with the SWP leadership in 1940 that this "pragmatic outlook led them into an adaptational tendency towards the Rooseveltian Progressives, many of whom were 'militant' Reutherites, during the 1939-40 period." In the discussion, Trotsky said; "We are in a bloc with so called progressives, not only fakers but honest rank and file.

"Yes they are honest and progressive but from time to time they vote for Roosevelt, once in four years. You propose a trade union policy not a bolshevik policy. Bolshevik policies begin outside the trade unions. The worker is an honest trade unionist but far from bolshevik policies."

Trotsky urged the SWP to fight for leadership in the unions as a "third competitor," as opposed to both the Stalinists and the Progressives.

When Trotsky said that "Bolshevik policies begin outside of the trade unions," he in no way meant that Marxists turn their backs on the unions, but that "militant trade unionism" as a method of fighting the bureaucracy leads to opportunism. It represents an acceptance of capitalism and the indefinite ability to achieve reforms through militancy alone. Trotsky said we must begin as Bolsheviks, not as trade unionists, no matter how militant. For a vanguard revolutionary party to opportunistically adapt itself down to the level of militant trade unionism, perform "practical work" and "organizational tasks" separated from the struggle for Marxist theory is tantamount to liquidation of that party. The struggle for leadership in the unions between the bureaucracy and the revolutionary party is the central struggle for the leadership of the working class. There can no longer be any middle ground and neutrality in the unions. Trotsky pointed out in his Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay; "They can no longer be anarchistic, i.e. ignore the decisive influence of the state on the life of people and classes. They can no longer be reformist because the objective conditions leave no room for any serious and lasting reforms. The trade unions of our times can either serve as secondary instruments of imperialist capitalism for the subordination and disciplining

of workers and for obstructing the revolution, or, on the contrary, the trade unions can become the instruments of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat."

No review of this important period of our party's history would be complete without touching on Cannon's Theses on the American Revolution, written by James P. Cannon and passed by the 12th National Convention of the party, November 15-18, 1946. This was the convention which reported the recruitment of over 1,000 new members to the party, almost doubling the party membership in one year. This important document was a positive expression of our party's deep conviction in the revolutionary potential of the American working class maintaining continuity with the best Trotskyist traditions which led Cannon to his original break with the American Communist Party. It stated that "the American workers have the advantage of being comparatively free, especially among the younger and most militant layer, from reformist prejudices." Their political backwardness is now in 1946 seen as no real problem; "given an objectively revolutionary situation, a proletarian party, even a small one, equipped with a precisely worked out Marxist program and firm cadres can expand its forces and come to the head of the revolutionary mass movement in a comparatively brief span of time."

In this theses Cannon expresses confidence in the revolutionary potentialities and how quickly illusions can be shed as objective conditions change, and how Marxists despised in one period can lead great masses in the next.

PROVINCIALISM

This theses also contained a provincial outlook based on a totally false understanding of the objective situation in the world economy at the time as well as of the relationship of American capitalism to the world capitalist system. According to the "Theses" the temporary restabilization of capitalism, already clearly apparent in 1946, would be only a mere episode of far shorter duration than the decade of prosperity that followed World War I. In fact Cannon states; "From the point of view of our theses it makes no difference whether the deep crisis begins early in the spring of 1947, as many bourgeois economists are predicting, or six months later, as many others think, or even a year or two later, as is quite possible in my opinion." Thus a deep-going crisis and prerevolutionary situation was seen as coming into existence in the

US in two years at the very latest. Furthermore this crisis was seen as developing despite stabilization of capitalism in Europe and the rest of the world following the failure of proletarian revolution, quite apparent by this time, throughout the rest of the world.

Come hell or high water the American system was going to collapse shortly and the SWP was to be catapulted into the vanguard of the revolution.

With such a perspective Cannon could very well state, as he did, that the main task of the SWP was, to come to power shortly and in this way help the Fourth International.

But the world of 1946 was not as Cannon pictured it. Cannon completely underestimated the tremendous significance of the betrayal of the postwar revolutionary wave, by the Stalinists in particular. Capitalism was able to survive this period of acute crisis in the immediate aftermath of the war not because it found some new solution, or developed a new stage of "neo-capitalism" but only because of the counter-revolutionary role played by Stalinism at this time, particularly in France and Italy, where the working class was preparing to take power from a demoralized and bankrupt ruling class and was prevented from doing so only by the counter-revolutionary actions of the Kremlin bureaucracy and its agents in the European Communist Parties.

Likewise in America the ruling class was able to beat back the post war upsurge expressed in the form of strike waves that swept the country with the help of the Kremlin agents and the trade union bureaucracy (including the "progressive" and "Militant" kinds).

SAPPING OPERATION

In order to counter-act and beat back the revolutionary upsurge which threatened their 1944 "Bretton Woods Agreement" plans for rescuing bankrupt capitalism in Europe, a "sapping" operation had to be conducted against the radicalized vanguard of this domestic class movement in order to achieve international stabilization of the capitalist system. The American ruling class has a long history of using devious machinations in order to maintain its control and keep its two party system intact. Starting with the petty-bourgeois populist movements of the nineteenth century which constantly swallowed up every working class attempt to assert its independence, prompted them to once again project a third capitalist political

party in 1948, headed up by the former "Rooseveltian" Democrat Henry A. Wallace for the intended purpose of trapping, disillusioning, disorienting and destroying all independent political sentiment, for a class break, that existed within the working class, as they prepared to heat up the cold war witch-hunts and consolidate their power. Our party's serious underestimation of two important obstacles to their being catapulted to power; (1) The Communist Party and the (2) trade union bureaucracy's control over the working class raises serious questions as to why they did not realistically face up to these tremendous obstacles in a serious struggle for leadership with an intervention into the crisis of the Communist Party at that time, which was breaking up.

The Communist Party emerged from the war as no small formation, with around 100,000 members as compared to our party's 2,000 or so. It had a periphery of at least one half million and solid bases in a whole number of CIO unions. While a good section of its membership were petty-bourgeois it also had many, many thousands of trade unionists, many of whom were motivated by genuine radical sentiments. The SWP in 1946 had a responsibility to both reach those in the CP it could reach and to deepen the internal crisis inside the CP so as to remove it as an obstacle from its path. Trotsky had spent many hours of his last two years attempting to convince the SWP leadership of the necessity of executing this successful tactic, which was even more of an opportune tactic to use in the post-war years as this party broke up under the impact of the deep crisis that tore it apart. The difficulties facing our party today have their direct methodological roots in this period which clearly expresses the theoretical weaknesses and inability of our party to overcome its internal inertia and adaptational tendencies which holds back our party from boldly seizing onto these opportunities advantageously.

TRADE UNION POLICY

The evolution of our party's trade union work had the following pattern to it; (1) In the late 30's our party formed an alliance with Rooseveltian progressives in the unions against the Stalinists on the basis of trade union militancy. (2) Early war years brought a deep isolation to the party's trade unionist who could not really function with either the Rooseveltians or the Stalinists because of their subordination to the war drive.

(3) End of war our party slowly

began to form an alliance once again with the Rooseveltian elements and dissident Stalinists, even though Trotsky had vigorously polemicized against this alliance by stating that we must begin as Bolsheviks, not trade unionists no matter how militant. This alliance soon soured as the Rooseveltian liberals in the union turned to witch-hunting and the cold war, and turned against all radicals including the SWP.

(4) By 1948 our trade union work began to take on once again the character of a retrenchment as the party participated in few caucuses and prepared to sit out the unfavorable domestic climate for the next decade and a half. Thus no sharp political break with progressive liberal trade union circles ever took place even to this present day. It must be emphasized once again that our party had never proceeded from a revolutionary perspective for the working class by interjecting Marxism into these unions with Trotsky's Transitional Program as a third alternative.

THE RETREAT OF THE RADICALS

The receding postwar radicalization period was in full retreat. The 1950's was a very difficult retrenchment period for the American Trotskyist movement. With the stabilization of the world capitalist system well under way, the post war boom was in full swing and as a result struggles on the part of the working class were at a minimum. In addition a witch-hunt against radicals was in full swing. It was certainly a dark period for building a revolutionary party... A period which brings out every weakness and accentuates every contradiction within a party. With the stabilization of capitalism came a conservatizing mood that settled down upon the world working class infecting all sections of the Fourth International with demoralization giving rise to liquidationist revisionist currents.

This found its sharpest expression internationally in "Pabloism" also inside the SWP in the 1952-53 in the form of the "Cochranite struggle," without a doubt the most profound internal struggle the SWP experienced since the death of Trotsky. It follows that every great struggle within the party has its roots in a break with the Marxist method and an adaptation to the method of the bourgeoisie. With the intensification of red-baiting attacks inside the unions and the full impact of Joe McCarthy's cold war witch hunt on the outside, I retreated along with thousands of other militants

who were unattached politically by the disintegration of the Communist Party under the blows of the East German uprising, ruthlessly suppressed by the Soviet bureaucracy followed by the Hungarian uprising which delivered the coup de grace to the remaining supporters of the CP. While my political retreat symbolizing the retreat of this whole period of radicalization was due to my lack of Marxist theoretical understanding, this same weakness was also to apply to the retreat out of the SWP of the 1,000 or so trade unionists who also were not firmly ingrained in Marxist theory in direct disregard of Trotsky's sharp clear instructions to the leadership of the SWP who failed to carry out his instructions. My political retreat was to be replaced by the restless search for the good life as I moved about the country as a railroad brakeman, construction pile driver, salesman, etc. finally settling back into auto in Oakland, California, in 1955 at the old Chevrolet assembly plant... One can delude himself about the "good life" but when you are a worker the facts of life keep hitting back at you, forcing you to face up to reality. With my experience it was only natural that I gravitated towards union leadership; shop committeeman, Executive Board, co-chairman of strike committee, etc. Even these delusions of becoming a union bureaucrat have a way of hitting at you until you face once again your earlier Marxist ideas and influences and grapple with the problem of reform versus revolution and the great unfulfilled historical task still confronting the working class. Influenced strongly by Farrell Dobbs' Presidential campaign and the ability of Trotskyist comrades to resolve outstanding questions in my mind concerning Stalin versus Trotsky I joined the SWP in 1961 dedicated to building a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class. There was no question, in my mind, that the SWP would be that party and I had made the correct choice.

WORK IN THE TRADE UNIONS

With an understanding of the few openings to do trade union work because of the relative economic prosperity and the acquiescence of the working class we turned to youth work around the campuses and moved our headquarters as close to these campuses as we could get them because that was where the action and opportunities for recruitment were beginning to open up.

The sharp contrast between campus free speech movements, sit-ins, teach-ins, anti-war rallies, etc. and the

low political level and backwardness of our co-workers in the plant, was a perplexing paradox as we discussed and were alert to every sign that might indicate a reversal of this deplorable attitude of apathetic indifference and sometimes antagonism to campus and civil rights ferment that was becoming a daily occurrence. Black workers were the most healthy encouragement as they generally expressed sympathy for and emotionally identified with the causes of the student and civil rights protest movements and were receptive to our press.

Union meetings were stifling dull and monotonous, rigorously stacked, manipulated and controlled by heavy handed bureaucrats who prevented anything of a controversial nature or job related complaint from being brought up or discussed at these meetings. "Sit down, you are out of order," or "don't disrupt this meeting with your personal grievance, see your committeeman after this meeting," was the common gripe of the rank and file as they turned away from these union meetings with disgust. As the union structure became more bureaucratized with self-seekers who were only interested in getting soft jobs, management took advantage of this quiescent attitude by consciously pursuing a policy, industry wide, of cultivating, corrupting and manipulating unions with a carrot and stick approach until they had compromised them to a level as mere extensions of their labor relations department in order to better police and control the workers. "Good" and "cooperative" union representatives under the watchful eye of management were given special treatment, privileges and settlements on their grievances in order to make them appear good to their workers while "uncooperative," militant union officials and committeemen were hassled, intimidated and given bad settlements in order to make them look bad in the eyes of the workers they represented in hopes that they would be defeated in the next election. If these "uncooperative" committeemen or union officers remain obstinate they would be summarily run out of the plant on discipline until they "wise up" and become more cooperative, compromising, etc. or they will be fired, losing their jobs in the harsh process of "housebreaking" them. "Our" union thus has been transformed, by management, into a training ground for future foremen as they became "housebroken" and more management oriented... At least twenty-five per cent of our supervisory personnel, here at GM Fremont, was recruited from the UAW union structure and includes one ex-International Rep. This accounts for the widening gap now occurring

between the ranks and "the union" as their suspicion is confirmed and turns to outright hostility and contempt.

Participation in union activities are discouraged by these local bureaucrats in order to insulate themselves from the anger and hostility of the ranks. Membership meetings are held at 10:00 AM on Sunday mornings in hopes that no one will show up, as a result the membership stays away in mass. The three per cent required attendance to legally constitute a quorum is accomplished only twice a year now; at nominations and election time as the opportunistic hopefuls angling for soft jobs, summer school camp and convention type paid vacations are attracted to and swell the size of these meetings to sometimes five per cent. To offset any charges of membership "apathy" it must be pointed out that at contract time, at both strike vote and ratification meetings between 50 and 70 per cent turn out to vote as 95% for strike in order to put a little backbone into these spineless bureaucrats. The superficial appearance of rank and file "apathy" mask a deep foreboding form of cynicism over rapidly deteriorating working conditions and the unions inability to reverse this process which harbors a violent rebellious mood that is now striving to assert itself and find expression.

One form of expression is the increasingly high rate of contract rejections. The international union acknowledges that the ranks would like to "get at them" after each contract settlement but "can't" so they take it out on the next available target; the local union leadership. After the 1961 UAW contract a new statistical phenomenon began to make its appearance based on 700 UAW locals; 20% of these incumbent local leaders were defeated in their bid for reelection, some of these were veterans who helped organize their union, along came the reaction to the 1964 contract which showed the casualty turnover rate had climbed to 40% of these incumbent local leaders who in their routine bid for reelection were defeated... The 1968 local elections following the 1967 contract produced an 80% turnover rate. This manifests an exceedingly high rate of discontent with leadership performance.

Old veteran office holders are being defeated by young challengers at an ever increasing rate. With the June elections, this year, in all the locals expected to register the largest reaction to date, incumbents will be judged on their past poor performance

and then defeated in wholesale lots.

The International bureaucracy are acutely aware that deteriorating working conditions and inflation are generating combative moods that erupt into wildcat strikes and contemptuous assaults on spineless piecards who refuse to lead and are forced to betray the ranks under tremendous company and International pressure. The monolithic power wielded by Woodcock which was acquired by his predecessor Reuther rests its structural base on these locals now under assault and defy all their efforts to stabilize control over these rebellious workers who are reacting to a heating up of the class struggle inside these factories. To refute comrades with spontaneous tendencies who would sieze upon this development as natural not needing the conscious intervention of Marxists with a transitional program to lead these workers towards a class break with capitalism. These well intentioned young militants who challenge the union bureaucrats, on finding themselves elected to office are immediately faced with the difficult decision of leading militant rank and file struggles in order to carry out their campaign promises or capitulating to tremendous pressure brought to bear upon them by the international union working in close harmony with the company to housebreak these mavericks into accepting the frustrating grievance procedures and time worn collective bargaining channels for "peacefully" resolving these disputes in a class conciliatory manner. If they compromise and become class conciliators they face almost certain defeat in the following election or if they persist in leading these militant struggles they will be fired by the company.

The sharpness of the class struggle poses no middle ground solution as the company's tough approach is backed up immediately by the international union who will slap this errant local into receivership and move in to take control over and put down any rank and file rebelliousness. If any outside help is needed the repressive arm of the state stands by with its court injunctions and police violence as the ultimate weapon. Thus an overwhelming array of state power is brought to bear in defeating militant on-the-job (rank and fileism) type action advocated by such ultraleft groups as PL, RU, etc. Defeats, demoralization and extreme cynicism are the end results of relying solely on militant trade unionism in the absence of a revolutionary Marxist consciousness... This local electoral game of musical chairs, now going on, can only be interrupted by the conscious intervention of Marxists armed with

Trotsky's Transitional Program dedicated to the struggle to instill Marxist theory and strategy into these struggles in order to win the allegiance of the working class at the point of production. There is no other way! Those who turn away from this task turn away from Marxism.

FROM GENERALITIES TO THE SPECIFIC

While our trade union policy was still one of "retrenchment," holding on and from time to time giving support to "progressive" office seekers just to loosen up the surface encrustation, it was obvious to trade union comrades that their work inside these trade unions was to play a secondary, subordinate role to our party's political assessment of the primary importance of the middle class "radicalization" that was to "penetrate all layers." We were to be on the alert for and encourage all signs of this "penetration."

My assignment as well as the other two comrades employed at the GM Fremont assembly plant was to carry on the "concrete work" and "practical day to day task" of disseminating our party's program, press and organizational activities into that plant. We were instrumental in giving important support and encouragement to emerging rank and file oppositional caucuses such as The Headlighters, Black Panther Caucus and the Emancipation Caucus in order to loosen up the long standing oppressive bureaucratic machine that controlled our local with an iron hand. The bitter objective lessons that we had to "relearn" all over again was that militant trade unionism as a method of fighting the bureaucracy leads to opportunism. We helped bust up the old machine utilizing these "militant" caucuses only to be confronted once again with a compromising and hostile administration as these newly elected officers turn on us with the prompting of the international as they are put into harness and become thoroughly class collaborationist and bureaucratized themselves. We three auto trade union comrades, with the urging of our top party leaders created the United Action Caucus to better facilitate a more independent type of work of building support for all emerging struggles through leafleting the plant, holding socials, educationals as well as selling our press. We even contested an election for delegate post to the UAW 22nd Constitutional Convention, unsuccessfully again with party approval under the direct urging and advice of comrade Frank Lovell. Going back three and one half years ago to the 1967 contract settlement our party drew up a leaflet exposing the inadequacies of that contract's emasculated Cost-of-

Living-Allowance (escalator clause) urging the auto workers to vote no and reject this contract... That leaflet distributed at our plant had an electrifying effect as these workers overwhelmingly voted rejection of this national agreement, at our local, placing us as one of the few "rebel" locals to defy and go against the national trend to ratify.

It must be pointed out that all of our past work was under the directionship of comrade Dobbs and the trade union section of our party's leadership, coordinated to the policies of the party as a whole. Our Fremont GM plant was always considered a valuable barometer of emerging trends in the basic industry in which our intervention consisted of making exploratory probes from time to time as we test out programmatic ideas in order to determine the level of consciousness of this body of workers as well as the effects of the student, nationalist, anti-war, etc. and how well these mass protest movements were penetrating into and radicalizing the working class. I must emphasize that for that ten year period I enjoyed the most respected cordiality and confidence of the top leadership especially the trade union section of that leadership. Whenever comrades Dobbs, Dunne, Kerry, Lovell, etc. came to town, one evening would always be set aside for our discussions which were fruitful and informative exchange of ideas, experiences and suggestive advice. All problems and questions concerning our trade union work at Fremont were worked out in friendly consultation with Bay Area trade union comrades Paul, Mary Lou, Asher, and Ruth, Sylvia and Nat and Art Sharon with any left over problems or questions being directed to comrade Dobbs. These sessions were sometimes taped in their entirety and mailed to the National Office for their information.

My writing of the series of articles that appeared in The Militant and pamphlet form called "Life in an Auto Plant" was a positive expression of my confidence in our party's ability to recognize and adapt to these early manifestations of working class radicalization that were making their appearance due to the economic crises and sharpening attacks being mounted by the ruling class. There was never the slightest doubt in my mind that a proletarian orientation could be achieved within our party under the impact of explosive class struggles that would objectively transform our middle-class composition and orientation into correcting presently held petty bourgeois misconceptions and deficiencies. It would be merely an educational task, or so I thought

at the time, carried out inside the party by trade union comrades in conjunction with entry type assignments. We trade unionist comrades had always functioned in the past in a secret elitist manner under the direction of comrade Paul Montauk. It was generally understood that the reason for this was so as not to disrupt the main work of our party and prevent a disorientation. This approach had the effect of re-enforcing the harmful trend in our party towards compartmentalization or over specialization.

Back last June, fully three months before our strike, we anticipated that there would be a long strike and we projected that GM would be the target and drafted a program of action accordingly. We were determined this time to break out of our circle propaganda existence in the branch and involve all comrades in building a correct program for our strike intervention both as an educational project and to sharpen up our program, tactics and approach. We submitted a rough draft of our program to the N.O. and branch executive board for criticism and advice. It was unanimously adopted that enough copies of this program be reproduced and mailed to all comrades in order to schedule a special SWP branch meeting and invite the YSA. The comrades at this meeting responded with utmost enthusiasm as this spirited discussion continued for three hours and was held over for the educational portion of the next branch meeting in order to accommodate all speakers with a request from the National Office that these sessions be tape recorded so they could follow this. We completely subordinated every step of our auto fraction work to full party approval, something that had not been done in the past ten years that I have been a member of this branch. We passed and approved the general outline of a program, developed and distributed eight different leaflets at the plant during this pre-strike period. On the eve of strike we attempted to address the night shift as it assembled in the union parking lot. When it was pointed out to me that management was attempting to move a load of trucks out of the plant, I urged that a massive picket line be established to prevent the movement of those trucks. Three years of pent-up anger, frustration and exuberance erupted as these workers charged this haulaway with a barrage of rocks and bottles, forcing it to back up into the yard.....stopped and set fire to a company garbage truck... chased the guard out of his shack toward the plant as they broke out all windows...turned away the fire engine as it responded to the fire with a barrage of missiles. Police cars

were hit the hardest as they turned off their lights and scurried back to Fremont. Established roving bands of pickets in trucks and cars to circle the plant. This territory surrounding the plant became their "liberated" territory as they were prepared to wait all night for supervision to come out of the plant so they could settle a few outstanding grievances. This was completely a spontaneous expression of these workers. It was in no way given a lead or organized. The majority were youthful third world workers with a liberal sprinkling of older workers whom I have known and worked with for many years. The counter-reaction came the next day in the form of joint union leadership press conference headed by regional director Paul Schrade blaming all this violence on "radical student rabble rousers from Berkeley." He further stated "that investigation in collaboration with the Fremont police absolutely showed that no auto workers were involved in this disturbance, they were all outside agitators and for proof he displayed leaflets that he had found on the ground from I.S. calling for an all out fight against GM." Management's statement said it was all auto workers who were violently attacking and destroying their property and they were going to hold the union directly responsible.

The strange turn of events is that our attack did not come the next day from any of the above mentioned sources but from our own SWP party leadership who summoned us to a hastily arranged special executive meeting where we were accused of losing control of our caucus to I.S., P.L., R.U., Wohlforthites and the Stalinists. The charge was that we were breaking party discipline by allowing other political tendencies to come into our caucus which I emphatically denied. Montauk led the attack based on an open UAC caucus meeting which we invited interested trade unionists including eight of our own comrades to explore ways of building support for our strike. They in no way joined or affiliated with our caucus! As for the one hundred of our co-workers who joined our caucus on the eve of the strike, they were looking towards us for a lead. We could not force them to sign a loyalty oath to the SWP because this kind of logic would be ridiculous, when our party is organizing any mass action or demonstration we correctly persist in a non-exclusionary policy, this means that we don't pull out of an anti-war coalition just because it becomes contaminated by another political tendency. We have long realized that these other political tendencies will always be attracted to where the action is and our political line must be fought for in the larger arena in competition with these tendencies in

order to win over new comrades. None of these vague blanket charges were ever substantiated as they voted through a cease and desist order to completely disengage ourselves from this caucus and cease all activities of an oppositional nature to the trade union bureaucracy. This treacherous stab in the back was aggravated further by disclosure that it was instigated by and carried out under secret orders and direction of the national political committee in a secret elitist organizational maneuver to squash my work at Fremont using our branch organizer and NCR as pawns in a dishonest attempt to obscure their dirty work without giving satisfactory reasons in the traditions of democratic centralism. I had come to expect this type of dishonest maneuvering and treachery by the trade union bureaucracy, but not the top leadership of the SWP.

When it erupted into a bitter branch struggle, Tom Kerry himself flew out from New York to personally administer the coup de grace. I can only offer my opinions on the reason for our party leadership's strange behavior: My work at Fremont during the strike conflicted with and embarrassed their efforts to "win over" the UAW western regional director, Paul Schrade into their anti-war coalition (which subsequently has been accomplished with much gleeful handclapping by the right wing revisionist forces in our party's leadership clustered around Jack Barnes). This same "liberal anti-war" Paul Schrade went on after that first stormy night of our strike to establish a virtual dictatorship over our local by abolishing all meetings inventing a phony "red bomb plot" in order to justify a large goon squad armed with baseball bats to guard the union hall and prevent contact with outside supporters of our strike. Forming a liaison committee to co-ordinate between management and the Fremont police department on all phases of "riot control." When the United Action Caucus, minus SWP support, attempted to counteract these dictatorial methods of outright intimidation by calling for a massive strike support rally to be held on the union's parking lot, this same liberal, anti-war Paul Schrade armed 70 goons with baseball bats, called out the Fremont police force and 200 Bay Area Mobile Tact squad in full riot gear in the ultimate in intimidation forcing the UAC to call off its scheduled rally to avoid bloodshed. It would have been interesting to observe comrade Barnes and his followers reaction to this piece of treachery. While the party attempted to blind, gag, and tie my hands so I could not give a lead in this strike I still managed to get the floor at the

contract ratification meeting and speak out against treacherous sellout and betrayal by our union leadership using the one at a time strike strategy and sharply call Schrade to task for his dictatorial methods and called for a massive no vote on the contract. I received a thunderous four minute standing ovation from 2500 of my co-workers and when Schrade succeeded in quieting down this turmoil he attempted to launch into a vicious red baiting attack on me and was drowned out again by a massive roar of disapproval, as he grew visibly flushed with anger the membership sensed its organized strength and kept up a steady boo. Schrade shouted into the microphone "that no god damn outside subversive commie Progressive Labor group is going to take over his union and tell him how to run a strike."

With this all pandemonium broke loose as workers stood on their chairs and shouted "we're all subversives" or "we're all commies" or "Progressive Labor" as they established a strong emotional identity with me. As Schrade beat a hasty retreat the meeting was adjourned for the voting on the contract. As we filed out a large swarm of my co-workers were shaking my hand wanting literature on my party, two wanted to join outright, two others wanted to join PL mistakingly thinking that this was my political party which I had to set straight immediately. The National contract vote in our local was overwhelmingly rejected and promptly ruled null and void by Schrade who gave strict orders to all local leaders not to give any statements to the press. A significant section of this local leadership broke with Schrade under tremendous membership pressure and tried to identify with my position. At this meeting I had called for a massive picket line around the plant in order to show management that we were not about to crawl back into those plants on our bellies which this local leadership promptly endorsed. This may come as a surprise to skeptics inside our party but we were able to mobilize 1000 workers and their families in our GM strike to mass picket the plant in a determined show of working class strength and solidarity in the tenth week of our strike.

All of this was accomplished under the most severe party harrassment and organization blocks imposed on me, under direct threat of expulsion if I broke discipline. While I was pre-occupied with the GM strike my character and ten year party reputation was consciously assailed and maligned. It was secretly whispered behind my back that I was using the GM strike in order to develop a disloyal party line, that

I had all of a sudden developed PL, RU, CP, WL tendencies. I don't know whether it was implied that I held these beliefs concurrently or one at a time, but the intended effect was the same -- to plant suspicion, doubt and drive a wedge between supporters and in effect to make me an isolated political leper -- such is the state of health inside our party today. The N.O. has secretly circulated copies of the transcript of that branch meeting that Kerry spoke out against me, to all N.C. members and branch organizers. I request that this transcript be made available to everyone who requested it and it not be privileged information. Tom Kerry's parting prognostication to me was, "as far as your caucus is concerned, Tom, it never existed, Tom, it was you, this caucus was just an extension of you, your ideas, this caucus existed solely by your efforts and energy to keep it alive, there was no substance to your caucus, without you the caucus would fold up and cease to exist." "Can a couple of these guys keep it alive after you pull out?" But Kerry was wrong about the caucus' demise with my leaving...With a thoroughly discredited local leadership it returned to publishing its paper which has grown to eight pages putting into sharp focus all the rich lessons learned during the strike.

It supported and help build an April 24 anti-war contingent from our plant of 16 rank and filers which equaled all that Paul Schrade could pull out in the whole of region 6. While edition after edition of The Militant heralded the growing "official" trade union list of endorsers of April 24 no attempt is made to probe the causes of the dismal turnout from the "ranks" of these same trade unions. Our party's treatment of trade unions as being homogeneous is a totally false premise; as though an "official" trade union leadership endorsement can pull out the ranks; as though the sharpening class struggle in the shops can be subordinated to the very leadership that betrays it; as though the union bureaucrats are more "enlightened" "progressive" than the ranks. These petty-bourgeois myths find fertile soil in the anti-war coalitions and brought into our party to sow confusion and disorient our political line. Thousands of union anti-war leaflets were stacked up in Schrade's sub-region office in San Jose undistributed because Schrade did not have "official" local distributors to hand them out. The conservatized local leadership of 1364 and 560 were afraid to touch a controversial issue that would help undermine any more what they felt to be their shaky support as local elections were only two months away.

As word was passed to the UAC these leaflets were distributed. antiwar posters tacked in the plant. Of the UAW contingent of a little over 30 that marched it was equally divided into two distinctly different and antagonistic groups; Schrade's cluster of 16 or so were all international region No. 6 staffers Repts. etc. whom we contemptuously referred to as "pork-choppers." They probably referred to us as "commies," given a little provocation we would have declared war on them right there in the peace march, but they dropped out after five blocks. Comrade Kerry's prognostication of the demise of the UAC of local 1364 is greatly exaggerated or has yet to be realized as it refuses to die a natural death and hangs on to continue to annoy all those who would like to see it buried. My being approached to run for president in the approaching local elections on the UAC slate had to be respectfully declined because of the party's open hostility towards UAC but the third world composition of these UAC candidates including two Black Panthers promises to be an interesting contest.

My traumatic experiences during the GM strike as well as comrade Kerry's instigated assault had its positive aspects in so far as to disturb me enough to force me to face up to the facts and review all questions and doubts accumulated in my mind covering that period and to probe to the very depths just where our party began to change. I was certain that it was not my political position that changed but the party's and its long standing, old, tired, adaptationist leadership who had long since abandoned the working class and have opportunisticly adapted to the middle class protest movements which exist as mere surface impressions of a deeper and sharper class conflict developing on a world scale between the working class and its capitalist rulers. Not only have they adapted to these currents but are now in the process of liquidating our Trotskyist Political party into these middle class protest movements! I do not underestimate for one second the seriousness and gravity of these charges because when they are substantiated it means that our party must undergo its most agonizing internal struggle thus far recorded in our turbulent forty year history of struggle to maintain and advance Trotskyism. With the retirement from leadership and active party life by Comrade Cannon the founder of American Trotskyism, the mantle of responsibility for maintaining the party's correct class line fell on the shoulders of Comrade Farrell Dobbs who not only is negligent in maintaining this correct class line but is open to charges of aiding and abetting this revisionist and liquidationist trend inside our party today towards a position of adopting a false class line based on the so called middle class radicalization. Comrades

Farrell Dobbs, Tom Kerry and Frank Lovell represent our party's living link to the last great period of radicalization of the 1930's with all of its rich traditions and class struggles. They were vigorous proponents of Trotsky's Transitional Program and its application to the concrete class struggles of that period.

As our party's continuators of its rich class struggle heritage and keepers of the correct class line in all aspects of our party's work, they also occupied a central position in leadership as a powerful center bloc for stability, arbitration and conciliation between internal warring factions, elitist motivating, egotistically inclined individuals who gravitated towards the formation of cliques who constantly jockey for recognition, influence, position, prestige and favoritism towards complete bureaucratization that afflicts and cripples the trade unions today. The process of development towards heavy handed bureaucratization of the SWP today cannot be separated from the same process of bureaucratization of the trade unions. The same dialectical process that contributes towards the bureaucratization of the working class organizations also contributes towards the bureaucratization of those claiming to be vanguard parties of working class. This disease that afflicts both groups are both one and the same. The polarization occurring inside trade unions between the ranks and the leadership is in reaction to the sharpening class struggle, which in turn produces splits, rebellion, election upsets and rival oppositional caucuses in a conscious struggle to overcome this leadership crisis. This same process is at work within all political tendencies of the left claiming to be vanguard parties of the working class. Their political positions are being put to the fire and tested in the emerging class struggles that lay bare and exposes all of their political deficiencies, organizational weaknesses and internal contradictions creating centrifugal currents erupting into internal factional struggles leading to fractures and splits as the falseness of their political positions is laid bare before the relentless logic of the advancing class struggles. A cursory examination of the recent splits that occurred in PL, SLP, CP, and IS will prove this hypothesis to be true. Can comrades honestly believe that the SWP will escape from these forces at work in other tendencies? That we are a homogeneous grouping in complete political agreement? Have a correct class line? These lines of cleavage already exist within our party. The leadership knows and is all too painfully aware of this and is frantically attempting to shore up a shaky structure, paper over the cracks and plug up the holes, send its leadership surrying about the country in a frantic effort to defuse and prevent the

inevitable from happening, transferring trusted comrades into suspected branches in hopes of containing and neutralizing opposition from forming in the approaching political struggle inside the SWP. This revisionist and rightward moving leadership surely is in trouble, caught up in the contradictions of its own false political positions and cannot escape or hide before the relentless logic of the advancing class struggles. The fight must and will be carried out inside the SWP to rid our party of all alien class influences, ideologies, revisionist and liquidationist tendencies and once again turn to the struggle for Marxist theory and the building of a revolutionary vanguard party of the working class.

In concluding my document I would like to briefly trace the historical impact on the working class of the civil rights movement, the divergences between the black nationalists and the Black Panther Party and their influence on the rise and fall of black caucuses inside basic industry and what this portends in the continued and accelerated process of radicalization in conjunction with the student and youth radicalization which also acts as an expression and response to the underlying movement of the class.

I must also express sharp disagreement and criticism with the majority resolution as representing a sharp turn to the right based on capitulation of our party's center leadership around Comrade Dobbs to bloc with Barnes-Novack-Brietman on the basis of the latter's and Mandel's liquidationist theories in which the revolutionary party becomes a "nuclei" and the capitalist crisis and Transitional Program is thrown out with the 1930's.

BLACK NATIONALISM

The impact of black nationalism in America which is reflected in the sporadic growth of black caucuses in the service unions and basic industry today is in turn a reflection of the deepening crisis of world capitalism.

A brief look at the evolution of the Negro movement since the 1954 Supreme Court Decision will make this patently clear. From the Montgomery bus boycott through to the marches into Cicero the Negro struggle was primarily a reform struggle. Mass demonstrations were held in order to force concessions from the government. This was the policy of both King and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). But the results of all the demonstrating was, despite the passage of all kinds of laws, no real change in either the economic lot of the Negro masses or racial discrimination occurred in this country. Civil rights proved the bankruptcy of capitalism which entering a new period of crisis and decline, was incapable of bettering

the lot of the black masses or wiping out race discrimination, prejudice and ghetto existence. With reformism exposed there was no other road open to the black militants than a revolutionary struggle against capitalism itself. This required the building of a revolutionary working class leadership not only in the black community but the class as a whole.

It was precisely at this point when the need for a revolutionary class struggle was posed that black nationalism enters the scene seeking to separate out the Negro not only from the rest of the working class in the US but at the same time from the international struggle as well.

"Marxism is a white boy's thing," "all whites are honkies and racist," "we must organize for black power in the black community in order to better make demands on the white racist power structure." What this shows is once this monstrous method of thinking in cultural, national and race terms creeps into one's outlook, it takes total control and absolutely nothing can be seen in anything but racial terms. The importance of black nationalism lies precisely in its turning away of the Negro masses from a struggle which poses the end of capitalism itself to a racialist battle for one or another form of community or cultural autonomy. The black nationalist struggle by its very ideological character accepted the race divisions in America, the black ghettos, the poverty, etc. Its goal is to seek control over the ghetto rather than its abolition, to preach acceptance of racism and racial pride rather than the abolition of the race system and class solidarity. They present racism in America as a national question and seek to obscure and pragmatize its international inter-relationship with the world exploitative system of capitalism occurring in the general historical period of imperialist decay. Acceptance of black nationalism is thus deeply connected with a pragmatic retreat from an international outlook and acceptance, not of the crisis of international capital and the struggle of classes, but the permanence of capitalism and its race divisions. Black nationalism is petty-bourgeois not only because its ideology turns the Negro masses away from class confrontations and internationalism, from a fight against capitalism itself, but because the petty-bourgeois strata of the Negroes are the only ones to benefit in the slightest from black nationalist demands. Who is the petty-bourgeois leadership? You have only to flip through some back issues of The Militant to find our press completely adapting to them; the Muslims, John Lewis, Dick Gregory, William Worthy, Conrad Lynn, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Rev. Milton Galamison, Rev. Albert

Cleage, LeRoi Jones, H. Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, Floyd McKissick, Aaron Henry, John O. Killens, Noel Day, Stanley Branche, Roy Wilkins, Rev. Martin Luther King, etc.

Our party took on all the adaptational colorations to this Negro petty-bourgeois strata using the revisionist rationale being developed by comrade George Breitman, of the revolutionary aspects of black nationalism.

Justification for this adaptation was the evolution of Malcolm X from the Muslims through all aspects of black nationalism towards an international understanding of the need for a socialist revolution. Missing from all of these political assessments of Malcolm is the fact that he had outgrown black nationalism to the critical point of considering a complete break with this reactionary ideology, denouncing it as an obstacle in the path of developing black as well as white consciousness for a revolutionary overturn of this racist, exploitative capitalist system. Particularly obnoxious is a series of articles in The Militant by comrades Tony Thomas and Gus Horowitz attempting to clothe black nationalism with Leninism by crudely paraphrasing and quoting out of context so as to obscure exactly what Lenin was stating is blatant dishonesty. A case in point Comrade Tony Thomas attributes to Lenin's views; "Lenin insisted that revolutionary socialists should support, without qualifications, the struggle for self-determination as a struggle against imperialist oppression. The nationalism of any oppressed nation, has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression and it is that content we unconditionally support." (Militant January 24, 1969) "Why Black Nationalism is Revolutionary," by Tony Thomas. Comrade Thomas flagrantly attempts to distort Lenin when he lifts out of context the above underlined quote attributable to what Lenin had in mind in order to produce the exact opposite that was intended. This is what Lenin really said; "The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support." At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness; we fight against the tendency of the Polish bourgeois to oppress the Jews, etc." (my emphasis) On the next page of Lenin's article; "Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination," he point blank states; "We combat all nationalism and uphold the equality of the various nations." The first alteration that comrade Thomas performs

is to remove all of Lenin's references to nationalism as being bourgeois so as to continue his fraudulent frame of reference to nationalism as a classless generality something that Lenin makes explicitly clear throughout all of his works on the national question is that he could not consider nationalism to be anything but bourgeois. Then along comes comrade Gus Horowitz with an even more unbelievable statement attributable to Lenin in The Militant January 31, 1969, "PL's Attack on Black Nationalism." Comrade Gus search as he may could not find any of Lenin's quotes that he could doctor up and distort in order to lend credibility to his false argument that nationalism is progressive, so he had to resort to paraphrasing Lenin as saying "that the nationalism of the oppressors is reactionary but the nationalism of the oppressed is progressive." Lenin said nothing of the kind... What he did say was; "Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, in favour, for we are the staunchest and most consistent enemies of oppression."

"But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism, we stand against." "We fight against privileges and violence of the oppressor nation and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation." Lenin did not equivocate one iota in fighting all the way for the right of self-determination of oppressed nations without making the slightest concession to the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nation. Lenin's longest polemical struggle and important contribution in this respect is on the Jewish question against the Bund and his battle against the theories of cultural and national autonomy of Otto Bauer and the Austrian centrists which is completely ignored by comrades Thomas and Horowitz. Any comrade who would take the time to re-examine what Lenin had to say on this subject would find that Lenin adamantly and completely opposed autonomy in cultural matters, control of the schools, community, police, etc. which he held meant support for the bourgeois aspirations of the oppressed nationalities and led to divisions not unity of the working class. Any comrade in our party who holds these nationalist views and disagrees with Lenin should honestly and forthrightly state their differences without attempting to resort to these stratagems of quoting out of context, paraphrasing, what Lenin said in order to adapt to the middle class positions

using such shenanigans as doctoring of evidence, empirical logic-chopping and sophisticated ability to twist and distort Marxist Leninist phrases about program to every opportunist turn of their petty-bourgeois liquidationist schemes. But comrade Gus proceeds to state in his article that, "The essence of self-determination is the right of oppressed nationalities to decide for themselves what they want and need. Revolutionaries have the obligation of supporting this right, regardless of what they may think best." (my emphasis)

Thus, comrades, you have it in an empirical nutshell our party's subordination to nationalism to whatever happens to be in the hands of Chicano or black nationalist leaders at the time, no matter how ridiculous it may appear. This formula becomes the rationale for the liquidationist trend to subordinate our party and its press in uncritically supporting everything and anything that these nationalist leaders do. Lenin clearly saw the danger and negative aspects of a revolutionary party becoming completely confused on the question of self-determination, going too far by getting all mixed up with cultural-national autonomy type demands that disorients and sows confusion in the ranks of a revolutionary party contributing towards the petty bourgeoisification of that party. This is why Lenin warned that there is a "limit that the proletariat can go to in supporting nationalism, for beyond that begins the 'positive' activity of the bourgeoisie striving to fortify nationalism."

As far as nationalism in the United States is concerned Lenin's assessment here was that the bourgeois democratic revolution was completed long ago and therefore saw no validity whatsoever to the right of self-determination of nations within such countries, only for the workers movement to defend this right in the colonial sphere, especially where their own imperialist bourgeoisie was concerned, South East Asia, etc.

IMPACT OF NATIONALISM ON GM FREMONT AUTO PLANT

There can be no disputing the tremendous impact and influence of black nationalism on the black working class, hair styles, dress and use of terminology, signs, symbols, buttons, open greeting of both black and white brothers with clenched fist, black power salute and handshakes. This black power identity was given its greatest emphasis during the heat of the ghetto rebellions that spontaneously erupted in Harlem, Watts, Jackson,

Chicago, Newark, Detroit, etc. and was vigorously defended by these black workers to their white co-worker on the job in heated debate and angry confrontations sometimes lasting for days on end with a few fist fights thrown in for added emphasis.

One thing that the white worker learned for sure was he had to reappraise his black co-worker with a little more respect as he tries to understand, reassure and identify with this black anger that suddenly burst forth to disrupt even their seemingly peaceful working relationships on the job. The white worker reasoned that there must be something to this black power that was expressed in the spontaneous ghetto rebellions waged by the most exploited, oppressed, frustrated and angry section of the American working class that literally burned itself into the memories of even the most die-hard racist who had to begrudgingly pull in his neck and at least outwardly show respect. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense was born in East Oakland as a direct response to these ghetto rebellions as their natural expression attempted to give this "Mother Country -- Black Colony" madness articulated by Stokely Carmichael and tail ended by our press, its highest theoretical form. Huey Newton, whom I worked with at the old Chevrolet assembly plant, in founding the BPP along with Bobby Seale stated that their "Vanguard Party must provide leadership for the people..." "When the Vanguard group destroys the machinery of the oppressor by dealing with him in small groups of three and four, and then escapes the might of the oppressor the masses will be overjoyed and will adhere to this correct strategy." (Huey P. Newton, "In Defense of Self-Defense; The Correct Handling of a Revolution," July 1967). Huey's strategy however was not correct and cost the lives of many young members and sympathizers. His strategy cost him a number of years in prison and nearly his life. His strategy was wrong because it rested on the incorrect premise and ideology of black nationalism which our party encouraged and by thinking that Black Americans are a colonized nation, Huey tried to plot out a course for armed struggle for liberation of that nation which led him to near disaster and the realization that he had been sold a phony bill of goods by black nationalism which in turn left him in a deadend alley, with years to spend behind bars to ponder his dilemma.

Many black workers were and are ready for armed insurrection and if they were a nation, as comrades seem to think they are, they would have engaged in an armed struggle for the

liberation of that nation. But black workers are not a nation -- they are part of the American working class.

Much class work remains to be done before this stage can be approached. Black workers will play an important vanguard class role in the coming American revolution but can not be thrown into battle alone prematurely without being militarily crushed, racially polarizing the working class and bringing about fascism in America as the barbaric penalty for attempting a short cut to revolutionary overthrow of this racist bankrupt capitalist system. It is criminal for certain petty bourgeois revisionist adventurers in the leadership of the SWP to advocate this folly. They subtract from our effectiveness and seriousness in building a vanguard party to lead the coming American revolution.

With the tremendous power of black frustration and anger erupting in the Detroit rebellion General Motors top corporation executives as well as Ford and other industrial capitalists had a ring side seat to the burning of the city and the fighting in the street. From the eleventh floor of the GM central building the president and chairman of the board of GM witnessed the day to day battle as smoke and flames grew closer until it ringed their mighty bastion of corporate power. What was different and unusual about this ghetto eruption was not only its fierceness and intensity but the outlying ghettos in Grand Rapids, Lansing, Ann Arbor, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Flint, Saginaw, Bay City, Port Huron and Pontiac where I was staying, erupted also into looting, burning and sniping causing a dispersment of national guards, police and fire fighting equipment which diminished their effectiveness, necessitating the calling in of federal troops to suppress this rebellion.

The absolute total paralysis that resulted in a shutdown of all business and industry for one week was attributable to this outrage and fury of the ghetto explosions that produced racial tension, racial polarization, hostility and fear in all industrial centers of Michigan. Guns and ammunition were sold out overnight as white auto workers refused to go to work for fear of leaving their families unprotected. They would take turns sitting up all night in the dark of their homes with fully loaded guns and if anything moved outside they would shoot first and ask questions later. Working class families that moved about during the day did so fully armed. All whites with very few exceptions viewed this rebellion as a direct racial threat to themselves personally which aroused ugly, blind, racial emotions and animosi-

ties contributing to the total paralysis that resulted. The racial polarization was self defeating. For all those who advocate race war as a means of achieving revolution ought to be the first ones thrown into the middle of the next conflagration.

These lessons were not lost on the heads of industry in Detroit who realized that this blind raging power must be defused, placated, appeased, controlled and harnessed into "safe," "profitable" channels once again. One aspect of this "enlightened" approach to improving race relations occurred when the president of GM sent out a corporate letter to all plant managers for institution of a "crash black upgrading program" combined with a program to "re-evaluate all local managements racial attitudes," in an effort to gain stability and harness this power. Black auto workers were immediately upgraded into supervision, skilled trades, production clerks, quality control, specifications, engineering, time standards and office work. Many of these were militant black nationalist, union committeemen and officers of whom some were subscribers to our press The Militant. They eagerly vied with and competed against each other to put on management's "white shirt," adopt management attitudes making this class transformation with comparable ease. GM was delighted with this response and its results and accelerated all of its training programs in this direction. GM proved to itself that this violent, militant force called black nationalism was merely a mask in which to hide their petty bourgeois aspirations.

Black caucuses appeared in auto simultaneous with and directly influenced by these ghetto rebellions as an expression of black nationalist sentiment closely linked with black community based nationalist movements and organizations for the purpose of fighting on the job discrimination; its programs and demands were made against the "white racist power structure" calling for an end to all discrimination, promotions and upgrading to better jobs to supervision, etc. John Watson's Detroit based League of Revolutionary Black Workers provided an organizing base for DRUM, ELDRUM, FRUM, HOWRUM, NEWRUM, UPRUM, and JARUM industry based Black caucuses. Despite all of its revolutionary rhetoric they remained exclusively racial, separatist and nationalist in their outlook, arousing considerable white suspicion, hostility and opposition which proved decisive in rendering them ineffective, polarizing the working class in these shops along race lines giving the UAW bureaucracy and management all the leverage needed

to frustrate their aspirations and discourage their activities.

They will remain at a low level of activity discouraged and demoralized as long as they maintain a separatist racial approach to auto-union class problems that confront all workers (speedup, discipline, etc.) When faced with these insurmountable obstacles these black workers usually revert back to "community" type activities from which nationalism maintains its base. Racial attitudes, outlook and perspective completely blind and paralyzing these black proletariat to correct strategy and the class solutions that could galvanize all these workers into a struggle against their common enemy. This remains the most insidious aspect of Black nationalism, a turning away of black militants from the struggle for leadership of the working class, control over their unions and power at the point of production towards community activities that defuse their potential strength, confuse, disorient and reinforces even more their racial nationalist handicaps.

The rise and fall of Kenny Horston's Black Panther Caucus at the Fremont GM assembly plant also made its debut along similar circumstances, presented ten black nationalist demands, "if these are not met we will burn that damn plant down." Management schedules top level negotiating meeting with Kenny Horston and proudly announce that they are not "unreasonable" are willing to "negotiate" they find all ten of Kenny's demands acceptable and offer Kenny a foreman's job to boot, in one grand gesture they were willing to coopt Kenny and his ten black demands lock stock and barrel and welcome him into the fold. You couldn't ask for a more reasonable management approach and support for black nationalist demands than that! Kenny balked knowing that he is being bought off, coopted, creates a disturbance, acts offended, outraged at being propositioned by those who he swore to be his bitter enemies, scraps his ten black demands and draws up ten class demands showing that he learned his objective lessons well. We support and encourage this caucus, scheduled a forum and Militant interview, but ultra-leftism and opportunism are but both sides of the vacillating characteristics of black nationalism and was to mark our unstable relationship as Kenny twisted and turned even resorting to red baiting in an attempt to ingratiate himself into the services of UAW Regional Director Paul Schrade. Disappointment at every turn led to the demise of his B.P.C. which has become inactive as they are caught up in the internal struggle now enveloping the B.P.P. I in no way want

to write off this caucus with Kenny Horston quitting his job, his Panther Lieutenants are undergoing intensive struggle to throw off the paralyzing effects of poisonist racist outlook of black nationalism through going to classes studying Marxist theory, Leninist concepts and dialectical materialism. I have been assured that this caucus is not dead but just preparing for a new stage of struggle and will emerge as the most theoretically advanced caucus in the country.

Nationalism is not deepening its influence as the SWP proclaims, quite the contrary its influence is waning as evidence by its degeneration into cultural nationalism of Ron Karenga, Pan Africanism as represented by LeRoi Jones who embraces openly the bourgeoisie through Mayor Gibson and then resorts to violent strike-breaking against the teachers of Newark under guise of "community" control exposing thoroughly the demise of an ideology that places race above class, follow this out to its logical conclusion by attacking class struggles as they emerge and calling them "racist" and in so doing place those who advocate "nationalism" on the side of the ruling class, raising the question inside our party of just how far down this road is the leadership of our party prepared to go in providing cover for Black nationalist strike breaking?

The internal split of the Black Panther Party can only be understood against the backdrop of the movement of the American working class expressed in the strikes in GE, postal workers, Teamsters, auto workers, etc. that will lead up to its American counterpart of the French May-June events that brought the French working class to the brink of power and the French government to near collapse. The logic of Black nationalism is being challenged inside the BPP itself by the international movement of the working class, proving that the working class alone, is that social force capable of smashing the bourgeois state for the purpose of transforming society. The criticism raised by Derrick Morrison of the BPP as they attempt to turn away from the dead end programs of black nationalism and call for a turn towards dialectical materialism again must be reflected in the social pressures brought to bear on these two organizations, the BPP and SWP. We know that the movement of the working class is exerting pressure on the BPP effecting their internal struggle exacerbated by ruling class repression, can we conclude that the SWP is reacting to bourgeois pressures on it to maintain nationalism, just when it is coming into disrepute, losing respect and being abandoned as

a dead end program? Because I am a known Trotskyist, Socialist and Marxist in the GM Fremont plant which employs 4700 workers of whom one third are black, one third white and the other third Latinos, Indian, Orientals, etc. I am sought out by black militants for discussions on Marxist theory and dialectical materialism as interest is being aroused by Huey Newton's call for dialectics and request for all the literature they can buy on this subject. Our Granma bookstore could not keep its shelves stocked of this "hard" theoretical Marxist Leninist works as black demands for it increased. The important significance of this development must not be lost on or cannot be ignored by the leadership of our party. A sizable section of black proletariat around the BPP is prepared to break with black nationalism and struggle to master Marxist theory, Leninist concepts and Trotsky's Transitional Program but our party is in full retreat as fast as it can run away from all of these serious theoretical struggles to build a revolutionary party based on recruiting just such healthy proletarian elements as these serious (anti-nationalist) blacks. Our party is too busy chasing after middle-class "on going," "radicalizing," currents, has developed a perverted obsession with chasing after the gay liberation movement. Our press cannot seriously be sold to these blacks because of its attacks on BPP. Our campus oriented forums offer little towards their developing interest in theory. Our attacks on and criticism of the BPP effectively eliminates us as serious theoretical contenders for their allegiance and recruitment.

Just as in 1957 our party advocated integration and now advocates separation, this logic flows pragmatically from the needs of our leadership in assessing the "current subjective and psychological level of the masses" and choosing some "transitional steps" that "gear" into this level. Or in simpler terms it was finding out where the action is and digging up a demand or two which allowed it to adapt to that action. Not until these developing black Marxists can prove to the leadership of the SWP that they can carry an action showing that they fit into middle class protest will they warrant a "geared" in "transitional step" as the SWP attempts to adapt to them. This method can only be described as opportunistic tailendism to surface impressions an absolute break and abandonment from Marxist method by the SWP leadership. Surely a struggle must take place inside the SWP to correct these deficiencies and false class orientation, smash, defeat and drive out of the party alien class influences,

stratagems, logic choppers, Marxist twisters and Leninist distorters with all kinds of Ph. D. degrees to give added sophistication to their petty bourgeois revisionism. There is no other way to resuscitate Marxist theory, Leninist concepts or Trotskyism inside the SWP without an all out political fight against these revisionist forces. The fight must be taken up immediately. "The historical crisis of mankind is reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership."

The majority Draft Political Resolution on "Perspectives and Lessons of the New Radicalization" expresses awareness that objective conditions are changing that "could provoke a major reaction by the working class." Detail many excellent facts to substantiate this and then proclaims that these developments must be left to spontaneously follow their course without any need for us to decisively intervene with our Transitional Program. Not only does this document flippantly dismiss the prospect of renewed working class struggle but spends considerable space criticizing our political opponents for turning towards the working class in order to gain strategic positions from which they can lead these projected struggles. This document complains that all of their critics and political opponents fail to "understand the dynamics and depth of the radicalization" (middle class protest movements) and "how it can extend into the working class in the future, and how it can lead to revolutionary upsurge." It goes on to complain that none of their critics understand the kind of party to be built. "We see ourselves as a Leninist nucleus concentrating on those essential cadre-building steps without which there will be no basis for the construction of a mass revolutionary workers party."

This document calls all opponents "dogmatic" who attempt to apply all the class struggles learned from the 1930's to the current development because "new forms and new tactics would be necessary in the next radicalization."

There in an empirical nutshell you have a sharp turn to the right openly embracing middle class protest movements as the "center" of the revolutionary movement reducing the struggle to build a mass revolutionary party to the level of "nucleus" as an open capitulation to Mandel's liquidationist theories. Throwing out the window the deepening capitalist crisis along with Trotsky's Transitional Program as well as the rich class struggle lessons of the 1930's because "new forms and new tactics would be necessary in the next radicalization," and if anyone in the party objects he or she will be called "dogmatic."

A reading of Comrade Barnes' "Report" cannot be surpassed for gull, vanity and pure petty bourgeois arrogance as he dispenses clever wit from Mount Olympus where he elaborates even further on Mandel's liquidationist schemes such as creating an elite "leadership nucleus" which will set about "constructing independent organizations for mass struggle outside the unions, as part of the struggle to both transform the unions and to lead a mass radicalization," or the unions will either be transformed or they will be crushed, or totally tamed, and have no independent value to the working class." (my emphasis)

No wonder all of our political opponents are perched on our doorstep like vultures, they are waiting for comrade Barnes to reduce our party to a "nuclei" corpse. We must use scientific Marxist methods to determine the underlying radicalization process now taking place. Comrade Barnes' departure from Marxist method occurs when he talks about middle class "radicalization" as the source of "political crisis" and not the capitalist economic crisis itself which is world wide. Our perspective must be rooted clearly in the Marxist understanding of how this capitalist crisis pits worker against capitalist in a class struggle for survival. Comrade Barnes has instead chosen to embrace Mandel's revisionist theory of "neo-capitalism" in which "old" contradictions of capitalism have been superceded by a third industrial revolution and today the movement of workers takes on a

middle class character. It is a perspective of workers entering into the present middle class radical struggles, reduced to merely an appendage of the "on-going" middle class protest movement. This attempt to emulate Mandel's liquidationist theories is the basis that produces a faulty assessment of the anti-war, student, nationalist and feminist movements in our party.

Instead of arming our party with an accurate Marxist assessment of these petty bourgeois protest activities, he uses these protest activities to overthrow the very fundamentals of Marxism itself, using impressionistic formulations. He uses the "Transitional Program for Black Liberation" and the concept of the "Red University" not to amend or add on to but to overthrow Trotsky's fundamental strategic document based on his assessment of this "epoch" as one of "imperialist decay" not to be amended or added upon but to be fought for under the specific conditions of his original assessment of this "epoch."

The minority document of "For a Proletarian Orientation" by comrades Barbara Gregorich, Bill Massey, John McCann and Phil Passen comes as a breath of fresh air and holds out the only hope of resuscitating our party. This document must be supported by all those comrades who still believe in the revolutionary potential of the working class and that our party should be firmly rooted in that class.

June 2, 1971

INTRODUCTION TO TRANSCRIPT OF OAKLAND-BERKELEY BRANCH DISCUSSION ON 1970 UAW STRIKE

Frank Lovell

The following transcript of a discussion in the Berkeley branch about our policy in the 1970 UAW strike was forwarded to members of the National Committee only, as clearly stated in the covering letter by Barry Sheppard which is included. This was not mailed to branch organizers, or to comrades in the UAW. We developed our line and analysis of the strike in the pages of The Militant, in consultation with

our comrades who were active in the strike and carrying out our objectives.

In response to Comrade Cagle's request we are making the transcript available to all comrades through the discussion bulletin.

It should be emphasized that the comrades who spoke have not edited this transcript.

June 7, 1971

873 Broadway
2nd floor south
New York, N. Y. 10003

December 3, 1970

FOR NC INFORMATION ONLY

Dear Comrades,

Attached is a transcript of a discussion on the General Motors strike and related matters held by the Oakland-Berkeley branch.

The material consists of a report by Tom Kerry and discussion by branch members. It is for the information of NC members only and is not for general membership distribution.

Comradely,

Barry Sheppard

Barry Sheppard
National Office

REPORT TO BERKELEY BRANCH ON UAW STRIKE
GIVEN BY TOM KERRY, DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

September 27, 1970

[The discussion was taken from a transcript of the tape recording without benefit of correction by the discussants.]

Comrade chairman, comrades, in my presentation, I intend to comment on the issues that have arisen in the course of your discussion on the problems of our intervention in the UAW strike -- the branch has had its discussion and made its decision; I don't propose to attempt to alter that decision. I do hope I can shed some light -- there has been quite a bit of heat -- and some clarification on the issues involved, which go beyond just the local here. This is a national strike and what you do here, on questions of policy, affects the national organization. And so we're very deeply interested in the matter.

I consider that the central economic issue in this particular strike is the struggle over the escalator clause. The cost-of-living clause is a transitional demand. The UAW first won the escalator clause I believe, in the 1948 strike, but in the 1967 strike, against Ford, Reuther traded part of the escalator clause off for other concessions. That is, he cut the guts out of the escalator clause by placing a certain limit on it in which all increases in the cost-of-living beyond a 16% ceiling, the escalator provision would not apply.

He also stated that in the event the cost-of-living went beyond this ceiling, anything in excess would be automatically granted the auto workers after the expiration of the agreement. They found it wasn't so. There was a little deception. He lied to the auto workers, as he was wont to do. Or, if it wasn't an outright falsification, it was a careless handling of the truth. For the corporations now insist the agreement was that the excess over 16% coming to the workers on the escalator clause, would be included in the new wage package, not given the workers as an outright grant under the compromise clause.

Ever since a number of unions succeeded in gaining the escalator clause, the corporations have not ceased for one moment in their attempts to emasculate or to eliminate it all together. They have no confidence in the ability of a Nixon or a Kennedy or a Johnson, Democrat or Republican, to control inflation. Unfortunately they have succeeded and not only in the UAW. The Steelworkers cut the heart out of their escalator clause. They did the same thing Reuther did, and other unions did likewise.

So I view this struggle not just around an issue that concerns the UAW alone, but the entire labor movement. This is how the corporations and the administration see the question, because if the UAW is successful in restoring the cost-of-living clause to cover all increases in the cost-of-living, be they what they may, it is going to spark a demand on the part of other sections of the labor movement for the same provisions.

The corporations and the administration say the escalator clause is inflationary. That it "contributes" to inflation. Not so! Increases in conformance with the escalator provision are granted only after the cost-of-living has gone up, not before, to compensate workers for an increase in the cost-of-living that has already taken place.

General Motors and the Nixon administration and the employers as a whole see this struggle as a conflict of fundamental importance to the capitalist class of this country. That is why I contend that the central economic issue in this particular strike is the question of the cost-of-living clause.

That doesn't mean that the question of wage increases isn't important. It is -- workers have got to catch up for the slash in the standard of living over the past three years. And the workers want to improve their standard of living also. One of the great advantages of the escalator clause is that it gets the workers out of the rat race of getting wage increases in a two, three or five year contract, and then having the cost-of-living eat up the wage increases beyond what they've gotten, and then have to begin the chase all over again.

It's only through the escalator clause that the workers can succeed in increasing their standard of living, by providing some protection against inflation. Then negotiations can take place on the basis of wage demands which can result in an increase in living standards. The truth of the matter is that the standard of living of the American workers has been decreasing in the past period, precisely because of the inflation, and the lack of such protection.

Let me quote from an article written by Raskin, the labor expert for the New York Times, one of the more astute bourgeois labor commentators, on what their attitude is towards this question of wages and escalation. He says: "When prices kept going up and unions in construction, trucking,

newspapers and other industries pushed wages through the roof, the administration's advice to industry was that the only real hope for checking runaway wages lay in the willingness of the employers to take long strikes. That advice got so assertive in the early stages of the Big Three Auto talks, that Leonard Woodcock, the United Automobile Workers new president, called administration leaders and reminded them that they were publicly committed to a hands-off attitude in labor relations."

Woodcock must be very naive if he believes that his admonition to the Nixon administration is going to have any real effect. The only way, they are convinced, to cut down the workers' standard of living is to take long strikes. To starve the workers back to the job without the kind of wage increases they are entitled to. But here they're confronted with a problem. There are only certain industries and certain areas where they can carry through such a policy without sparking the kind of a reaction that will compel them to either conduct all out war, or to make concessions.

Reuther, in the 1946 General Motors strike, first initiated the so-called one-at-a-time strategy. The one-at-a-time strategy was based upon the premise that if the auto corporations were struck one-at-a-time, you see, it gave a competitive advantage to their rivals, and this would act as pressure to shorten the period of the strike. Now that may have been true many years ago, and it's true in some degree today where you do have small competitive employers, but the auto industry is the most concentrated, monopolized industry in this country. When they adopt their labor policies it's done in joint agreement. In fact the trend has been in recent years, for those employers who have confronted the one-at-a-time strategy to band together and declare in advance that if you strike one of us, the rest of us are going to shut down. It happened in newspaper, it happened in aircraft, and it happened in a number of other industries. Why don't the auto corporations follow the same course of action?

They don't do it because it's in their interest not to. It's in their interests to which one-at-a-time strategy conforms. It conforms to the interests of the administration, and to the narrower interests of the labor bureaucracy, that is the Reuther bureaucracy, and now the Woodcock bureaucracy. If that is so then to whose interests is it opposed? It's against the interests of the workers of the UAW, and the workers as a whole, because of the way Reuther has utilized this one-at-a-time strategy. It has been consistently used in order to put over some compromise settlement which the workers would not accept without a struggle.

Reuther would employ the strategy to put the UAW members through a more or less prolonged bleeding process -- soften them up, and after they had been on the bricks for two or three months, or maybe more, they would be in a mood to accept a much weaker and much worse agreement than they would at the beginning. Furthermore it divides the union one section against the other, the employed against those who are out on strike. It serves to prolong the strike and results in agreements which are not commensurate with the strength of the union.

Just consider for a moment. The emasculation of the escalator clause was a result of the one-at-a-time strategy in 1967 as applied to Ford. And now, three years later they have to fight all over again, to get back what Reuther had given away in 1967, in exchange for inadequate wage and fringe concessions.

Let me again quote Raskin -- not that I think he's such a great authority, but to give you an idea of what the thinking is in these circles, who write not for the workers, particularly, but for the bosses and bureaucrats. He says: "The one sure thing is that the White House will not let the railroads stay shut if a strike does begin. Mr. Nixon will go to Congress for emergency legislation, similar to that which President Kennedy got in 1963, to compel arbitration of precisely the same dispute. By contrast, the government is totally out of the General Motors dispute. The trains have to run, but the country can limp along indefinitely without new cars from the biggest of the Big Three auto makers. The UAW counts on the inroads Ford and Chrysler will be making into GM's customary market dominance to intensify the struck company's interest in a speedy end of the strike." No! History has proven just the opposite.

On the same question, in the same paper, on the financial page, by Jerry M. Flint. He observes: "Not fast like a rail strike, that can stop everything quickly, and bring immediate court injunctions and government bans.

"Not dramatically like a garbage strike that brings denunciations from almost every political pulpit on labor's public responsibilities, as well as well on the odor.

"But slowly, as dirty oil damages a finely tooled machine, that's how an auto strike works on the nation, and that battle between the United Auto Workers and the General Motors Corporation is under way.

"If the future may be judged by the past, this strike could be a long one. The last great confrontation between the two a quarter century ago lasted 119 days. But is also could be followed by a boom, perhaps the biggest in Detroit's history."

And then he goes on to point out that the profits of the corporations are affected, but only temporarily, and they will be recouped in the boom that is going to follow a very extended strike so in the end GM is not going to lose very much to its "competitors."

Along with the one-at-a-time strategy, Reuther had made it a practice to demand "flexibility" in the negotiations for a new agreement. He didn't spell out precisely what the demands were going to be, but intimated what they were, and talked a lot about "equity" -- Reuther always stood for "equity." But, as nobody knew precisely what this equity amounted to, there was a certain advantage to it, because he didn't get committed to any specific bargaining demands. So it left him free to make whatever kind of deal he felt would be accepted after the membership had been sufficiently softened up.

For some reason or other, Woodcock departed from Reuther's model and therein created for himself potential trouble. Let me cite another quote from Flint on this particular question. "Mr. Woodcock's biggest problem may be that he's been boxed in on specific demands, something Mr. Reuther tried to avoid, insisting that he needed flexibility at the bargaining table, and never, never, never, publicly mentioning exactly how much money was wanted. If Mr. Woodcock fails to win any of the union's specific demands, some will call the strike or the agreement a failure, and ratification may become a problem." That's right, "ratification may become a problem," because there has been a specific commitment made especially on the escalator clause provision.

This briefly is the way I see the problem of the UAW strike. And to me it indicates a certain tactical approach, deriving from the major issues, both economic and strategic, involved in this dispute. Frankly, then, I was somewhat dismayed when I saw a copy of the Local 1364 United Action Caucus leaflet of September 1, 1970, which stated: "We agree with Irving Bluestone," a co-director of UAW GM Department who stated "that GM be selected as a target company for a pattern-setting agreement."

No, we do not agree with Irving Bluestone any more than we agreed with Reuther before him. We do not agree with the one-at-a-time strategy because the one-at-a-time strategy is calculated to put over sellout compromise agreements by bleeding the workers, and softening them up, and starving them back to work. That's what the one-at-a-time strategy meant under Reuther. And that's what it means under Woodcock and Bluestone.

No, we don't agree with that. True,

this was corrected in a subsequent leaflet that spoke about making the strike general. But it is contradictory and it is confusing. The central issues do not emerge clearly, as the important and decisive issues, in this strike. Instead, agreement with Bluestone is coupled with the demand for a boycott -- a national boycott. Another contradiction! Because if you hold with Bluestone on the one-at-a-time strategy, how can you be for a national boycott which must extend the action to the other auto corporations: Ford, Chrysler and American Motors, to begin with.

And then let me remind you that a boycott is a mark of weakness, not of strength. No union resorts to a boycott as an effective instrument of struggle unless it doesn't have the capacity and the power to shut the industry down; in some cases, in very rare cases, it is employed as a supplementary, only as a very insignificant supplementary, instrument.

And not only a boycott, but a boycott conducted not by the union, but by the caucus. Now to conduct a nationwide boycott, you've got to have a national apparatus. And if the caucus is going to conduct it outside the union, it's got to set itself up as a substitute for the union apparatus. Where are you going to find such an apparatus on a national scale to initiate and carry through a national boycott? This confusion is worse confounded by several leaflets talking about the union doing it, and some of the leaflets talk about the caucus doing it. The caucus, actually, in one of the leaflets, initiated an action, in its own name, for a boycott here.

The first we learned of the boycott proposal is when we received from comrade Tom C. a letter, a copy of which he sent to us, which was sent to Pete Kelly in Detroit, and to Louie Cicconi in Los Angeles. Pete Kelly is the head of, or prominent in, the United National Caucus which is about as big as this caucus that you have here, and about as effective.

In the letter, Tom C. said to Pete Kelly that "it would be very doubtful if it were to receive -- "the boycott" -- official international union support, because they would view this as a weakening of their controls over the ranks, something they regard most carefully. Pete, I propose to you that the United National Caucus become the national boycott organizing center, with support here on the West Coast, and we prevail on Frank Lovell to provide us with his good services, and the backing of the National Student Mobilization Committee support as a starter." That is, that the so-called United National Caucus in Detroit be the headquarters for this national boycott, for the UAW.

In your discussion, and I carefully listened to the tapes, there were certain analogies made, particularly with the Oil Workers, and the Grape Boycott. Arguing by analogy can be very tricky, very tricky, because no two situations are so closely parallel as to warrant the conclusion that if a tactic is applicable in one place, then ipso facto it is applicable in another. I happen to know something about the oil workers and their boycott. I was here at the time. And in a meeting with Jacobs and Nat Weinstein we discussed what could be done. The strike was on its last legs, it was hopeless, the strike was broken. The workers were drifting back to work; they couldn't get enough pickets to stop the trucks from going into the plant or to stop the plant from operating.

One of the reasons Jacobs turned towards the youth was because it provided an arena for recruiting the youth as pickets to try and shut the plant down. The strikers were unable to shut the plant down. But before we initiated that boycott, we told them they had to get the support either of their International, or of the Labor Councils in the area. The International was ambiguous on the question, and so the Local went to the Labor Councils and got their endorsement, at least the one here in Contra Costa, and Alameda, I believe. And so we said on that basis we can go to the labor movement, we have the endorsement of the organized labor movement in the area, your own local, and see if we can't force the International to give its endorsement to the boycott.

Well, it turned out otherwise. The International had made a rotten deal with Standard Oil in Los Angeles and were trying to impose this deal on Richmond, which Jacobs and his union wouldn't go for. They were, in their own way, trying to get the Richmond workers back to work even if they had to help bust this strike, and so they sabotaged the boycott.

Later they ran a full page ad -- I saw the Los Angeles paper, I suppose it was repeated here in San Francisco -- for a boycott not of Standard in Richmond, but of Shell Oil at Martinez!

Now that strike was broken. Those workers went back to work without a contract; not only didn't they get any concessions, they lost the union shop in the Chevron chemical plant which they had before the strike. The boycott of the oil workers union was, as I said before an expression of weakness. They were unable to shut the plant down, they were unable to stop the back-to-work movement, and they were casting about for some method of last resort to permit them to salvage something out of this strike.

But does that apply to the UAW? Do they have any problems shutting the plants down? The biggest of them all, GM? I don't think so. I don't think so. They shut them down, and there's no attempt to open them!

There's no attempt like there was at GE, under Boulwerism. The first thing they would do is start a back-to-work movement, make a last offer on a take-it-or-leave-it basis, and start a back to work movement when the workers walked out on strike. Unfortunately in many cases it was too successful, but they don't even do that in auto. The UAW is too powerful; it has established its position in the industry and they know any attempt to open these plants would result in civil war! Not only the UAW but the entire labor movement would consider it a threat to its very existence.

No problem, no problem keeping these plants shut down. In fact they just have a few token pickets.

The grape workers. Was the grape workers' boycott a manifestation of strength or weakness? The grape workers couldn't shut production down. They couldn't halt the production and distribution of grapes. They didn't have the power. So they initiated a boycott. And they got a very sympathetic response, and -- after five years -- they got union recognition and some kind of an agreement.

It wasn't too great a sacrifice on the part of people who were sympathetic to the grape workers to give up grapes, but even then they had the support of the organized labor movement. Reuther himself poured a lot of money into that action; they had the support of the AFL-CIO unions throughout the country, the sympathy of students, liberals, and so forth and so on. They did a good job and they won union recognition.

But is that the situation with the UAW? There's no analogy, comrades. I say that arguing by analogy can not only be tricky, but it can be false.

Another thing we were disturbed about when we saw some of this "caucus" material was the question of the so-called non-negotiable issues. Where does this come from? This is the first I ever heard of that in the modern labor movement.

The first time I ever heard of it I think was San Francisco State, where some hot shots thought up the idea of non-negotiable issues. To win their demands, those so-called non-negotiable issues would require taking state power. That was the only way they could do it. But it sounded very radical, it sounded very good, but it sounds very disturbing when we begin to take over that kind of rhetoric. Meaningless rhetoric! Confusing! Not clarifying, not educating.

And the non-negotiable issues are tied up with the proposal, and I quote: "Our caucus intends to send a telegram to President Woodcock advising him to break off negotiations with the Big Three and

go fishing at Black Lake Michigan while we conduct a strike to win our three top demands," and in parentheses, "non-negotiable." Woodcock go fishing; we'll win the strike for these "non-negotiable" demands, then you can come back and negotiate the others. Well, let me tell you, that if, while Woodcock is fishing, you can win these "non-negotiable" issues, that is, compel General Motors to surrender, then Woodcock can stay fishing from then on. Because everything in your other demands would be subordinate and peripheral to that, and there couldn't be much of a strike after.

And who would do the negotiating? The rank and-file, but the rank and file as a mass cannot negotiate. They need leaders. We're not against leaders; we're not against elected representatives, elected leaders. We're for the right kind of leaders, yes. We're not anarchists; we know that the workers in the mass cannot negotiate an agreement with General Motors. There's where the real power rests, yes, and with a correct program and a fighting leadership they can go very far.

The question is not Woodcock or anybody else, and I don't think the workers would go for it. I mean the very idea would be repugnant to them at this time. You know Woodcock has a very difficult problem. He's got to fill Reuther's shoes. He's got to make it for himself; he's got to make a record. So he didn't take on Chrysler or Ford, you see, he took on General Motors for the first time since Reuther did it. That's where Reuther won his spurs. It was Reuther's leadership in the General Motors strike that catapulted him into the presidency of the UAW. So Woodcock is going to take on the biggest one of them all, to show that, by God, Woodcock is as good as Reuther ever was.

Then he went a little further and made a definite commitment on what I consider one of the central issues in this strike. In the negotiations they refused to give him what he was asking for, so he called a strike. So why would you want to send him fishing? Up to now, up to this point, with the exception of criticisms you might have that he's not asking for enough money, he has acted in conformity with the interests of the union. Not that I have any faith or confidence in Woodcock. Woodcock, as I say, in employing the one-at-a-time strategy is trying to do exactly what Reuther did. Soften up the workers and prepare them for some kind of rotten compromise.

But this is at the very beginning of the strike, and workers have to go through a certain body of experience before they are convinced. We know now what Woodcock is up to; we're smart, we're Marxists. We're able to generalize from past experience, from theory and from practice, but it's a mistake to invest the workers with

our consciousness; they've got to go through an experience first! They won't take our word for it. And it's in going through this experience with them, pointing out what the main dangers are at this stage in the struggle, basing ourselves on their present consciousness, that at a later stage when a conflict does occur, when the issues do erupt around which workers begin to mobilize for action, they will give us a hearing. They would say, "You people are right; you were right at the very beginning, what you said was right and I think you're entitled to leadership."

I want to say a word about slogans and our transitional demands. We can always learn something from discussions around very concrete and very specific issues -- well, we should try. I noticed in these leaflets, there is reiterated again and again and again, the "labor party" demand. But most always in a very wrong way.

We're for the labor party. But we're against emulating the Wohlforth hotshots, who are not only for the labor party Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, but in the days in between. Twice on Sunday. That's their answer to every problem! For every problem that arises in the working class they have a pat answer -- "labor party!" So everybody can be a hotshot theoretician, everybody can be a strike strategist, don't you see -- all you've got to do if you have a problem is form a labor party. Nothing short of that will do.

And here again, as I say, the question occurs in the caucus leaflets in a way that is not good. It says, and I quote: "If Leonard Woodcock refuses to reorder our contract priorities for a halt to job loss, we must organize an independent political party of labor to fight for these demands." It's not realistic, comrades. A labor party is not going to "fight" for the UAW demands, even if there was one in existence. And to say if the UAW fails, we've got to organize a labor party to fight for our demands is preposterous.

Then again, "The need is to prepare for a political struggle against government interference next fall around the fight for a labor party." There's not going to be any labor party next fall -- in the elections. As of now, we've got slates of candidates in the field; we say "vote for the Socialist Workers Party candidates." That's realistic. Not that we're going to be elected, I don't think, but voting for our candidates is the best way to promote the movement for a labor party in this period.

The labor party slogan, or any slogan, must be applied in different ways at different times. At one time the slogan is a propaganda slogan. The same slogan at other times is a slogan of agitation and at other times the same slogan is a slogan

of action. Right now, with no sign, no hint of a labor party development anywhere in the working class, obviously the labor party slogan is a propaganda slogan. It's not a slogan for agitation and certainly not a slogan for action. You mix everything up. You confuse everything when you use it as a slogan for action, under circumstances where all you can do is propagandize for the idea of breaking with capitalist politics and embracing the concept of independent working class politics or the independent labor party.

But there's another more insidious aspect to this question. The Wohlforths present the labor party question as a counterposition. They counterpose it to the Black independent political party and to the Chicano independent party. They're against both. They're against Black nationalism; they say they're against the Black independent political party. They're against a Chicano independent political party. They say "wait!" "Wait until the labor party is formed, and then you'll all find a home inside the labor party. You won't need your own party."

I wish I was as sure as they are. I don't think so; we have no assurance. We can't tell the Blacks or the Chicanos to wait until the workers get ready to form a labor party, if you please, with any assurance that the leadership of that labor party will truly represent the interests of these two oppressed minorities.

We're for a labor party even under reformist leadership, and reformist leadership will never solve these problems -- we're for the Blacks organizing their own political party, even if there's a revolutionary leadership at the head of a labor party. Because you're not going to convince them by words. You'll convince them by deeds, and only by deeds.

It's only a labor party, a working class, mass party in action, that demonstrates that it says what it means and means what it says, that will convince them that maybe it isn't necessary to have their own party. All we can say at this point is that if the workers form their own independent labor party, then for the first time there's the basis for an alliance; to cement an alliance between an independent labor party and a Black independent political party and a Chicano independent party.

Why must we insist they give up their right to form their own political organization until the workers are ready to move? I don't know when that will be but I'm sure they're going to move. You know the Socialist Party prior to World War I had an almost identical position as the Wohlforthite group does now. They said that the struggle of the Blacks, termed at that time the "Negro struggle," was not a special struggle, that their needs, their aspirations, their demands would be

resolved within the framework of the general class struggle for socialism.

They denied that there was any such thing as a national minority, although they did recognize race-color oppression -- at least in words. Well, what did that lead to? It led to the Socialist Party, to the leaders of the Socialist Party who were officials of their unions, placing a ban in their unions against Black membership. Yes! All under the aegis of "wait until the social revolution and that will solve your problems."

This approach is a treacherous, a reactionary, a counter-revolutionary application, if you please, of the idea of working class independent political action. That's not our view -- we do not ask and cannot ask that the oppressed minorities give up their own political independence contingent upon the workers forming a class party. So we have to be careful how we use slogans -- slogans should be used to educate, not in such a way that everything is thrown together in the same pot.

Now the question of caucus and caucuses came up, and the question of "exceptional" circumstances. Let me say this at the outset. There was confusion on both sides of the question. The question of caucus and caucuses to me is a question of time, place and circumstance. No principle for it or against it, one way or another. Tactics are always concrete. And you've got to view the form of intervention in any given trade union situation according to the most effective method of intervention, the relationship of forces, and many other questions that must be taken into consideration.

Every union is "exceptional." I don't know of a single union that's identical to another. I don't know of a single local within a national union that doesn't have exceptions, so when you say "exceptions," you're not saying very much. I think that in the Fremont plant, it's to our advantage at this stage in the development to say "yes, there's an exception" -- the exception is that the caucus would get in our way! That would be the exception here, over some of the other exceptions that you cite.

The painters union. I'm guilty here also. I was the one, together with Nat and the other comrades involved, who proposed a caucus in this union. And why? It was an exception, yes. The painters union in San Francisco in the Bay Area was rather unique -- it was unique in the sense that in the past period, prior to Nat Weinstein coming to this area, an internal struggle had taken place, led by Dow Wilson who was an ex-CPer, a radical who formed a caucus in the organization that ousted the old leadership in the local and conducted a big struggle against the International.

The Wilson group began by outlining

a militant policy of fighting for the working conditions and rights of the members on the job. He was assassinated, and one of his lieutenants, named Evenson "inherited" the local. He was considered Dow Wilson's lieutenant. He was of a different cut, different breed and in his term in office began to adapt himself to the privileges and prerequisites of a piecard, and began to give up, surrender, many of the gains that had been previously made; to give away conditions in the contract, and not enforce existing work rules and conditions and this caused a division inside the former Dow Wilson caucus.

Some of the militants, after a year of internal struggle, concluded that in order to preserve those gains that were made under Dow Wilson, it was necessary to organize a caucus. In the painters union, like in Fremont, caucuses are an accepted part of their tradition, not only here, but in New York and elsewhere. We had a very capable and very competent political comrade, a member of the National Committee, directly involved. We knew we had no problem on the score of close collaboration in the execution of this tactic. We were able to win over almost immediately some leading people who had collaborated with Dow Wilson and went into opposition, announced our opposition on the basis of a program, a program which we wrote, on the question of internal union democracy, enforcement of the agreement and a number of other points.

Later, when the question of the elections came up, it was decided to run a slate of candidates in the elections. That was essentially the "exceptional" situation there. I think they did quite well -- I think they got 25% or 30% of the vote, I can't remember.

Now the Right-to-Vote Committee was also dragged in. The Right-to-Vote Committee in Chicago is not a caucus. The militant who's the head of the Right-to-Vote Committee is an official of the union because he is chairman of the Right-to-Vote Committee, and this local is conducting a fight in the whole area among the railroad workers to enlist support for the "right-to-vote!"

What is the right-to-vote movement? It's primarily a struggle for internal union democracy; it's a fight on the part of a section of the railroad workers for the right to vote on their contract. They do not have the right now to vote on their own contract! The officials negotiate the contract and the contract is signed by the officials, and the rank-and-file has no right whatsoever to vote on the terms of the contract. Now you can call it a caucus; you can say the local constitutes a caucus in relation to the other locals and the national union, I suppose. But that would be stretching the meaning of the term.

On the AFT (I understand that came in) you have Jeff here who was in that situation. I believe he has made plain what the situation was there and what was the character of the struggle. We weren't concerned about office.

In the New York AFT the fight for Black control of the Black community was one of the major issues. We were concerned about projecting this issue into this union in conducting a struggle against the Shanker leadership that was carrying on a policy of subordinating and victimizing the Blacks and the Black community for the interests of the white teachers. We were opposed to that.

Yes, we formed a caucus, or there was a caucus in existence, I can't remember which it was, and we got involved with alliances and so forth and so on. Frankly, I don't know what happened to the caucus after the election campaign was over, but I think we did some very effective work.

So as I say there's no question of principle involved here. It's merely a matter of determining what is the most effective method of intervention with the forces available at our disposal, and the given relationship of forces in the organization in which we work.

In some unions you can't form a caucus at all. In most unions, as a matter of fact. Why, they would kick you out the moment it's known that you belong to a caucus; out you go on your ear.

Some unions, like the ILGWU, permit caucuses only for a period of several weeks or a month prior to an election. That's all. They're "legal" then, and they become "illegal" the moment the election is over. That is, you're subject to punitive reprisal if you engage in caucus activity. We're talking about where it is possible; it is not a question of principle.

Why do I say that I think a caucus gets in the way in Fremont? At least this kind of a caucus? You know, there are caucuses and caucuses. If I understand this caucus, it's a small group, a very small group, of whom most are radicals of one kind or another. It has no real influence in the union; and it's picked the wrong time and the wrong issues.

To me, what is required in this situation is patient analysis and education. Around what question? Primarily around the question of the one-at-a-time strategy.

As the strike goes on, this is going to become a more and more burning question. For the workers who are on strike will begin to ask: "How can we end this thing?" The economic pinch will get ever more serious, and the natural thing for them

to do, as was done before, is to demand that the other sections of the union join the strike in order to bring it to a conclusion.

Or another alternative -- after several months, three months, or more, elapse, and Woodcock and General Motors think the auto workers have been softened up enough, they may come through with a proposed agreement that does not restore the escalator clause, does not honor the commitment made, and attempts to put over a compromise agreement. At which time the possibility exists for another eruption, that is, a movement to reject the contract. I believe that's been done before, wasn't it, Tom?

Tom C.: No, never, never.

Kerry: In your local, in Fremont?

Tom C.: I'm saying nationally, it's never been done.

Kerry: It's never been done in your local?

Tom C.: Nationally, it's never been done nationally.

Kerry: No. I'm not talking about nationally. I'm talking about your local in Fremont. Didn't they reject the agreement in 1964?

Tom C.: Yes, but we don't have veto power.

Kerry: Yes, I know that. I'm not talking about veto power. You're not working "nationally;" you're working in Fremont.

It's not excluded, and it's not excluded then, that under the pressure of the workers you will get the collaboration of the local leadership in rejection, as happened before, or if there's a division at that time, we may find it necessary to organize a caucus, but there will be a genuine basis for it then. There will be an issue which has aroused the workers, an issue they understand, and for which they would welcome leadership in this struggle.

You cannot arbitrarily impose a whole host of issues on the workers and say "come join us, we're the ones to lead you." No! They're not prepared to do that. You get in your own way. When you come out at the very beginning with all guns blazing, with broadsides directed at everybody, when you attempt to substitute yourself for the leadership in conducting actions which the union is opposed to, you can only discredit yourself, so when the real movement develops, nobody will listen to you. I've seen this happen before.

This strike is going to go on for a long time. It's wrong to act as though it's a question of now or never, do or die, that the whole thing is so explosive that all it needs is a spark, and we're going

to provide that spark. We don't believe in the "spark" theory of politics, or union tactics. We don't believe it. No, it doesn't work that way.

I think the most effective method of intervention now would be through the pages of The Militant, through analysis in The Militant. Another advantage in using The Militant would be that along with this analysis -- and this has been our experience when workers are on strike, and we are writing about their struggle in our paper -- they're interested in reading about questions of particular interest to them, and if what we write about their struggle makes sense to them, they will be interested in other aspects of our program. They'll read the rest of the paper, they'll read about the Chicano struggle, they'll read about the Black struggle, they'll read about the Women's Liberation (movement), and all our politics.

You see, it's an advantage over the leaflet type of propaganda and it's educational -- it educates. It analyzes and it educates.

You're not going to be able to direct the course of these current negotiations, or this strike, out of this plant with any kind of a caucus, I don't give a damn what kind you've got. You're not going to be able to do it. All you can hope to do is to educate some workers, to raise their political consciousness, to prepare them for what is coming.

They went through the same thing in 1967. One-at-a-time led to the kind of escalator clause that Reuther put over on them three years ago. Now they have to go through the same fight to get what they lost then through the same one-at-a-time policy.

What I'm concerned about is taking the kind of action that is the most effective under the given circumstances, with the given relationship of forces, and that's why I personally am against a caucus formation at this stage in the Fremont local.

Now let me conclude. Well, never mind, I'll conclude here. I have a few remarks to make about the branch. I don't want to mix the two things up. I'll make them after the discussion on this question.

DISCUSSION

Alan W. I was pretty disturbed by the speech that Tom Kerry gave us tonight, because Nelson said that he was going to come out and address us on the issues that were dividing the branch, but the fact is that the overwhelming majority of his speech was on issues that did not divide the branch.

In fact, most of the speech was irrelevant to the discussion which took place in the branch last week. I don't know who Comrade Kerry talked to that gave him the idea that the boycott and the non-negotiable demands, the labor party, Black nationalism, and so on, were the main issues of the debate. Because the fact is that these were not at all discussed, and they were not at all debated in the branch, because the Exec. moved to stop the caucus altogether regardless of what politics it put forward. And that's what divided the branch.

That was the issue that was discussed, although there were comrades that kept trying to cloud up the main issue. Last week Marylou said in the discussion that working with the Stalinists in the caucus was tantamount to a popular front. I think it would be very incorrect for me to demand an hour to explain why this is incorrect, when that wasn't the main issue that we were discussing. That was a sidelight; that was one person's point of view. And most of these things, the boycott and so on, were only held by perhaps Tom, maybe not even clearly by Tom. Maybe if they had been debated and discussed as the issues for the program of the caucus, maybe Tom would have been discouraged the other way, but that wasn't what the discussion was all about.

And that's basically the method Tom used in his debate, was taking up minor issues, secondary issues, that one or two comrades may have supported, and using them as the basis of his polemic and skirted a lot of the main issues until the end. All this stuff with analogies he criticized, the analogies were used to show that having a caucus as a method of work is not the most horrible crime in the world. That's why people used analogies, and Comrade Kerry agrees with that; he says that it would be the exception not to have a caucus out here. That was the only purpose the analogies were for, to unconfuse those comrades who thought it a heinous crime, that it was against the national line.

Now, as I say, I don't know who Comrade Kerry talked to -- he didn't talk to me, although I indicated to Nelson that I was interested in talking with him -- so I should think that the branch leadership would have tried to clarify the issues that split the branch, rather than to muddle them and give a talk of this character which I think is only going to confuse people further, and anger a lot of people, because a lot of it just wasn't what the debate was all about. But maybe this is what the branch leadership preferred.

Tom C.: I wonder if I could have an expanded amount of time, an additional five minutes, because there are two points I'd like to cover.

Chairman: Take the five minutes and then ask for an extension.

Kerry: Give him as long as he wants.

Tom C.: OK? Ten minutes be OK? Well, we'll see. I won't take as long as Tom Kerry in presenting this here.

What I want to discuss is the lack of competitiveness of our press which required my working through a caucus and leaflet utilizing leaflets at the plant. I attempted to emphasize to our comrades the fact that our press had been completely silent about the approaching auto strike; there'd been no mention of it previous to the strike, and we have all the other political tendencies out at the plant selling their press with banner headlines stating that there was an approaching auto strike, and they were getting their propaganda into the plant precisely because they were pitching it and keying it to the level of the workers' interest, and they were getting their particular political line into the plant.

Our comrades were attempting to sell our press out there, and we sold 30 or so, which was fairly good, considering that it was sort of irrelevant to the present struggle, the interest of the workers at the present time. They were about student struggles and all the rest.

My attempt to adapt our caucus formation to getting our line and our program into that plant, this caucus formation was entirely my work, my effort, the leaflets were mine, and I attempted to subordinate this to the branch -- I attempted to present my whole program to the branch for discussion; I attempted to subordinate my activities to the party and the branch as a whole. I submitted a resumé of our rough draft of what we were going to do on all the leaflets back to the national office. Frank Lovell made it available entirely to the entire party.

Now the strange thing about this is that there was no criticism until after I had initiated a series of programs, you see. There was no criticism from Frank or suggestions of how I should firm it up, you see. I'm under party discipline. And I want to be as effective as I can in that plant. And by being effective I'm open for advice, see; if the comrades say there are certain weaknesses in my program, I'm open to these suggestions. That is why I submit to the branch and to the party in our intervention out to the plant.

Now Tom Kerry presents, he epitomizes what I'm attempting to make a point of here, the fact that there's been no leadership, no leadership in the working class struggles whatsoever. We have no interventionist program or policy out there. The only thing they can do is

criticize or attack after we carry out a line of action or a program at that plant.

Now, briefly, some of our competitors out there, the Stalinists, were giving away their PW, their press. Of course we can't compete with that, with banner headlines, you know "The Coming Auto Strike," and which was well distributed within the plant; and then we have the Workers League, selling their Bulletin out there, and handing out a leaflet which has an application on it for five free issues of The Bulletin, and discussing with one of their salesmen, they got 55 takers on this which they're attempting to build on.

And I'm very sensitive to our lack of competitiveness with our rival political tendencies. We have PL out there, with all kinds of gimmicks for free copies of their press, Challenge. The Militant leadership of our press back there and the leadership of our party failed to intervene or give any advice at the time that I was open, you know, for this. And I'll admit there might be a few weaknesses but I'm not going to defend those weaknesses. I'm going to make a pretty sharp criticism of our leadership that does not lead, and they do not offer any type of corrective advice or programmatic line out there; they can only attack after you carry out a line of action. This is not vanguardism; this is definitely not vanguardism. If we're building a vanguard party of the working class, we're deficient in this area. This is one of the points I want to emphasize.

Now the boycott. That was not a firm demand. The boycott was just a legitimate platform or cover from which we could unite student groups with the workers and keep this, develop a unity between the forces, which would be much more constructive than this divisive thing we see developing now in the UAW where the leadership is attempting to blame the students for all the violence, the bombing of our plant. They're trying to create a false straw man in order to divert the workers' attention from the real problems. The real problems are with GM, the struggle against GM and a weak compromising leadership in the trade unions.

Now the boycott was taken out of context -- it was only part of a total program -- we advocated full strike power -- this is only one part of the coin, you know. We advocated to shut down the whole industry. If you want to take something out of context and criticize it, this is Tom Kerry's prerogative, but it's not fair in debate, where he has an advantage over me because he's been debating a lot longer than I have on these points. But this boycott was not firm, it was only a platform, a propagandistic thing that we could unite those students with the workers, where we now see a division, a pulling apart on that.

Kerry's presentation on labor struggles here tonight was excellent; it should have been in our press one month ago. This could be educating the entire comrades of our party which really need this education. Tom Kerry had to fly on an airplane all the way out here in order to put me down rather sharply because he sees some little deficiencies in my program. This is strange. This is strange behavior.

Now all the history of all the labor strikes this year have shown that our press has only reacted impressionistically to these strikes. They only cover them when they happen. In other words, we only report on these things. We don't seem to draw conclusions from these strikes; we don't have an interventionist attitude; we don't have an interventionist program. We don't tell the workers what to beware of or the leadership when it's betraying the workers. We don't criticize this labor leadership. This has been another weakness in our party and our press; over the past year, it's been very noticeable to myself. It's been a weakness of our party, not being able to play a vanguard role in leading the working class and interjecting our line within these struggles. We seem to be adapting to the trade union bureaucracy. This could be a fatal illness in our party if we allow this trend to continue.

Kerry had to pick apart all my weak points in the program and he proposes to destroy the vehicle, the only vehicle we have for getting our propaganda in that plant. That plant has completely ...is an armed camp out there now; where they don't allow any sales of literature or outside intervention within this, and I mean it's quite a tense situation out there. If we send some of the comrades out, they might get their heads cracked. We don't want to see this. And the only vehicle we have at the present time is a caucus formation and those we had attracted within the caucus formation for that purpose. Now this is like saying we have a baby that perhaps is not in the perfect image that we wanted; it didn't have the blue eyes or the hair that we wanted, or something like that. So in effect we're saying let's destroy that baby because it has slight imperfections. Instead of attempting to mold and shape its character and personality and develop this thing, and in the proper image we want it developed, in a programmatic image that we want it developed, Kerry says let's destroy the baby. The majority of the branch says let's destroy the baby. It's no longer of any use. This is ridiculous. I fail to see the logic of this argument.

The caucus, now, in abandoning it, the Stalinists are moving in on the thing -- and of course they're trying to co-opt this whole thing, the mailing list ...I hate to admit it, but it seems as

though our party is playing left cover for the Stalinists, who are playing left cover for the bureaucrats, who are playing left cover, period. You know, I consider this a very fundamental weakness in our party. And I fully intend to carry this fight back to the International, to the convention. I just want to point out that all the leadership of the party, I think that the main thing that rubs Tom Kerry wrong and rubbed a lot of our leadership wrong, I disagree with the fact that he says that this is a local matter -- I really think we had an intervention by the national office, and the thing that irritated them more than anything else is my attacking the leadership out there. I called on the rank-and-file to fight that leadership every inch of the way and be prepared for a sellout; I think this is what disturbed our leadership who is attempting to form some sort of a coalition, an antiwar coalition, with the leadership.

Next month we're going to have to go out and get one of these slimy UAW bureaucrats and make a speaker of him out there at the same time they'd be stabbing us in the back on our strike. These are very serious deficiencies in our party that I've been aware of for some time. I've neglected to really speak out on them. But I think this has brought it in sharp focus; this problem is not going to be solved here tonight or anywhere in the near future. This is a very serious deficiency within our party.

Paul M.: There's not much time to speak on this subject before the branch. There's not much you can say in three minutes, or for that matter in five. But I want to briefly recount the circumstances for the evolution of this.

Tom C. came up before the branch organizer of the previous Exec. sometime a month or two ago and indicated he had been doing a great deal of thinking and studying and he had some ideas and proposals to make, as far as future work, etc., and a special meeting of the Exec. was called to discuss that. All the old comrades who were on that Exec. can recall it.

At that time, Tom C. essentially presented to the Exec. what subsequently was printed up into the three pages. It was in my opinion a rather confusing body of ideas. The point was made, and I was maker of the motion, that Tom C. was requesting rather strongly that we seek branch education. He kept emphasizing that the whole branch has to be brought in.

The whole party has to be brought in. Instead of having what he characterized as "secret meetings," etc., we should have branch meetings. And of course this was something we rather strongly agreed with, and the motivation was made very clear and was spelled out rather clearly and

rather specifically that in order to possibly enhance and develop a branch awareness and understanding of this, we were going to refer the question to the branch itself for discussion.

As a matter of fact, I was the maker of that motion, and I prefaced it and qualified it by saying, "Now I personally am in disagreement with Tom C.'s remarks on the labor party, and emphasis of that, etc., but what we want to do is have a branch educational discussion." And the question was brought before the branch.

Now unfortunately the two meetings that it was discussed, I had to work that night, which I think was somewhat of an advantage, because when you listen to a tape of a meeting it gives you a better ability sometimes to grasp it than it does by sitting here in the hall itself. And at the meeting itself, Tom C. presented more ideas than he had presented at the Exec. For that matter, I recall him using the term characterizing the independent Chicano movement as something that was divisive. Now what did he mean by divisive? I think Tom Kerry explained that, and I'm not going to go a little further.

When you have his point of view of the labor party being the thing, etc., everything else gets in its way. And subsequently he also made the point in passing that he just made now on the party leadership and the party line, cottontailing it up to some phony bureaucrats in order to get them on an antiwar platform. At the branch meeting where this was discussed, Ralph asked a question. And he says, does this represent the point of view of the Executive Committee? And Jean S. got up, and said "no, it does not," specifically, clearly, unquestionably.

What the Executive Committee voted for, was what was on Tom C.'s paper, on Tom C.'s initial document. So anyone who can draw, or who attempts to or tries to draw out of that the conclusion that the Executive Committee had endorsed a proposal for caucus, or anything of that kind, is falsifying history. On the contrary, the motivations of the Executive Committee were to seek an educational discussion. Tom had committed himself to two things at that first Executive Committee. The first one was that he committed himself to running for the Branch Exec. which was going to take place in two weeks, something that he had fulfilled. And we welcomed it very, very strongly. And the second thing was to go to Oberlin. And the point was made, time and time again, that that was one of the most ideal places and opportunities in which to discuss the question at this time. And we deferred; we held off, because we looked to Oberlin as a possibility.

Unfortunately, Tom C. was not able to make it there. But there was a rather rich discussion at Oberlin that took place. After that, suddenly the leaflets started flying. The rest is past history. The caucus was formed, etc. Tactics can only be approached with validity and clarity when they are derivative of, subordinate, and flow out of a clear strategy. What is Tom's strategy, you see? That is the question that I'm asking here.

Tony C.: I want to address myself to some of the remarks that were made. Unfortunately I didn't get a chance to speak at the last discussion, because it was very lengthy. I wanted to raise some questions there which Tom C. raised. First of all, Comrade Alan W. was shocked at how Comrade Kerry proceeded in his presentation. I'd like to explain what Comrade Kerry did, which was absent from the presentation of the comrades of the minority, on the question of the caucus. Comrade Kerry proceeded from a general evaluation of the status of the trade union movement, particularly the UAW as it stands today, the struggle that's been taking place inside the trade union bureaucracy, and from that general, national evaluation of the issues involved in that strike and their historical roots, Comrade Kerry then went on to look at the concrete situation of the particular local in Fremont and the particular tactics that then applied to our intervention there.

This, comrades, is what is called a Marxist approach to questions dealing with our intervention in any movement that takes place, and if comrades are surprised by this approach, I suggest that they look at this again, carefully.

Also, Comrade Kerry went over the key political questions involved and precisely did not deal with organizational questions, secondary questions. He dealt with the primary, political questions involved in terms of our overall evaluation of the situation, and therefore, how we would intervene and what organizational forms our intervention would take place on the basis of that general political evaluation of the situation. That again is in the traditions of how we Marxists analyze and function.

Now in that discussion that took place a very interesting thing I think we should point out. As far as I'm informed, there was no evaluation by the comrades out at Fremont or by the comrades in the minority of the existence, or the relationship, or our attitude, or a program towards any Black or Brown caucuses that exist out at the Fremont plant.

Now our evaluation in terms of the radicalization of the working class in this country has been that the Black and the Chicano workers represent the most

advanced section of the working class and in fact are providing the vanguard of the trade union movement in the Black caucuses that have been formed in various parts of the country and so on. Now comrades didn't mention what our attitude is to these Brown caucuses; I understand there is a large percentage of Black and Chicano workers out at that factory. What is our attitude towards them? Do we say to them that a Chicano party is divisive? Do we say to Black workers that a Black party is divisive? That wasn't made clear.

Now, you know if we worried about being outdone by all the other political tendencies, why, we're outdone every day. If you look at Challenge, Challenge runs screaming headlines every day about how the workers are about to go out on a general strike. That's not how we function, comrades. I think that the comrades in the minority are reflecting the pressure of these ultraleft and opportunist elements out there, particularly the Workers League, Progressive Labor Party and the Communist Party, who are all to the letter anti-nationalist and absolutely diametrically opposed to the creation of a Chicano or a Black party. But I think there's a certain amount of adaptation to the pressures of these reactionary currents within it.

Now, what Comrade Kerry pointed out is that the question of a caucus is not an abstract question that you look at in the general. It's a concrete question of a particular situation. The question of a caucus is not some type of organizational form through which we have to work, or can only work. As Tom C. pointed out now, that we're destroying the only means that we have to work -- that's incorrect. That's not the only means we have to work. A caucus is something that is created at a particular time in a struggle that relates to the consciousness of the mass of the workers in that particular situation or the mass of whatever grouping, like happened to us in Los Angeles. Where it became possible to form a caucus at a particular point in the struggle where it wasn't possible to do that before. It's a tactical, concrete question.

Peter G.: I'm glad Comrade Tony C. got up and explained to us what Comrade Kerry had said; I'm sure none of us understood it. I really do not think that it was necessary for Comrade Tony C. to put himself as the crutch of Tom Kerry in his remarks, and I think we pretty clearly understood that. Now a couple of things -- I'm not sure how we're going to deal with this problem of whether we voted or didn't vote to establish a caucus, or not. I hope these tapes that were made of those meetings are available to the entire branch so that we can go back and listen to them and decide in our minds again more clearly whether we voted for this or not. It was my understanding that we had; it's other comrades' understanding that we

hadn't. So this question I can see is never going to be resolved until we can review those tapes. That's the only way I can see it being resolved.

One thing I'm going to request is for Comrade Kerry to give us a political perspective for our intervention, a strategic and tactical perspective for our intervention in this strike. Now you mentioned that there would be a time where a caucus would be good. Or that it would be possible in certain situations in the development of this strike, or in future strikes, or the future development in the union as related to this specific plant, that it would be good to do that. The only real perspective that he mentioned was one of trying to get The Militant out, which I think is a good thing. But that does not substitute itself, I don't think it can substitute itself, for relating to the strike, to the issues of the strike and trying to get people actually involved so it affects not just the general workers involved in that plant -- it involves them also, they are directly involved, because they are there -- exactly what kind of activity they could carry out; how to prepare for a situation when there would be a need for this caucus.

I'd also like, if he could explain how the withdrawing from this caucus is the best way to get in that situation -- to get in the situation where we're putting forward clearer politics, how he sees that would be impossible politically for that to come about.

Jeff M.: Comrade Tom C. made the analogy of the decision of the branch to abolish our caucus as "killing the baby, even though it has certain imperfections." Whether or not we discussed the imperfections at all, the fact is that if all it takes to kill the baby is the withdrawal of one person, the kind of caucus that we were talking about could not have been that effective to start with. So I think we have to be clear about what we're talking about. If it hinges on one man, then we're talking about a different kind of baby.

Comrade Tom C. said from the articles in The Militant we seem to be adapting to the union bureaucracy on the question of, for the sake of, our alliance in the antiwar movement. "We don't have an interventionist program for this strike or for the trade union movement. We don't lead." That our leadership in the SWP disapproves of Tom C.'s position in a caucus because it doesn't like Tom C.'s attacking the trade union bureaucracy which we are forming an alliance with.

Now comrades, we don't have any position whatsoever in opposition to forming caucuses in the unions. We just ask that when we do form a caucus, when we do intervene in a caucus type formation, that

there are political benefits to be reaped from it. We know that there has been considerable movement in the antiwar, women's, Chicano and the Black movements, and we have sent comrades into those movements. But we don't have a general policy of either sending comrades in or forming caucuses in unions, because we don't see the beginnings, or we don't see the class struggle today on a level where we can make any kind of gains, in comparison to the kinds of gains that we have made elsewhere, or that we are making elsewhere.

And I mentioned last week if we followed the policy of sending comrades for the record into the unions, so we could say, like the IS, PL and everyone else -- the abstentionists from the mass movement developing today -- that yes, we proletarianized, we're a working class branch, and so on. We would be the same numbers that we were when we started this party in '38.

Comrade Kerry gave his position as he saw it on the factors that mitigate against a caucus. It's unfortunate that the leadership of this branch was not able to come up with a statement as clear. And from the entire context of the discussion -- and, by the way, on the side here, it's not going to do us any good looking back on the tape recordings to find out whether or not we agreed or did not agree to have a caucus. That doesn't solve the problem. It goes way beyond an interpretation of a decision.

What Comrade Kerry did say, in his opinion, is a caucus at this point would not be fruitful and that is because we could not clearly differentiate and draw around us a group in the union at this time. And if the comrades think that that's not true, then they should give us their analysis of the objective situation in the plant that differs from that.

Now, the other thing which is even more crucial. There was total disagreement in the caucus and on this branch floor about what kind of program we had in the caucus. That is also not the fault of Comrade Tom C. but the fault of the entire branch. We can't pooh-pooh these, and it was Comrade Kerry and every other comrade's obligation to point out what's wrong with the program we're intervening with, regardless of the fact that Wohlforth, Spartacists and the CP can intervene from now until the end of the world, as they have been doing, and groups like them for years with a program that isn't worth a pile of dung!

And if we want to emulate that kind of intervention, we can go on intervening with no program and total disagreement on the floor. I agree with Comrade Tom C. that the leadership of this branch has not conducted this discussion or our intervention

in any way that -- well, it should warn us in the future for better preparation. And if comrades feel that we should have a caucus there, then they should present to us their position on the objective situation which would merit it.

Mike T.: I'd like to strongly disassociate myself from the remarks of Comrade Tom C. in several aspects. One, on "make The Militant competitive." I think The Militant is the only paper worth a moment's consideration in the labor movement today. The Stalinists had to give their People's World away, because no one would buy the rag. The other papers, Challenge and what not, are a joke and bear no relationship to reality. Now as a left cover for the bureaucrats because we're trying to utilize them in the antiwar movement, would we welcome Woodcock to speak at a national rally against the war? Right! It would be a terrific step forward for the antiwar movement and I would welcome such a move. At the same time you have to point out we'd support a Woodcock, we wouldn't let that interfere with our role of presenting demands, etc. which cut across class lines.

Now as a left cover for the Stalinists, the Stalinists' role, of course, has been to, in the past period they've supported the bureaucracy and basically they have the same position as the bureaucracy: maintenance of the status quo, with realignment of the Democratic Party and some tertiary reforms, etc., and the ex-Stalinist unions are welcoming them in.

But our record against Stalinism in the labor movement dates back from the foundation of the party, and I suggest you re-read the struggles we lost in UAW and Maritime against the Stalinists. I think that many of the things you've picked up are slanders of the Wohlforthites, whose pomposity is only outdone by their sterility.

Now at the same time I agree with Comrade Tom C. that we should have a caucus at Fremont, and while I agree with many of the things Comrade Kerry remarked about, including the demands that one of the key things is that we have to oppose the one-at-a-time, just attacking GM and leaving Ford and Chrysler alone, and we have to face the cost-of-living also and the non-negotiable demand and the boycott, etc., were mistakes. They were mistakes by Tom C. of I don't think a too serious nature.

Where Comrade Kerry makes his error, I think, is on the following. That the basis of the strike in the UAW and the basis of the struggle in the labor movement is not around the cost-of-living and not around wages per se; any collective bargaining agreement where a wage settlement is the main feature is only a defen-

sive thing and that even includes the cost-of-living.

An escalator clause may maintain the status of living, the standard of living, but doesn't increase it. Where wages have fallen for four years in this country and capitalism is demanding a bigger share from the workers to pay for imperialism, to pay for the war in Vietnam and to pay for their own contradictions, the trade union bureaucracy is going to have to carry this struggle to obtain what capitalism wants in the trade union movement.

The big thing centers on the productivity of labor and the tremendous speedup engendered, both absolute and relative, of increase in productivity of labor and the whole question of working conditions and shop conditions and struggle over what basically is aspects of workers' control in the plant itself.

These struggles the unions want no part of whatsoever and have turned hands down on, and that's the way where a caucus can make an inroad and prepare some gains. That struggle has to be launched, not negotiated on a one, two or three-year basis in Union Square or Solidarity House, but has to be fought on a day-to-day level in the plant. And in this area where the caucus has the ability under a program worked out in accordance with our traditional policies, of the transitional program, etc., can intervene and be effective.

Ralph L.: I feel obligated to speak since I made the presentation for the minority which has come under such criticism and attack in the course of tonight's session. Of course I can't help but respond to Comrade Tony C.'s ludicrous remarks that in contrast to Comrade Kerry, this minority didn't outline its Marxist perspective for the struggle in the auto unions. In ten minutes, comrade? All that in ten minutes? I mean I speak pretty fast, but in ten minutes we're going to give that analysis? That isn't what we were discussing! We weren't trying to give you a full perspective; we were trying to orient the branch towards some positive and modest gains that it could make in a particular union situation. Nor can I give you that Marxist perspective in four minutes. Please don't be ludicrous. Could you do it in ten minutes, comrade? Comrade Kerry spent an hour and twenty minutes doing it.

Now, I have to comment on these remarks on the discussion in the general context of which I think it is most important and that is the context of why Comrade Kerry came to make this visit and report to our branch. And I can only make a judgment on this based on some remarks in a conversation I had with Comrade Kerry. He said there were several aspects to his

coming here. One was to give this report on the general situation in auto and this union situation that has divided the branch to some degree. Now in my opinion there's no doubt that this aspect of Comrade Kerry's visit has been very instructive; I learned quite a bit in the course of his remarks. But I must point out to Comrade Kerry that we were not aware of this information about the painters' union situation. I only assumed myself -- the only evidence we had to go by on the question of caucuses was a letter that Comrade Lovell sent, something to the effect that our experience had been that caucus work hadn't been too effective.

But this was a very narrow statement and we had, as opposed to that, the opposite evidence that right across the Bay one of our leading National Committee members and a former branch organizer and so on was conducting such an intervention. Now we had no way of knowing that this intervention was not fully approved by the national office and Comrade Kerry indicated that it might have been an error, or partially an error and so on. And we made our judgement on the caucus question by pointing out the other situations where we do intervene, via caucus and so on. So this information puts it in a different light although I don't think it's convincing. Although nonetheless it's educational and it certainly will play a role in this conversation. Comrade Kerry raised some remarks that were not at all broached, points of view that weren't even broached in our original discussion.

Now there were several other reasons why Comrade Kerry came and I have to comment on them too. One, I think a major one was that this situation in our branch, which had been somewhat divisive, be handled in the best possible manner for the further growth and activity of our branch and that it not divide the branch in a way in which it would become bogged down and lose sight of our broad, party-building objectives. I don't think that the character of this discussion, Comrade Kerry, has been and your presentation is such as to lend itself towards that.

I think it has the very definite potential to further divide the branch and that the remarks were not put in the context that I certainly assumed they would have been. I think the Executive Committee had played no role whatsoever in the organization of this discussion or any other aspect of it. We learned about Comrade Kerry's visit at the last branch meeting. The Executive Committee was never consulted in any way, shape or form on this question.

Finally I just want to repeat the comments I made to Comrade Kerry and that was, although he was coming out to a branch that was divided, this is not a problem branch. It is a branch that has problems. These divisions that have taken place in

our branch on this question and others have not led to any of the various factors that would indicate this being labelled a problem branch which needs a very strong intervention in order to reorient it. In most of the activities of our work the branch has turned outwards. There is no demoralization in our branch for example, and that is one of the best indications of a problem branch.

There is no demoralization that I've seen among comrades because of these disputes. Moreover, it's a branch that is continuing to recruit. Our branch has been continuing to recruit through the YSA and we're doing outside work. Along most of the basic activities of the branch I see no reason for this to be called a problem branch and see no reason to say that these disputes or divisions have been such as to create a problem situation in Berkeley that have required a very strong intervention with respect to straightening us out. And I think that your comments, Comrade Kerry, have more potential to divide than unite.

Ed D.: The points I'd like to stress, comrades, are first, that I disagree as I said last week that the party leadership can just take an interest in a question like this on a trade union question. It has to exert leadership. I agree with Ralph L. that Comrade Kerry has shed a lot of light on the problem -- it should have been long before the question came up and we should be getting direction. Again I repeat from the Transitional Program that a correct union policy, a correct policy on the trade unions, not any policy, a correct one, is a basic condition for an organization that considers itself in fraternal ideological solidarity with the world Trotskyist movement.

Our policy has to be correct. It can't simply depend on the way a branch will vote. It's one of these questions that the party leadership has to be decisive on. And I think, just like on the question of critical support, this branch voted to give support to the Panthers on the Peace and Freedom ticket. Well, the party overruled that. I think the trade union question and our intervention with the class like that is such a question and. I think that should be stressed.

I also feel that I have to defend Tom C. Certainly organizationally he accepts a lot of the criticism made as I do, especially on those leaflets. But organizationally, I mean, let's all admit Tom C. acted as a Bolshevik, as a revolutionist, not as a trade union militant in this. Last summer it was Tom's initiative alone that raised the question of our intervention in Fremont. Tom C. brought on the discussion well in advance of the strike. And as the strike approached Tom tried to get the Executive Committee to take leadership of our intervention there. He asked for

party direction. He didn't get that. Two Execs in a row didn't even consider the question.

He told me that Nelson met him at the door at the second Exec. a week before the strike asking him not to bring it up again. I mean that's just a plain fact. And the fact is that we didn't enter into a discussion until the night of the strike when the comrades at Fremont had to go down there and leave at 9:00 or 10:00 or whatever it was. So I think Tom should be defended. He acted correctly; he asked for party direction and it's false polemics, comrades, to find fault with this or that point. On GM as the sole target. I agree, I think Tom C. agrees. He came out with it in a leaflet for industry-wide. To criticize Tom C. for stressing the labor party, it's no big deal. He also retracted on the boycott idea but he had reasons for it. But it's false polemics to criticize these things if you yourself, I mean the branch, now the Exec. and also the party, refuse direction.

I think it should be stressed. Leaflets didn't just fly around by the way. They were passed out as they were turned out. The Exec. knew about them. The first person who got them was Nelson B. I turned them out myself you see. I know that. Now on the question of the caucus itself, all I'll say is maybe it's correct to say that that caucus down there is pushing the wrong issues, certain wrong issues. But the point is we have a possibility of building a caucus with the correct issues and Tom C. mentioned some of those issues. Tom Kerry mentioned those issues. We should build it. It's possible to do that.

They're hard-nosed workers down there; it isn't just a bunch of radicals. I went to the first meeting and the majority of the people there were workers at the plant. Mike was there -- he said they were all hard-nosed workers. I agree with him. I've seen a lot of guys in the antiwar movement; these guys looked great! Now, we might be discreet in our intervention there -- that's one thing. But to say that we can't intervene is something I find hard to understand.

So let me sum it up by saying that Tom Kerry's statement that we can't affect the negotiations -- that to me sort of sums up our disagreement. You see, that's the attitude of the trade union bureaucrats, whether they can affect the negotiations or not. We don't think we can. We operate in fascist unions, don't we? Can we affect negotiations there? The fact that we can't affect negotiations, or can't affect the general course of the struggle, doesn't mean that we don't operate in the unions, even fascist unions.

Comrades, there are good workers

down there. The reason we intervene from the inside is to split as much as we can the influence of the trade union bureaucracy on the workers. That's why we're in the fight. That's why we're there -- to split them away from the trade union bureaucracy and to recruit a few people. I say there are people we could recruit down there! How can you say we can't work with them? How can you give them education and consciousness except you go through a struggle with them when they're ready to struggle? You see, they showed they were ready to struggle. Those workers, they came to caucus meetings. A hundred of them signed up.

Gelia S.: In terms of this discussion there's one sort of general comment I'd like to make before I get to specifics, something that really bothers me that I've seen done in this branch a lot and I think that is something that's very bad and tends to give the branch a factional atmosphere which we don't want. And that is people constantly pulling up the boogey man. Like Paul pulls up the boogey man of anti-nationalist feelings and someone else pulls up the boogey man of taking all the students off the campus and sending them into the plant and so on. All these kinds of things that were not discussed in the previous discussion, and bringing up things that everyone knows that's in this branch are not ideas of most people of the branch.

For instance, I think that Alan W. was justifiably shocked to a certain extent by Comrade Kerry's remarks. I was too, and not in the sense that he gave a history of the UAW or gave an analytical and national perspective on that strike, but in the sense of spending so much time on the boycott and the analogies of the boycott when nobody discussed those analogies in terms of the boycott. See, that's the kind of thing, the kind of distortion, that's very irritating to a sensitive situation and I think should be avoided. People should be very careful and very precise in these kinds of things.

Now on the question of killing the baby, or throwing the baby away, or whatever it is. See, it's not true that the withdrawal of one person -- that whole idea is kind of a strange idea. If we withdrew from the SMC, for instance, and turned it over to the opponents who were operating in the SMC, at least at Cal., it would kill the SMC. And that doesn't mean that the SMC is worthless or that we should discontinue work in that area. And I think allowing the Stalinists to come into a formation could effectively kill it. The formation might continue with a name or something. But it certainly would in a certain sense kill it to withdraw our ideas and our movement from that.

Now in terms of a caucus, I think

that we should continue with some kind of formation. I don't care if we call it a caucus or not. Maybe that's not exactly the appropriate name. But certainly there are many things that we can do with a formation of people out there that we have around. Many people, you know there are a number of healthy people there that perhaps we could recruit. Especially with the situation that we have now where it's very difficult to sell The Militant externally and to do work where comrades go out there on trailblazes and so on.

We can literally at this point write the leaflets and programs for any kind of formation out there. We could have written them in the beginning. In fact, the first leaflets that were written around the elections for that formation, for that caucus, were written, I believe, by comrades from the Executive Committee including Comrade Montauk. And there was the opportunity to do that with these other leaflets. I think that it's possible to develop a program or a strategy on which we could utilize that group of people and that formation in an effective way. I think that we should spend some, and the Executive Committee should spend some, time discussing how we could utilize that group of people.

I mean, for instance, perhaps they could sell Militants for one thing. Perhaps this group of people could be used as a lever for some of the red-baiting and anti-student attitudes and statements that are being put forward by the local bureaucracy out there. There are a whole number of other things and I think that some of the ideas that Comrade Kerry mentioned were very useful ideas that should be discussed further in terms of that formation.

Dave W.: I think that one of the key things that has marked this discussion is that it has contrasted an organizational type approach to the question to a political one. And the excuse of the minority for not giving a political argument is of all things, time, or that the Exec. proposed as part of its implementation of tasks out there, proposed that Tom withdraw from the caucus.

These are all secondary issues and these are the issues that attorney's argue on -- fine points, not political basic issues. Now all along, and regardless of what Ralph says, the majority has talked politics all through the last discussion. And through this one. It has proved that the caucus is incapable of carrying out our party line out there, or our party tasks. And it has proved that this caucus, regardless of your snickers, is attempting to be a substitute for the union leadership out there.

A totally incorrect attitude toward

a movement at this stage, completely obvious. And it's so obvious that's why they don't want to discuss it. In fact the minority has focused on that the Exec. has failed to organize this discussion, that Tom Kerry flew out here (that's really key); that the United Action Caucus a few months ago (which was really a misnomer -- it was a fraction of our three comrades out there plus any other person who agrees with the Socialist Workers Party ticket) turned into some broad coalition on the arbitrary action of Tom C.; that this somehow warrants that we should continue this.

Totally an organizational argument. Another one is that we need action out there, right? So we should keep this caucus going and then talk politics. That was explicitly said in the last discussion. Until the minority, except for a couple of comrades like Ed D. agreed to face the political issues and really talk about the politics in this, the minority is just going to be ineffective in helping to build this branch and build the action of this branch out at the UAW plant.

SUMMARY

I'll try to make it as short as I can. I can't answer everybody fully. I'll try not to neglect anybody. But I can't answer everybody; otherwise I'd be speaking for another hour and a half. So I'll deal with the questions I consider relevant.

First, on Tom C. I'm very much disturbed about his attitude towards the party, the party leadership and the party press.

I say I'm very much disturbed about Comrade Tom C.'s attitude towards the party, the party leadership and the party press. I don't know how you comrades feel, except Comrade Mike T. who expressed himself on the question. If the comrade is serious about what he said, then we've got a much bigger difference than just this strike out here at Fremont and the UAW. If the party, the party press, is covering up for the labor bureaucracy, is serving as a left cover for the Stalinists who in turn cover up for the labor bureaucracy, then you've got to get rid of this party leadership. Yes!

Then your problem is not that of working out a tactic for intervention in a strike. I didn't repeat to the comrades here the discussion I had with Tom C. I had a conversation with Tom C. He was the first person I wanted to speak to because it was precisely this question which we were most concerned about. And he told me the same things, only with some amplifications and elaborations. I wouldn't even repeat them here, but he repeats them openly in a branch meeting! As I say, you'd

better think very seriously, Tom C. about what you're saying, whether you really believe what you're saying. If you really believe what you're saying, then this is not the party for you. I'm sorry.

Or you would have to start a faction, fight in the party to oust this leadership and to get another revolutionary leadership, because covering up for the union bureaucracy is betrayal!

That's what we accuse the Stalinists of doing and other opponents of the party. So I don't know, I don't know whether you're serious or whether you're just using polemical exaggeration in your arguments, but it's a serious matter to me.

Now, is it true that there has been no advice, no collaboration, no intervention? I don't think so! I recall as far back as the time that the comrades ran for convention delegate, it was after consultation with Frank Lovell, and Frank Lovell warned against the type of caucus activity that the comrades had been previously engaged in out there! We've had a long history and I know something about it.

I worked with Bill K. and Tom C. years before this branch was formed. This is not my first experience with this plant. This plant, when it was out in Oakland, Bill K. reminded me the other day when I spoke to him, too, to the two comrades who were active in the plant to to find out what the facts were.

He reminded me that he'd been kicked out of the plant several times and that I had warned him if he got kicked out again, I was going to kick him out of the party. Why? Because he was getting kicked out for all the wrong reasons! For the wrong reasons and getting into the wrong fights! That's why he was kicked out. I'm surprised he got back. It was only because of Tom C.'s activity and the intervention of some other officials. But he's back in that plant now. I don't want that to happen again!

If our comrades get kicked out of a plant, I would prefer it to be on the basis where the party can conduct a big campaign for them and not be fouled up with all kinds of stuff that is indefensible.

Tom C., don't say there hasn't been any line. I don't know whether you've been reading The Militant. You say The Militant hasn't carried articles on the UAW situation before the strike began? We apparently haven't been reading the same paper! And what I say here is new? No, it isn't new! Some of it is new, but the line's not new. It was in the article that was printed before the strike broke out, written by Frank Lovell, en-

titled: "UAW Goes for Wage Boost." Frank goes into the whole question of the one-at-a-time strategy and the history of it in the UAW and what a pernicious role it played, but you ignored all that. Where do you get the line from? Who do you think Lovell's writing for? Himself?

His articles are written in collaboration with the comrades in the center. And on an important question like this they represent the party line. And you ignored them, and you came out with a leaflet about agreeing with Bluestone and Co.

We were so much concerned about this question of the strike and of getting at least a meeting of the minds and laying out a perspective for the strike that we urged Comrade Tom C. to come to Oberlin. And why? Because we would all be there at the same time. And Frank L. wrote to him -- not only wrote to him, he called him from Atlanta, Georgia, didn't he? And he urged you to come to Oberlin. I wanted to talk to you. I wanted to talk to Tom C. Dobbs wanted to talk to you. We wanted to get together because we knew this thing was busting out.

You (Nelson B.) spoke to Tom C. also to urge him to come. We even offered that if it was a question of finances, the party would advance the money to come out there. But he either wouldn't or couldn't come, I don't know. You can't compel someone to do it.

Now you say you made this material available to the national office. But this wasn't made available in the form of a query or asking for our consultation. You sent us a copy, that's what you did; you sent us a copy of a letter that you said you had already sent to Detroit and to Los Angeles. We didn't make a big to-do about it, because we knew Pete Kelly wasn't going to do a thing about it (he couldn't if he wanted to) and Lou Ciccone would do less. Because I know both of them; I know Pete Kelly and I know Ciccone and I know they wouldn't go for this sort of boycott gimmick.

You see, I'm not accusing you of malice, Tom C. I think it was a question of not knowing proper procedure, that's all. And maybe we'll learn a lesson from this: how to proceed.

A comrade involved in a strike which is of national character cannot, must not, take it upon himself to advance a policy, a national policy, without consultation with the center. We've got other comrades in the UAW besides you and Bill K. and the other comrade involved, who don't agree with this line. But they didn't even have a chance to discuss it. That is not the way to operate. I know it's not done maliciously, but you've got to learn something. We've all got to learn something.

I don't think the Executive Committee was correct in everything they did. They probably should have intervened earlier, probably should have asked me to fly out. I've done that before.

I spoke to you a year ago, didn't I, Tom C.? At the time of the oil workers' strike, we discussed the whole Fremont situation then about joining a caucus headed by a Black worker. And I said yes, I was all for it on the basis of fighting for the right of minority representation. I said, "That's enough for me. If it's headed by Blacks, has the support of Blacks and the Chicanos in the plant, and the fight is for representation of this minority, that's plenty for me. I'm for it." Didn't I? Yes!

We've never refused collaboration to any comrade. We know how tough it is to get caught up in a situation; things begin to happen pretty quick. But the basic mistake was to feel that this was a right now, do-or-die matter, that you didn't even have time to consult or to consider the question; and so you went ahead and made a lot of mistakes.

And, in my opinion, you discredited this caucus, such as it is. I don't know what it is, frankly. I've never been able to find out, except that a petition with a hundred names was signed after the strike broke. You've got a hundred names. Now what does that mean? What does that mean in a situation like this? All I know is that in one leaflet the caucus called for an action, an action. They said that on Saturday at 10:00 A.M., there will be a boycott demonstration at the Corey Chevrolet in San Jose or somewhere; bring your friends and fellow workers.

Now that's a test of how much support, how much influence this caucus had. How many turned up for that demonstration the next day? The comrades who knew about it tell me that six turned up -- four of whom were students or hippie types, two auto workers. Is that a manifestation of a caucus that is viable? And if you give it up, you're giving up the fight? You're cutting your heart out? Betraying the workers and so forth and so on?

No, I can't be conned on this question, comrades. I've had too much experience. I've been in this business too long. I know a viable caucus when I see one, not only by what it says, but by what it does, by the response it gets to a call for action.

Now, I told Tom C. I wanted to talk to him again after this meeting. I didn't want to talk to him again before the meeting. I want to talk to him after this meeting. And I hope I can. I hope I can see him tomorrow or before I leave, and we'll have another talk, try and arrive

at some kind of modus vivendi, see whether or not there's any basis for collaboration and work out some practical measures if we can to facilitate our intervention.

Now, Comrade Peter G. asked whether I could lay down some specific and strategic and tactical formula for intervention in this strike. I thought I did that. I said as of now I think that the most effective intervention must be on an analytical and educational level and be through The Militant.

I don't mean by that that the comrades rush out there, start selling The Militant. You can't do it even if you wanted to. There's just a token picket line out there to begin with, and because of the incidents that occurred the night of the strike, Tom G himself tells me the workers are armed with clubs to beat any student or anybody who's not a member that tries to get in there.

But we are fortunate enough to have two or three people in the situation, don't we? If you can't sell The Militant, give it away. Is the branch unable to subsidize distribution of Militants -- 50, 75, 100 or 500? The national office will do it for you. Give it away, if you can't sell it. Bill K. tells me he takes a bundle of 15 each week -- very good! And distributes them around. I think they'll get more out of that, those 15 workers, more of an understanding of the strike, an understanding of our politics and an understanding of what the basic issues are than out of 1,000 of these so-called "caucus" leaflets. I believe that.

And I think if Tom would do that too -- he's known out there as a union militant -- the very fact that he would sell them or give them a copy of the paper, turn it to the page dealing with the UAW strike. We're covering the strike in every issue of the paper. Before I left New York I spoke to Frank L. about zeroing in on the question of the one-at-a-time strategy. I said that this is the central tactical issue; I think we should do more on it. Do it in a more pedagogical way; show how this thing has worked out in the past.

Do an article on the Ford strike and how that was sold down the river through this one-at-a-time strategy. Go back in history and relate and reveal some of the incidents in the development of the UAW, you see. This is not new. It is new to many of the workers in the factory, to most of the workers in the factory. It's not new to us. If you go back to the May, 1946 issue of the magazine in an article by E. R. Frank, he also dealt with this question.

The UAW strike then, the role that Reuther played, and the whole business of

the one-at-a-time strategy. It would be very instructive to do it, because it's sort of analogous to the present struggle. Then, also, there was the question of a national offensive against labor. It was a question of mobilizing the labor movement on a national scale in order to counter this offensive, and the one-at-a-time strategy cut right across it. The demand then was for 30 cents an hour. All the unions had joined in this demand. And because of the one-at-a-time strategy, the UAW settled for 19½ cents; some of them took 18 cents, some of them 18½ cents, and some of them took 17½ cents. About half of what their demands were, because they used one-at-a-time in a struggle that required the collaboration of the entire labor movement.

How would withdrawal from the "caucus" help? It would get rid of what I consider is an impediment to doing this kind of educational activity at this stage in the strike. It's going to be a long strike, comrades! Unless they are prepared to shave their demands and especially on the cost of living clause. This strike is going to go on for some time. And if it goes on for a long time, the mood of the workers is going to change.

You know, when they first come out on strike it's a big celebration, like New Year's Eve, you know, a release from the tension of uncertainty about whether it's going to be strike or not strike. Then you march out of that plant! Assert yourself, confront the corporations, by God, and make them bow down to the demands of the union, sure. It's festive. It's a celebration.

But that mood is going to change, you see. When they're out on strike a month, two months, three months, it becomes tougher and tougher all the time. And they begin to ask why the strike is going on so long when the UAW and the labor movement have so much potential power.

They're going to be receptive to the idea of using this power, by God. Use this power that we've got; to hell with this one-at-a-time strategy! Get the Ford workers and the Chrysler and American Motors workers out with us. Create a social crisis; challenge the government to intervene. Because that's the real opponent of the workers -- the executive committee of the bosses, the administration in Washington.

The real confrontation on this issue is with the government; it's all concealed though. They can't see it. They think they're in a fight with just GM. Poppycock! They're in a fight with the employing class of this country and their executive committee in Washington.

We want to strip the blinders from their eyes, so they can see who the real enemy is, and that's the only way you're going to do it. If you tie up this whole industry, create an economic crisis which engenders a social crisis.

If Washington intervenes the rest of the labor movement has to jump in. They cannot tolerate any kind of frontal attack on the UAW which would immediately mean an attack on the entire labor movement. That's the strategy; that's the tactic.

How successful will it be? I don't know. When is the mood going to change? I don't know. I wish I did. I'm not a mind reader; I don't have a crystal ball. I do know the dynamics of the class struggle. I do know what long strikes do to the consciousness of workers and the pressures they go through.

When the bills become due and they can't pay them and the mortgages and so forth and so on. I don't have to describe it to Bill K. or to Tom C. or to other comrades who have gone through it. They know.

The mood changes, and some of them begin to get mad. And it's not just the ho, ho, ho stuff anymore -- going out and getting loaded up on beer and dumping a garbage truck. No, that's play stuff. They're in for the fight of their lives. That's what we've got to make them understand, and that's what the paper is going to do and has been doing.

We didn't start with a big bang. We started patiently, explaining, analyzing. The tempo will pick up. The mood will change; manifestations of resistance will become manifest not only in Fremont but throughout the entire GM complex. The paper will be in tune with that development.

Now this about the baby, destroying the baby, if you'll pardon me an analogy. You know it's just as fatal for a politician as it is for an obstetrician to mistake the first month of pregnancy for the ninth. You didn't have a baby here, Tom C. You have the idea, the germ, but not a good germ. And the best thing to do before you get into any more trouble is to get rid of it.

* * *

I'm sorry, Mike T., but I lost the thread of your remarks. You said the basis of the struggle is not the cost-of-living, but I didn't get what your alternative was. I'm sorry. It was something else.

Jeff M. (from the floor): He said speed-up and conditions, as I understand it, is

going to be a factor, would be a target that we could rally people to at the plant, as I understand it.

Kerry: Well, speedup and conditions, that's always true, whether the strike's on or off. They've got 37,000 grievances in GM alone, and so now when the negotiations broke down, they say they are going to settle these grievances. They're not going to settle anything important, because on this issue, on this issue the only solution is workers' control. Are they prepared for that? Union control of the line speedup, for example, they've raised the issue before. It may come up again, but not now!

We are not confronted now with the kind of consciousness among these workers that's prepared to fight for workers' control of production. I wish we were. The slogan is perfectly correct and it's a transition slogan and can be raised in a propaganda way, but should not be advanced as an action slogan now.

I know working conditions are bad and getting worse. And that's true generally, not only in GM. It's probably worse in GM, but it's true in Ford and it's true in all these production plants. It's going to get worse, you see. The intensification of labor is going to get worse, because they've got to drive down the cost of labor.

They're facing increasing competition from abroad, and the only way they can meet it is to take it out of the hides of the workers through driving down their standard of living and intensification of labor on the job. That's the only way it can be done.

But the question of the sliding scale of wages now is a major union demand, don't you see. It is a transition demand and it happens to be the demand which at the present time meets their needs. They had it before. They lost it. They want to get it back. Now in this period of inflation if unemployment continues to rise, I think we will have to begin to present our full slogan which is the sliding scale of wages and hours because you have both inflation and unemployment.

While the sliding scale of wages takes care of those workers who are employed, what about those who are getting kicked out of their jobs, who can't find jobs? What about the youth who, in ever growing numbers, can't get jobs? So the sliding scale of wages and hours, that's our transition slogan. It's the transition slogan -- or, as it's interpreted -- 30 for 40 and the escalator clause. This is the slogan now, calculated to develop the greatest amount of support in the organized labor movement and among the unorganized working class, because all of

them, all of them, face the pressure of inflation on their standard of living.

Comrade Alan W. says he wanted to speak to me; he told the comrades. I'd be glad to speak to Comrade Alan W. The comrade never told me.

Nelson B. (from the floor): He never told me either.

Kerry: Well, I don't know. I spoke to Comrade Ralph L., I spoke to Tom C., I spoke to Bill K., Comrade Paul M. I can't remember how many comrades I spoke to. Comrade Alan W., I'll be here tomorrow; I'll be glad to speak to you tomorrow. I'll be glad to speak to you but not about the union.

I want to speak about the union to the comrades who are directly involved. When I spoke to Ralph L. I spoke very little about the union. I asked him a couple of questions. He said, well, he wasn't too sure about how big the caucus was, so forth and so on. I didn't press it; I wasn't interested in speaking about the union to Ralph L. I wanted to speak about the union to Tom C. and Bill K. because they were directly involved.

Now let me conclude on Comrade Ralph L.'s remarks which I think provide the occasion for elaborating the questions which we discussed. First, I don't agree with you, Ralph L., that such reports as I made here tonight serve to "divide" the branch. That's not been my experience.

My experience has been that issues which are concrete, that can be openly presented, discussed and a vote taken, are the most productive. They are the most productive kind of discussions. You see, I can be very firm in my presentation because I believe very deeply what I think and feel. It's my style. I can't adopt any other.

But I think what you did was wrong, Ralph L. I didn't characterize anything that Tom C. said as "ludicrous". No, I say that's the sort of thing that irritates, that's personal -- personal and insulting. And such personalizing of differences does not contribute to an objective discussion among comrades.

We have differences; we're going to have more differences, I am convinced. And, as I told you, I am convinced that when the discussion opens up, the pre-convention discussion, we're going to have a discussion on all of these questions.

And comrades with differences will be given the opportunity to present their point of view to the entire party. I think that when that happens, it is going to clarify the atmosphere, because once political lines are presented, there's a

proper basis for taking sides.

Otherwise, groupings that are not based upon clearly demarcated political line become personal groupings. The tendency is to degenerate into cliques. And what is the basis then for discussion? It can only be on organizational questions, organizational matters and suspicions that people are trying to take organizational advantage one way or another. You then have a situation where apparently everybody agrees politically, but all kinds of fights break out about how to do what. That's a dangerous sign; I've seen it too many times in the party.

And so I said to you that what we are interested in doing is ameliorating friction, trying to soften whatever hard lines exist, to eliminate any organizational grievances in order to prepare the way for a more fruitful exchange when the political discussion opens. Otherwise people can get so hardened and fixed, you see, so solidified on a personal basis around personal groupings that when the political discussion opens up they don't listen to each other.

You then can't have an objective discussion. Groupings then don't take place on the only proper place that they should take place on in our party: along political lines. But when political divisions are manifested openly and clearly in open discussion, you can have close personal relations with a political opponent even though you have differences, because you know there's no organizational maneuvering going on; nobody's trying to take advantage of you.

You know a political minority has certain rights, and those rights will be safeguarded by the party. A minority is entitled to certain representation, but on the basis of political line and not by organizational maneuvering.

Now you say this is not a problem branch. I don't know how you mean that. It's a problem branch because there are groupings in the branch and there is no political differentiation upon which comrades can have a discussion and take a vote. This is the first time in a long time that you've had this kind of discussion on an issue where the comrades could exercise their judgment on the basis of the facts as they see them and not on the basis of loyalty to individual groupings.

I feel that we have a common basis for coexistence in the party, that we are all committed to the task of building this party. We consider this as our party, regardless of what differences we have, and that comrades who are loyal to this party have to be given every opportunity to participate in the activity and leadership of the party.

Nobody should be victimized or can be victimized -- you've got to be very careful about that -- because they have a minority point of view. That's wrong. That would poison the atmosphere in the party. No, if a comrade wants to work, we don't have so many that we shouldn't provide every opportunity for them to show their ability and their talent to help build the party, because that's our mutual objective.

If we debate differences, it's only because we want to strengthen the party. If comrades think we ought to adopt a different line or policy, it's because they want to strengthen the party, and I respect their opinions and I respect their views. I may not agree with them, and I'll argue against them, and you may rest assured it'll be very vehemently and very vigorously, but I won't insult them, not personally, no.

I have very good relations with Tom C. We can get together and have our discussion without insulting each other. And other comrades. With you, Ralph L. We don't have any problem. I don't know what your differences are, but whatever they are, when the convention discussion opens, I told you when I spoke to you, I trust you'll put them down on paper, circulate them to the whole party, and let's have a good discussion.

But don't ever say anything that I write or say is ludicrous, because I'll resent it. And you can make an enemy out of me, and we've been friends for a long time.

There's no demoralization, you say. No, I didn't say there was demoralization. We want to prevent as much as we can any sign of demoralization. We want to act prior to the onset of demoralization because when it gets to that stage, it's pretty far gone. I'm not blaming anybody; I'm not trying to make a judgment on what has gone on in the past. I've heard stories, not only in this branch, grievances and horror stories, and I say, comrades, I cannot make a decision on that basis.

I learned long ago to take positions on the basis of politics. That doesn't mean you don't have close friends and associates. Some people are compatible, some are incompatible. But you always seek to establish the kind of an atmosphere in which we can coexist and build the party together, which means if there are differences, at the proper time those differences are presented, they're discussed and a decision is made.

Comrades who have political differences, if they have large enough support, get representation. There's no reason for personal quarrels. That's all.

So we sent some comrades from here to other branches. We thought maybe that would help the situation, and we transferred a couple of more people in and I hope we helped the situation. We're certainly not trying to make it any worse.

I would shudder to think that my remarks here made the situation worse. I don't think so, Ralph L. I don't think so. Because I've steered clear of any

personal insults, stuff like that.

I've expressed my view, and I've expressed it as vigorously as I can. And I hope that we've learned something. I think that mistakes have been made on both sides. And I hope that in a more comradely atmosphere, we can review some of those mistakes and avoid making the same mistakes in the future.