

POLITICAL COMMITTEE DRAFT RESOLUTION ON THE EMERGING

PUERTO RICAN STRUGGLE IN THE U.S. AND ITS PERSPECTIVES

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I. PUERTO RICO'S COLONIAL RELATIONSHIP TO THE U.S.

Since 1898 Puerto Rico has been a direct colony of the United States. Along with Cuba, the Philippines, and several other island territories, it was seized from the decayed Spanish empire at a time when the U.S. was emerging as a world imperialist power.

Puerto Rico's relationship to the U.S., however, developed along somewhat different lines than that of the other booty of American imperialist conquest. Cuba was granted formal independence in 1900 and was a U.S. protectorate until 1960 when the workers and peasants led by Fidel Castro established a workers state. The Philippines became legally independent in 1946, and since then have been tied to the U.S. in a semi-colonial status.

Puerto Rico, however, after nearly 80 years remains subjugated to the U.S. in a direct colonial relationship. There have been several important changes in the legal relations between the U.S. and its island colony, but none have fundamentally changed its colonial status.

In 1900, authority was transferred from the U.S. military to U.S. civilian governors appointed by the president, and a Puerto Rican legislature with limited powers was established; in 1917 Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship (in large measure to provide cannon fodder for the U.S. army); in 1948 they were permitted to elect their own governor; and in 1952 the present Commonwealth status was established.

As a result of considerable nationalist agitation in the 1930s and 1940s and the tide of colonial revolt after World War II, the Commonwealth status imposed by the U.S. was designed to give the appearance of greater autonomy for Puerto Rico. In reality it attempts to camouflage the true relationship between the island and the U.S. and improve Washington's image internationally by hypocritically declaring that Puerto Rico is "self-governing" and "voluntarily" associated with the U.S.

In response to growing pro-independence sentiment and international pressure, the U.S. Congress is now discussing a new form for its continued domination of the island-colony. The "Compact of Permanent Union Between Puerto Rico and the United States," as it is called, attempts to cover up the colonial relationship in a new way.

The Compact would not make the present Puerto Rican legislature sovereign and permit it to legislate over such vital matters as foreign relations, immigration, customs, tariffs, monetary policy, postal service, or licensing of television and radio stations. These matters would remain the exclusive right of the U.S. Congress.

Under a Compact government, as under the present "Commonwealth" set-up, Puerto Rico would remain under the thumb of most federal regulatory agencies. U.S. courts and federal courts would retain their authority in Puerto Rico, and the highest arbiter of the meaning and constitutionality of laws would remain the U.S. Supreme Court.

Independence Struggle

At various times during the past seven decades there has been considerable support on the island for independence. In the 1930s and 1940s there was a mass independence movement in which the Nationalist Party led by Pedro Albizu Campos was the most prominent organization. One indication of the depth of pro-independence sentiment at that time was that the bourgeois liberal Popular Democratic Party, formed in 1938 and a majority in the Puerto Rican legislature in 1940, even felt pressure to include a plank supporting independence. It later abandoned this position which led to a split and the formation of the Puerto Rican Independence Party in 1948. In 1952 the PIP received the second highest number of votes in the elections.

There was a temporary ebb in pro-independence activity in the 1950s due to the improved economic situation on the island and the McCarthyite witch-hunt, which was carried out even more savagely in the colony than the motherland.

The colonial revolution, particularly the Cuban revolution, played a significant role in inspiring and ideologically influencing the reemergence of the independence movement in the 1960s. The formation in 1959 of the Puerto Rican Independence Movement (MPI), which became the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in 1971, and its subsequent growth reflects this new sentiment.

Testifying to the depth of this movement is the size of several pro-independence demonstrations in the past decade, including actions of 20,000 in Lares in 1968 and 80,000 in San Juan in 1971. The latter was the largest pro-independence action ever held in Puerto Rico. Major struggles with a nationalist and pro-independence thrust included those against conscription into the U.S. army to fight in Vietnam; against the Navy's target practice on the island of Culebra; and against the construction by U.S. oil monopolies of an environment-devastating superport for mammoth oil tankers. The struggle against the draft was so successful that it became virtually impossible to arrest thousands of Puerto Rican youth who resisted conscription. In 1975 the U.S. Navy was finally forced to stop its target practice on Culebra.

The struggle for Puerto Rican independence has received considerable international attention. This has focused around the drive by the Cuban government, the Puerto Rican Independence Party, and the Puerto Rican Socialist Party to get the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a resolution clearly declaring the "inalienable right of the Puerto Rican people to self-determination and independence." This resolution was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the General Assembly in 1973 over the strenuous objection of the U.S. government which denies that Puerto Rico is a colony which and pressured the United Nations in 1953 to cease characterizing it as a "non-self governing territory."

Under both Democratic and Republican administrations, the U.S. government has ruthlessly attempted to suppress the decades-long fight for independence. Thousands have been jailed and scores shot down as the American capitalists

stubbornly resist any move that would restrict their freedom to exploit the island's natural resources and labor.

At the present time most of the U.S. ruling class as well as its agents in Puerto Rico favor the Commonwealth status or some modification of it like the Permanent Union Compact.

The only major alternative supported by sections of the ruling class is statehood. This is the position of the New Progressive Party in Puerto Rico, which has ties with the Republican Party in the U.S.

At its founding conference in 1938, the Fourth International declared that it stands for "the immediate and unconditional independence of Puerto Rico." This remains the position of Trotskyists today.

The resurgence of the independence movement in the 1960s and its continued growth in the 1970s indicates that it was not an ephemeral phenomenon peculiar to the 1930s. Rather this testifies to its deep historical, economic, and social roots and its permanent character as a significant and powerful force in Puerto Rican politics.

Revolutionary Marxists in the United States have the elementary obligation to oppose all aspects of colonial domination over Puerto Rico and to demand that Washington recognize Puerto Rico's right to self-determination. We unconditionally support the demand for a free and independent Puerto Rico. While we believe that full national and social liberation can only be achieved through a socialist Puerto Rico, we do not make this a condition for supporting the struggle for Puerto Rican independence.

American working people have no interests whatsoever in preserving imperialist enslavement over Puerto Rico. On the contrary, breaking the chains that bind Puerto Rico would be a serious blow to the American capitalist class and a victory for U.S. labor.

The labor movement, under its present pro-capitalist leadership, has seriously defaulted by supporting the gov-

ernment's colonial policy rather than placing its considerable weight behind the struggle for Puerto Rican independence.

A labor movement led by a class-struggle leadership would be a powerful force in helping to put an end to the decades of colonial rule Puerto Rico has endured.

III] PUERTO RICANS IN THE UNITED STATES

Migration and Distribution

The massive migration of Puerto Ricans to the United States is rooted in the oppressive economic and social conditions imposed by Yankee imperialism. Puerto Ricans were dispossessed of their land by U.S. monopolies and transformed into a wage labor force suffering high unemployment and low wages. These conditions have driven hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans to leave their homeland and come to U.S. cities looking for jobs and better economic opportunities.

The rhythm of this migration is determined in large part by the economic situation in the U.S. The greatest number came during periods when unemployment in the U.S. was relatively low and job opportunities were greater.

Some Puerto Ricans migrated in the early decades of this century. The largest proportion went to New York City, but others were also recruited to work on sugar plantations in Hawaii and cotton fields in Arizona. Migration on a really large scale, however, did not begin until the final years of World War II. In the last years of the war, the War Manpower Commission recruited thousands of Puerto Rican workers and brought them to the U.S. in army transports. When the war ended daily air service and lower fares were established between San Juan and New York City to facilitate bringing more low-paid labor to the U.S.

The largest number came during the economic boom in the 1950s when there was an annual average net increase of 41,000. The rate slowed down in the 1960s and with the economic squeeze of the 1970s the number of Puerto Ricans coming to the U.S. has even been slightly smaller than the number returning to Puerto Rico.

Today, nearly two million Puerto Ricans live in the U.S. compared to less than 60,000 in 1935. Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. represent more than one-third of all the Puerto Rican people and are the third largest oppressed national grouping in the U.S. after Blacks and Chicanos.

Twenty-five years ago the largest concentration of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. was "El Barrio," or Spanish Harlem, and only 20 percent lived outside of New York City. Today an archipelago of barrios has been created by the settlement of Puerto Ricans in other parts of New York City and in more cities throughout the country. Nearly 40 percent of the Puerto Ricans in the U.S. now live outside of New York State. Ten percent live in Newark, Jersey City, Hoboken, Camden, and other New Jersey cities. Twenty percent live in six states -- Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Illinois, California, and Florida. Fewer than 10 percent live in the other forty-two states and the District of Columbia.

Although Puerto Ricans are only about 1 percent of the U.S. population their concentration in a few large cities gives them greater potential political and social weight than their numbers alone would indicate. Eighty percent live in major cities and they are significant minorities in Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, and Newark. In New York, the country's largest city, Puerto Ricans are about 11 percent of the population, giving them a major role in coming social struggles.

The overwhelming majority of Puerto Ricans in the United States are part of the working class. Severe discrimination in employment opportunities restricts most of them to the lowest paying and most menial jobs. By far the greatest number are employed in semi-skilled jobs and as service workers and laborers. There is a sizeable number of Puerto Rican steel workers in cities like Buffalo and some auto workers in plants in the Midwest. Thousands, especially women, work in the garment industry in New York City. During the past decade a growing number of Puerto Rican women have also been employed as clerical workers.

The number of Puerto Rican state, county and municipal employees grew with the increase in public employment in the 1950s and 1960s.

Although the number of Puerto Ricans in white-collar and professional positions is increasing, this is still a small percentage of the Puerto Rican work force.

There is a thin stratum of small businesses owned by Puerto Ricans, especially barrio grocery stores (about 10,000 in New York City). There is no Puerto Rican bourgeoisie in the U.S.

National Oppression

Puerto Ricans migrating to the U.S. are part of a people who have suffered several centuries of national oppression under both Spanish and American rule. They come looking for better opportunities than are available to them in their superexploited country. Because wage levels are higher in the U.S. many have found better paying jobs than they had in Puerto Rico. However, there is no escape in the U.S. from national oppression and inequality. In some respects it is more intense due to the depths of racism and language discrimination.

Racial and language characteristics are utilized by the capitalist ruling class to brand Puerto Ricans and restrict them to second-class status. They are discriminated against in all aspects of economic, political, and social life and segregated into hellish barrios. Thousands of youth early despair of bettering their miserable situation and try to escape by using drugs.

The 1974-75 depression, which forced millions into the ranks of the unemployed, has heaped especially heavy burdens onto Puerto Ricans. And an even deeper crisis in Puerto Rico closes the door to finding any relief by returning to the country.

Discrimination in employment means that the official jobless rate among Puerto Ricans, according to government figures, is twice that for the population as a whole. In reality it is higher because thousands of youth who have never had jobs and many others who have given up looking for work do not appear in the official statistics, just as thousands are hidden in faked government census reports.

Like other oppressed national groupings, Puerto Ricans are part of American capitalism's industrial reserve army. When there is a labor shortage employers hire from this pool of cheap labor. When production is cutback and layoffs occur these workers are an easily identified layer that are among those fired first, with the acceptance of many white workers. Many Puerto Ricans who received jobs in the past few years as a result of "affirmative action" plans are among the first to lose them with the cutbacks and layoffs. The existence of this reserve labor force helps the ruling class restrain wage increases and deepen divisions in the working class.

One result of the high unemployment rate is that many Puerto Rican families are forced onto welfare rolls. In 1970, even before the recent economic downturn, 24 percent of the Puerto Rican families were receiving some form of public assistance.

In 1974 the median income for Puerto Ricans was an estimated 59 percent of that for white families, compared to 65 percent in 1959. The long-run trend is for the gap to widen.

Even when a job does not require complete proficiency in English, a Puerto Rican applicant with a heavy accent will often be turned away. And civil service examinations are not given in Spanish, making it difficult for many Puerto Ricans to get government jobs.

The worst slum areas left by previous waves of immigrants have become the lodging place for Puerto Ricans. Some areas like the South Bronx, the Lower East Side of Manhattan, and parts of Brooklyn resemble bombed-out zones more than residential areas.

Apartment buildings have been put to the torch, in some cases, by greedy landlords anxious to collect insurance and to divest themselves of the responsibility for maintaining them as dwellings fit for human habitation. Construction of new government subsidized housing has not even kept up with the rate at which housing becomes unfit.

Cultural opportunities, recreational facilities for the young, and day care for infants are doled out with an eyedropper. Sanitation services are minimal and garbage and glass on the streets are an additional depressant to ghetto residents.

When Puerto Ricans have sought escape by buying homes in better neighborhoods they have often been subjected to arson and bombing by racist vigilantes as tragically shown in recent cases in Philadelphia and Boston.

The housing patterns have also segregated Puerto Ricans into schools that receive less funding and are inferior to schools attended by most white students. This inequality in education is made worse by language discrimination. Tens of thousands of Puerto Rican children begin school with little or no knowledge of English. Many of them have transferred directly from schools in Puerto Rico. Very few teachers know Spanish, so that all instruction in arithmetic, geography, science, etc., is conducted in English. The Spanish-speaking students, struggling to learn English, fall behind. Monolingual racist teachers call them "retarded." Many students give up and the "push-out" rate is high. As of 1972 it was 57 percent for Puerto Ricans in New York City from tenth grade to graduation, compared to 29 percent for white students. The problem is aggravated because there is only a handful of Puerto Rican teachers. Most teachers are racist in their attitude toward Puerto Rican students and insensitive to their history, culture, and problems.

Although the courts have ruled that bilingual education is necessary to provide equal education opportunities and some bilingual programs have been established, they are totally inadequate. And even these meager programs are now among the first targets of the ruling class offensive to drive down living standards and cut back social services.

Language discrimination not only makes it difficult to get jobs or a decent education, it pervades every aspect of social and political life. When a Spanish-speaking Puerto

Rican goes to a welfare or unemployment office, hospital, library, or any other public facility, the chances are slim that there will be competent Spanish-speaking employees on hand to help. Until recently participation in political life has been restricted by English-only ballots and voting instructions and, despite federal court rulings, racist gerrymandering continues to exist in fact.

Puerto Ricans are subjected to particularly barbaric treatment by the cops, courts, and prisons. While organized crime and the drug traffic operate under their benevolent eye, the police harass and murder Puerto Ricans. Even the mildest expression of Puerto Rican unity and cultural identity arouses the cops to frenzy as shown in attacks on annual Puerto Rican Day parades and festivals in Newark, Boston, and other cities in the past few years.

Racist judges and a scandalously inadequate number of Spanish-speaking interpreters weigh the scales against Puerto Ricans in the courts. The proportion of Puerto Ricans in jail is far greater than their proportion of the population as a whole. High bail has forced thousands of Puerto Rican youth, convicted of no crimes, to serve long terms in crowded detention centers while they wait for trial. Insufficient Spanish-speaking personnel and lack of Spanish-language books in the prisons further aggravate the generally inhumane and racist treatment that are part of prison life.

Recently released documents on the government's COINTELPRO program confirm what has long been general knowledge in the barrios -- that Puerto Rican radical organizations are the target of harassment and deadly provocation by local red squads and the FBI.

Racism

From its inception, U.S. imperialism has utilized racism to help justify the savage repression and superexploitation of the peoples in its colonies and semi-colonies. Whether the inhabitants are black, brown, or yellow, they are considered inferior and are treated accordingly.

Puerto Ricans are no exception. Although there is considerable diversity in color among Puerto Ricans, reflecting their Spanish, Indian, and African origins, all Puerto Ricans are considered racially inferior according to imperialist ideology and therefore targets for racist indignity and injustice.

Race prejudice was exported to Puerto Rico, but is not as intense or institutionalized as in the U.S. Many Puerto Ricans who in their country thought of themselves as white, because of their appearance, find that in the U.S. they are all "colored." In the U.S. the racist mentality categorizes any one vaguely associated with African, Asian, or Latin American descent as part of the colored world. In the U.S. Puerto Ricans are surrounded by a hostile society whose racism is woven into every aspect of life. They are confronted by the fierce hatred spawned by centuries of racial prejudice and are all "spicks" in the eyes of the ruling class.

One of the consequences of this racial oppression is that dark-skinned Puerto Ricans are particularly subjected to abuse and discrimination. It is even more difficult for them to find jobs and decent housing. Since the days of slavery, racist ideology in the U.S. has considered Black to be "bad and ugly" and the blacker people are the more inferior they are.

The influence of anti-Black prejudice perpetuated by the ruling class permeates U.S. society and its institutions so extensively that it even affects its victims. As a result some lighter-skinned Puerto Ricans look down on dark-skinned Puerto Ricans -- sometimes even within the same family.

This dual nature of the oppression of Black Puerto Ricans has been the subject of a number of books, interviews, and workshops at recent Puerto Rican conferences.

Women

Puerto Rican women suffer the added burden of sexual

discrimination and abuse characteristic of capitalist society. They are especially the victims of the prejudices and traditions of machismo and the Catholic church.

Discrimination makes it more difficult for them to obtain decent jobs than either Puerto Rican men or white women, and their incomes are lower. This pressure is intensified by the fact that one out of every five Puerto Rican women in the U.S. head households and are the principal breadwinners for their families.

The problems of working and maintaining families is compounded by the obstacles placed in the way of economic independence. Child care facilities, already too expensive and inadequate, are being cut back. Despite the 1973 Supreme Court ruling on abortion, there are still numerous obstacles, especially the expense, to obtaining them.

The right of Puerto Rican women to choose whether or not to have children is also abrogated by the large number of forced sterilizations. In 1972-1973 there was a 180 percent rise in the number of sterilizations performed in New York City hospitals that service predominantly Puerto Rican neighborhoods. Racist hospital administrators and doctors, who want to help limit the growth of the Puerto Rican population, use subterfuge and blackmail to force sterilization on Puerto Rican women. Many hospitals also force hysterectomies on women who don't need them in order to provide practice for interns.

Oppressed as part of the working class, as a national minority, and as women, Puerto Rican women today have a special stake in fighting for the Equal Rights Amendment. The ERA, if ratified, would be a weapon in the hands of women in much the same way as the 1974 Supreme Court decision declaring bilingual education the right of Spanish-speaking students is a weapon in the hands of the Puerto Rican community.

Women are the principal organizers and activists of many struggles demanding child care, housing, and education in the Puerto Rican community, and there is a growing acceptance of feminist ideas among them.

The Puerto Rican Movement

A radicalization of the Puerto Rican population in the U.S. began in the late 1960s and continues today. It developed in response to the miserable conditions in which Puerto Ricans are forced to live and was inspired by the explosive rise of the civil rights movement, the development of Black nationalism, the rise of the mass anti-Vietnam War movement, and the political radicalization in Puerto Rico. While its greatest impact has been on youth, it has reached all layers of the Puerto Rican population and established itself as an important reflection of the class struggle in the U.S. It has been a catalyst for a wide range of struggles and has led to the birth of new organizations which are demanding a better life immediately, not four or five generations from now.

The new pride and self-confidence of Puerto Rican nationalism has led to more radical methods of struggle and radical ideas about society. Among a small but growing number there is increasing interest in and acceptance of socialist ideas. The scope and militancy of this radicalization can best be appreciated by tracing some of the earlier history of the Puerto Rican movement in the U.S.

The principal radical organization of Puerto Ricans during the 1930s was the Nationalist Party, which was based in Puerto Rico and maintained a branch in New York City. Its main work was the organization of support for the Puerto Rican independence struggle and defense of Nationalists jailed in Puerto Rico. It, along with the CP, influenced Democratic Congressman Vito Marcantonio, whose district encompassed Spanish Harlem, and obtained his support for independence for Puerto Rico. However, the repression of the Nationalist Party in Puerto Rico by the U.S. government and the jingoism organized in preparation for World War II limited its effectiveness. The Nationalists opposed the war and refused to serve in the army of U.S. imperialism. Many of them served prison terms for draft evasion.

Another political force within the small Puerto Rican community was the Stalinized Communist Party. Due to its influence in the unions and its dominance in the American radical movement, some Puerto Rican militants were drawn into its ranks. They became disoriented and miseducated during the war. The CP shamelessly collaborated with the employers and their government to stifle militancy among workers and oppressed minorities in their drive to support the imperialist war effort.

Most of the CP's Puerto Rican cadre drifted away during the Cold War as the Stalinists were victimized by the McCarthyite witchhunt.

The twists and turns of the CP line, its failure to support the Nationalist victims of repression during World War II, and the class-collaborationist miseducation of its membership, kept the CP from becoming a major political force among the generation of Puerto Ricans who migrated to the U.S. after 1943.

Militants of the Nationalist Party launched an armed attack on Blair House, Truman's home, in 1950 and then organized a pistol shooting in the House of Representatives in 1954. The ruling class seized the opportunity to whip up a campaign of hysteria. Puerto Ricans were accused of causing the housing shortage, unemployment, coming to New York solely to collect welfare, and charged with responsibility for all the ills of society. The press also attempted to create the impression that Puerto Ricans "naturally" resort to terror and arms when they participate in politics.

This witchhunt generated a climate of fear that inhibited Puerto Ricans from exercising their rights and intimidated them from participating in radical political activity. Coupled with the economic boom, the environment was created that allowed the Commonwealth Government's office in New York to become a key organizing center for the community. In this situation even the reactionary Catholic Church appeared to be progressive when Puerto Rican workers turned to it for help in exposing some of the racketeer unions

preying on them.

However, there was no authentic, independent voice of the Puerto Rican community -- no organization that commanded the respect, loyalty, or allegiance of the majority of the Puerto Ricans in the U.S. It became fashionable for liberal sociologists and academicians to "analyze" the "passive" nature of Puerto Ricans. But what really was at work was the difficult adjustment Puerto Ricans had to make to a new and hostile environment. And it was an adjustment that had to be made without leadership or powerful allies.

The new Puerto Rican movement burst onto the political scene in 1966 with a revolt against police brutality in Chicago's Northwest Side. Since then Puerto Ricans have been involved in strikes, campus struggles, the antiwar movement, prison revolts, demonstrations against cutbacks in social services. They have fought against inequality in education, racial and sexual discrimination in employment policies, and for better treatment for veterans.

Most of these actions have been led by local organizations and coalitions, like the Young Lords and the Por Los Niños coalition in Manhattan's Lower East Side, which emerged from the struggles themselves.

Some organizations like the Puerto Rican Legal and Education Defense Fund have initiated significant legal suits for equal rights against the government and employers. But they have restricted their activities to that arena.

Defense committees have been established to defend victims of political persecution. Most notable were the cases of Carlos Feliciano, a framed-up Nationalist Party militant, who was finally released in 1975; and the five Puerto Rican Nationalists railroaded in 1950 and 1954, Lolita Lebrón, Oscar Collazo, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Irving Flores, and Andrés Figueroa Cordero, who have been in jail longer than any other political prisoners in the Americas.

As in the Black community, government-financed anti-poverty agencies, most of them with ties to the Democratic Party, have assumed the leadership of many actions in order to tame them and channel them into the framework of capitalist politics. As a result a number of militant community leaders have been bought off or coopted.

Fight for Equal Education

The fact that Puerto Ricans speak Spanish is used by the ruling class and its apologists to rationalize their discriminatory policies. They push the racist concept that Spanish-speaking residents do not deserve the same pay, working conditions, housing, or standard of living as English-speaking workers.

The response of Puerto Ricans and other Spanish-speaking minorities, especially Chicanos, has been to fight for the constitutional right of their children to an equal education. The 1974 U.S. Supreme Court decision, Lau V. Nichols, ruled that a public school that fails to educate non-English speaking children in a language they can understand is in violation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

The long struggle for bilingual and bicultural education led to this landmark decision, but like the 1954 Supreme Court ruling on school desegregation, it will not be implemented without a fight. The first major test of the Lau decision came in New York City where the Board of Education was sued by Aspira, a federally funded organization set up to help Puerto Ricans gain a college education. A federal court decree agreed to by both sides ruled that special classes for all children who cannot function in English had to be instituted by September, 1975.

This decision raised the hope that major progress would be made in bilingual-bicultural education. However, many school administrators, with the aid of racist teachers, are sabotaging attempts to set up classrooms for Spanish-speaking students. The decree says that when children are

able to function in English they are to be moved back into monolingual English classrooms. This ability to "function" in English is determined by inaccurate, teacher-controlled tests and may only mean the child knows enough to hear commands to sit down or keep quiet from a monolingual English-speaking teacher. This undermines bilingual-bicultural education, and leads to cutbacks in the hiring of bilingual teachers.

The fight for bilingual-bicultural education in some cities has been accompanied by the demand for parent control over the hiring of administrators and teachers, curricula, and allocation of funds. Puerto Rican parents insist on this to fully implement bilingual-bicultural programs and insure that teachers and administrators aren't abusing their children.

The fight for bilingual-bicultural education is complementary to the struggle for school desegregation by busing. They both are aimed at fighting inequality in education.

Another aspect of the struggle for bilingualism is the insistence that the language of Cervantes is just as good as the language of Shakespeare. Puerto Ricans desire to become part of the workforce in the United States, which means becoming proficient in the tools, customs, and language of the shop, factory, restaurant, or institution in which they work. But they have the right to maintain their knowledge of Spanish and their own cultural heritage. For many Puerto Ricans Spanish is a tie to their country of origin, and provides access to a broader world and culture which would be narrowed by the loss of their language.

District One Struggle

The struggle against racism in New York City's School District One is one of the most significant movements in which Puerto Ricans have played a leading role. It grew out of the 1967-68 city-wide struggle of Blacks and Puerto Ricans to combat inequality in education. In 1967, three districts were set up in the city as experiments in decen-

tralization. They included Ocean Hill-Brownsville in Brooklyn, a district in Harlem, and a district in the Lower East Side, part of which included what is now District One.

When the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district school board tried to hire Black teachers and institute new teaching methods more in tune with the needs of Black and Puerto Rican students, the Albert Shanker leadership of the United Federation of Teachers called a racist strike to beat back this move and discourage similar initiatives in other districts.

This reactionary action defeated the Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggle. It led to the weakening of a proposed decentralization law that would have given parents more say in the running of the schools in the communities of the oppressed minorities. Despite its many deficiencies, the law that was adopted in 1969 has been utilized by Black and Puerto Rican parents as a weapon in the struggle against racist inequality in the schools.

In the Lower East Side, parents challenged the 1968 strike by opening nearly all the schools and keeping them open with parent volunteers. This was where Puerto Rican, Black, and Chinese parents in the district first forged a united bloc.

In the first school board election in 1970, the UFT leadership successfully elected a majority of its supporters to the District One board. However, parent struggles in the next two years forced resignations and new appointments until the pro-community control forces held a majority. One of its first moves was to appoint Luis Fuentes, a veteran of the 1968 Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggles, as superintendent. It also hired more competent Spanish-speaking administrators and paraprofessionals, established more bilingual and bi-cultural programs, and moved the district office so it was more accessible to parents.

However, since then, in another election, the Shankerites reestablished a majority on the board, removed Fuentes, and reversed most of the other advances instituted by the parents.

The District One fight has highlighted the central demands Puerto Rican parents are raising to combat inequality in the schools. These include more funds to improve schools in their communities; more bilingual programs to help students learn basic subjects in their own language; and parent control over curricula, hiring and allocation of funds for the schools in the Puerto Rican communities.

Despite its ups and downs this parent-led struggle has been a model because of the way it has drawn together a broad array of forces in direct action struggle. It successfully avoided the pitfall of basing its leadership and financing on government-financed antipoverty programs and Democratic Party clubs which have derailed countless other community struggles. It has utilized direct action such as picket lines, demonstrations and rallies; court suits against illegal and undemocratic moves by the city administration, the board of education, and the UFT leadership; and election campaigns for school board.

The District One struggle has played an important role in combatting Albert Shanker's demagogy by exposing the racist policies and attitudes of the UFT officialdom. It has served as a beachhead in the struggle against Shankerism and been an example to other oppressed communities as well as to rank-and-file teachers looking for allies in the struggle against cutbacks and layoffs.

Student Movement

The radicalization among students in the 1960s and 1970s found its reflection among Puerto Rican students. This became particularly visible when Puerto Ricans and Blacks in New York's City University system waged a militant struggle for admission to the colleges. The City University system had boasted of its free tuition policy but through competitive examinations had succeeded in maintaining an almost totally white enrollment.

Black and Puerto Rican students took over the City College of New York in 1969 and held it with the support

of the community. Their demand for open admissions was finally granted despite protests from both liberal and conservative politicians that this was "racism in reverse" and would "lower educational standards."

In the South Bronx Puerto Ricans won the struggle to have a college set up in their neighborhood. Eugenio María de Hostos Community College, the only public bilingual college in the country, was established by the Board of Higher Education.

The educational system, when it deals with Puerto Rican history and culture at all, does so in a distorted and dishonest way. At many colleges throughout the Northeast, students demanded and won Puerto Rican studies programs to counter this attempted obliteration of the Puerto Rican culture and heritage.

As a result of these struggles the Puerto Rican Student Union was formed to try to unite the Puerto Rican campus organizations and forge a common city-wide federation. Lack of perspective on how to unite the different campus groups and an unsuccessful attempt to move the focus of its activity from the campus to the community caused the PRSU to atrophy and disappear.

The open admissions victory brought a dramatic rise in the number of Puerto Ricans who entered the city university system. The total number, in comparison to the Puerto Rican population, was small, but seemed to open up new hope that Puerto Ricans would now be able to enjoy a change in their status and standard of living. The hope was to be shortlived. In 1976 in the context of the general offensive against the working class in New York City and cutbacks in social services, the City University budget was cut, open admissions ended, and Puerto Rican studies programs slashed. Underlining the racist nature of the cutbacks, the New York City Board of Higher Education voted to close Hostos. This attack is aimed at the entire Puerto Rican community that utilized the facilities, night classes, and special

programs. It galvanized a militant takeover of the school by students demanding that it not be closed down.

The Young Lords

The 1966 Northwest Side rebellion in Chicago prepared the ground for the Young Lords Organization. It had been a street gang but evolved into a political organization under the influence of the rebellion.

This revolt, the first solely Puerto Rican explosion to hit the national press, marked the political awakening of a new generation that was at home in the barrios of the cities, considered them their "turf" and was willing to fight for them. They had little or no memory of Puerto Rico, although they were eager to trace their roots. It also reflected the beginning of the end of the illusion that Puerto Ricans would improve their material conditions without a struggle.

The emergence of the YLO in Chicago in 1968 inspired a similar formation in New York and several other Eastern cities in the following two years. Unlike the Chicago organization, the New York leadership was composed principally of student activists, some of whom had been radicalized on the campuses and influenced by the Students for a Democratic Society. The two groups coexisted in a common formation for about six months, but split because their different backgrounds made it difficult to establish an authoritative national apparatus. The Young Lords Party, as the New York group was named, initiated a series of actions: dumping garbage in the already filthy streets to force the sanitation department to clean them up; taking over a church to serve the community's needs; a dramatic, though shortlived takeover of Lincoln Hospital in the South Bronx in order to get better medical care and end racist practices. The Young Lords Party received wide media coverage and won sympathy from the Puerto Rican community at large for its actions despite the fact that the majority of the community did not understand its "revolutionary" rhetoric.

The impact of the Black movement on the Young Lords Party was clearly shown by the organizational emulation of the Black Panther Party, by the major role Black Puerto Ricans played in its leadership, and by the fact that some of its leaders had previously been in the Black Panthers while others left the YLP to join the Black Panthers.

Like the the Panthers, the Young Lords were victimized by police harassment and infiltration which was facilitated by their ultraradical rhetoric. As with many youth groups at that time they were attracted to Maoism and in 1972 evolved into a Maoist sect called the Puerto Rican Revolutionary Workers Organization. Most of the original leaders had left or been driven out by the time PRRWO was founded.

PRRWO's sectarianism prevented it from effectively mobilizing support for the October 27, 1974 pro-independence rally at Madison Square Garden. The chief preoccupation of the PRRWO was to expose what they termed the "revisionist" slogan of "A Bicentennial Without Colonies," around which the largest pro-independence demonstration in the U.S. was built. Its Stalinism has led to the use of physical violence against opponents within the socialist movement. Its use of violence and sectarianism has cut it off from effectively participating in student struggles against the cutbacks. The result has been to narrow its supporters to a few colleges in New York City. Its influence on the Puerto Rican community is nil.

As one of the Maoist groups in the U.S. it was involved in the unity maneuvers aimed at establishing a single Maoist multinational party in the U.S. However, since that effort has not succeeded in forming any such new Maoist formation the membership of PRRWO remains overwhelmingly Puerto Rican.

The Young Lords Organization in Chicago has been reduced to a relatively small group under the leadership of José "Cha Cha" Jimenez, one of the organization's founders. It is active in community work and orients towards Democratic Party politics. Jimenez ran a campaign oriented to the Democratic Party in the non-partisan elections for alderman

in 1975 and was a delegate to the Democratic Party's mini-convention in Kansas City.

Puerto Rican Socialist Party

The PSP is the U.S. section of the largest radical party in Puerto Rico, which until 1971 was called the Movement for Puerto Rican Independence (MPI). It has been operating in the U.S., first as the MPI then as the PSP, since 1959, but has grown and become more active since 1971. It has established chapters in cities outside of New York, including Chicago.

The PSP has been influenced politically by the colonial revolution, particularly the Cuban revolution, and the heritage of the nationalist movement in Puerto Rico. It has generally supported the positions and policies of the Cuban Communist Party for more than a decade. This is not surprising considering the historical links between the revolutionary movements of the two countries and the Castro regime's refusal to abandon its active support of Puerto Rico's independence in the face of Washington's pressure.

This relationship was evident during the international struggle against U.S. aggression in Vietnam when Cuba organized solidarity actions with the Vietnamese freedom fighters and the MPI and its youth group, the University Federation for Independence (FUPI), were leaders of the antiwar and antidraft campaign in Puerto Rico. The MPI also participated in many antiwar activities in the U.S.

The Cuban CP's adaptation to the Moscow Stalinist line has also influenced the PSP. It is particularly shown in the PSP's support to popular frontism, as in the case of its uncritical attitude to the Stalinist and Social Democratic betrayal of the Chilean workers. The PSP also hailed the capitalist MFA government in Portugal.

In spite of its close relations with the Cuban CP, the PSP has not merged nor affiliated with the pro-Moscow Stalinist parties in the U.S. or Puerto Rico. It maintains

its own independent identity and character. However, the PSP attempts to avoid taking sides on the big debates between the major tendencies in the international workers movement by invoking solidarity within the "socialist camp." This stance has led the PSP to remain silent about or condone many reactionary policies of the Stalinists, including the repression of dissidents by the bureaucratic regimes in China and the Soviet Union.

In recent years the PSP branch in the United States has established a student organization, the Puerto Rican University Student Federation (FUSP) and has become involved in a wide range of community and student struggles.

However, the basic policies and program of the PSP in the United States are determined by the party's campaigns in Puerto Rico. The political axis of its activities in the U.S. is organizing support for those campaigns.

To its credit the PSP, more than any other organization in the U.S., has waged an extensive propaganda campaign against U.S. colonial oppression of Puerto Rico. It was the prime initiator and organizer of the mass rally in Madison Square Garden in support of Puerto Rican independence.

The PSP has also initiated activity around the slogan of "A Bicentennial Without Colonies" for July 4, 1976, along with other groups present at the February 1976 "Hard Times Conference" in Chicago. The PSP and the Prairie Fire Organizing Committee were the principal forces at that conference.

A major step taken by the PSP is the announcement of a slate of candidates for the 1976 elections in Puerto Rico. This breaks with its past policy of boycotting the colonial elections. While the PSP organizes support for these candidates, it has no proposal for Puerto Ricans in the U.S. elections.

Flowing from its concentration on building support in the U.S. for the struggle in Puerto Rico is its concept of a single party for Puerto Ricans in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

In practice the PSP rejects the necessity, confirmed by historical experience, of drawing together in a centralized revolutionary socialist party the most conscious leaders of all sectors of the working class, including the Puerto Rican national minority in the U.S. The centralized power of the capitalist state, however, dictates the need for such a party.

The PSP is very heterogeneous. It contains different currents and widely varying levels of political understanding. While it has often proved difficult to work in united actions with the PSP the SWP seeks to establish a dialogue with the PSP on the best way to defend Puerto Rican rights in the U.S., advance the struggle for independence and how best to advance the socialist revolution in the U.S., and engage in united struggles where possible.

Democratic Right for Equal Representation

Although Puerto Ricans come to the U.S. as citizens with the legal right to vote, run for office, and work without special permits, the ruling class has deliberately denied them their rights and tried to exclude them from political life. Literacy tests, English-only ballots and voting instructions, and racist gerrymandering are the principal means they have used to accomplish this. Consequently most communities with Puerto Rican majorities are represented by non-Puerto Ricans in city councils, school boards, state legislatures, and the U.S. Congress.

For a long time Puerto Ricans have been waging a struggle against these restrictions and for the democratic right to be included in the political life of the U.S. and to be represented by Puerto Ricans. As a result several important victories have been won. In 1973 a federal court ordered New York City to have bilingual ballots and voting instructions for the first time in both the general election and the school board election. This ruling was upheld by a 1974 court decision and extended to require Spanish-speaking personnel at the polls. In 1975 congress extended the 1965 Voting Rights Act another ten years and broadened

it by making bilingual elections mandatory in districts where more than 5 percent of the voters do not speak English.

However, in spite of these important rulings and laws, Democratic and Republican election officials still attempt to find ways of circumventing them.

The Civil Rights Commission has documented the serious undercount of Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, and other Hispanic minorities by the Bureau of the Census in 1970 and noted that this has reduced the number of districts that qualify for bilingual ballots and instructions.

The emergence of Puerto Rican Democratic Party clubs, which attempt to replace the older, more established Democratic machines in the barrios, is a distorted reflection within capitalist politics of the struggle for the democratic right of Puerto Rican representation. Many of these have been closely tied to government-financed anti-poverty agencies. With the rise of the Puerto Rican movement and the breaking down of some of the barriers to Puerto Rican involvement in politics, these clubs have been able to get a few Puerto Ricans elected to local positions in the Democratic Party and to public office.

The most prominent Puerto Rican elected official is Herman Badillo who was elected to U.S. Congress from the South Bronx in 1970. Badillo is pointed to as a symbol that Puerto Ricans can "make it" in U.S. politics. When he ran for mayor of New York in the Democratic primaries in 1969 and 1973 many Puerto Ricans hoped he would be elected and would do something to alleviate the intolerable conditions they face.

Significant sectors of the ruling class also backed him because they believed a Puerto Rican mayor, supported by Puerto Ricans and many Blacks, would be more effective in maintaining the support of these oppressed minorities and demobilizing their struggles. They favored a course similar to that followed by the ruling class in other major cities where Black Democrats have been elected mayors.

Badillo has carefully demonstrated his loyalty to big business. In response to the New York City "budget crisis" he demagogically opposed wage increases for city workers on the grounds that they take funds away from the Puerto Rican community. This ploy advanced the ruling class goal of dividing the working class by pitting one sector against another. He refused to support the "Por Los Niños" campaigns in New York's school District One and opposes independence for Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rican elected officials have joined with their Black and Chicano counterparts to form caucuses and press their demands in legislative bodies and the Democratic Party. In New York Black and Puerto Rican legislators have formed their own caucus in the state legislature. Prominent Puerto Rican Democrats, like Badillo, have joined with Chicano elected officials and others of Latin American heritage to establish the National Hispanic Caucus affiliated with the Democratic Party. Formed in November 1975, its stated goal is to demand greater recognition of the needs and aspirations of the 15-million Americans of Latin American heritage in the 1976 Democratic Party platform.

An attempt to form a similar organization in 1971 failed to get off the ground when hundreds of militants, including La Raza Unida Party leaders and Puerto Rican independentistas, intervened in the founding conference. The Democratic officials, scared that the conference might get out of their control, adjourned the gathering before they were able to set up an organization.

Although Puerto Rican clubs and caucuses in the Democratic Party reflect greater participation of Puerto Ricans in politics, they are not a form of independent political action. On the contrary, they encourage dependence on one of the capitalist parties responsible for perpetuating the oppression of Puerto Ricans. And reliance on either the Democratic or Republican party will not advance the democratic rights of the Puerto Rican people any more than it will the struggle of the working class as a whole.

Independent Political Action

The two-party system is the way the capitalist ruling class maintains its monopoly over the country's political life. It owns and controls the Democratic and Republican parties which are equally committed to preserving the capitalist system and its evils of war, racism, and exploitation.

Illusions are deliberately fostered that the working class and the oppressed national minorities can win reforms and improve their condition by supporting their "friends" in these parties. But reliance on either of these parties facilitates the ruling class aim of diffusing and coopting independent struggles of the masses.

To advance its own goals the working class must break from the capitalist parties and steer a course of political independence. Its mass actions must be independent of these parties -- not dependent on funds or favors from them, not concerned about embarrassing them, and not subordinated to getting them elected. Independent political action means putting nothing ahead of the demands and interests of the working class and oppressed national minorities.

In order to break the two-party stranglehold, the working class needs to form its own political party to give direction and reinforcement to its struggles. A mass revolutionary workers party is needed to lead the struggle to replace the capitalist rulers and establish a workers government.

A giant step in this direction would be the formation of a labor party based on the organized power of the unions. This would not be a labor version of the Democratic and Republican parties or a vote-catching machine for up-and-coming "labor politicians." It would be a new type of party that strengthens the independent mobilization of all sectors of the oppressed and helps aim their force at the common enemy. Workers running as independent labor candidates on a local scale can help set an example and point the way to a nationwide party of labor.

Within the Black and Chicano communities there has been considerable discussion and some attempts made to establish independent Black and Chicano parties. Mass independent parties based on either the Black or Chicano communities, both of which are overwhelmingly working class, would also be a significant step forward in breaking with the capitalist parties and laying out a course of political independence for the working class. They would be powerful tribunes and organizers of their communities.

Within this strategic framework of independent working class action, Puerto Ricans should consider running their own independent candidates against those of the Democrats and Republicans. Campaigns for these candidates would strengthen the mass struggles of Puerto Ricans giving them an independent voice in the electoral arena. The concentration of Puerto Ricans in big cities, especially New York, means that state and city legislators and a few members of Congress could be elected who would for the first time be beholden to no one but the Puerto Rican community whose interests are diametrically opposed to those of the bankers and bosses and their Republican and Democratic hirelings. It would also be an important example to the labor movement and other oppressed national minorities to break from capitalist politics.

So far there have been very few examples of independent Puerto Rican candidates. The Socialist Workers Party has endorsed these candidates whenever they have run for office independently of and in opposition to the capitalist parties. We have supported them, as in the case of José Fuentes for state assemblyman in New York City in 1965, even if they were not socialist and in spite of our criticisms of their programs.

Puerto Rican Struggle and the Labor Movement

The American labor movement is potentially the most powerful ally of the Puerto Rican struggle but under its present class-collaborationist and self-serving leadership,

it is indifferent or hostile to the struggles of the most oppressed groups. Its record in respect to Puerto Ricans is particularly miserable.

The first experience for tens of thousands of Puerto Rican workers with the labor movement in the U.S. was recruitment into racket-infested locals of the Retail Clerks, United Textile Workers, International Jewelry Workers, and other unions in New York City in the 1940s and 1950s. These were traps for grabbing dues while "sweetheart contracts" guaranteed sweatshop wages for the workers, big rake-offs for the racketeers, and class peace with the employers. Usually these unions held no meetings or elections, and both the city government and the AFL-CIO hierarchy were complicit in this mammoth dues robbery of Puerto Rican newcomers. Attempts by some Puerto Rican workers to organize their own unions to circumvent this situation were brutally crushed with city government help.

These particular conditions were somewhat alleviated when several of the locals were expelled from the AFL-CIO in the late 1950s after Puerto Rican workers flooded the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists with requests for legal assistance. The ACTU, historically a reactionary obstacle to the development of class struggle methods by the unions, was pressured into exposing the situation.

Today Puerto Ricans are often barred from more skilled jobs by unions that act as job trusts for white workers. Most notorious are the United Federation of Teachers in New York City and the building-trades unions.

In New York City, for example, where 23 percent of the students in the public schools are Puerto Rican less than one-half of one percent of the teachers are Puerto Rican. This is the bitter fruit of Shankerite opposition to affirmative action programs and preferential hiring to help move toward equality for Blacks and Puerto Ricans. It is part and parcel of the same racist policy behind the UFT leadership's fierce struggle against Puerto Ricans and

Blacks having a say over the administration of the schools in their communities.

Like the social democratic Shankerites the officialdom of the construction trade unions has vigorously resisted opening their doors to Puerto Rican workers. Puerto Ricans, united with Black and Asian workers in New York City, have participated in demonstrations against the discriminatory hiring policies of the construction industry and the racist, white job-trustism of the building trades.

In some unions like the Transport Workers and Taxi Drivers in New York City, Puerto Rican unionists have joined with Blacks in caucuses fighting for their special interests.

The unions with the largest number of Puerto Rican workers today are the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, and the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees.

Puerto Ricans in the ILGWU have second-class status. No Puerto Ricans are on its Executive Board and few hold staff positions. Thousands of Puerto Rican garment workers are employed in unorganized sweatshops that the ILGWU refuses to organize.

Both AFSCME and NUHHCE reflect the growth of public unionism in the past fifteen years. They have brought thousands of new forces into the labor movement including Blacks and Puerto Ricans, and have tended to feel more pressure to support social struggles. AFSCME, for example, supported the Por Los Niños campaigns in New York's Lower East Side.

However, today public employees are the main target of the ruling-class offensive to drive down wages, working conditions, job security, social services, and to divide the working class. Massive layoffs of public employees have hit Puerto Rican workers particularly hard as they are being laid off in disproportionate numbers.

The bureaucratized leadership of these unions is demonstrating its bankruptcy by counting on collaboration with capitalist politicians rather than class-struggle methods. They desperately attempt to defend their dues base of a shrinking number of relatively more privileged workers in their unions rather than charting a course to fight for the broader social needs of the class as a whole.

This narrow policy facilitates the ruling-class strategy of dividing the working class by pitting workers in the private sector against public workers; public employees in different departments against each other; employed workers against the unemployed, students, and welfare recipients; workers with greater seniority against those more recently hired; and white workers against Blacks and Puerto Ricans. This dead-end scramble for fewer jobs and funds especially victimizes Puerto Ricans, who have lower seniority, greater unemployment, and proportionately more welfare recipients.

For labor to lead the fight for even the most elementary needs of the working class, a new kind of leadership is needed. The development of a class-struggle left wing in the union movement is necessary to provide this leadership. It will use class-struggle methods to fight for the workers interests, champion the social struggles by the oppressed and will map out a political course for the unions independent of the two employer parties. It will lead the fight for a labor party based on the organized power of the unions. A labor party will be a crusader for the Puerto Rican struggle for equality, the organization of Puerto Rican farmworkers, independence for Puerto Rico, and the release of the five Puerto Rican nationalist political prisoners. Puerto Rican unionists will be in the forefront of developments toward the formation of a class-struggle left wing and the creation of a labor party.

Farmworkers

There are between 60,000 and 150,000 Puerto Rican seasonal workers employed mostly in agriculture on the East

Coast. There is no accurate count of how many come each year and the number varies from year to year depending on the capitalist business cycle in the U.S. A portion of those who come (an estimated one-fourth in 1974) are employed under contracts negotiated between the Puerto Rican government and the growers. Workers under these contracts usually get the pittance of the legal minimum wage. The rest of the migrant workers have no contracts and most do not receive even the minimum wage.

Conditions for all Puerto Rican farmworkers are barbaric and inhuman. Housing is crowded and unsafe, field sanitation facilities are nonexistent or inadequate, and pesticides endanger the health of the workers. Farmworkers get no overtime pay, no fringe benefits, no job security, no promotions, and no unemployment insurance. Growers overcharge them for food, beer, wine, and cigarettes and shortchange their paychecks. In the 1970-1975 period nearly 4,000 workers in New Jersey won complaints for \$190,000 of pay systematically cheated from them. Thousands more did not file complaints for fear of losing their jobs. There have also been a number of cases where Puerto Ricans who wanted to leave the farms were prevented from doing so and kept in involuntary servitude.

The outrageous treatment of seasonal farmworkers has generated protests, strikes, legal actions, and a union-organizing drive.

In 1972, migrant workers employed in the potato fields on Long Island conducted an unsuccessful strike for decent wages and humane living conditions.

There have also been attempts to organize Puerto Rican tobacco workers in Connecticut. This effort is being undertaken by the Farm Workers Association (Asociación de Trabajadores Agrícolas) which seeks to replace the Puerto Rican government as bargaining agent and negotiate higher wages. This drive had its highest peak so far in 1974 when it received broad support including the endorsement

of United Farm Workers leader Cesar Chavez and the Connecticut State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, and threatened to call a strike against the growers. In 1975 the drive was set back by the growers' decision to hire mostly local unemployed workers.

The attempt to organize Puerto Rican farm workers faces special difficulties because farmworkers have no standing in state or federal law to organize and bargain collectively.

Relationship with Other Oppressed National Minorities

Most Puerto Ricans are concentrated in cities where there are also large populations of other oppressed national minorities, especially Blacks and Chicanos. Usually the Puerto Rican barrios are next to or overlap with the communities of these oppressed nationalities. The similar nature of their oppression naturally leads to common struggles and sometimes common organizations. The Por Los Niños coalition in school District One in New York's Lower East Side united Puerto Rican, Black, and Chinese parents in a common fight for equal educational opportunities. Although there were frictions between the different components of this alliance, it was key in sustaining this struggle for so long.

The Attica prison revolt in 1971 was also an example of Black and Puerto Ricans uniting around demands that affected both groups.

The struggles of each oppressed national minority have reciprocally influenced each other. Victories won by Puerto Ricans fighting for bilingual ballots and education in New York and Boston reinforce struggles by Chicanos in Texas and Colorado demanding the same thing. The rise of the Black movement in the 1960s particularly helped stimulate the radicalization of both Chicanos and Puerto Ricans.

Puerto Ricans also live in or next to the same communities with many undocumented workers, especially from the Caribbean and Central and South America. For example, in the New York metropolitan area alone there are an estimated 1.5 million persons without legal papers. The largest number, an

estimated 300,000, are from the Dominican Republic.

Some employers will not hire Puerto Ricans using the excuse that they could be "illegal" Dominican or Guatemalan workers posing as Puerto Rican citizens. This underlines the importance of not allowing the employers to turn Puerto Ricans against undocumented workers and for the Puerto Rican movement to solidarize with the struggle for the rights of "illegal aliens" to jobs, unemployment benefits, and all other social services and to oppose all deportations.

Although there are many points of collaboration between Puerto Ricans and other oppressed minorities, the ruling class attempts to pit each against the others. School officials in Boston, for example, have tried to take advantage of court-ordered busing to slash the bilingual-bicultural programs which are concentrated in a few schools and disperse Spanish-speaking Puerto Ricans through the school system. Moves of this type must not be allowed to divide Blacks and Puerto Ricans fighting for the same goal -- an end to inferior schools for their children. School busing need not be carried out at the expense of bilingual-bicultural programs.

The ruling class also attempts to widen hostilities by getting Black and Puerto Rican antipoverty agencies to fight with each other over the few crumbs doled out by the federal government.

In respect to collaboration with other forces, Puerto Ricans can best guarantee that their demands and needs will not take a second place if they unite themselves in their own independent organizations. This will both strengthen their struggle against the ruling class and help reinforce collaboration with their allies.

Assimilation or Self-Determination?

The large stream of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. in the past 30 years means that more than one-third of all Puerto Ricans now live in the United States. According to the 1970 census about 40 percent of this number was born in the U.S.,

compared to 30 percent in 1950, and many of those born in Puerto Rico came to the U.S. at a very young age. Thus, the outlook of an increasing proportion of Puerto Ricans is being influenced by life in the barrios of the U.S.

Puerto Ricans, unlike European immigrants before them, are not being assimilated, that is, becoming another "ethnic" group with simply residual cultural characteristics of their homeland. While more Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are becoming better educated and a thin layer of lawyers, educators, public officials, and politicians is emerging, there has been no significant improvement in the condition of the great majority of Puerto Ricans compared to the rest of the population. The gaps between the unemployment rates and income levels of Puerto Ricans and the population as a whole are not narrowing. The segregation of Puerto Ricans into inferior schools and housing is not disappearing.

The fact that Blacks, who have been in America for 400 years, Chicanos, who were annexed 130 years ago, and Native Americans, who were here before the Europeans, have not been integrated into capitalist America points to the impossibility of this road for Puerto Ricans. The American "melting pot" has not included non-white national minorities.

Even if all second, third, or fourth generation Puerto Ricans adopt English as their principal or exclusive language and become "Americanized," they will still be subjected to the deep-rooted racism necessary to American capitalism.

Like all nationally oppressed peoples Puerto Ricans have the right to self-determination. The depth of pro-independence sentiment and agitation in Puerto Rico and the dynamic of the class struggle there has led revolutionary socialists to support the demand for an independent sovereign Puerto Rico.

However, for Puerto Ricans in the U.S. the solution to the question of self-determination is more open. It is not excluded that the masses of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. will choose to return to their country and become part of an independent Puerto Rico.

They may also integrate into a common state with whites or Blacks; establish a separate state in the U.S.; or choose some other solution. This decision will depend on their experience in the U.S. and the course of the class struggle and economic developments in Puerto Rico and the U.S.

Whichever course is chosen, it will be the obligation of the American labor movement to defend it. If Puerto Ricans return to an independent Puerto Rico or establish a separate state on U.S. soil it will be the responsibility of a workers government in the U.S. to provide all the material assistance necessary.

It would be premature to rule out the possibility that Puerto Ricans in the U.S. would return in large numbers to the island because they are still a very fluid population consisting of sectors with different experiences and outlooks.

Every year thousands of Puerto Ricans move back to Puerto Rico from the U.S. Many of them are here long enough to save some money or learn a skill. Others aren't able to find the opportunities they seek. For most Puerto Ricans, Puerto Rico is still a place they can return where they have relatives and friends. This also includes some U.S.-born Puerto Ricans who now comprise about 5 percent of the population in Puerto Rico.

The relative newness of Puerto Ricans to the U.S. is reflected in the fact that first-generation Puerto Ricans are still a majority in the U.S. In 1970 the average age level of the second generation was only nine and most second-generation Puerto Ricans have not entered the labor force. Only 7 percent of the heads of households over the age of 16 were born in the U.S.

There is no indication that the masses of Puerto Ricans living in the U.S. view themselves as a people radically different from Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico. Furthermore, there is considerable political and cultural contact between them.

Puerto Ricans in the U.S., however, are also getting more deeply involved in the political life of the U.S. as they fight back against the specific forms of oppression they face here. They are establishing organizations, organizing protests, and running for political office. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens, which makes this process easier than for other national minorities like Dominicans, Haitians, and Mexicanos who face deportation for political activity.

Many of the social and cultural pressures, deprivations, and abuses experienced by Puerto Ricans living as a minority in the U.S. are different from those in Puerto Rico where virtually everyone is Puerto Rican. Life in the barrios leads to different political experiences, social outlooks, and cultural tastes, especially among the younger generation that has never lived -- or lived only a few years -- in Puerto Rico.

This generation is seeking its own identity. Puerto Rican writers, artists, and musicians are attempting to express the unique feelings and values of the Niuyorriqueños. The Young Lords emerging from Puerto Rican street gangs in the late 1960s and early 1970s were an authentic political expression of the particular resentments and aspirations of Puerto Ricans growing up in the U.S.

If present trends continue, the younger generations, which are more rooted in the life of the United States, will play an increasingly important role in the Puerto Rican community. What changes this will bring in attitudes, cultural traditions, and ties to Puerto Rico remain to be seen.

Program for Puerto Rican Struggle in the U.S.

Puerto Ricans in the U.S. are engaged in a two-fold fight. As an oppressed national minority they are fighting for equality and self-determination. In this role they are one of the allies of the working class.

At the same time they are part of the working class in the U.S., struggling for emancipation from capitalist exploitation.

The goals of neither side of this combined struggle can be won without revolutionary action which replaces the present capitalist rulers with a workers government, opening the road to socialism.

Both struggles are woven together and one cannot win without the victory of the other. The struggle against national oppression cannot succeed without the revolutionary mobilization of the working class as a whole. And no workers' government will be established if the labor movement subordinates or opposes the fight of Puerto Ricans and other oppressed national minorities for their immediate needs and democratic rights.

In the concrete development of the fight for the full social and national emancipation of the Puerto Rican people, which culminates in the socialist revolution, they should not subordinate their struggle to the class-collaborationist bureaucracy in the unions in the name of a spurious "unity." On the contrary, the independent mobilization of the Puerto Rican people is one of the factors impelling the radicalization of the working class as a whole, helping to lay the basis for unity on a class-struggle basis.

The combined character of struggle of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. requires a program that will mobilize Puerto Ricans around both immediate and democratic demands for equality and national liberation and transitional demands that help the working class cross the bridge from their immediate aims and present level of consciousness to revolutionary socialist conclusions.

The central problems of special concern to Puerto Ricans are discrimination in employment, education, and housing, language discrimination in all aspects of social and political life, and lack of genuine representation in legislative and political bodies.

To combat job discrimination Puerto Ricans are calling for preferential hiring and upgrading. They are demanding that employers not be allowed to use layoffs to reduce the

proportion of Puerto Rican workers, and that civil service examinations be held in both Spanish and English.

To end inequality in education Puerto Ricans are demanding bilingual-bicultural programs with competent teachers so that every Puerto Rican student can be educated in the language of their choice. Open admissions are called for to give every Puerto Rican student an opportunity to attend college.

Puerto Ricans are demanding an end to housing discrimination and the right to live in neighborhoods of their choice.

To end all language discrimination competent Spanish-speaking personnel is required in all public facilities, at the polls, and in the courtroom. Bilingual ballots and voting instructions are necessary to provide equal voting rights. Spanish-language books in the prisons must be provided.

Puerto Ricans are also demanding control over the institutions and affairs of their communities in order to help guarantee their democratic rights.

Puerto Ricans need to break from the parties of their oppressors, the capitalist Democratic and Republican parties, and run independent Puerto Rican candidates where feasible.

This program, which is essential to the struggle against inequality, does not present answers to all the key questions facing Puerto Ricans. For example, in respect to jobs, Puerto Ricans will be among the most consistent and militant fighters for jobs for all. To achieve this goal, the first requirement is a massive program of public works. Also needed is the immediate reduction of the work week, with no reduction in take-home pay, in order to spread the work among those who need jobs.

The program against inequality is thus part of a broader working-class program. The demands, method, and strategy for this program is outlined in the Socialist Workers Party's 1975 resolution Prospects for Socialism in America, especially the section, "Labor's Strategic Line of March

This program is based on the perspective that the American workers must see the big social and political questions facing all the exploited and oppressed of the United States as issues of direct concern to them. It is rooted in the knowledge that only when the working class depends on its own independent collective strength, on the political as well as economic field of battle, can it successfully chart a course to the establishment of a workers government.

The Socialist Workers Party

The American working class has the momentous task of wresting state power from the most powerful ruling class in all of history. The necessity to carry out this mission is being demonstrated by the breakdowns and crises of the capitalist system. But the working class will need something it does not yet have -- its own mass revolutionary party.

We are confident explosive events will open the door to rapid changes in the political consciousness of the working class and lead to upsurges out of which a mass revolutionary socialist party can emerge. However, this can only happen if the cadres of this party are assembled beforehand around a clear perspective and program. This is what the Socialist Workers Party is doing.

Only a party that is deeply rooted in the working class, especially among its most oppressed sectors, can lead the American working class and its allies to power. This means systematic work in all sectors of the mass movement to recruit the most capable fighters to the party. There is no way that the working class can achieve its aims unless it brings together in a common fighting party the most resolute revolutionists of the working class and the best fighters from all national minorities -- Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican. The brutality and centralized power of the capitalist state dictates that the working class and its allies have the greatest possible centralization and cohesion in their political leadership.

Puerto Rican militants, concerned first and foremost with the struggles of Puerto Ricans, may at first see no reason or advantage in belonging to a proletarian party with broader perspectives and concerns. However, its revolutionary activity in the labor, Black, Chicano, women, youth, and other mass movements provides a means of enlisting allies for the Puerto Rican movement and of strengthening the inter-connections between all the various expressions of the class struggle and the Puerto Rican struggle. In a party that includes revolutionists from other sectors of the working class, Puerto Ricans will help sharpen the understanding of their allies about the needs of Puerto Ricans and strengthen the program of the working class in respect to the Puerto Rican struggle.

The SWP believes and acts on the belief that the working class has no interests that come ahead of or are higher than those of the Puerto Rican struggle. It believes that the working class cannot achieve its goals without the Puerto Rican people and other nationally oppressed peoples achieving theirs.

Membership in the SWP also means being politically part of an international revolutionary movement. While reactionary legislation prevents formal affiliation to the Fourth International, the SWP, since its founding, has been an integral political component of the world party of socialist revolution.

For Puerto Rican revolutionists, being part of an international movement means being armed with a world outlook and program which helps give direction to the revolutionary struggles in both the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican Fourth Internationalists who live in the U.S. and are politically active in the Puerto Rican movement and class struggle here are part of the Socialist Workers Party. Those who presently live in Puerto Rico or move from the U.S. and become part of the struggle there are members of the SWP's sister organization, La Liga Internacionalista de los Trabajadores (the International Workers League).

While the working class struggles in Puerto Rico and the U.S. have their own dynamic and distinct peculiarities, they are very much interconnected because of the colonial relationship between the two countries. Collaboration in a common international movement between revolutionists in the two countries is essential to working out political perspectives and encouraging mutual assistance.

In order to establish itself more firmly in the Puerto Rican movement and win more Puerto Rican members, the SWP has to devote more attention and energies to the Puerto Rican struggle. The SWP membership around the country has to become better educated and more familiar with Puerto Rican history and the current tendencies and organizations in the Puerto Rican movement.

More branches especially oriented to Puerto Rican communities will have to be established. Sales of our Spanish-language books and pamphlets should be increased. Although the SWP doesn't have a Spanish-language press at this time, sales of the bilingual Intercontinental Press and of La Verdad, publication of the Puerto Rican Trotskyists, can be organized.

Our proletarian orientation and unconditional support to the struggle for Puerto Rican liberation gives us optimism that we will succeed in winning Puerto Rican revolutionists. But this will only be achieved with systematic work and serious application to the task. It will be a fundamental test of our capacity as a revolutionary party.