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SUMMARY REMARKS ON OUR COMING TASKS IN THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION
MOVEMENT, TAKEN FROM A SPEECH BY BETSEY BARNES AT THE OBERLIN CONFERENCE

At this time, we are in a position, with the number of women cadres we have, to significantly affect the development of the women's liberation movement from its inception. We can play the same decisive role in this movement that we have played in the antiwar movement.

Already comrades working to build the women's liberation movement across the country have found that there are virtually no barriers to our participation, or to our assuming leadership positions. There is a remarkable minimum of prejudice against socialists, or sectarian and exclusionist attitudes. Women are searching for answers, and at this stage, they tend to want no one to be excluded from the movement because it is assumed that everyone has something to contribute.

In projecting what our tasks should be for the coming period, the most important thing to realize is that we want to immerse ourselves in all aspects of the movement, to learn from the movement, and to have the most open minded and flexible attitude towards it. Things are still so fluid that there are almost no organizations which are not worth our while to participate in and to help build. As a matter of fact, the biggest problem we have is that there are so many opportunities that with our limited cadre, it is impossible to take advantage of them all.

On the basis of our experiences in the past months, we have found that certain activities should be given priority.

One of these is campus work. We must make women comrades available to go on campus and help to build viable campus women's liberation groups. These groups are important in inspiring and spurring on the entire area-wide women's liberation movement and they can play a key role in helping to construct city-wide organizations and coalitions. We should have as our ultimate aim -- through regional organizing and through our election campaigns and other means -- to try to initiate groups on every campus possible in order to strengthen the women's liberation movement as a whole.

In addition, every branch or local which is in a large city needs to participate in off-campus women's liberation activities. We have found that in the women's liberation movement there are a large number of younger, non-student women who are active and who provide an important base of the movement. Many of these are ex-students who are beginning to feel that their lives are now more restricted than they were during their campus years.

Thus far, the forms which the off-campus movement has taken in cities around the country are in great flux. We have seen the development of small groups,

federations of small groups, umbrella coalitions, women's centers, communes and collectives, groups of women gathered around women's liberation publications, high school women's liberation groups, and coalitions for specific actions. And because of the newness of this movement and the tremendous experimentation which is still going on, it is impossible right now for us to predict exactly what forms the movement will take in the long run. Our attitude should be one of joining existing organizations where possible and building new ones where necessary. What we should aim for is organizational structures which can carry out all the necessary activities of the movement -- all the way from consciousness raising, to education, to publication of literature, to mass action.

In picking what particular issues and demands the movement should choose to orient around, there is no formula. There are a number of different demands that we have already found can mobilize significant numbers of women: child care, equal job and educational opportunity and abortion. In the case of August 26, we have been able to combine all three.

We believe that the issue of abortion is particularly important at this time. The reason we have emphasized this issue is not only because of its importance to women and its potential for building the movement, but because right at this time, big changes are being made in abortion laws in states around the country. It is important for the women's liberation movement to intervene in this process, to use the ferment taking place to push the basic demand for free abortion on demand and to educate around the issue of the right of women to control their own bodies. This issue is important also because significant victories can be won and, contrary to what some ultra-leftists say, victories build movements.

Other important arenas of activity during the next years are going to be in high schools and in the Third World movement. In both these areas, the women's liberation movement is in its earliest stages and few actions have been initiated. But both are potentially extremely important, and we want to do everything we can to build them.

Another essential task is our educational program around women's liberation. The norm for every local and branch should be to always have some kind of women's liberation class going that we can direct new women to, either a class sponsored by the YSA or SWP, or classes being carried out by one of the women's liberation organizations that we are active in. In addition, internal education within our movement is very important, because the ideas are so new to many

of the comrades. Not only do we need to study Marxist literature on the question, but also the literature coming out of the women's liberation movement, including such periodicals as Notes from the Second Year, Journal of Female Liberation and Woman: A Journal of Liberation.

Related to our educational program are the important tasks of beefing up our bookstores with women's liberation material and getting out The Militant and other women's liberation literature of our movement. An indication of the importance of this is the fact that women's liberation literature is at the top of the Pathfinder bestseller list. In areas of the country where we have a large selection of women's liberation literature, our bookstores quickly become centers where women come. And we are finding that we're getting more and more regular readers of The Militant in the women's liberation movement itself -- women who follow our line on the movement and use our ideas to help build the movement.

Last, but not by any means least, are our election campaigns. These are of

central importance. We have found that across the country it is the women's liberation aspect of our campaigns that so far have generated the greatest interest and given us the greatest coverage, and of course we want to take full advantage of this. But it is important also to be clear on how we want to use our campaigns. The main orientation of our campaigns is not toward the women's liberation movement itself, but to reaching out to masses of new women and winning them over to the women's liberation movement. That is, we want to provide an example for the movement of how to go out to the masses of women with a concrete program for women's liberation and win new people to that program, and we want to involve the best activists in the women's liberation movement with us in this effort.

In summary, we have to remember that this movement is still in its earliest stages and the big job we have to do is help to spur this whole process forward whereby women, for the first time in history, are waking up to a full understanding of their oppression and of the institutions responsible for it.

MAIN REPORTS GIVEN AT THE OBERLIN
CONFERENCE WOMEN'S LIBERATION FRACTION MEETING

Report on Campus Work by Debby Woodrooffe

Betsey spelled out in her report that one of our major tasks is to establish women's liberation groups on all the campuses where we have fractions, and even beyond that. There are several advantages to organizing on the campus and one of the key ones is, of course, that the campus is an arena of the youth radicalization. It's much easier to organize campus groups than off campus groups, generally. One thing you can do very easily, just by registering as an on-campus group, is to get an office which can be a sort of campus women's center. You can set up a library and immediately have a place where women can gather to talk about women's liberation.

Another aspect is money. On some campuses, when you apply for money, you have to prove to the administration that somehow your group is relevant to the interests of a large percentage of people on the campus. Women's liberation is clearly relevant to the needs of at least half the students on campus and is in a good position to get funds. At Wayne State University, for example, the women's liberation group was just given money to have a teach-in in the fall.

Other things we should relate to include the campus newspapers which are key to getting a movement going, keeping it going and winning new people. After all of the take-overs of various publications that have occurred, and the demonstrations demanding that women's liberation be given space in the mass media, I think that we can say that the newspapers on many campuses are just waiting for angry women to come banging on their doors demanding half the issue, or at least some space. At San Francisco State they kept asking us for more and more copy on women's liberation. We had to finally give them reprints and they finally just started reprinting articles out of The Militant. Another thing is that the campuses are research institutions and that makes it possible for a women's liberation group on the campus to start providing data for the women's liberation movement on such things as child care, job discrimination and women's history. The comrades who are in women's liberation groups, as well as independents, can do papers for credit on women's liberation and have these printed in women's liberation journals.

There is certainly no one formula for organizing a campus women's liberation group. You can't be rigid in your approach. I think one of the key things is to remember that you're dealing with a total movement that isn't just demonstrations. The scope of the movement encompasses action, consciousness raising, education and other aspects. And you have to respond to the need for those things. In order to encompass all those needs in one group,

what we did at San Francisco State was to have weekly business meetings and at those business meetings we'd have a sign up sheet for people who wanted to be involved in consciousness raising groups. We appointed a coordinator in charge of setting up different groups which met off campus. And we also scheduled regular educational where we would have a speaker from off campus on things like the gay women's liberation movement, job discrimination and all the different questions of the movement.

Now in terms of the action, I want to discuss briefly, four demands. The first one which is really key for the campus is to write women back into history. This demand is the first step toward a women's liberation university. It involves making the university a center for learning the truth about women. The concrete form this can take is demanding courses in women's studies.

The second demand deals with birth control, the right of abortion and the right of access to birth control as part of the campus health system. Birth control needs should be considered an integral part of the health needs of students.

The third demand is job discrimination. This is particularly important to the campus because many people joining groups are faculty members and campus workers. At San Francisco State, we related to this demand when several AFT women professors were fired for political reasons. We organized a big forum to expose this and to expose the particular discrimination women face in professional jobs.

Another important demand is child care. One way to implement this is through a child-in, where you have children and mothers throughout the community and on campus bringing their children to campus for one big action. Such a show of force of all the children that don't have adequate facilities can demonstrate really graphically the tremendous need for child care.

A women's liberation group can be launched on a campus in many different ways. You can decide on a specific action and call a meeting to build it, or you can have an educational talk on how women are oppressed on this campus or in society as a whole or, you can just put out a general leaflet announcing the formation of a group.

One problem you may find in organizing a campus group is a general fear of any kind of structure. There is a fear that this will lead to elitism, and people see that as something that the women's liberation movement wants to avoid. But at San Francisco State, these women

who were so afraid of elitism found very quickly that if you didn't have some kind of democratic structure, an undemocratic structure would form anyway, and that was how you got elitism. So, still being sensitive to this fear of leadership, we set up four people who were co-chairwomen, four co-chairwomen on an equal basis, and we had weekly steering committee meetings where everyone was invited.

Now one last thing I want to mention quickly is the potential for women's liberation trailblazing this fall. I think that's going to be one of the key ways we're going to be able to start organizing on many campuses. In building an SWP campaign conference on women's history a few weeks ago, I found that when I'd go on a campus and start leafletting, within five minutes I would be talking to a nucleus of women on that campus who had thought about women's liberation and wanted to start the movement on their campus.

Report on Off-Campus Activity by Judy White

I'm not going to go over all the types of off-campus women's liberation formations that exist in the women's liberation movement, just the ones we've had experiences in or where there seem to be good possibilities to work in the coming period. These are basically three types: conferences, women's centers and consciousness raising or small groups.

There are just a couple of points to make on conferences. It is our experience that these can be successful if they're organized to serve either or both of these functions: first, educational or teach-in type conferences like the "Breaking the Shackles" conference in the Bay Area. At these we can get out our analysis and program through huge literature sales (and they have been huge where these conferences have taken place) or through our own speakers. Second, conferences that are called to plan out specific actions -- campaigns around an issue like abortion, child care or whatever. The completely unstructured gatherings that were possible at the beginning of the women's liberation movement, before the political currents had crystallized, in general are no longer fruitful. The Second Congress to Unite Women in New York was an example of the problems which can come up at an unstructured conference.

The second type of off-campus formation I want to discuss is women's centers. Women's centers have a lot of potential as places for the exchange of ideas, for exchange of information, education, as places where small groups can meet each other, and as places to mobilize all sections of the movement

for action campaigns. Our orientation to them should be that they be structured to encourage all women to participate. In New York we made a proposal that the center should be a coalition that would take no position on specific political questions, and that it would be action-oriented. Questions where there is disagreement within the movement would be discussed out in open public meetings sponsored by the center. In other words, our concept of what a women's center should be is a service center for the entire movement but not a body that would take positions on strategy, line, etc. for the movement.

The biggest mistake we could make with these women's centers that are springing up around the country is to not get involved because the center is controlled by some clique. We should work to discredit these cliques where they exist, to discredit them for their elitism, and for being very exclusive in their orientation. We should take on our opponents in this area. The more we take on our opponents now, the easier it will be for us as the movement grows. We educate, win allies, get known as the most articulate spokeswomen for the mass of independent women in the movement by doing this.

The third form of work that I'm going to speak about is the consciousness raising or small group. This is the most characteristic form that the women's liberation movement has taken so far. Because of the nature of the oppression of women, the key initial phase for every woman coming into the movement is the discovery of her worth as a human being. And the consciousness raising or small group plays a role in this. We know that the small group has attracted large numbers of women who aren't on campus who want to join the women's liberation movement. For example, in New York, at the high point, Redstockings and the New York Radical Feminists, both of which are federations of small groups, had over 400 women participating. So, if we don't participate in these organizations then we're just ignoring a whole large sector of the movement. It's also important for us to participate in these small groups because we learn a lot from them and from the consciousness raising literature. We get a much deeper, more intimate understanding about our oppression as women. We also learn to be very sensitive to the thinking and ideas and insights of women in the movement.

We work to build the movement within these groups. In Redstockings for example, we've been able to discuss and educate on general questions of radical politics, on questions such as is the movement only for poor and black women. In addition, of course, we do contact work and recruitment in these groups. We've recruited some people directly out of Redstockings and we

also have some women who have come regularly to our forums and classes as a result of this work in small groups.

Over the course of the six months four N.Y. comrades have participated in Redstockings, we discredited the ultraleft leadership among a large number of the members. We also got the women in our group involved in action -- in antiwar action, abortion actions and so on, which the leadership was not doing. And we got a number of women in the small groups interested in studying socialism. For example, in my Redstockings group, the last three meetings before we came out to Oberlin, we spent discussing socialism. However, we didn't succeed in convincing a majority of the women in these groups to fight through to the end to transform Redstockings into a really viable growing organization. They weren't really ready for such a fight and weren't fully clear on what kind of an organization they wanted.

One last point on small groups. We have to draw a distinction between the small groups and the small group "theory." We don't agree with the women in the movement that think that the small group is the be-all and end-all of the women's liberation movement, or that any woman who isn't in a small group isn't part of the women's liberation movement.

So just to sum up, we see the campus groups as the key driving force of the women's liberation movement. However, there are many other arenas of work for us in the women's liberation movement. We should be very flexible and participate in many types of formations. We have to view the consciousness raising group and the centers as areas where we'll meet non-campus women who make up a large part of the movement, where we can learn from them, influence them, and work with them on actions around the issues of the movement.

Report on Coalitions by Ruthann Miller

Coalitions in the women's liberation movement can be organized around any of the demands of the movement, for instance child care or equal pay. What I want to deal with, specifically, is coalitions organized around the abortion issue.

The aims of the abortion movement have been, in the first instance, to have all laws repealed. We say that there is no more reason for laws around abortion than around any other medical procedure. One of the main vehicles for attacking the laws has been through lawsuits. We feel that this is a very good way to approach it, in keeping with our view that there should be no laws on the subject, and that the laws are unconstitutional.

The March 28 abortion demonstration in New York was organized around legal cases that were challenging the constitutionality of the laws, as well as demanding free abortion on demand. At the same time we had to relate to the abortion law which was under consideration in the legislature.

I want to first say something on these abortion laws. All of these new laws have restrictions. The ones that stipulate only that abortions have to be done by doctors, or that have residency requirements, we see as a major step forward, because they support the right of a woman to make the decision. We can allow critical support for these laws because of their recognition of this right. Those which have been introduced which simply broaden the law to allow abortion for insanity or rape, etc., which totally do not recognize the women's right in this area, we are completely opposed to. We also want to educate the women's movement on the fact that we must organize independent action, pressing for our demands, and not rely on the lawmakers.

The New York experience I think is a good example of the way that we want to approach these laws. The demonstration was organized around support to the legal cases and around the demand for free abortion on demand. The coalition took no position on the law that was introduced in the legislature before it passed, since the coalition was deeply divided on the issue. However, after the law was passed, which was one week before the demonstration, we claimed it as a victory for the movement and continued to educate on the necessity to continue the fight. In doing this we had to oppose the ultralefts, who wanted to actively work against the law before it passed and to call it a defeat after it was passed, due to the restrictions in it. We continued to work on the demonstration, continued the same demand for free abortion on demand, which implies the right of women to control their own lives. And we were able to mobilize thousands of women.

I want to go a little bit into the demand and the implication of the demand that we have been raising nationally: "free abortion on demand -- no forced sterilization." The implications of the word "free" directly point to the social responsibility to make abortions available in addition to making them legal. This is the stage we're in right now in New York, where abortions are costing anywhere from \$350.00 to \$400.00, and are still not available to the majority of women. The second thing is the whole question of the right of decision, the right not to be forced to have a child, the right not to be forced to have an abortion, and the right not to undergo forced sterilization. In totality, the whole right to control your body.

The women's liberation movement has

brought forward all these aspects of that demand. And, at the same time the scope of the coalitions we've been involved in has been very broad. We've been able to involve organized women from the unions, churches, welfare mothers, parent organizations, the YWCA, community organizations, student groups, as well as other layers.

The last question I want to deal with is how we approach the question of whether or not men should be involved in the coalitions. I think we have to look at it in the context of our recognition of the revolutionary character of women organizing independently of the system, and independently of men. We don't view this as a stage. In fact, we view this as a factor that's going to propel this struggle to a winning conclusion. We believe the best way to mobilize masses in the streets to support the demands of the movement is precisely by having this movement organized and led by women, and having the course of this struggle determined by women. In that context the question of men in coalitions becomes a tactical question as long as it does not negate the fact that these actions must be led and organized by women.

In New York, around August 26, the coalition has decided that men cannot take part in organizing, planning or deciding the demands of this demonstration. We also decided that after these things were decided the demonstration could be supported by individual males and groups which include men. The tactical approach taken by the People to Abolish Abortion Laws coalition, which organized the abortion demonstration, was somewhat different. There, the coalition was open to both men and women, with women being in the leadership. One of the questions we had to deal with was how to make the leadership visible in the action. One of the ways we chose to do that was by having all women speakers at the rally. I want to make clear that I'm talking here specifically of coalitions of the women's liberation movement, and not the independent organizations of the women's liberation movement which certainly should not include men.

Unfortunately, there's not time here to discuss the August 26 actions that are being planned around the country, and the coalitions that are being built around that. But comrades should watch The Militant for coverage of these coalitions. I think that we are going to learn a great deal more from our activity in them as well.

Report on SWP Campaign Activity by
Dianne Feeley

Just as the women's liberation movement is a combined movement of both action and education, so too must our election campaigns relate to both aspects of women's liberation. They must be action campaigns in that they help initiate mass actions and conferences. For instance, you've heard

about "Women: Breaking the Shackles." The California SWP Campaign and candidates worked very closely in setting up that conference -- in helping to call the press conference, in initiating a Third World women's workshop at that conference, and in speaking from the floor in the workshops. Our candidates also helped to initiate March 8 and August 26. We have also kept ourselves informed about the hearings that are taking place in the state capitols on abortion, and on other aspects of legislation that come up dealing with women. And we mobilize campaign supporters to go and speak at those hearings, and to have press releases issued for those hearings.

The other aspect is of course, education. That is, the candidates and the campaign committees should be informed about the movement, and take part in a very friendly and sisterly way in the discussions going on. It's also very important for our candidates to have as full a knowledge as possible of the history of women.

Another whole area is the media. And this is a very exciting area which is open to us, even in certain "hard boiled" towns where they tell you they've never heard of the SWP campaign, and that you just don't exist. Even in the red-baiting Berkeley Gazette we were able to get a fantastic article on the women's page. Now, women's pages are a very good source of women's liberation articles, and our campaign should be there also. In addition, the campus press is extremely friendly, and there are many women's liberation papers which will want to have interviews with us. I recently opened up Everywoman, and there was the program of the SWP printed, and a listing of our women's liberation candidates.

Also, it's possible to get good radio interviews. During the first radio interview I was ever on, people were calling up from Canada and Nevada to ask questions.

In addition, it's very important to get out and do regional work. This has a twofold function. Not only can we get honorariums from this, but it's also possible to set up a regional network, helping to form women's liberation groups, and setting up campaign supporter groups.

We have to look at the different forms the women's liberation movement takes to be sure that we're not missing any section of the movement. It's important, for example, to be able to go and speak to the small groups as SWP candidates, to attend the mass meetings, and to speak at the demonstrations. On campus, you can give presentations to women's study classes, and other classes. In addition, the high schools are a very important area of our work. And one of the demands that I think it's important for us to raise is an end to the tracking system with women being shuttled off into home economics. I raise the demand of "general living" courses, in which people learn how to make

certain minor household repairs, to fix the car, learn to sew a button on their clothes, and so forth. And these would be open to both men and women. And also raising the demand that it is the right of women who are pregnant to stay in high school.

Also, we should hold our own women's liberation forums frequently. Like after August 26, which is a Wednesday, we have a Militant Labor Forum planned for San Francisco Friday. We can leaflet those August 26 demonstrations, and have women's liberation campaign forums that Friday night. We've been thinking in San Francisco in terms of one women's liberation forum per month. Also, there are many different caucuses our candidates can go to, like the Committee for Returned Volunteers (CRV) has a women's caucus. Many of the teachers' unions will have women's caucuses in them. NOW, by the way, will agree to set up candidates' nights, and invite our candidates. In Berkeley, the president of NOW supports us and she wants her organization to come out in favor of supporting the SWP campaign. Also, there are informal meetings. The other day in Los Angeles we decided to get all of our women contacts, and invite them over for coffee and cake. We recruited three women right there, several more were interested in joining, and all of them were very interested in our campaign, and we got lots of campaign endorsers.

Now, in terms of endorsement. We should approach every woman to endorse our campaign on the basis of its being a women's liberation campaign, and having a women's liberation program. The question of whether we ask a women's liberation group to endorse is a tactical question, depending on how the endorsement would affect the particular group.

Now, some of the things that women's liberation campaign supporters can do. Of course, they should be involved in helping to build the various actions. They can sell The Militant and the ISR, and subscriptions, and they can help set up speaking engagements. Also, we can have women's liberation campaign ads, as the Atlanta campaign did.

In addition, it's very useful to set up women's liberation educational weekends, as San Francisco and Detroit did this summer. We can draw in all kinds of new campaign supporters to help build these weekends.

Report on Education by Carol Lipman

We always want to have one or another type of educational class going on for outside people to come to -- either public classes by the YSA or campaign committees, or a class sponsored by a group that we're active in. We've found

in our activity that education is something that almost all women are interested in. And some of the best recruiting chances come through these classes. We also want to make education and discussion about women's liberation part of our regular forum series and the conferences that we hold.

Internal education is very important for us, both in SWP and YSA meetings and in SWP and YSA educational programs. Some of the things we'll want to deal with are: the history of women's struggles, the history of the oppression of women and the role of the family and the nature of the movement as it is today. In addition all the comrades should be familiar with the consciousness raising and psychological aspects of the struggle.

Education is also important in relation to the literature that we carry in our bookstores. We should stock our bookstores not only with the literature from Pathfinder Press, but also with the literature that is being published by the women's liberation movement and capitalist enterprises. It's very important to have this literature in our bookstores, not only for the women who are active in women's liberation, but also so that it is easily accessible to our own comrades.

During the past year, a number of questions have come up around who should sponsor educational functions, or classes. That is, should they be sponsored by women's liberation fractions, the YSA as a whole, women's support committees of the SWP campaign, or any other subcommittee of the YSA that we can think of. It's very clearly a tactical question for us, whether or not we want a class sponsored by the YSA or a committee, or a campaign committee. But there's one thing we want to be very careful about, and that is, we don't want to imply that the party or YSA is a federation of different groupings. We don't want to give any implication that our fractions are "caucuses" whose purpose is to fight for the rights of women within the SWP. In addition, I think we should generally avoid the use of the word "fraction" in outside literature, since people outside our movement don't know what the word fraction means.

Also, questions have been raised about excluding men from educational functions. And in this a distinction should be made, between external and internal classes. An internal class is education for the whole membership, and it should be open to both men and women in our organization. But we've also found, through practical experience, that in the public women's liberation classes that we have run, that new women coming into the movement like to have all-women classes, and feel freer that way. So it is a tactical question whether or not these external

classes will be just for women or open to both men and women.

Report on Third World Women's Liberation
by Jacqueline Rice

Just as Black nationalism and the Black struggle helped to spark the women's liberation movement, the women's liberation movement in turn has had a great impact on the Black liberation struggle. We can already see it reflected in some of the Black press. Right now, you can find articles coming out in the Black Scholar, for example, dealing with Black women and their oppression. Even the magazine, Liberator, which has traditionally taken the most horrible stands on women, has begun to change. They used to have articles about Black women's place being in the home. They just completely wrote her off. But, recently, there was an article implying that they had to reevalutate that whole position.

Now, we face certain problems in building a Black women's liberation movement and one of these problems is the whole attitude of some groups that the women's liberation movement is a white movement, and that it will divide the Black national struggle. That whole concept is put forward by certain ultraleft tendencies, but it does not, by any means, express the sentiment in the Black community as a whole. Just as the attitude that abortion and birth control is a form of genocide is not agreed to by women throughout the Black community.

Another thing, is that the women's liberation movement is having an influence on the Black liberation struggle as a whole, that is, it has an effect on the Black women inside their own movement. As a matter of fact, it was because of the chauvinism within the existing groups such as the Panthers that women started to revolt and organize as women.

In this report I've been talking about Black women because that's the group that's moving. But I think it's important to make the point that Third World women cannot all be lumped into one bag. You have to make a distinction between Black women, Chicano women and Latino women, because there are big differences between these groups in regard to women's liberation.

I'd like to stress the need for education on Third World women. In the forums that we have we should take up such topics as Black woman's history, or the Chicana or have something about the history of the Chicana, or other things like that. If you don't have any Third World women in your local to give such talks, invite someone from another organization, or from another local.

Another thing is that we need to read the literature that's coming out about Third World women, see what other people have to say. And we need to put out more literature about Black women. The response that Maxine's articles got was just tremendous. I have had many talks with Black women about those articles in The Militant. Also, the classes that we have should include classes on Third World women's liberation. Some locals may now be in the position to hold Third World women's classes open to Third World women only.

Now, as far as the whole development of the Black women's movement is concerned, one of the main things right now is consciousness raising and education. Black women and all Third World women suffer a triple oppression, so therefore we have a lot of things to look at, and the problems and complexes that we go through, and the psychological changes, are very heavy. So there's going to be a lot of discussion among Black women about our lives and what effects us, because it's quite different from white women. Also, in the initial stages, there's going to be a need for Black women to organize independently of the existing women's liberation groups. And, like I say, it's due to the oppression and the psychological changes that are quite different than that which pertains to white women.

Now what we want to do also is to project action, concrete action that can involve Black women. What we'd like to have is Third World women, or Third World groups, involved in some actions around such demands as abortion or free day-care centers.

Now, I like to call the beginning of the Black women's liberation movement, "killing two birds with one stone." The reason I say this is because Black women, by taking action, can spur forward not only their own struggle, but the Black struggle as a whole. In reality these two struggles are combined. In Atlanta, our comrades went to welfare mothers and involved the welfare mothers in a whole action on International Women's Day around the issue of abortion. They went to the Welfare Rights Organization and they asked the leaders of this organization to speak. And the Welfare representative spoke in favor of abortion and brought a lot of Black women with her. Now, at the same time there was this other ultraleft woman there speaking against abortion, calling it genocide, and the whole argument took place right up on the stage there, and these Black women from the Welfare Rights Organization supported our position on the right of "free abortion on demand, the right to control one's own body and no forced sterilization." And the welfare mothers got up there and really socked it to them. And they also socked it to the RYM women who have this

whole paternalistic attitude that abortion is genocide. So we've got to go in there full strength in many, many ways and relate to these different groups. And the last thing I'd like to talk about is that where we have Black women or Third World women on the campuses, we can go into the BSUs and the different groups and form caucuses, women's caucuses inside these Black groups. We can also form separate Third World women's groups, or Third World caucuses of women's liberation groups. The sort of things these groups can do is put out newsletters that address themselves to Black women, set up classes, go around speaking, and they can link up in actions with other women's liberation and nationalist organizations. Because, ultimately, our whole goal is to have the Black liberation struggle to come out in firm support of the women's liberation struggle because the two struggles are intertwined.

Report on Women's Liberation and the Struggle Against the Vietnam War by Linda Jenness

All of us here, of course, are aware of the many ways in which the war in Indochina particularly affects women and we see and understand the need for organizing women into the antiwar movement. But it is not the job of the antiwar movement to organize the women's liberation movement. The two movements are separate, but of course interrelated. Very often we've fought other tendencies at antiwar conferences and meetings around the question of the antiwar movement developing or endorsing any particular program for the women's liberation movement. That's not the job of the antiwar movement, that's the job of the women's liberation movement.

Now, wherever the antiwar movement can play a supportive role or give concrete aid to the women's liberation movement, that is very good, and it should be encouraged. For instance, at San Francisco State, I'm told that the SMC there had done a lot of research on the budget and allocations and appropriations of the university and so when the women's liberation movement began a struggle for child care facilities on the campus, the SMC was able to provide the women's liberation movement with some very valuable information that they could use. But, the antiwar movement is not a substitute in any kind of way for the women's liberation movement. And neither is our work around organizing women into the antiwar movement any kind of substitute for other women's liberation work that we do.

It is important, in this regard, to be very careful from a tactical point of view about how we approach the women's liberation movement in getting support

for antiwar actions. There is a tremendous potential for women's liberation groups to become enthusiastically involved in antiwar actions, if participation in these actions grows naturally out of the needs of the women's liberation movement itself. That is, we have found that if the women's liberation movement in a particular area is a vital growing movement, and if support for the antiwar movement comes from inside the women's liberation movement itself, women's liberation participation in antiwar actions can be very successful. But, if a women's liberation group is approached from the outside to endorse an antiwar action, without any regard or concern about what that group is doing, there may be some resulting resentment and suspicion.

I think that we also must be very, very conscious of the fact that there are some women who are involved in the antiwar movement who are not involved in the women's liberation movement, or may even be hostile to it. And, of course, the reverse is also true. And part of our job is to help educate women in both of the movements about the other movements, and to show the interrelation of the two movements without in any way cutting across the single-issue nature of the antiwar movement, and without imposing the antiwar movement onto the women's liberation movement.

Experiences that I've been told about from around the country indicate that the most success that we have had in organizing women into the antiwar movement has been in committees formed around specific actions. That is, that during the building for a specific demonstration, a women's committee was formed to draw more women into the action, and these committees did not function as ongoing women's committees, or women's subcommittees of the SMC or the mobilization committees. Except for around the specific action time, there wasn't too much for these committees to do. In other words, they were more or less task forces for a specific action. And I might point out that these task forces should be much, much broader than the organized women's liberation movement, or women's liberation groups. They should reach out to all women around the question of the war, and draw in different women's organizations, such as women's clubs, welfare mothers, professional groups, and including, of course, any organized women's liberation groups in the area.

Now there are some specific ideas about how we can draw women into the antiwar movement. Very often in the demonstrations of the last year there have been women's contingents, marching under special women's banners. A leaflet can be put out which lists the ways that women are particularly oppressed by the war, explaining why they should join the antiwar movement,

and maybe why they should march in a special women's contingent at the antiwar demonstration. And then, of course, antiwar women can be drawn into the leafletting of other women with this special leaflet, leafletting at shopping centers, at factories where especially women work, telephone companies, and women on the campuses, and in the high schools. Special posters can also be made, not only to advertize the demonstration, but also to be carried on the demonstration itself, and the same applies as well for buttons. There has been some success in getting articles in the women's pages of the newspapers advertizing the demonstrations and why women should come to them. You can also hold women's press conferences, as one of the various tactics you can use to draw women into the action.

Of course, for the actions themselves, child-care centers should be arranged, and it's very, very important that women speakers be included on the platform. And these women speakers don't necessarily have to be women's liberation speakers, they can be, but it's not neces-

sary that they be. They can be leaders in the antiwar movement, or women in the trade unions, Black or Chicano women.

And the final point I want to make is about GI's wives. The GI wives, the WACS, and the other women in the armed forces are beginning here and there to organize. In some places, they're beginning to organize around the question of the war, such as at Ft. McClellan, where a GI-WAC antiwar group exists. In building for November 15, there was a good bit of success there in organizing GI wives for that demonstration.

In other places the GI wives are beginning to organize around the question of women's liberation, around women's issues. I think that these women are certainly a case in point of the interrelation of the two movements, and it seems to me that special efforts in the areas where there are bases should be made to involve women, particularly around, and building for and participating in the October 31 actions.

TRADE UNION WORKSHOP

[The following is a digest of reports at the Trade Union panel at Oberlin, August 15, 1970, made from transcripts of tapes without benefit of correction by the reporters.]

* * *

Chairman (Lovell): We have reports from comrades who have been active in different unions in different sections of the country, working under a variety of circumstances, sometimes with different goals. We hope to draw some conclusions about what is best for us to do in the unions, now; and what we do not want to do at this time.

Frank Grinnon, Atlanta: Most of my union work has not been in my union, the Glass Bottle Blowers Union, AFL-CIO. As a union member and a candidate for public office, I was able to participate in strike support actions of the city workers' strike conducted by AFSCME local 1644 this past spring.

The forms of our participation were mainly around Militant articles, interviews with strike leaders, sales to the rank and file during the strike, through our election campaign, and through our organization of community and student support of the AFSCME strike.

We got a lot of mileage out of the Militant, a recognized supporter of the strike. It gave good coverage of the strike; we sold it consistently; and leading strikers took small bundles to sell to their friends.

We got interviews from the strikers which were published. Tom Evans, a middle-layer official, was one of those interviewed. We became friendly with some of the leaders, and introduced our ideas, urging the necessity of a break with the Democratic Party. Evans had actively campaigned for Sam Massell, had played a leading part in the Atlanta labor movement to elect Massell mayor. When Massell stabbed the striking union in the back, we were able to introduce our ideas about independent political action and the need for a Labor Party. We invited Evans to speak at our Militant Labor Forum where we had an entire evening discussion about breaking with the Democratic Party.

Our election campaign also served well. About the fifth day of the strike, we got out an open letter to Sam Massell, which we made sure got to all strikers. It was an attack on Massell, pointing up the vicious strike-breaking tactics he used, hammering home the need to break with the Democratic party.

This was a real propoaganda campaign,

and the response was fantastic. Strikers were saying, "Linda was right. She was saying all that during the campaign, that Massell and the Democrats are not interested in labor." Some said, "I should have voted for Linda."

We played up the Black nationalist character of the strike. The bourgeois press, many in the unions, and some in the Black community were trying to play down the nationalist character of the strike. They were trying to gloss-over the fact that it was Black workers who were receiving those intolerable wages and the bad working conditions. We pointed this up, and the strikers liked us for it.

Also, we were very aggressive in strike-support actions which we tried to organize wherever possible. Linda spoke as an SWP candidate at several mass rallies. I was running for office, too, but I wasn't so well known. So I spoke at a couple of rallies as an active union member, working for trade union support. I was invited to speak on building mass marches. We were at all the mass meetings, volunteering our services, helping to organize, and the result was that people in the unions and in the Black community would call upon us for help.

We played a big part in setting up student support action for the city workers' strike. We were a little late in this because we had been responsible for building the April 15 march.

The strikers held a march on April 15, too. Both were held on Saturday afternoon, and they joined forces in downtown Atlanta. Two or three thousand marchers were there. The workers picked up the antiwar slogans, chanted "Bring the Troops Home Now." It lent a very good feeling of solidarity. And a lot of people in the union leadership saw that the antiwar movement is a social force. They want to relate to it because they see it is a power.

I think this is the way we will relate to many in the unions, through the antiwar movement. They seek the support of this movement.

We're seeing it now in Atlanta with the Alliance for Labor Action where students have been supporting a strike out at Dobbs House, at the airport, and the leadership in the ALA is very interested. They talk to us about the antiwar movement, and want to know what they can do to help it along.

We are trying to get some money from them which we badly need. And, of course, they are looking for organizers, young people to serve on their staff. So they

are super-friendly.

We helped the AFSCME strike of the city workers by getting resolutions passed in our own unions, and by getting individual militants to join the picket lines and the mass demonstrations. In this way our comrades became known as strike supporters. For me this opened up a new group of friends among Black militants in my union who followed the strike closely. I was able to get a small collection of food in the plant for the strikers. And in this way got others to actively support the strike and come to the strike hall.

Through these new friends we made during the strike, we were able to open some doors to the domestic workers' union, the Distributive Workers union, the Teamsters, and some others. This made it possible for us to get endorsements for some important actions such as the Cleveland Conference. We got endorsement for this from AFSCME local 1644, and from some leaders in the domestic workers' union.

We took the initiative after Jackson State and Augusta. There was a big march in Atlanta. We got on the phone and called everyone we knew in the unions, set up a labor committee to build this March Against War and Repression. As a consequence we won some respect. Whenever criticism comes up we're well known to several trade union leaders and to many militants, and we have been able to work together with them quite well. We hope to build a lot of trade union support for the October 31 demonstration.

Briefly on the role of our political opponents: RYM II had several people in the AFSCME local prior to and during the strike. They were busy building a caucus, putting out a small paper, trying to make recruits. When the strike came, they fell in line behind the union leadership at first, even when the union leaders made serious mistakes. Soon they veered off to the left and began criticizing the bureaucracy. This turn was so sharp and went so far that they forgot all about supporting the strike. They lost contact.

Another tendency, represented by Great Speckled Bird, actually worked in support of the strike. This paper has a weekly circulation of 20,000. It was the only local press coverage that backed the strike.

To summarize: Our political aim in this particular strike situation was to discredit the Democratic Party. The issue was obvious. Mayor Sam Massell is part of the Democratic Party, stabbing labor in the back, and we kept pounding away at this -- in Militant articles, in our campaign literature, in private discussions, in the Militant Labor Forum. Many of those

strike leaders are very defensive about the Democratic party today. A couple of them are supporting Lonnie King in the Democratic Party primary. But they are shamefaced about it and try to justify themselves by explaining that they hope to break up the Democratic Party and form an independent Black party. This idea of an independent Black party was introduced by us, and it is significant that many -- including the opportunists -- now recognize this as an alternative to the Democratic Party.

Chairman: The next three reporters are teachers, each from a different part of the country.

Cummings, Atlanta: The Atlanta Federation of Teachers is a new AFT local, struggling to survive. It has attracted some militant young teachers.

At the very beginning some of these young teachers wanted to set up a radical caucus. I didn't encourage this idea, but I did go to the caucus meetings to get to know some of these activists. It was a foregone conclusion that the group would fall apart or move rapidly in a reformist and opportunist direction.

The AFT local is overwhelmingly Afro-American, but the radical caucus was all white. It soon faded away.

Another trap I avoided: pure and simple trade unionism. It is easy to become involved in all the problems and work of building the union. And we should take on a limited amount of this work, but we can't let this distract from our more important SWP work. We must be sensitive and tactful and patient about explaining this so as not to offend union militants who may become SWP members at some stage.

Right now routine trade union work must be subordinated to the more important work that the YSA and the party are carrying out.

Some specific activities in my AFT local:

1) The fight against the standard red-baiting clause in the constitution, denying membership to "communists, fascists, and other totalitarians." Other activists and myself got the local to reject this clause in our local constitution. Our delegates to the AFT convention will urge its removal from the national constitution.

2) The support of the AFSCME city workers' strike. We worked hard on this issue and got teacher support for the strike because much more was involved here than just union solidarity. There was the whole question of the Black struggle, plus the chance to expose Democratic Party politics.

3) Political action. The National AFT asked us to endorse Andrey Young, a well known SCLC figure. But rather than rubber-stamp the National AFT's choice, our local voted to invite all candidates for the office to speak to us, and arranged for a big public meeting where Young and Lonnie King (former president of the Atlanta NAACP), and also Frank Grinnon who is the SWP candidate spoke.

This was a very successful campaign action, and we hope to use it as an example to other trade unions.

4) Antiwar work. This is the most productive area of activity in my opinion. We helped organize a teachers' antiwar committee which conducts an educational campaign about the war, through the union, and has passed a strong antiwar resolution to be introduced at the AFT convention. The local also endorsed the last Cleveland antiwar conference, and sent a telegram to CAPAC. Then, after Cambodia and the murders at Kent, Augusta and Jackson, the Atlanta antiwar movement and SCLC combined to call a mass demonstration for May 23. We got a vote of our AFT local executive of 12-1 in favor of supporting this demonstration. So we made big banners saying AFT, AFL-CIO, for the march. The most conspicuous (and most photographed) signs were "US Out of Asia Now" and "AFT Against War."

Our local endorsed and participated in the Hiroshima-Nagasaki Day demonstration, August 8, and it was an AFT member who chaired the demonstration and was the main public spokesman for the Atlanta Mobilization Committee.

We have not made any recruits yet, but we hope to.

Two points: 1) don't give the impression that you are trying to sneak socialist ideas into the union. Tell everyone who is interested in listening exactly what you think and stand for. 2) whatever is under stake should be in consultation with the SWP. It helps avoid a lot of mistakes.

T. Bird, Connecticut: We have been working as a fraction of two because there is no SWP branch in New Haven yet. We hope to have one soon.

My AFT local is intermediate between the well-established locals and the new ones like Atlanta. The local is 20 years old, but only became the collective bargaining agent three years ago. We still face challenges from the NEA.

All sorts of teachers' groups form. My first experience was in a Teachers' Cooperative reflecting student militancy and soon fell apart. Many teachers -- especially the young liberal to radical types -- simply reject unions out of hand.

More recently I have been approached by another group who is in the union and wants to challenge the incumbent leadership. I agreed with their aims, and ran for union office on their slate. The slate won by six votes. So for the past six months I have been a member of the Executive Board.

During this time I have been developing contract proposals, going through the whole process of negotiations, doing the regular union things. I agree with Cummings that it's dangerous to get tied down, but some important openings have developed through the Teachers union:

1) getting the union and the Black community allied in fighting the Board of Education, 2) projecting the idea of open schools, which is turning out to be a force within the union, 3) getting out an antiwar referendum to the membership.

Without going into detail, I'll mention one case involving two teachers who were suspended for supporting a parent boycott. It was a parent boycott of the school, where what was essentially a community control issue arose. The union came out in support of them, of course, and that whole issue has re-oriented some of the teachers towards working with the union, and at the same time it tended to forge a community-union alliance on this particular question.

We have not functioned as a caucus. At the present time, many of the things we're pushing have a big majority for them on the Executive Board. However, some of the conservatives on the Board are getting very uptight about the community control issue, and likely there will be a big ideological split.

An encouraging development is that a women's group may form in the union. And simply the way the male leadership has treated the women activists, within the union, they have a basis for forming the women's liberation group.

We do not have a Black caucus. Only ten per cent of the teachers are Black. However our president who is somewhat of a Black opportunist, responds to the Black community in a way the previous leadership could not.

I will end by saying again that this work tends to become very time consuming. And even though it may be fruitful, it must serve the needs of building the working class party.

George Bouse, Detroit: There are about 10,000 teachers in Detroit, fairly solidly organized. About 40 per cent, or 4,000, are Black.

We participated in the New Caucus which held well attended meetings and was

predominantly Black. Here we introduced our idea of independent political action and community control of the schools, our antiwar position, and -- on occasion -- our SWP candidates.

This New Caucus offered us an opportunity to do very basic political work, selling subs, distributing our literature, doing all those things we associate in the full sense with political activity.

We can also do much the same thing at the general membership meetings of the AFT in Detroit. We have been able to set up campaign literature tables and antiwar tables.

Literature has gone well. And we have recruited one member from this union.

The New Caucus, which had a promising start a couple of years ago, degenerated into a kind of anti-bureaucratic opposition to the peculiar kind of Shankerite leadership we have in Detroit.

I want to return to the fact that I feel that intensive participation in the unions does have to come from our national tasks and perspectives.

Elmer Hendrix, Chicago: In the United States, there are about 600,000 railroad workers. They occupy a key sector of the national economy. The engine crew members, 230,000 of them, belong to a relatively new union called United Transportation Union.

Like many other unions, there's been a big influx of young workers, particularly young Black workers.

Within this union a very broad sentiment for the right of the membership to vote on contracts is encouraged by the existence of a Right-To-Vote-Committee. It is an official committee in one of the Chicago locals, a standing committee. The right to vote is a very simple, democratic demand.

This demand does not in and of itself, at this time, challenge the material privileges of the union bureaucrats.

We believe that the formation of this Right-To-Vote-Committee is a useful tactic at this time. It is presently confined to the single issue, is uniting thousands of railroad workers for an action, seems to be splitting off some sectors of the union leadership, and promises to open the way to greater membership participation in the affairs of the union. This is something new in the railroad industry.

It is good that we are now in a position to pay some special attention to this development in this union, and assign two or three members to give most of their

time to this work. We think it will prove worthwhile in the long run.

There is another side to the work in this union. This is among the young workers who are not much interested in union activities generally, or even in the Right-To-Vote-Committee at this time. These young workers, like their generation in most other unions, are interested in other issues such as the war in Vietnam, the Black struggle, the need for anti-capitalist political action.

Last fall, up in Minneapolis, we recruited a young railroad worker who's a member of this union. He did not learn about us through the RTVC which he had never heard of. He found us because he got interested in radical politics and came to a Militant Labor Forum.

We want to go after some of these young workers in the industry with the idea in mind that in the very near future we will recruit and educate a few of them who will then discover that the RTVC exists in their union and is a good idea. We think this will help to make some further changes in the railroad industry.

Meanwhile, the RTVC has been collecting money from railroad workers on all lines and different parts of the country. We have an account in the UTU local, and we're using this money for leaflets, buttons, stickers, and literature that demands the right to vote on contracts. For example, in a few weeks the committee has reported that it will be sending out a mailing to 8,000 local officers throughout the United States and Canada, in order to expand this committee into an international formation, with chapters and members from coast to coast in the US and Canada.

The Right-To-Vote-Committee is printing thousands of buttons and stickers, demanding the right to vote on union contracts, to paste on boxcars -- so watch the trainmen and the trains as they go by and you will know about the RTVC. This committee hopes to build up a big national leadership, and is printing 20,000 flyers for this drive. In the fall they hope to open a national office, with a staff, and begin publishing a regular newsletter. Later on, maybe they can pick up on many other issues such as inflation, unemployment and the war in Vietnam.

Lawrence, Los Angeles: I am a social worker and, as you know, the Federal Government has been rationalizing and phasing out the welfare system. My union is Local 535, organized up and down the state in California. It is an AFL-CIO affiliate, but not part of AFSCME. There has been a sharp increase in Black and Brown workers in the welfare departments because the college degree requirements no longer obtain.

Our key work is socialist propaganda and recruitment, and this consists mostly of Militant sales, subscriptions, and recruitment. However, there are some things we do in the union in connection with this and in order to promote it.

At each meeting of the Executive Board, which consists of officers and stewards, about 40 or 50 members attend. We sell ten to fifteen copies of The Militant there. We have 50 to 75 subs in the Los Angeles area among members of this union. Our paper is popular, and lots of pictures, diagrams and cartoons are cut from it and pasted on people's desks, because they really enjoy the graphics.

During the May upsurge, we were able to walk around from desk to desk with The Militant and show the headlines. The paper sold itself.

We also sell books and pamphlets to social workers on an individual basis.

The union with about 2,500 members (6,000 statewide) has taken a very strong position against the war. A couple of years ago there was a union referendum, which passed, for immediate withdrawal. The union has endorsed every major national and local antiwar action, including the Chicano Moratorium on August 29 and October 31.

On a statewide basis we have a fight with the bureaucrats over what endorsement of these actions means. Our local union publications have printed such things as the SMC appeal for international action.

On two occasions the union contributed \$100.00 and \$50.00 for the SMC. It has sent official representatives to local and national antiwar coalition meetings. It sent a bus to San Francisco for the November 15 demonstrations there.

Our union sends representatives to other unions to urge support for the antiwar movement, and usually these speakers are SWP members.

A few months ago, for the first time in 20 years, there was an antiwar candidate in the election of officers at the ALF-CIO central labor council. Our union supported and campaigned for that candidate, put out leaflets about the issue, and he got ten to fifteen per cent of the vote from among the delegates to this very conservative body. We considered it a very good showing.

In helping to build the action for May 30 this year, our union gave an office and some supplies and equipment.

The union has also organized demonstrations against California welfare cuts. In these actions the SWP had a campaign

speaker and a special campaign leaflet that was directed to the union membership. This leaflet got a very good reception at the demonstration.

In terms of supporting struggles in the Black and Brown and Third World communities, the union is under quite a bit of pressure because of the kind of work it covers, and the kind of people it has organized.

For example, one client was killed by the sheriff when he came into the welfare office. We built a demonstration around that.

The union publicly opposed the shoot-out at the Black Panther Party headquarters. It defended the Chicano group that was arrested for demonstrations at a Catholic Church. To all these things, the union has given money.

There is now a Black caucus in the union, and the majority of leaders are Militant subscribers. This caucus was opposed to the antiwar activities a year ago, now they are in support of them. We have backed their fight for the union to hire the first Black piecard. This was successful, and they got their Black piecard.

This Black caucus tends to be for more rank and file democracy.

There is another development within the union, a Black and Brown group calling itself "New Careerists." It is made up of clerical workers. They are better organized than case aids, for example. Only about 1/3 of the eligible workers belong to the union, but 80 to 90 per cent of clerical workers are signed up.

The union sometimes gives direct support to the SWP. When the party headquarters was burned down last May, this union made offices available for printing leaflets, holding meetings and press conferences.

The state Executive Board unanimously endorsed the Citizens Committee for the Right of Free Political Expression, our defense committee. All officers of the Los Angeles chapter signed an urgent appeal for funds for the SWP, as an act of solidarity after the gusano attack upon us.

Some workers we meet in the course of our union activity come to banquets, forums, and other party functions. They contribute financially also.

We have become involved in some internal struggles within the union, but these are of a different character from those of most other unions. Our union does not have control of the jobs. It must constantly win new members in order to stay

alive. Membership is purely voluntary. Consequently, our union politics tend to be more free than in the old-line closed-shop unions.

Lund, Berkeley: In this report I draw upon the experience I have had working in the Berkeley post office. The question I will talk about is that of young YSAers and SWP members moving into a union situation without any previous experience in unions.

How effective can we be if we go off campus and into a union situation?

My own experience convinces me that the youth radicalization and the increasing oppression of the working class in the US has deeply affected the new working class. This is because the composition of the working class is changing. Today the average age of workers is 26. A large percentage of workers is Black and Third World. So the possibilities for young worker comrades to be effective propagandists, moving trade unionists in the direction of class consciousness and rank and file control of their unions, are unlimited.

The present period of labor rumblings is indicative of the youth radicalization. The instincts of labor, struggling against class oppression, are as positive and healthy as the spontaneous student movement towards the antiwar university. It is essential that we understand the positive direction of the labor movement, and the labor upsurge, as revealed by the postal strike.

Young comrades who enter the trade union movement without previous experience should have the perspective of carrying out our party tasks, that is, propaganda -- giving effective expressive analysis to the situation within each union.

Our trade union work should have a by-product of increasing recruitment to our movement.

We should get endorsements, and help to build united front actions. In the Bay area these include Fair Ballot, Defense Committees, and especially the antiwar movement.

One of our most important immediate jobs is to involve trade unionists -- and the union we belong to -- in the existing mass movement today, primarily the antiwar movement. This is where we can be most effective.

With this understood, young comrades from the campus can be just as effective as comrades who have been working in trade unions for many years.

At this point, we're seeking to re-

cruit new members and build our party, not red unions. Nor are we trying to take over any section of the existing unions. Our central task is propaganda.

What we do must be done in consultation with the branch leadership. What has been done in my union is instructive. I am a member of the Alliance of Postal and Federal Employees, an industrial union. The big problem for postal workers is how to smash craft unionism and build one big union. My union is one of the older unions, established along industrial lines. The membership is predominantly Third World. Locally it is about 70 per cent Black, nationally about 90 per cent. It is extremely militant, and attracts young radicals and Black workers. It is breaking the hold of the craft unions. We expect to gain exclusive recognition for the entire Berkeley post office within the next year.

A close friend of mine just off the campus has been able to do the following:

- 1) Write consistently for the union paper -- polemics against craft unionism, articles on the need for unity of action in the post office, and especially material on the relationship of the war to the workers.

- 2) Serve as a staff member on the paper, influencing to a certain extent the policy of the paper -- even if a eulogy of Reuther was printed.

- 3) help make a connection between the local union and the antiwar movement by getting SMC at the University of California to agree to run off copies of the union paper free. This was important because it started militant thinking about the relationship between unions of this kind and the antiwar movement.

- 4) Become an elected trustee of the union. He played a leading part as a spokesman during the postal strike, and was a member of the strike central committee.

Our union executive and the local have endorsed the Cleveland conference, adopted a widely publicized resolution in support of the local transit workers' strike, passed a strong antiwar resolution and is recommending similar action by the national organization, urged all-out support for the October 31 demonstrations. Most important, our union is calling on the membership to march in the demonstration. Postal workers, as federal employees, are hesitant to join demonstrations.

Our friend was sent as a delegate to the national convention. The local union president spoke publicly in favor of Hiroshima Day demonstrations.

Our election campaign has helped all this work in the union. Our union president has met and had political discussions with

Herman Fagg, the SWP candidate for governor in California. He wants to meet Andrew Pulley upon his return from the Far East. He has had some talks with Paul Boutelle. Although our union president has feelings of sympathy with the Panthers, they do not talk to him about the problems he faces as a postal worker and a union official. Our candidates do. He reads our literature and learns from it. Recently he bought a large order.

This man is very able. He has been mentioned as running for Ron Dellum's city council seat in Berkeley.

We have tried to introduce everywhere the idea of independent political action for the Black community.

In my opinion, our experience has not been due to any exceptional union situation, or exceptional comrades, but rather to the changing and radicalizing working class.

This is not like the 1930s with the Stalinists in control. We, unlike our political opponents, can lead the mass movement. And our comrades who have already had experience on campus can come right on into the union movement and begin to help out wherever their experience is of some use.

Pat Masters, Houston: This is a case history of developments in a Texas oil refinery and some of the lessons we drew. This refinery is located near Houston, and employs about 1,500 people, organized by the Oil, Chemical and Atomic workers, and the vast majority of these workers are older, went through the McCarthy period, well-tamed, constituted an aristocracy of labor in this region, lots of them are Wallace men.

The big change started last year when the company hired 300 young workers, right off the campus, high school and college graduates. They are open to radical ideas, mostly against the war, wearing long hair, go to rock festivals, smoke pot, a product of the youth radicalization, reaching even into Texas.

This affected the union. These kids started going to union meetings. They began raising questions about what kinds of deals the union leadership was making with the company, and how the union leadership had a no-struggle attitude, and the company was always running over the union. They stirred up quite a bit of motion within the local. Meetings used to be 20, and now they're 50 to 60, even 150 once, and the meetings kept growing. The young guys would come down, criticize the leadership, and they'd make big speeches; the old guys would come down, mainly to vote down the younger guys. They did this mostly out of prejudice.

The main leader of the young guys was a real hippie. He wore a headband to the union meetings, and his little string of beads. He'd get up and make speeches. The Blacks would always vote with the young guys, since they'd had experience with the older white workers, real crackers, who had put the Black workers down in the whole formation of the union since 1942.

About this time, a couple of YSAers were hired into the plant. We'd go to union meetings, and we could see something was going on. We'd talk to them about getting together before union meetings, have a discussion about what should be raised, and what positions to take, but before any of this really got started, the caucus fell apart.

Like a lot of these formations around the country, it really wasn't very serious. The young people had put forward a motion to expand the grievance committee within the union, and there was a big battle that lasted three weeks; the old guys mobilized and it was six to one against the young guys, and they sort of fell apart, got demoralized, and stopped coming to meetings.

These temporary groupings, without real programs will be showing up more and more in the future, and it's not really fruitful for us to get organizationally involved with them. We feel now, it would have been much better for us to start selling Militant subs to them.

McHough, Madison: I'm going to try to project some of the lessons and limitations of what you can do in a city where you don't have a mass industrial base, where you do have a large campus, and a large force of public employees organized in unions. In the Madison local we had seven comrades in five different AFSCME locals, and two other comrades in the Teaching Assistants locals. Now, the key comrades who played considerable roles were in three different AFSCME locals. In Local 1, State Employees, with jurisdiction over all non-university state employees in Madison, we had two friends on the Executive Board. We had a comrade in Local 60 which is city employees, and another in Local 171 which is University Employees. Let me say that most of our trade union work in Madison is done as trade unionists, and we are fairly constricted and circumscribed. The antiwar work I described yesterday was probably the most comprehensive that we did.

Two years ago, a close friend of mine was elected to the Exec. of my local, which has 400 to 500 members. He was elected unanimously. He was recently re-elected unanimously, which is strange, because he had quite a reputation as an antiwar builder.

Ever since I've been in the union, the antiwar thing has never been mentioned by anybody. It's very difficult. We've found that in all the AFSCME unions we have a combination of apathy and militancy. A real contradiction. You're lucky to get eight people to a union meeting, and they just sort of sit there.

Within the unions, the war is difficult to raise, so we created a structure outside the union called Madison Labor Against the War where we did our most productive work.

The militancy is directed against the State, County and City, their rotten wages etc. And there is also militancy which is directed against the union bureaucracy itself -- every union meeting I've been to, there's been a tirade against "King Wurf," Jerry Wurf, head of AFSCME.

Every bienium, capital dues have been increased. "Where is it going? He's making forty grand." Some of the more racist workers in the union say Wurf is spending all the dough supporting the Blacks down in Memphis and Atlanta, that sort of thing. So there are contradictions.

My first probe was when the city of Madison was repressing the firefighters union which was on strike. They city tried to suspend the leadership of the union, and we convinced our AFSCME Local to back the firefighters. I think that's the first political stand that union had taken in its history.

The next break came around the GE strike, when we put up resolutions endorsing that strike. We tried to get money for the strike fund. Our comrade in local 60, a librarian, put up that motion, there was dead silence -- support the strike and donate \$25.00! They begrudgingly supported it. In local 171, university employees, almost all blue collar, a similar resolution was put up, and the reaction expressed the conservatism of the workers in a city like Madison.

The labor movement is dominated by the building trades workers. The whole attitude was why give money to them? What have they done for us? That was our baptism under fire.

The next opening was during late winter, early spring, the teaching assistants' strike on campus. This was the first major campus strike, where 3,500 TA's went out. We had two comrades there, one who was on the stewards council, the other a rank-and-filer. As soon as it became clear that there would be a strike, we geared our whole local into it, mobilized the trade union comrades, very effectively. Just before the strike, before the membership had actually taken the strike vote, we brought a TA repre-

sentative to our union exec. where he rapped about the strike. Then after a closed door session of three hours, we got a motion out of the board to support the upcoming TA strike.

That went out in banner headlines, especially the student paper. I think it helped build momentum for the strike.

Once the strike was on, we assigned a comrade in the university employees local 171 almost full time to the TA strike headquarters, to give them technical advice, and be liaison with Local 171.

We feared the YSAers towards building up student support, we took the YSA campus transitional program, and we reproduced thousands of copies of it -- and put in large letters "support the TA strike."

Local 171 had made a deal with the university and the state AFL-CIO that they wouldn't support the TA strike if they could make a certain deal in negotiations, a real bureaucratic sell out.

We knew it was coming. We tried to fight it, and really got creamed.

Local 171 scabbed on the strike the whole time. What really won it was that the Teamsters supported it. All the comrades learned from it.

Dave Rodgers, Chicago: I work on the railroad. There's a big difference between the older and the younger workers out there. Recently I brought out a book, Who Rules America, to read on a soft-touch job I had -- well, I never got to read it. It brought out such discussion on the war that it was an all night thing. The younger workers kept the discussion going.

I hired out two years ago on a third man crew. I came out there as an antiwar activist, and got known as a radical, even a socialist. The newer guys didn't care. The older guys started calling me a Communist. The younger workers told me I had that right. Black workers in the job have changed things. I was out there with an old engineer who was white, and two younger Blacks. These two Blacks got up there, and he's nice, and as soon as they left, he'd say "those goddamn niggers are taking over our jobs." So during a break, I asked him with a lot of other Black workers around, "Hey Bill, how come you're nice to them when they're around and call them niggers when they're not?" He jumped out of the back of the shanty, and was out for a few weeks. I think he's back now. Now he warns the other older workers. "Not only the Blacks will beat you up, but you got to watch out for that other guy -- he says things that will get you beat up." They're still racist, and they'll continue to be, but now they whisper and they're very careful about it.

There's a certain amount of ultra-leftism out there, not like smashing the shanty, but how to derail. You have to talk to them about it, they're very serious about it. You have to make them understand that it's not a good tactic for the real fights, but it shows there's a real feel for that big strike that's going to come some day. Right now younger workers don't go to union meetings. Maybe we get twelve members to a union meeting, used to be five -- all yes men for a quorum. We get a few new faces now, once in a while 24 guys come. It's not that they're bad union members, but they just don't feel the union is doing enough for them. And it's not. I think they'll eventually see that they need to be active to make the UTU better, and fight the bureaucrats.

When we proposed the right to vote thing on the floor, six international representatives came down. They must have been told, but they agree with us. They've agreed for the last 30 years, and they appreciate us. They're glad to see us come along, and one of them, the local chairman made the statement, "you guys are doing me a real favor. You've taken the decision-making responsibility off my shoulders, I really appreciate it."

Sorenson, San Francisco: I am in the Lithographers and Photo Engravers International for about ten years now. While in Minneapolis, until about two years ago, I was able to make some friends within the traditional trade union structure and do a little work there, some antiwar work. But now, in San Francisco, the situation seems changed. I find it harder to work in the established trade union channels there. This may be due to the peculiarities of my local union. But in many ways it is typical of the craft union set up.

The only success I had was in the plant where I used to work, a large printing plant. There I tried to polarize the shop on the antiwar issue. My target was October 15. I made a big effort to get the workers to take off that day for the demonstration. Two or three others, members of the Peace and Freedom Party, and I took off. And there was sentiment for it among many others. Tension in the shop was pretty high.

So after this, we started building towards November 15. It gave us a good chance to rap with other workers in the shop about the war. This was not done at all in the local union.

Most young workers don't come to union meetings, maybe on this account. So the best place to reach them is in the shop. You have to work in the plant, get to know them, and when the time comes and when you think they can be pulled into an action, then they become recruitable work-

ers. This is an ongoing process, part of our every day work.

Because these young workers can generalize, and begin to see the established trade union structure in relation to the general picture, I think that's why they get demoralized.

Sitting in a union meeting where the whole old craft union style of running a meeting is used, gets pretty dull. A lot of issues about the Golf Committee or the Bowling Committee take up most of the time. New Business, which is where issues that interest the members may be brought up, is given very little time. There isn't much New Business at these sections of the craft unions. Mostly it's Old Business. Issues that relate to the young workers never come up.

I believe this will change, but right now that's the way it is in many places.

Lovell: That concludes the reports.

We asked for these reports at this conference because we have been in correspondence with most of the comrades who are in these different situations. We hope, by bringing them all together, to draw some general conclusions from this rather extensive collective experience in the unions.

Of course, the question immediately arises as to how these reports relate to each other, and what meaningful conclusions can be drawn from a body of reports like this that includes a very wide range of experiences. What does it tell us about the unions today?

We tried to add to it. We wanted a first-hand report here from Debbie Leonard of Seattle who certainly was more active and more responsible than anyone else for the adoption of the antiwar resolution by the AFSCME International Convention in Denver this year. We wanted her to give a report here about what she did in AFSCME in Seattle, how she was elected as a delegate to the convention, what her work in the union has been, and how her campaign for public office on the SWP ticket affected her union work. She wrote such a report which went out to the branches, but we hoped she would be able to participate in this discussion. We had also hoped that Tom Cagle would be able to come here. He is active in the UAW. Everyone is familiar with his pamphlet, "Life in an Auto Plant."

In addition, our painter comrades in San Francisco have been deeply involved in a struggle against bureaucratic control of their union.

These all represent different ways

of work within the union, determined in part by the situation in a particular union and also by the general political climate of the times.

There were several examples of different ways we relate to changes now occurring in the union movement. One such example is that submitted by Frank Grinnon from Atlanta. He is a member of a union that did not offer much opportunity to him as a candidate for public office in the city. So he turned his attention to other sectors of the union movement and sought to help organize support for the strike of city employees. He did this as a trade unionist as well as an SWP candidate. This is one way of working when the SWP branch seriously tries to link its electoral campaigns with local developments. It happened in this instance that the strike of city employees raised important political issues. But the fact that our comrades seized upon these proved to be a help to us in our future relations with the entire union movement. This is one way of working, and under present circumstances it serves our purposes well.

We seek everywhere to introduce the antiwar campaign into the unions, and make them a part of it. The report about the social workers union in Los Angeles by Lawrence offers an example of how this can be done, and how it helps promote our general work in some unions where the situation is favorable.

Sometimes we find that our comrades are elected to official union posts. In this union it happened because we were active in local grievances, and promoters of antiwar activity. This appealed to the members of this social service union, and they supported our comrade in the union election. These jobs often take a lot of time, but they can be very useful to us. Decisions to run for union posts ought to be considered in each instance by the branch executive committee.

There is another type of union work that we are now experimenting with, where we have an unusual situation. This is in the railroad industry.

We are working here on a campaign to democratize the union, and it is being conducted on a strictly union basis, independent at this time of our broad political campaigns and other party-building activities.

The reports emphasized that we do not regard this as a big campaign against the bureaucracy. We try to avoid fights of this kind at this time. We do not consider the bureaucracy the main danger. The bureaucrats are not our first enemy. The enemy is the boss. And if you operate in the unions, this is what you must remember at all times.

If issues are properly raised, very often we find that some of the bureaucrats, without in any way identifying themselves with us and our broader aims, will support particular issues. This is happening today with the increasing support of unions for the antiwar movement and the mass demonstrations.

Even when the bureaucrats don't like what is going on and are worried about where it may lead, if the issues are clearly presented as being squarely against the boss, these union bureaucrats find it hard to fight our proposals.

The course we have followed in the rail union already provides useful experience and lessons for future work. The Right To Vote Committee was established as a regular committee of the union. It is not the work of a rank and file caucus, although it seeks to draw rank and file militants into the apparatus of the committee and to involve broad sections of the membership.

All financial contributions sent to the committee -- and it has received a good response in this respect -- are channeled through the local union treasury. There can be no charge of misappropriation of funds. The books are audited regularly.

Now you can see right away that this is different from the commonly accepted notion of how the militant left-wing forms and operates in the unions.

This particular development grows out of the unique character of the union and the industry. But that will always be the case in other unions and other industries.

We want to help this development in the rail industry in every way possible. But it must remain the work of militants in the union. We do not want to substitute the party for this, or try to make assignments to carry out detailed work that must be done by men in the industry with several years experience and therefore better qualifications as organizers than anyone now in our own ranks. However, we are prepared to help them with technical assistance.

Often our critics say that the SWP is not involved in the "real movement," that we are not interested in and have no connection with the working class and the unions, that our party, is "just a bunch of campus kids." But this is not accurate.

If you compare and contrast our work in the union movement with that of the Stalinists, we do not come off badly. We can also stand comparison with the Social Democrats. No other tendencies relate to the union movement. The ultraleft sectarians who are our most severe critics have no

connection with unions and don't know where to find them.

The Stalinists, it is true, have more members and sympathizers and connections in the union movement than we have. But they are not able to make any headway with their National Rank-and-File Action Committee. Their aims are different from ours, but we have been able to make gains while they have not.

We try to keep close contact with political developments in the unions, to the extent that this is possible for us. We are constantly probing for any openings that may appear. As you know from these reports, we have comrades in some unions around the country. They are not idle.

We still have comrades with a vast amount of experience in the union movement, and the party experience is unparalleled. There is no single organization -- including the CP -- that has the experience of our party. No other organization can publish a history of the modern labor movement to match Labor's Giant Step. So we have a background that gives us some understanding of the union movement which others lack.

We understand the great potential of the union movement. We do everything we can to promote the interest of the working class by organizing the vanguard party of this class. And we do this at every juncture, wherever we can make the greatest gains. The most important consideration for us at all times is what must we do right now, under present circumstances.

What is the present stage of development of the union movement? What should we do to take it maybe a step further, to link it up with some of the big political developments of the day? This is our problem in relation to the unions.

The whole process of radicalization which cannot help but affect the union movement is something over which we have no control.

As concerns our overall work in the union movement at this juncture, we have no standard formula. We cannot give pat answers. There are some warning signs of pitfalls we intend to avoid. But we do not have any pat answers. We must keep step with the changing movement and know and try to understand the new moods of the workers.

Many comrades read the history books and say, "Well, in Minneapolis in 1934 this is what the comrades did, and why can't we do this now?" We can draw many lessons from that experience, and relate them to the now, but it is not the same now, it is different. We must do what is

dictated by the conditions of today. This is the whole meaning of our trade union work at this stage of its development.

This is what we have tried to bring over in the course of these reports today.

Comments From the Floor

M. Cherney, Philadelphia: (Paraphrased, because not spoken into the microphone) Until I heard these reports, I had imagined there was much less party activity in the unions than is actually the case. Now Comrade Lund's (from Berkeley) statement that new comrades can be as effective as older ones, is a drastic general statement. This is not how you bring about a change into the concept of the party. Changes like this should be more formally developed, in written form, as a National Committee statement, perhaps. When a leading comrade makes the statement "all the old rules are off," I don't know what applies anymore. It can be a very dangerous source of confusion, especially in trade union work.

Lawrence, Los Angeles: I think the old rules do apply, especially in the case of the Transitional Program. We have to find the right way to do that at this time, and they are different from the way they were, in the thirties, because there's a Black movement, and a Chicano movement, and a women's movement, and there's an antiwar movement right now. And in my opinion, that makes the way we relate to the unions somewhat different. The concept of transitional program, trying to apply them in the union in terms of getting the concept across generally. Recruiting comrades is a basic aim, and that has not, and I don't see any reason in the future, why it should change.

Now in terms of anti-bureaucratic struggles, this is a problem you can easily get too deeply involved in. It's like we are the best builders of the anti-war movement, the Black movement, we want to be the best builders of the union movement, too.

We have found that we could get overly bogged down in struggles to make the union actually implement programs that it has adopted, and actually carry out its purpose as an organization. When indeed our most overriding purpose within the local is of course spreading our socialist propaganda, and making individual recruits, and getting the union linked up with the other mass movements that are going on in the country.

Another thing, is just like in Berkeley, where we've gotten access to the union press, and have been able to publish articles in it, the articles that we write aren't just about "well, we

need a lower work week, and that kind of thing, but they're written to get across the whole class struggle concept, and the

whole concept in terms that relate to the actual job, and people read that, and understand that. And relate to it favorably.

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LETTER FROM LOVELL TO SHARON

Saturday
August 22, 1970

Art Sharon
SAN FRANCISCO

Dear Art:

Here is a brief account of reports given at the Oberlin Conference about our activities in several unions, plus some additional information. The reports will be available on tape soon. But I am sending you this report now to give you an idea of what we are doing and where we have been most successful.

At Oberlin we heard reports by ten activists from different sections of the country and different types of unions. They are engaged, in some instances, in different kinds of trade union work. Some, as in the case of teachers in two instances (Detroit and New York) have worked within broadly constituted and rather powerful caucus formations. Others, as in the case of some social workers, have had or presently hold elective office and have managed to gain popularity as opponents of the war and because of this succeeded in getting the union to endorse and financially support antiwar demonstrations. Another report was given by railroad workers who are members of a standing committee in their local union, the Right to Vote Committee, and who are busy now building a national committee of the union on this idea of the Right to Vote.

In Atlanta, Ga., SWP candidates for public office (one is also a union member) were able to intervene effectively in the sanitation workers strike there, as supporters of the strike. They are doing the same thing now in a strike at the Dobbs airport restaurants. This way they make some friends and establish cordial relations with rank-and-file union members as well as some officials of the union. This helps Militant sales, especially when the paper has stories of the local strikes or news about the local SWP election campaign.

We have also had some experience with small local caucus formations. One of these sprang up in the oil workers union in Houston, Texas. We knew some of the activists in it, but didn't get involved because it was one of those self-named "young workers" groups that had no other expressed purpose than to change the leadership. It failed in this objective and soon disbanded.

In general our whole experience in unions around the country at this juncture shows that we stand to gain most in literature sales, close contacts, even a few

recruits, by introducing antiwar resolutions, selling our literature and propagandizing for socialism. There is an improving climate for this kind of activity. This was shown by our work in LA and Seattle and now in Madison in the social workers' unions and other locals of AFSCME, in Detroit and Atlanta and in Connecticut in the teachers' union, and I think you will soon find some favorable developments along these lines in Berkeley in the postal workers' union there.

We would like to step up this type of work in all areas where we have activists in the unions. They will, of course, be governed in part by circumstances within the particular union. But it is a rare shop or plant these days where there is no talk about the war and where no one is interested in reading such a paper as The Militant.

I have the uneasy feeling that right now, because there is more open discussion and a generally more militant mood -- especially among younger workers -- that there is sometimes a temptation to join small caucus formations or to organize such caucuses in order to take control of a local union when this seems possible. Very often such moves get our comrades in a position where they appear not much different from other office-seekers in the union. Also there is a tendency, at this stage of development in the unions, for these caucuses to adopt the mistaken notion (or to give this impression because of the heavy fire they direct against their union opponents whom they seek to oust from office) that the main enemy is the union bureaucrat and not the employer. This is what happened to the United National Caucus in the UAW. They talked about "issues," but the caucus was a pure and simple anti-Reuther caucus. It was tiny. (Reuther correctly described it as "miniscule.") But within it were such diverse elements that it could not support a resolution against the war in Vietnam.

These caucuses, and the fight over union posts that always develops, get in the way of what we would like to do in the unions now. We want to keep all doors open, and talk about the broad social issues of the day, the war, growing unemployment, the need for independent political action. These are the things written about in The Militant. Where there is need to say something about a particular union situation, it can best be said in The Militant, as we did in the series by Tom Cagle last winter.

Comradely,
Frank Lovell