

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MINUTES, No. 13, April 11, 1968

Present: J. Barnes, Kerry, Dobbs, Jones, Shaw, Sheppard, Hansen, DeBerry

Visitors: B. Barnes, Vernon

AGENDA:

1. Antiwar
2. International
3. Plenum Agenda
4. Black Struggle

1. ANTIWAR

Jones reported.

April Days of Protest: a lot has happened in the last ten days. The move toward negotiations has cut into preparations for the April days. Parade Committee getting phone calls about whether the April demonstration will occur, etc. But within the movement the feeling is that we've got to push ahead and get more publicity out. In Chicago there is a push going on to have local independent peace candidates as the only speakers at rallies.

NBAWADU National Conference: the conference of the National Black Antiwar Antidraft Union is scheduled for this weekend. It may not be as large as expected because of the Johnson statements and the assassination. Comrades will propose the establishment of a Student Mobilization-type organization for the black movement. They will project a newsletter and actions in the near future.

Democratic Party Convention Demonstration: This project is now unlikely to come off. Dellinger had a meeting of his "new coalition" last week and explained that the National Mobilization Committee had died and pushed for the building of local organizing groups. No mention was made of the Democratic Party Convention. Dellinger proposed setting up coffee shops near Army bases, but no decisions were made at the meeting.

2. INTERNATIONAL

Hansen reported.

Elections in Belgium: A shift to the right along nationalist lines took place. It affected all left formations, they all lost ground. Our comrades had had greater expectations for the elections. The complete results are not yet in.

3. PLENUM AGENDA

Dobbs reported.

Motion by Administrative Committee: To recommend that the Black Struggle Report be changed from a supplementary to a full point on the plenum agenda.

Carried.

4. BLACK STRUGGLE

Dobbs reported. (Written summary of report and discussion will be prepared for N.C.)

Meeting adjourned.

ATTACHMENT TO PC MINUTES, No. 13 -- Black Struggle Report, by Dobbs

What the Administrative Committee had in mind is to begin at this meeting our thinking, in preparation for the coming plenum, about the new stage in the black struggle marked by the assassination of King. There's already considerable evidence that this event will precipitate more acutely than ever in the black movement consideration of the problem it faces over the question of program and leadership. It also appears that one of the central features of the changed situation is the new opportunities that are presented, by the rethinking that must now go on in the black movement, to press more vigorously than ever our propaganda in support of independent black political action.

I think it's worthwhile to undertake to review very briefly some of the highlights of the background development of the last twelve or fifteen years which brings the movement to this stage.

As a simple matter of historic chance King was precipitated into a national leadership role by an event in which he participated in 1956 in Montgomery and his assassination becomes a central factor around which a new stage is now reached. In a large sense the Montgomery bus boycott marked the beginning of the breakaway from waiting for voluntary action at the governmental level and the organization of mass pressure for government action. It was out of that situation that King propagated his policy of non-violence.

One aspect of it was that the mass action should remain within the framework of pressures to get capitalist politicians in government to do something, and the other aspect of it was that a posture of non-violence would have the effect of checkmating racist assaults on the black movement in the process of this struggle. And neither of these expectations bore fruit; both of them are refuted by what has happened since.

This already had become markedly clear by the time of the Watts explosion in 1965. In a sense you could say this: the changed movement led by King and the increasingly central focus it was able to gain in the black struggle in the first period, had as its central target attacks on the legal forms of Jim Crow that still existed in the Southern states. A degree of progress could be made on that specific count, in form at least, as events demonstrated. But, as was already clear then, and as has been increasingly demonstrated since, at most this could be only a phase. It was necessary to move on to the general socio-economic struggle, to do something in substance about the acute problems facing the black community everywhere in the country. As we noted in our earlier analyses, the struggle was going to have to go beyond those limited forms espoused by King as action began to emerge in the black ghettos in the North, which have their repercussions in the black ghettos in the South.

King said in one of his speeches that the black ghettos are faced with a major economic depression, and I think it's a rather apt summation of the situation. In its own forms, with all the added factors goading the masses toward anger and action that stem from the dehumanizing features of racism, there is in the black ghetto today the counterpart of the conditions that precipitated the general working class radicalization during the depression of the 1930's, and it is this factor that is a primary impulse behind the struggle that is now developing.

Some of the problems created by lack of program in this situation need to be sorted out as categories and thought out in their specific features and in their interrelations. One category in the crisis of leadership is that the headless, essentially programless outbreaks of massive protest that have characterized the uprisings in the ghettos cut across the need of the black movement to split the white movement and win allies from the white majority. A certain edge is given to the racists and the capitalist government in the counterattack on the black militants. That is not to say that these moods of frustration are to be deplored, but rather to think in terms of trying to perceive some of the problems that are created for the movement by the present state of developments and some of the lines of solution.

I notice that already the government has carefully utilized the latest explosions in the ghetto to try and set a general atmosphere that not only justifies police and military repression of the ghettos, but undertakes to carry that process beyond the black struggle to every form of protest. There's an interesting little episode in Michigan where a proposed law was written in such a way that it could apply to unions as well as to the black ghettos. The labor fakers complained about it but, typical of their mentality, they were all in favor of the measure as it applied to ghettos. They merely wanted an exception for the unions.

There are repeated reports that the government plans to move against Stokely Carmichael. That symbolizes another step that the capitalist government is going to take, and that is to frame up militants in the black movement. Here again, it's setting the stage for widening the attack beyond the black movement to other sectors of the general mass movement. It's significant to note from this point of view that the so-called open housing bill that passed the House yesterday contains provisions for federal prosecution of anybody allegedly going across state lines to advocate a riot.

That problem becomes further aggravated by the fact of an ultraleftist tendency in the black community with farout notions about organizing guerrilla warfare in the ghettos. That too plays into the hands of the capitalist ruling class.

In our approach to the present situation there are two things we need to emphasize. One is the matter of self defense. Here -- as against the kind of speeches that have been made by ultraleftists in the black movement of arming to fight the cops and troops, of arming to have open season on whitey and so on -- there's a need for emphasizing the constitutional right and the compelling necessity of black people to organize their own self defense. I would suggest two points that demonstrate the lines of approach to the question -- one, the assassination of King. The assassin was in among a nest of cops. The morning paper reports that there's some question now about an organized conspiracy instead of the act of a single individual. Whatever findings evolve later, the central fact remains that black people and the leaders of black people cannot depend upon the so-called forces of "law and order" to protect them against racist terrorism. They've got to organize their own defense.

Another episode that illustrates the point took place in Newark yesterday. Black tenements were set on fire. It wasn't in this instance apparently, as I can gather from the reports, a matter of a tenement chancing to catch fire when a fire had been started in a store or something like that, but apparently a direct attack on black tenements. This has led Adonizio, the mayor, to admit yesterday the possibility that it could have been white racists that did this. This kind of episode again emphasizes and underlines the need for self defense in the ghetto against acts of racist terror.

Concerning the police repressions of recent days fresh emphasis is added to the need for black control of the black communities. Keep the white racist cops and general repressive forces out of the community and leave it to black people to patrol their own communities.

There's one other thing we've got to think about. As near as I can gather from a report in the minutes of the Chicago branch, our comrades participated in an effort by a small segment of the antiwar movement there to conduct a march on a National Guard armory in protest against the sending of the National Guard as a repressive force into the black community. They got somewhat roughed up. It was only, as near as I can gather from this report, a token force from the antiwar movement. We've got to get more facts about the event but this bare-bones account in the minutes suggests a question that we have to consider. We need to discuss with the comrades what is involved in passing from propaganda forms of opposition to police acts of repression in the black ghetto to protest actions. This subject involves a basic category that is always present in tactical matters of this kind. It is necessary to determine whether or not you've got the necessary objective situation, the necessary forces and so on to carry out a worthwhile protest action, or if only a token handful will be involved which can lead to victimization of militants without serving any useful purpose.

It seems to me the central question in this changed situation is the matter of our propoganda around the need for independent black political action. It's interesting to assess some of the factors in the policy of the capitalist government in the aftermath of the King assassination. In a sense, they of course felt that King was their man. They recognized that he was trying to help them maintain law and order on capitalist terms. They recognized that he was continuing in a role of keeping the black masses tied to capitalist politics. In all these respects he was their man and in that regard they're bound, in the light of all that has happened since last Thursday night, to have very genuine regrets about the assassination of King. But they're cold blooded bastards who don't stop for a moment to get emotional about things of this kind. They went right to work from the outset to put themselves in the most advantageous position tactically. Obviously, one of the first things they sensed was the danger of political protests in forms that would be disadvantageous to them, like protest work stoppages and so on. There were, as a matter of fact, a number of proposals that emanated from one and another quarter along that line. So the capitalist rulers just offically took over the mourning for King to take all the potential steam out of forms of anti-capitalist protest around King's funeral. At the same time, they carried out all the acts of repression in the ghettos and they stepped up the process of tokenism, as illustrated by the bill that finally was passed yesterday in the House that makes a few more concessions to blacks. As I mentioned before, in the process they take some more repressive licks at the black movement and anticapitalist protests generally in the new law by making it a federal crime to "incite riots." They step up a little the degree of tokenism in the hope that, along with the acts of repression and all their duplicity in joining in the ceremonial mourning of King's death, they can contain the situation.

Reactions within the movement are very interesting. You don't see too many as yet but there seem to be a few straws in the wind. First, consider it from this point of view: King himself had had to pass over into the area where a clash with the ruling powers was involved by getting into economic issues, which meant fighting for substantive concessions. In Memphis he was backing black sanitation workers on strike for union recognition and for economic concessions from the city administration. On one side that manifests how King himself was having to move in the direction of clashes with the ruling powers over economic demands. I think there's another interesting facet to it that is implied. It indicates that the black movement -- instead of feeling that it can have nothing to do with the unions because of the despicable policies of the union bureaucrats -- is going to be compelled to recognize that black workers have to use the unions as one of their instruments in the struggle to achieve their demands. I think that's already implied in the Memphis situation, especially when one considers that the black population is overwhelmingly working class.

Such a trend would give new impulses to the process of change now taking place inside the unions.

From another point of view, King had called for a nonviolent demonstration in Washington this month. Here again, the essence of the thing was to put economic demands. The morning paper reports that Abernathy says it may be postponed a week or two, but it's still going to be held. On the one side, this indicates that the Abernathy-led movement is going to have to proceed with one or another form of confrontation against the government. On the other side, however, there's no sign of a change in political line in that quarter, just the opposite. Abernathy is also quoted this morning as saying that if he can find a presidential candidate that seems to offer something of significance for the black movement, he will support him. Which is to say that he's still thinking in terms of lesser evil policy in capitalist politics.

Last night on TV Leroi Jones was interviewed on the question of black control of the black community in Newark. He said, "We're going to have to act politically to solve this political problem." The reporter asked him, "Well, what will you do politically?" He replied, in effect, "I don't know yet but we've got to act politically." This rather significant change in Jones' attitude seems to reflect a new realization among militants in the black movement that they have got to do some rethinking about political action.

In our propaganda approach to these militants I would suggest the following points: Politics in the black community have been shaped from the point of view that they could get the capitalist government to change its policies. This government is not going to change its policy in any basic sense. Blacks are not going to realize their objectives through the medium of this government. They've got to change the government and that doesn't mean change one gang of capitalist politicians for another. A fundamental change in government is needed. This means that black people are confronted before all else with a political problem in striving for the realization of their just demands.

Faced with this political problem they stand dependent upon racist capitalist politicians in the Democratic and Republican parties and they can't win that way. They've got to have their own party if they're going to grapple with a political task. This applies both to the need for a basic change in government and to the struggle for black control of the black community. Political action is necessary and this requires a party of their own.

From another point of view I think it will be useful in our propaganda approach to stress more than we have the effectiveness, the potential of an independent black political party. One feature that we've dealt with that needs continuing emphasis and further elaboration is that, although a minority, in the given overall

political situation an independent black party can have a weight on the national political scene that goes beyond their proportional strength in the population as a whole.

Put another way, blacks as a minority can split the majority politically and win a section of the majority over to their side in a political coalition of blacks and whites opposed to the capitalist status quo. Take the question of students. Due to the class nature of the student-based antiwar movement, they aren't in a position to go into politics in their own name without falling into the trap of lesser evil politics in the capitalist political structure. But, there's a tremendous potential there, an urge, a yearning, and even one can say, a sense of urgency among students about finding a new meaningful form of political action. From this point of view, there's a positive side, I think, to the kind of support that McCarthy got from students when he started out to challenge Johnson -- a wrong line, a wrong course, being taken for a ride by a joker and all that -- but at the same time, it's a form of manifestation of the potential among students. If an independent black political party were organized, it seems that virtually from the outset it would get highly significant support among students.

New trends gestating in the trade union movement are building potential in straight class terms toward a labor break with capitalist politics. The appearance of an independent black political party would have profound effects in giving further impulses to the rise of an independent labor party, which would connote another form of support to the black community.

There's an analagous situation with regard to farmers and so on down the line. A minority people acting through their own party could become a vanguard political force generating a mass break with the two-party shell game and setting the stage for some fundamental changes in this country. On this road lie real possibilities of not only solving the problems of black people but of problems of others ground down under the capitalist regime.

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DeBerry: I was going along with Comrade Dobbs as he was making his analysis and I was thinking in terms of the presentation I'm going to make Friday night along the same basic line. The point that he raised about the reaction of Leroi Jones is an interesting one. I've seen this reaction among other blacks on campus and off. As a matter of fact, I was reading in the New York Times where, up at CCNY Epton was speaking and after he finished speaking, some black youth grabbed the microphone and stated how all he (meaning Epton) was concerned about was "Burn, baby, burn." This black youth said he didn't have anything to offer but that wasn't it. This is beginning to come through in the thinking of alot of young

people in Harlem. It's a little early to say now, but I think to some extent this is going to be reflected in the National Black Antiwar Antidraft Union conference this weekend. There's some serious rethinking about this whole problem.

I think that what we're going to have to do is to make concrete the ideas that we've been projecting in the campaign and in general, mainly the black control of the black community. We project it as a slogan and it's correct, but it should be spelled out in a practical way to the militants in the black community. Because although the idea is correct, if presented in a way that they can understand, then it can begin to have meaning to them. Also, the idea of an all black party -- we should definitely begin to step up the articles, the leaflets, the propaganda in a variety of forms in this connection in the immediate period.

One of the things that we're going to have to begin to talk about is getting a better line of communication between the activities in the black community than we have now. It's better than it was, but there's still a lot more to be desired. I think of the reactions, even among what are characterized as the ultralefts in **Harlem like this old follower of Malcolm X, Kenyatta of the Mau Mau**, is talking about. He'll be attending the NBAWADU conference this weekend. People around him in that strata of supporters of Carmichael and Rap Brown, they have reservations. They're doing some thinking. I think that these are indications that some thinking is going on. Our task is to be there to participate in this thinking and to bring our ideas in. I think now, more than at any other time, we will get a chance to get a hearing more than we've had in the past immediate period with some of these new young militants. We should prepare ourselves. The NBAWADU conference is going to be interesting from the point of view that it will be addressed by Stokely Carmichael. And the whole spectrum of black militants will be in attendance.

Barnes: As part of our initial thinking out loud, there are several points we should be thinking about in light of the events following Martin Luther King's assassination. Before the convention we discussed the fact that we now face a totally new and permanent phenomenon in American politics. That is, what happened in Watts in 1965, it turns out, was not a fluke or a single incident, but a prototype of the mass reaction in the black ghetto to blows struck against the black ghetto. This changed situation is one the ruling class and the white racists are having to face up to. The black masses in this country, following Watts and the deepening militant nationalist consciousness in the black ghetto, especially among the black youth, are likely to respond by mass counteraction to any major blow against the black community. If there's any incident to kick it off, the largest ghetto to the smallest ghetto is likely to explode in burning, looting, rioting. It won't necessarily be isolated to any single city; there is no way of predicting when it's going to strike or where it's going to

strike. The scope of its effects is beyond anyone's estimation.

It must now be getting into the consciousness of everyone -- of the white working class, of the ruling class, of the black masses, of the different sections of the protest movement, that this is not simply something that might happen, or did happen once or twice or is a single chapter in American social struggles. The possibility and the probability that when blows are struck -- either national blows like the killing of King, or even police brutality or some incident in a single ghetto -- these blows can precipitate mass explosions -- counterblows -- regardless of what their leadership or lack of leadership is. These uprisings have absolutely no respect for bourgeois law, order, or property rights. This state is not their state; this government is not their government.

So far, the pattern we noted earlier of these uprisings being sort of blind blows against the white capitalist oppressor, his property, his stores, his instruments of oppression and repression in the ghetto remains accurate. Far from being general excursions into the white residential areas or organized attacks on individual whites these are more like incipient national uprisings of the Afro-American community against the state oppressor and the symbols of his oppression. In this sense these events, regardless of their leaderless character or regardless of the stage they're in, are simply another example of the vanguard role of the black people. Another example of what Trotsky talked about 30 years ago and what our resolutions have been trying to deal with and develop.

This is also shown in the changing reaction of the whites to Afro-Americans, something which I think we've got to try to get some facts on, get a feel for. I'll give my estimate. It's important that we not give excessive weight to our estimates of the negative effects of these explosions, the looting and burning, on whites, especially on the white working masses. I believe that the entire rise of nationalism beginning with the rise in prominence of the activist wing of the Muslims and Malcolm X, through the recent mass reactions in the streets -- the entire period we've been through has seen somewhat of a shift in the attitude of whites toward Afro-Americans. It hasn't seen a shift in basic racism of course. That would require a whole educational process and experiences in common struggle. But there has been an increase in respect, a change from the idea that the black masses are defenseless, a shift from the stereotype that white America held of the black man, that used to be standard in the movies, in books, etc. That is, there's been a shift toward hesitation about carrying out racist assaults of all kinds on black people, a shift in rethinking since now obviously racist attacks cannot be carried out with impunity. Of course, at the same time, there's been a polarization but this has taken place on top of this shift.

Farrell pointed out that one of the things to notice is that the Afro-Americans in Memphis, set an example of the utilization of the trade union as an instrument of struggle to win one aspect of their demands. There's another side to this. And that's the fight inside the labor movement itself against racism and for alliances with the Afro-American movement and community. If the vanguard role of the black struggle is going to continue to deepen as there is every evidence that it is, the struggle inside the union movement against racism, against the racist bureaucrats and for policies of collaboration and alliance not only with the blacks in the union itself, but with the black community's struggle becomes a major question for the revitalization of the union movement, for the rebuilding of class struggle left wings and for the resurgence of struggle inside the union movement. We saw the example of Memphis where black workers, because they numerically dominated the sanitation workers' union, it was relatively natural to attempt to mobilize the entire black community in their struggle. There's a powerful example involved in the Memphis sanitationmen's struggle and that is, the idea, even if the union is not 90% black -- maybe if it's 80% black, maybe if it's 60% black, maybe if it's 20% black -- the idea that a powerful weapon of the labor movement in struggle is to mobilize the Afro-American community with them in their struggles. The union doesn't necessarily have to be 90% black to attempt to mobilize the black community as was done in Memphis. But its ability to do so will depend on its own policies to Afro-American members and the black struggle. This question should become one of the things discussed when other unions go on strike, when other trade union struggles develop.

This question is likely to come to the fore more because we also have a lot of the opposite of what happened in Memphis. That is racist union leaders and racist policies which are a block toward knitting this alliance. We got a sample of this in the teachers' strike in New York -- and we're going to see that side of the lesson drawn more sharply in the coming period if the trends that we see are at all correct. That is, some strikes are going to get busted, some economic demands are not going to be won, struggles are going to be blunted and diverted and confusion and division in the class are going to be sown. In New York City the Shanker leadership of the UFT carried out policies which divided the union from, rather than built an alliance with, the black community. This both weakened the strike and weakened the struggle of New York Afro-Americans for control of their own communities. We're going to see more examples of this. Of course we see it in the South with the woodworkers. That's been traditional in the South. But I'm talking about a new phenomenon taking place in the big Northern cities and especially in the public employees' strikes. Maybe a propagandistic way to deal with this is to have Fred give a talk like Frank Lovell did in his gubernatorial campaign in 1964 -- why white workers should support the black struggle, why this alliance is crucial. We could then produce them as Detroit did in 1964 -- as a campaign brochure.

Several other points. The rejection of the American government by Afro-Americans that Farrell mentioned will take many forms in the black community. One of the forms is going to be the rise of separatist sentiment. I believe that's now inevitable in these conditions. How much and how central it will become I don't know. But if we check with the comrades around I think we'll note that in most areas of the country you'll already see a rise in black vanguard circles of that form of the rejection of the capitalist state. That is, as part of a reflection of the struggle for self-determination, the demand for some form of separation, of total rejection of this capitalist state. The initial groundwork that Bob Vernon and the black fraction did in preparing for publication his debate with Robert Browne on this question is a first step in thinking out where this fits into the general picture is important, because especially in vanguard circles this is likely to be discussed more than it has.

The final thing is our approach to our relations with the black nationalist movement and with the black community under these circumstances. I agree with what Dee said about the rethinking that's going on in some sections of the Afro-American leadership, although I don't think we have a very broad knowledge of this yet. Under the pressure of repression, blows and deaths even among inexperienced, young activists, who've had no training in the mass movement, who are going through their initial stages of learning in the heat of battle, are rethinking questions of strategy and tactics. And some of them are beginning to think that the answer is not so simplistic as guerrilla warfare in the ghetto. In this rethinking we can play a valuable role. Our literature on the black struggle is by far our largest selling item. Much of it goes to blacks. I think there's a misconception among some comrades. That is, the idea that the deepening of nationalism means an increase in the difficulty of establishing working relations with Afro-American militants and the penetration of our ideas into the vanguard circles of the nationalists. I believe that the initial evidence shows that the contrary may well be true. That with the deepening of the nationalism and with the beginning of a growth of some self confidence among these militants, having reached the period when they don't have to prove anymore that they aren't capitulating to the white man, it's easier for them to listen to us.

It's important to utilize the campaign along these lines too. The majority of our Afro-American endorsers, which now number over 300 for the campaign, are these young black nationalist types on campus who are in Afro-American student clubs and who often also have direct contact with young militants in the ghetto. Building the Afro-American for Halstead and Boutelle endorsers is our best vehicle to lead to further discussions, working relations and their reading our ideas. We should not have the idea that establishing contact and working relations is restricted to the black comrades. Our black comrades are the only ones who are going to be able to

play a role in black organizations and have a certain kind of entry and contact with these people, but it's going to be the relations with the party that is going to be the central thing -- the party's ideas, with the party's cadre over time. This is especially important in an area where we have few or no black comrades.

DeBerry: I just want to raise one point that Jack touched on. It's that in some article by Bayard Rustin, he put his finger on the key point in the Memphis situation. He made the point of how the struggle for dignity, the struggle for bread and butter, the struggle for the right of black people to organize, were all focused in the struggle in Memphis. It's true. I'm just wondering how we can utilize this union question. We recognize that in the South it's because the racial lines are drawn sharp there, it's possible to mobilize the black community around an issue. But it's not just that simple. There have been attempts to organize black unions but they have not gotten the support of the black community. This has to do with King's influence in the civil rights movement, going in to support this struggle. The fact that these black workers have to organize and the whole AFL-CIO is just sitting there, I was wondering about raising this question -- part of the question about black caucuses in areas where the AFL-CIO refuses to organize, the need for organization and the question of black caucuses supporting the organization through pressuring the AFL-CIO. What brought this to my attention was I noticed that District 65 is raising money sending delegates to some conference that Randolph's paper organization, the Negro American Labor Council, has called for. You know what that is, but within the minds of some black unionists who haven't gone through that whole experience with Randolph and the Negro American Labor Council, they might get taken in. I was wondering if we couldn't give some thought to trying to take this side of it and try to make an appeal to black workers about this struggle in Memphis, essentially trying to build some opposition within the unions to fight the union bureaucracy among the black workers, but also getting some support to the union struggle of black workers in the South. This is possible in the context of our general line of developing left wings within the union movement. I think this might be useful in that regard, despite the fact that at this stage we don't have black comrades in the unions.

Kerry: We've got to make an assessment of the movement headed by King. The emphasis has been on the nonviolent philosophy and the capitalist press has picked that up because it's precisely the angle that they are interested in impressing on the Afro-American masses. For us, it's important, I think, to assess the various tendencies in the black struggle movement and in what direction they've been moving. It appears to me that the King movement was moving in the direction of a break, certainly with the Johnson administration, and implicitly with capitalist politics. They were moving in that direction -- not consciously, not programmatically, not ideologically -- but by virtue of following the very logic of

the problem that they saw very clearly, in its essence, as an economic problem.

You cannot solve the question of discrimination, of prejudice, you cannot achieve equality or anything near approaching it, you cannot get desegregated housing, adequate education, unless you're able to lift this lowest strata of the American laboring population up the economic ladder. It's very symptomatic that King and SCLC became the leaders of a trade union struggle in Memphis, not the AFL-CIO to which this union is affiliated. The AFL-CIO could have, by a correct intervention in the Memphis situation, turned the whole South upside down, and that's the basic problem for the American trade union movement. When they talk about organizing the unorganized, the largest section of the open shop, unorganized workers, is in the South. And it's a problem they cannot overcome until they win the adherence and support of the Negro worker in the South. They cannot do it. This offered them a magnificent opportunity, if they had thrown the support of the national AFL-CIO behind those workers, of demonstrating to the black workers of the South that the union movement is serious about conducting a struggle for their cause, they didn't do it. They defaulted. It's true that the intervention of King which made it a national struggle and gave it national prominence that a section of the trade union movement was drawn in. It's true that the local AFL-CIO went on record to support the sanitationmen and also that some of the whites participated in the protest picket lines. This was the absolute minimum and even then they were forced to do so under the pressure of the fact that King and the SCLC had placed themselves at the head of this movement, made it a national issue and aroused the support, not only of the entire black community in Memphis, but of a section of the trade union movement throughout the country.

It was rather amusing to hear over the television this official in Memphis, who explained: "We're not discriminatory. We would be just as opposed to granting union recognition if they were all whites. There's no question of discrimination here." He saw it as a purely trade union question. It can't be a purely trade union question, because these workers involved the ministers of their churches. It was through the ministers of their churches that King first got involved in this struggle in Memphis. Because, as we have pointed out, the church in the South is the organizing center -- the social, the political center of the Afro-American population, and the pressure of these workers on their own clergymen compelled them to become identified with the struggle and they're the ones who brought King into Memphis. That's the way it happened and that's the way it's going to happen again and again.

King's Poor People's Campaign and Camp-Out was a direct confrontation with the federal government. In a sense it's analagous to the big unemployed Camp-Out, the Bonus March. The unemployed were demanding of the federal government that they make some adequate provision for getting economic aid and assistance to the

unemployed veterans. It's not excluded that the same thing can happen again in Washington. King and his leadership were very much concerned about their ability to control a mass concentration of blacks and whites in this kind of an operation and that's why they have been postponing it, they've been proceeding very cautiously. Whether Abernathy will go through with it or not I don't know. In addition the question of the war in Vietnam, King broke with the administration. He tied Vietnam to the domestic economic issue of providing adequate funds for the poor. So that, the logic of the issues which are basically economic, inevitably set him in motion against the capitalist state, the capitalist administration.

How far it would go I don't know. But, as a tendency, it seems to me much more progressive than the Randolph-Rustin tendency. The Randolph-Rustin tendency is closely tied to the labor bureaucracy. Rustin preaches a political realignment of the Reuther type. He apes Reuther in his realignment policy. He wants to drive all the reactionaries out of the Democratic Party and take the progressives out of the Republican Party and then you'll have a genuine two party system. That is the line of their policy.

In a sense, King had a political organization that was not quite a political organization. Once you begin to organize masses in action against the government, you're in politics right up to your ears. He hadn't yet drawn the necessary conclusion. They hadn't yet gone through a sufficient experience. And the same is happening to the black nationalists in my opinion. They have no answers. Burn, baby, burn is no answer, except in the very negative sense. Go home and get guns is no answer. Guerrilla warfare in the ghettos is no answer. What you succeed in doing is burning out the homes of your own people which is a not very profitable exercise because you're going to turn the masses in the ghetto against you. They're the ones who suffer the most. It's not like going out and burning up and down Fifth Avenue. It's a sort of elemental explosion -- a form of protest, that's true, like the self-immolation of the Buddhist monks in Vietnam as a protest against the regime. But it's not a very effective instrument of struggle to gain the objectives and achieve the goals of the black liberation movement.

If there was a black political party they would conduct themselves in no other way than what King was doing in Memphis and what King proposed to do in Washington, D.C. That's precisely how we would propose a black political party to operate, not the mistaken view that a political party would operate only on the electoral arena. These would be the kind of actions that a black political party would conduct throughout the entire year. And could do it very effectively, because certainly even the action of King in Memphis did more to overcome the anti-union prejudice that's widespread among the Afro-Americans, and with very good reason, because they see the Meanys and the Reuthers in the labor bureaucracy as part of the "white establishment" that's keeping them down. They

don't see them as champions or protectors.

The movement hasn't yet reached the point of political consciousness but it appears to me that the drift is in that direction. They've gone through some very bad experiences. The Black Panthers, another tendency in the movement, started out with the concept of utilizing the provisions of the constitution permitting them to arm themselves in self defense, and ended in lining up with the Peace and Freedom Party, running as candidates in this mish-mash party for election. At the same time, they're being victimized. One of them was killed by the cops, Cleaver himself is wounded and is now in prison. They are in the process of digesting their own experience. And so they're beginning to turn to politics, but politics in a not very effective way, although they have advanced to the point where they will have nothing to do with the Democratic and Republican Party which is the beginning of wisdom, which is all to the good. So, this, you can say, is also a step in the right direction. I don't see this as a negative thing, the fact that they would run candidates in the Peace and Freedom Party means that they're breaking with the Democratic and Republican parties. They haven't yet reached the consciousness of the necessity of independent black politics on their own. But that will come as they go through an additional experience with such formations as the Peace and Freedom Party.

It's my view that all of these tendencies either positively or negatively confirm our analysis of the necessary next stage in the development of the mass struggle of the Afro-Americans in this country, that is, black independent political action. I think these tendencies are moving in that direction, haltingly and in distorted forms but nevertheless in the right direction. Unless we concede that the capitalist class can grant them significant enough concessions to alter the entire economic picture in this country, and I don't think that they can do it. I don't think that any of us believe that they can do it. It means such a fundamental change in the whole structure as to make you reconsider the idea of capitalists reforming themselves out of capitalism and into socialism. You see, it's a very significant thing that both King and the Rustin-Phillip Randolph group -- both have very elaborate programs, political programs. The Rustin-Randolph group put out a brochure, a very thick brochure, spelling out the kind of a program that they felt was necessary to resolve the so-called race problem. King did the same thing. He included in his planks the guaranteed annual income, on housing -- planks on every essential question. These were presented to the representatives of the capitalist class and they utilized the movement as a pressure movement, instead of as an independent political movement conducting a struggle around these demands. We have to avoid being unduly influenced by the nonviolent gambit. It seems to me it's a distraction, a diversion from what the real tendency -- what I discern as the real tendency, because King did represent more than any other leader, the aspiration of the black masses in this country, not only the middle class. It's a mistake to say he only represented the middle class. The kind of ourpouring you got from just listening

to this radio program of the black station, WLIB, that carried on an interview all night long with people calling in -- these were workers from Harlem, from Bedford Stuyvesant, who were calling in and pouring out their innermost feeling about their attitude toward King and what he was trying to do. Sure, he was a preacher, he was a bible banger, a pulpit pounder, and he utilized all the demagoguery, all the tricks of the trade but he was grappling with real problems. He was the only one really initiating any kind of action of any significance, any kind of mass action. Ineffectual, wrong in his philosophy and his ideology, but under pressure, moving in the direction of at least attempting to pose, if not to grapple, with what were the essential problems.

I'm not so certain that the Negro mass movement in this country has already exhausted this experience and is already prepared for another leap ahead. No, there are going to be additional experiences, many more experiences they're going to have to go through before they reach a more advanced stage.

We've got every reason to be optimistic in the sense that the tendency, the direction of movement of all of the tendencies inexorably is driving them into a recognition, if not an acceptance of the necessity of going beyond the present forms of struggle to a higher stage of political action. So, give the devil his due.

Hansen: I'd like to make just a few comments on a couple of points. I think Tom is quite right in his estimate that the movement that King headed was a real mass movement. Insofar as there was an expressed ideology, King's ideology was middle class, but the movement itself was a big mass movement and it's moving to the left and has been moving to the left for some time. One of the big problems that faced King was the fact that the very forces he appealed to, that he mobilized, constantly tended to resort to self defense when they were beaten in the head by cops and shot down and like that.

They wanted to go beyond his admonitions about nonviolence. That was his problem for a long time. And one of these appeals to the powers that be had been precisely that they've got to give. He couldn't continue to head them off from the direction they were moving in. He couldn't continue with his program of nonviolence unless they made some major concessions. He spelled that out in almost so many words especially when he first went into Chicago and began organizing in the ghettos there. Insistent demands that they recognize the problem and that they make concessions. He had hopes that they would recognize this and give them. But they had different ideas about it. They utilized him without giving him the tools, sufficient tools to really continue in that course and succeed. And they couldn't do it for the reasons that Tom indicated. One thing they'd have to do is liquidate the entire Vietnamese war and the whole colonial program and their whole imperialist projects. I don't think that they can do it, or that they intend to do it.

Now we say that the movement is moving toward the left; it moved not as a big phalynx without differences within itself but in sectors -- some moved faster than others -- and some of the first ones to break off were those who around SNCC, figures like Carmichael who moved to the left much faster than the others and who even got way ahead of the others.

To me one of the most interesting recent developments has been the fact that Carmichael himself has now made another bit of a turn. I don't know the full meaning of it or what his intentions were or whether it was a maneuver or whether it was a bigger problem he saw. But the turn was to connect back up again with King and to come in on this Camp-Out etc., which was being organized in Washington. He was featured as one of the joint figures in this. Now, that's a turn on Carmichael's part to do this. Why he did it I'm not sure but I would imagine that one of the things that he has been concerned about is precisely this question of remaining connected with the masses.

He had gotten too far out to the left with his statements and lost touch. He had to come back if he wanted to regain touch with the masses. But that also implies reformulations of all he's been saying. It means adjusting his tactics somewhat, if he's serious about this.

Now, I'm not familiar with his recent development; maybe some of the comrades are more familiar with this. He's been to Africa, he's been to Cuba. Undoubtedly this has had considerable impact on his thinking. When I say Carmichael I also mean those who are with him, like Rap Brown. They have been thinking more than they had before about this whole problem. And while they still talk about get your gun and like that, still there are certain indications that they are not saying this as violently as they did before. That they're finding better formulations. It's not only the Cubans that have had an influence on them but also the Vietnamese and the Africans. All the indications are that they have made pretty good connections with the colonial movement. Now their problem is to make better connections with this mass movement.

Here you see eddies within this whole general broad movement. You see these turns and eddies which are extremely important for us from the viewpoint of our connecting up, maintaining better connections, developing them, like that.

A special problem is the guerrilla line that some of them advocate. It expresses a mood. The same mood that leads to spontaneous actions. You see on TV these shots of buildings going up in flame and it reminds you of the old revolutions that began with what was called the jacquerie, where the peasants went out and burned up the landlords' buildings. These were among the first signs that the revolution was on the march, when the peasants set fire to these different places. But this phase is not the end;

it's only the beginning of the thing. It's not the final answer, can't be the final answer. The comrades who make that point are dead right. They're symptomatic of some profound processes going on in the United States today.

One of the difficulties of people like Carmichael and Rap Brown and the others face is they cannot formulate these things on a programmatic basis or on a theoretical basis because they don't have the background or the understanding. So they get stuck with some very simple formulas that not only don't give the answers but are entrapments for them, become like traps for them. The "Go Get Your Guns" formula -- that kind of thing. But even on that level they don't give a real theoretical explanation or have a reasoned way of expressing the thing because on a theoretical level, the idea of go getting your guns and like that, since it will only be responded to by a very small number in the situation can only mean that this small number would theoretically be able to galvanize all the rest by their action. That's the old anarchist theory that goes way back. It goes back to Bakunin and earlier. Now, one of the great difficulties is that the Cubans, who have great authority with these people and impress them very much, have precisely that line and explain it in so many words. So that we're faced with this very difficult problem of remaining connected with the Cubans and Latin America, and yet countering especially in the United States, this very dangerous and suicidal line which they express as a tactical formula but which has much broader suppositions behind it -- that you can galvanize the masses by the action of a small group of dedicated people who get arms and start with a whole series of deeds. That's one of our great difficulties.

I notice that the first Cuban response to the assassination of King was to make up a great big poster -- we got some copies air mail -- of a black panther with its mouth wide open and teeth showing, with red eyes, and the slogan underneath is that assassination should be answered with revolutionary violence. I'm sure that those posters will be displayed in certain places in this country and it will be associated with the Cuban revolution. That doesn't help one bit in this situation. It just gives us another difficulty.

I would say out of this there are two things we've got to watch and bear in mind very carefully now. That is that this is a mass movement, that it is moving to the left, and that the assassination of King can speed this process. It's very interesting to see the first reactions of people around King and young people all around the country. One of their first reactions has been Carmichael was right. That's a very important indication that the movement can now move faster, at least certain sectors of it can move faster towards the left. The other is the problem of losing touch with the "ultralefts," so to speak -- I mean by that, not the screwballs but those who are around Carmichael and Rap Brown --

the kind who are sincere devoted revolutionists but who have not yet got a good line on how to develop the revolution in the United States. Those are our two key problems tactically.

DeBerry: Ossie Davis' speech at the Mall in Central Park -- he had made the point that Malcolm X had sought to work with King. He went to see King before the Selma march. He also reported that King had met with Leroi Jones just before he went to Memphis. Following this, I noted a slight change in Carmichael, also a new term that he uses. You know in the past you had blacks and you had Negroes -- two fixed categories. So now it's blacks and potentially blacks, which means that he, in his own consciousness, sees that you can't just write people off because they aren't going along with you right now. That there is a gap in the thinking of black people and you have to give these people a chance. And this same thing appeared in the meeting between King and Leroi Jones. And it's also important that on the television after the police had attacked the demonstration, King had met with the militants. They had worked out an agreement. Now nobody has said what that agreement was. That is for the march in Memphis. They had worked out an agreement as to the demonstration that he was going to lead on Monday. He was assassinated shortly after his meeting with the militants. Nobody has expressed what kind of agreement they had reached. Apparently there is some kind of communication taking place between various thinkers.

Dobbs: I'd like to make a couple of suggestions: (1) that we undertake to work up a transcript of this discussion; (2) that the reporter prepare a summary of the recommended general line of the report to the plenum for submission to the Political Committee in advance of the plenum.