

Forward to the Party! Struggle for the Party!

No. 1

This is the first of several issues of the special journal on the programme of the party. The purpose of this journal is to provide an important form for discussion and struggle around the programme, among members of the RU and all potential party members. The title "Forward to the Party, Struggle for the Party!" was chosen to emphasize both the immediacy of the task of forming the Party and the fact that bringing the Party into being very soon means consciously struggling to carry out that task.

The key link in this is the discussion and struggle around the programme, focusing on the draft programme proposed by the RU, to achieve a qualitatively higher level of ideological and political unity as the very basis of the party.

As the introduction to the draft programme states, "Centered around developing the eventual party programme, this discussion and struggle can make use of past and present experience to serve the future. We hope and fully expect this struggle will enrich and deepen the revolutionary content of the programme to be adopted at the founding congress of the party." The more thoroughly this discussion and struggle is

carried out, by all future party members, the more the programme will be deepened and enriched, the greater the unity of the whole party around it, and the more powerfully the party will be able to lead the working class toward its revolutionary goal.

The articles in this first issue of the journal deal with the section of the draft programme, "Build The Revolutionary Workers' Movement," and with the basic class stand of the party as expressed in its programme. Each of the articles has the approach of taking a part of the programme, dealing with the revolutionary workers' movement and the basic class stand, and summarizing work around this.

None of these articles represents the line of the RU; none has been approved (or disapproved) by leadership bodies of the RU on any levels. Instead, these articles represent the summations of particular RU comrades based on their study of these specific points of the draft programme and their own summation around them.

These articles should serve the purpose of "getting the ball rolling," encouraging others to write summa-

tions and/or criticisms, questions, etc. around the draft programme in response to the points covered in these first articles, or other points of the draft programme.

In the future issues of the journal other articles submitted from readers of the journal—RU members and others—will be printed the way they are submitted, except for changes which the editors feel are necessary to make possible the clearest expression of the points being made in the articles—as one example, the subheads in the articles in this issue were added by the editors to make the reading of the articles easier. (We have also left space in the journal for writing notes.)

Carrying out the task of forming the party now, and actually building the party "from the bottom up," means that ALL potential party members must actively take part in the discussion and struggle around the draft programme that will establish the basis of unity for the party. This journal is one important form for broadening and deepening that process, and we urge readers of the journal to make full use of it in that light. Forward to the Party! Struggle for the Party!

Build the Revolutionary Workers Movement!

The draft programme put forward by our organization states: *"The present struggle of the American workers is primarily against individual employers (or employers' associations in different industries) around wages and benefits, working conditions, against speed-up and lay-offs, against discrimination...In these struggles, the workers begin to throw off the foot of the employer from their necks, to raise their heads. And in raising their heads they are able to see farther and more clearly. The face of the enemy and the forces fighting him begin to come into sharper focus. This gives rise to vigorous discussion among the workers not only about every question of the immediate struggle but also about events throughout society and the world. Through all this the workers begin to see themselves as more than mere individuals, but as members of a class, locked in warfare with the opposing class of employers."*

This paper shows how our work in a medium-sized manufacturing plant verifies this understanding. In applying the understanding that begins this paper, we have learned that communists must, at every turn, sum up the demands of the workers and, with the science of MLM, develop a fighting program.

In doing this, we unite with the demands that the workers put forward, sum them up and put them out in a concentrated, systematic form. In this way we can advance the unity around these demands by clearing away some of the fog surrounding the face of the real enemy.

When we have correctly summed up the demands of the workers in accordance with MLM and gone boldly into these battles, the struggle has advanced. When we have substituted our own consciousness and subjectivity for the understanding of the people we work with, the struggle has floundered and gone backwards.

Our latest contract struggle is a good example. The plant itself is multinational and the work is somewhat socialized (some production lines and some individual jobs). Our organization has been working there for a number of years and a caucus, that we lead, has built struggles there from early on. Some workers have come forward and many have participated in other struggles of the whole class.

For the most part we correctly summed up what were the main demands of the masses and led struggles around them. This included how the people viewed the

union. Most people saw the union as being led by company-minded men that were not really fighting for the people. On the other hand, most people also felt that our union was what we had and that the "people should be in the union."

This view comes out of years of experience of working in the unions in struggle against the company. The workers summed this up both from their own experience and those in other shops. This view has two sides: its negative aspect is the idea that the workers don't have the collective strength or wisdom to carry on struggle against the wishes and without the leadership of the union officials. But mainly this sum-up is positive be-

cause it recognizes the need both for a solid front against the company and sees the bankruptcy of these union hacks.

We agree with the viewpoint of the programme that "Trade unions in the U.S. today are controlled at the very top by scabs and traitors (who are)...agents of the bourgeoisie within the workers movement." In addition we believe that nearly all locals are in the hands of sell-outs.

By recognizing this view among the workers and uniting with it, we were basically able to keep away from both left and right errors as well as struggle with

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Summing Up South African Coal Struggle

In reviewing the work of communists, particularly comrades of our organization, in the campaign that began last spring to stop South African coal imports, some lessons about the nature of work with trade unions—particularly so-called "progressive" unions—stand out.

It is important to sum these lessons up at this time, on the one hand because if we are to move forward to the new party and a new period of work among the masses, we must consciously sum up our mass work in the light of developing a correct political and ideological line for the programme and the party; and secondly, because the work of this campaign is not over and other so-called "communist" forces, the October League in particular, are still chewing on the erroneous "progressive unionism" line and may try in the future to spit this rubbish out on the mass movement.

A fundamental error underlying the work we did in the campaign until recently, was in our political line towards the issue. In the beginning we basically accepted the essentially protectionist line that the United

Mine Workers (UMW) officials put out under the thin veil of some squawkish protests about "slave-like" conditions in South African mines.

On April 22, 1974, a UMW memorandum concerning the coal was written by Tom Bethell in Washington, D.C. to Arnold Miller and other international officers. To quote from this memorandum: "Arrangements are currently being made to bring substantial quantities of low-sulfur steam coal into the United States from the Republic of South Africa. This move on the part of the coal and utilities industries requires a strong response on the part of the UMWA, because it takes jobs away from American miners and because coal is produced in South Africa under conditions very close to slave labor." (emphasis ours)

The memorandum then outlined the specific plans of the utilities companies for the coal import contracts, discussed the situation of the South African coal industry and the "labor situation in South Africa," and ended up with this statement: "It is clear, however, that

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the U.S. coal and utility industries are already giving aid and comfort to a country whose policies are a slap in the face of both democracy in general and the trade union movement in particular."

The memorandum called on the UMW to "join with other organizations concerned with South Africa including the British Trade Union Congress...as well as American church and union groups..." to "warn Consol and other U.S. companies involved in South Africa that *such involvement is at odds with their professed commitment to the development of our domestic coal industry and must be seen as evidence of gross bad faith on their part.*" (emphasis ours)

Protectionist Stance

From the beginning the UMW tied the issue of the coal imports to a protectionist stance toward their members' jobs, saying that it would cost 400 miners their jobs. (This was a mathematical computation of how many miners it would take to dig an equivalent amount of coal to that which is being imported over the three year contract period.) They even chided the American imperialists for their "bad faith" towards the American workers in taking away U.S. jobs. "After all," they would say, "aren't we all 'Americans?'"

According to the memorandum, there is supposedly a direct cause-and-effect relationship between these coal imports and the loss of miners' jobs. The memo's statement about U.S. corporations' "professed commitment to the development of our domestic coal industry" exposes the UMW officials' view that there is essential harmony between the interests of the U.S. monopoly capitalists and the U.S. workers—if the U.S. capitalists would only "be fair." In essence, the UMW officials were as much as saying to the imperialists: "Sure guys, we can understand your wanting to do a little exploiting and oppressing. That's cool. But this slavery thing in South Africa is just a little too bitter for our social-democratic taste buds. Besides, you're not giving American workers their 'fair share' of the exploitation!"

To take up the line that the coal imports from South Africa rob miners of their jobs dovetails with this view. No matter how fancy or elaborate the anti-imperialist window-dressing it is given, nor how sincerely "anti-imperialist" you may mean to be, picking up these UMW droppings puts you in the bourgeoisie's camp.

It comes down to an essentially Kautskyite view of the imperialist system—that the imperialists can pick and choose according to free will, who and where they will go to exploit and oppress. It does not view, nor attempt to expose for the masses to understand, the economic laws that drive the system—the same laws that will inevitably drive it to its final doom.

The UMW memorandum is blatant: it calls on the imperialists to show "good faith" towards *American* workers and come home to do their exploiting. The line that we raised early in the campaign, that "The strength of the United Mine Workers is threatened by the purchase of coal from a country which operates a highly exploitative economic system..." which we covered with the view that "It is clear that the Southern Company is part of a *system* of imperialism which oppresses both South African and American workers," can essentially be reduced to the same thing.

In preparation for the February conference to organize the coal campaign, the October League raised the line that the coal imports represent "an attack on the moves for democracy and organizing efforts of the UMW." At the conference itself, the OL raised the slogan "Southern Co. scabs on U.S. and South African miners," saying that the coal "opens up a potential source of scab coal to weaken any strike action of the mine workers." It is clear that the OL had learned nothing at that point, from mistakes which we had already made and begun to sum up.

Open to Wrong Line

When we took up this line last spring, we left ourselves open to the totally reactionary protectionist line that the UMW concealed beneath the surface of their "progressive" stance on the coal imports. That summer a ship loaded with what turned out to be Australian coal came into the port of Mobile. The UMW sent a small band of officials down to the docks to set up a "picket line." They came out in the open with their junk when the action of dockworkers who crossed the picket line and went to work unloading the Australian ship scratched the surface of their meager "progressivism."

They stated that there was, in their view, "no difference" between South African and Australian coal because it was "all foreign." While the UMW officials

were at least consistent in their views towards "protecting miners' jobs," we couldn't be if we wanted to maintain any kind of a revolutionary stand.

When the officials came out of their bag we said, "damn them!" But we ourselves were caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, we had taken up their "protectionist" line when it seemed to be generally in a progressive framework. On the other hand, when they finally did come out in the open with a "Buy America" line, we knew it stank.

It was this hang-up between the "rock and the hard place" that finally drove us to re-analyze the issue of the coal imports, to critically think out the effect of the imports on the miners' jobs and the American working class generally, and to do some study of political economy in making our analysis of the functioning of imperialism in this issue. It was also at that time that we began to consciously try to sum up our mass work in the light of the period—trying to bring to an end the old period, and through the bridge of the new Party, make a leap to a new period in both the mass and communist movements.

In all of the investigation and study that we were able to do we could find no evidence that the importation of coal at this time is costing significantly the jobs of miners in the U.S. In fact, there have been some recent indications that there is some increased employment among miners. In Alabama, for example, while most industries were laying off and shutting down or slowing down production in December and the first part of this year, the mines were hiring.

As far as we can tell, all coal is coal and what South African coal does or doesn't do to miners' jobs will be the same for other imported coal. In the proposal of the Birmingham group to the February 21st South African coal conference we said: "The attacks coming down on people at home cannot be separated from the attacks that come down on the oppressed nations and peoples of the world because imperialism is not a 'policy' preferred by the ruling class. The manifestations of imperialism—the economic and political attacks it brings down, the wars it initiates, the crises and depressions it brings—are the result of the economic laws that drive the system. Faced with the rising costs of production at home which depresses the rate of surplus value, the Southern Company, like the other monopoly capitalists, has turned to the cheaper raw materials and labor costs in the oppressed nations—in this case South Africa...But the overall affect is to further intensify the crisis of the entire imperialist system...The imperialist solution turns into its opposite, paving the way for even more extensive and destructive crises and leading to depression with its all-sided and unsparing attacks on the masses of people, both of the oppressor and oppressed nations. To bring an end to the oppression and exploitation that both suffer we must clearly identify the common enemy—the imperialist system—and must build our revolutionary unity, consciousness and struggle to bring down imperialism the world over."

And we also said, "The importation of this coal is linked to increased attacks coming down on the working class and other oppressed people in the U.S. But there is no direct cause and effect relationship between South African coal and 400 miners' jobs. The main thing this importation of coal represents is an increased attack on and exploitation of the third world nations—specifically of Azania."

Not Relying on Masses

In effect, we had been taken in by the progressive posture that the UMW officials *seemed* to have taken toward the issue of South African coal. This boils down to being impressed by the fact that instead of taking an openly reactionary "Buy America" line, they covered it with some nice phrases about how terrible things are for Black South African miners. In any case, our job was not to unite with the progressive posture of the UMW officials, but with the progressive and revolutionary sentiments of the masses of rank and file miners and other working people about this issue of South African coal, and on this basis, build mass struggle around the issue.

In the December 1974 issue of *Revolution*, in a sum-up of the coal campaign and its main weaknesses and strengths, we said, "...the Coalition didn't see itself as really rooting itself in the masses of working people and using its political education campaign to mobilize people around an anti-imperialist analysis and program of struggle on a protracted basis. Its lack of a plan and spontaneous style of work demoralized some people...Tactically, the Coalition did not fully use the method of 'relying on the masses' in its attempts to spread propaganda and agitation...For example, going to labor union officials to ask to speak at union meetings should only be one of the ways we reach the working class because only a small number of workers attend these meetings."

What the article says is true: we didn't see ourselves as really rooting ourselves among the masses and building a program of struggle on a protracted basis, but basically developed a variety of get-rich-quick scheme tactics, going from this official to that, and so on.

The thing that all these tactics have in common is trying to build a struggle from the top-down: the view that if we could just find some liberals or progressives to unite with *us* (the "communists"), then we could get support from the masses, too, based on this top-down "cooperation." Instead, we should see that the struggle has to be built by going deeply among the masses with political issues and building mass revolutionary struggle. In fact, it is up to *us* to go to the masses and *unite with them* in building the struggle—not for us to seek out so-called "progressive" forces who only seek to pimp off the masses' struggles anyway.

We communists have a duty to analyze the issues before the masses from our own independent Marxist-Leninist perspective. This includes analyzing some so-called "facts" presented by forces such as the UMW officials. We basically swallowed hook, line and sinker the view that the coal would affect miners' jobs. This shows that we weren't thinking critically about the way that imperialism functions in the *real* world—and not just in our minds during study classes.

Single Spark Method

One of the methods we should have taken up more deeply, which would have helped steer us away from the path of relying on union officials and the union apparatus, is the "single spark method." As the Draft Programme says: "The answer (to dealing with the 'two-headed' monster in the daily battles of the working class) lies in pitting the workers' strength against the enemy's weakness...The method of the proletariat and its party is to mobilize the masses of workers to take matters into their own hands and wage a blow for blow struggle against the enemy, inside and outside the unions. To seize on every spark of struggle, fan and spread it as broadly as possible throughout the working class and among its allies. To build every possible struggle and build off of it to launch new struggles. And through the course of this to fan every spark of consciousness, to identify and isolate the bourgeoisie and its agents, and unite all struggles against the enemy."

Across the country comrades and others in many places took this method up around the issue of the coal. For example, the workers' papers like *Turning Point* in other cities spread the story of the struggle against the coal, popularized the example of the large and militant demonstration of white and Black miners that took place on May 22, and in that sense tried to "fan the flames" and build off of the struggle that had developed in Birmingham.

We ourselves did this in writing up and distributing thousands and thousands of copies of a special supplement to *Turning Point* that popularized the issue and the struggle that had gone on that far.

But we failed to take the issue *deeply* to the masses, essentially in the one-to-one contacts that comrades and others had among the masses on the job and elsewhere. We failed to develop the organizational forms of working class struggle that could independently (of union officials, etc.) build mass revolutionary consciousness and action around the issue.

The initial mistake in political line—around the question of protectionism—reinforced this other error. Both because we took up the stand that the miners' jobs were being attacked, and because we fell into some pragmatism about the fact that miners were in motion around the issue, we failed to grasp how our role was to broaden the struggle and make it a question before the working class as a whole.

If we had taken the issue to the workers in the plants, if we had developed the unity, consciousness and struggle of the working class where we already had some base, we would have been in a much better framework from which to relate to the rank and file miners at the point when it became necessary to expose the UMW bureaucrats' thoroughly reactionary outlook.

In the beginning it was generally correct to take the issue to UMW officials *as one way to try tactically to get to the rank and file miners.* (Our organization is still small and somewhat primitive in this area and there are close to 7,000 miners in North Alabama, scattered in over a hundred mines across many counties. There were certain objective limitations as to how we could reach the rank and file.)

But instead of using the method of going to the officials on the one hand, as a *tactic*, and on the other, striving to develop our own independent activity among both the rank and file miners and other workers, and overcome objective difficulties in doing this (as our *strategy* for building the struggle), we pretty much left it where it was. In the future, we tended to restrict our views as to "how to reach mainly miners" and continued to relate to the miners mainly through the union officials.

OL Position

This expresses a view, which in its extreme is put forward by the October League in their first proposal to the South African coal conference in February. In

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it they stated: "What should our policy be towards trade unions and trade union officials? This is important because working through trade unions and with various union officials increases our ability to reach and involve workers. This is so because large segments of the organized workers, especially the less advanced elements, are more receptive to political issues and campaigns when they 'officially' come through their unions."...and "Therefore, we should approach union and union officials with a genuine desire to unite around the issue of opposition to S.A. coal imports. The conditions for cooperation between our committee and them should be 1) opposition to S.A. coal imports and 2) this opposition cannot be based on a jingoist, anti-foreign and reactionary viewpoint that says all 'foreign products' should be opposed. Within this unity, we should struggle over the tactics, literature, etc., of the campaign, but we should be willing to make compromises which do not harm the fundamental interests of the campaign."

This view takes the tactical consideration of going to and through the union officials on issues and makes it a strategic question. There is no question that going through the union officials *may* "increase our ability to reach and involve workers." But the point is: it *may*, or it *may not*. The October League not only chose here to ignore the fact that with respect to the UMW officials, these toads had already come out in the open with jingoist, anti-foreign and reactionary views. They chose to ignore the openly sabotaging role that the UMW officials had been playing in the struggle since the summer.

Since we ourselves had earlier fallen into some of the errors that the October League now wants to raise to the level of political principle, let's look at what the Draft Programme has to say about trade unions today: "Trade unions in the U.S. today are controlled at the very top by scabs and traitors. Some of these rely on open gangster methods to attack workers' struggles. Others put up a 'progressive' and 'democratic' front, while *knifing the workers in the back*. Some are associated with out-front reactionaries in the ruling class, while others are salesmen for the 'liberal' imperialists and piously promote these imperialists—as well as themselves—as 'saviors' of the working class. They are all agents of the bourgeoisie within the workers' movement...The trade unions in this country, especially the powerful industrial unions, were not built by these bloated toads, but by the struggle and sacrifice of millions of workers. In the face of the mighty upsurge of the '30s the capitalists, unable to smash the drive for industrial unions, made concessions—and prepared to take them back."

Applying Analysis to UMW

We have to apply this same analysis to the UMW and in particular to the so-called "reform" or "progressive" officials like Arnold Miller. What does this mean? First of all, it means that *all* the trade unions today are *in the hands of the bourgeoisie*, through their agents.

The view of the communists towards the "progressive unionism" movement that Arnold Miller is connected with, is that what is *really* progressive about this movement is not some individuals who rode into office (no matter how "honest" some of them may be), but the militancy and action of the thousands and thousands of the rank and file miners. We tactically unite with Miller and individuals like him, where and when we can. The view of our organization was to provide "critical support" to the reform candidates. But what the Draft Programme says about the trade unions having been built by the rank and file and not by bloated toads, is also true of the reform movement in the UMW—it was not Arnold Miller and his gang of bloated pollywogs that built this mass movement within the union, but the rank and file itself.

If, "in the face of the mighty upsurge" the capitalists were "unable to smash the drive" for union democracy and reform in the UMW, they made concessions (in the form of providing for new elections, etc.) *but at the same time* prepared to take them back. This will continue to be true—until the workers' movement breaks out of the limitations of the fight for concessions and reforms under capitalism.

What is our view of this? It is to unite with the rank and file in their struggles, but to bring to them our own understanding of the nature of the trade union officials today, and expose them as it becomes possible in the course of the day to day struggles of the masses.

What we did at the beginning of the coal campaign that was correct (whether or not we were conscious of it) was to unite with the mass sentiment among the rank

and file about the issue of the coal imports. By building on this and taking it to the UMW officials in the form of proposing a mass demonstration around the coal imports we were able to *jam* the bureaucrats: they were caught between the mass sentiments of their own rank and file which were running high, and our concrete proposal for actions that the masses wanted to take up. In that situation they were forced to call out the rank and file to the May 22 demonstration. And at that point we were able to maintain some independent role—with our own propaganda, picket signs, and speakers.

But immediately after this the UMW officials began backsliding. Was our role then to continue to try to reach the rank and file "through the union officials," when they were running from the issue as fast as they could? Or was our duty to go to the rank and file themselves, who had already taken up the issue, and unite with the progressive and revolutionary aspects of their consciousness (the rudiments of class solidarity with the struggle in South Africa) to combat the backward baggage of "protectionism" that some of them carried? In addition, shouldn't we have gone out broadly to other sections of the working class and begun to unite the class as a whole around the issue?

Expose Traitors and Roll Over Them

The Draft Programme says: "As an important part of its overall struggle, the working class will fight to organize unions, to unite the masses of workers in unions in the common battle against the capitalist exploiters, to make unions militant organizations of class struggle, and to replace agents of the bourgeoisie with true representatives of the proletariat in union office...But the working class and its party cannot base its strategy on 'taking over' the unions by electing new leadership and *it cannot restrict its struggle to the limits set by the trade unions at any given time*. (emphasis ours) The policy of the proletariat and its party is to build its strength in the unions as part of building its revolutionary movement...Mobilize the rank and file around a program representing its interests and in doing so "jam" the union officials—expose the traitors at the top and roll over them, break the union bureaucracies' stranglehold on the workers, and unite with those on the lower levels of union leadership who can be won to stand with the working class—this is the policy of the proletariat and its party in the unions."

We had an opportunity to begin to do just that. But we failed to expose the traitors at the top when it became both possible and necessary, and to roll over them by developing our own methods of reaching the workers. We allowed ourselves to be "restricted by the limits set by the trade unions" and were unable to break the bureaucrats' stranglehold on the workers and develop the struggle into a *class* struggle.

The correct policy towards the top union officials is to work from the bottom—to go deeply among the rank and file and build a revolutionary workers' movement that presents the question clearly to those in union office: which side are you on? There are only two sides: ours and the enemy's. During the course of the coal campaign a leading member of the October League said that "the United Mine Workers union is objective-

ly anti-imperialist." This view and the view that we need to "move the unions to the left" and rely on "progressive" officials to reach the rank and file, really views the rank and file as a pressure group that we apply to the officials to get them to unite with us—the "communists."

This view says that the most important question is "Who will unite with us?" and not "How can we unite with the working class and build the proletariat's leadership of all the struggles of its other allies?" This is a wrong petty bourgeois view that shows that those who hold it care more about their own position in the course of the struggle, than they do about the masses and making revolution.

This was clear in the October League's proposal at the Coal Conference: "Cooperation with the union officials, where it can be reached, increases our ability to reach the rank-and-file. At the same time, the strength of the coalition in general and our links with and support from the rank-and-file in particular, has an important affect on our ability to get cooperation from officials."

Tactics and Strategy

The OL makes it sound as if "cooperation with union officials" and "strength of our coalition" or the mass movement in general, are two sides of the same coin. They're not. Cooperation with union officials is a *tactical* question. Building the strength of our organizations and of the mass movement and the rank and file is a *strategic* question.

Only the masses of workers and other oppressed people can make revolution. Only by relying on them can we be successful in guiding forward the struggles to the goal of proletarian revolution and socialism. If we can get some help along the way from "cooperative officials," that's fine. But it is certainly wrong to view "cooperation from the officials" and "cooperation" from the rank and file as equally important.

The union bureaucrats may be jammed at times into taking progressive stands on any one of a variety of issues. But the only way that the top offices of the unions can be more than fronts for the bourgeoisie that wear "liberal," "progressive" or "reactionary" masks, will be as the proletariat and its party build a mass revolutionary movement that, as *one* of its tasks, sweeps *all* the agents out of the unions and replaces them with true representatives of the proletariat.

In the meantime, our job is not to build "mass" pressure groups to get this or that union official to take a somewhat progressive stance on this or that issue. Our job is to build the struggle, consciousness and revolutionary unity of the working class and to unite a broad anti-imperialist united front under working class leadership, that can make proletarian revolution in the U.S., establish the dictatorship of the proletariat and begin to build socialism.

Within this overall struggle, the party's task of work in the trade unions is important, and the lessons we sum up now can help to lead the masses of workers to take the unions out of the hands of the bourgeoisie, and make them "militant organizations of class struggle." ■

Build...

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and advance this understanding. We didn't go off in a corner and with the more advanced workers take potshots at the union and make them the main enemy. Instead, our caucus tried to build actions aimed at the company and all the time put the union leaders up against the wall to go along with the people.

For example, the union heads were collaborating with the company in stalling negotiations to demoralize the people and defuse the mass sentiment that had built up for a strike. They were practically incommunicado and refused to hold a meeting to discuss the contract.

The foremen were stalking the aisles in pairs looking for saboteurs, spreading rumors, and the people were demanding action. We summed up the situation with the caucus and put out the call for mass meetings of the workers to make plans. In all, well over one quarter from both 1st and 2nd shift turned out. We reaffirmed the contract demands we had been putting forward and decided to confront the union heads to force them to have a union meeting and call the strike.

Besides ruining the sellouts' lunch and giving them indigestion, many workers saw more how the union heads were supporting the company from their arguments with the bargaining committee chairman.

They also learned through their united action more about their collective strength and the need to rely on it. As one worker put it straight on the line, "We've put up with your bullshit long enough. This time the people will have their say."

The demands for the contract itself were summed up finally in this manner also, i.e., through in-shop, lunch-time meetings.

Dividing the Class

Our mistakes came when we substituted our thoughts for those of the people. For instance, when we began to plan for the struggle we started to get in the bag of dividing up the working class in categories and rating them in the struggle. This led us to come up with special demands and roles for, let's say, the Black workers or the younger workers.

For example, we felt that Black workers should fight for contract language that hit on the extra harassment they faced because of national oppression. This was too narrow and no one, including the Black workers, saw it as an issue for the contract.

Instead of trying to figure out how to unite the class in struggle we were treating it like it was made up of different special interest groups.

This happened partly because we failed to apply MLM—we failed to grasp the fact that the material basis of unity, the common exploitation by the same capitalist, was the main aspect. It was this material basis of unity which should have guided our formulation of the demands.

Another failure to correctly apply MLM came because we hadn't yet fully carried out the struggle against Bundism and economism within our organization. It was Bundist to separate off the Black workers, with their special demands, from the overall workers' struggle. The Bundism was part and parcel of the economist error of asserting that workers could only be mobilized around the narrowest kind of issues.

The second reason we fell into this dividing error was that we didn't go to the people first for the demands. But when we put them out, the workers rejected this view out of hand. Through listening closely to what people were saying and using MLM to sum up, we corrected the errors, formulated demands that united the shop to win gains and strike a blow against the company. The work moved ahead.

This is not to say that we don't raise special demands. In fact we did and were able to eliminate a discriminatory pay rate for women. But this was based on showing how the special job grades for women hurt not only women, but all of the workers in the shop, and showing how fighting for equality would strengthen us and weaken the company.

In the course of the contract campaign we tried to follow the principle of fighting the day to day struggle as hard as possible and showing its relationship to our final goal of proletarian revolution. To aid us in doing this we put out an organization leaflet.

Confusing the Workers

While the leaflet was overall good and did help to show people the relationship between their fight and revolution, it had a tendency to set up the day to day fight in opposition to the goal of proletarian revolution. This also came out at times in our discussions when comrades would say, "This contract fight is OK,

but really whatever we win they will take away. Really we need a working class revolution."

This somewhat confused folks. On the one hand we were agitating, jamming the union leadership and building activity in the shop for a strike, and on the other hand we said it really wouldn't help. This was brought up to us by some workers. In summing this up we were able to see very clearly that tendencies to pose the day to day struggle vs. revolution, as both right and "left" opportunists do, only confuses and demoralizes those who are active in the fight.

Instead we should have shown how such a fight actually strengthens the working class and weakens the enemy for our final victory over them.

Through the contract struggle, many workers learned about how to fight the company and its friends in the union. A number of workers also began seeing the need to jump into the broader struggle.

Our work around May Day, which took place just as the contract was finally sold out, was an example of how to link the day to day with the broader struggle.

Many of the most active workers in the contract struggle, because of the work done, saw our contract fight as part of the overall struggle. Even as early as International Women's Day, a member of the caucus presented the struggle in the shop as part of the whole workers' movement. When the union leadership, after months of struggle, jammed a lousy contract down our throats, the active people recognized it for what it was, a defeat, and summed up both mistakes made and the correct things we had done.

In the past the workers had summed up correctly that the union leadership was no good and that the workers had been sold out. But the new understanding gained was that we could, through patient work and hard struggle, unite the people to fight. They saw that we had no choice but to keep on fighting, and May Day, which was just coming up, was seen as another part of that struggle.

Instead of dropping back from demoralization, an active core came forward to help build May Day. A speaker for the caucus at the event talked about the contract sell-out and summed up, "The bosses try to divide us every way they can. They try to make whites hate Blacks, men hate women and young people hate old people. But there's only one group we have to hate—that's the bourgeoisie."

Most of the workers involved are presently in the revolutionary workers' movement and are building struggle both inside and outside the shop.

Unemployment Work

Another important example of how people learned about the whole system through day to day struggle is our work around unemployment. Last year around the energy freeze we raised the broad general slogan, "Stop the Layoffs!" without any other fighting demands. So the reaction we got from the people was, "Yeah, that sounds like a good idea," or "That was a real good leaflet."

Our line in practice was that the most important thing we had to do was get out the broad political propaganda around the question of the crisis and unemployment rather than involve the masses in struggle around it. This sees these things in complete contradiction, rather than understanding that the masses learn through their struggles and that the broad propaganda becomes much more meaningful and important to people as they are involved in the struggle against their exploitation.

This "left" line goes dead in the face of the Marxist theory of knowledge. As a result people got a few good ideas from the leaflets and some participated in the TTBO marches but that's where it was left.

Recognizing our past mistakes, this year the caucus developed a fighting program around the layoffs. There has been sharp struggle in the plant around questions relating to unemployment, such as seniority, harassment, as well as linking these fights to the overall UWOC demands.

This year, instead of just passing out leaflets, the masses have been mobilized. We formed an employed/unemployed committee within the union to struggle against the company, in the fight against layoffs, and build unity with others like UWOC fighting around unemployment. The committee included members of our caucus as well as other workers who were coming forward to fight the unemployment.

The work of this committee was hampered by the union bureaucrats from the jump. Our first action was to put out a leaflet detailing our demands—no more overtime during layoffs and honor the seniority system in the layoffs.

The people were mobilized by the leaflet and the company and union bureaucrats went nuts. At the next union meeting they refused to allow discussion of our next plan, a mass informational picket line in front of the plant. At the same time they carried on an intensive red-baiting campaign. These actions sparked a storm of debate in the plant about our organization and communism, and the layoff struggle itself. Some workers

who "didn't want to know" from us before, actively participated in the discussion.

The employed/unemployed committee tried to set up a meeting with the head of personnel to push our demands. With the approval of the bargaining committee chairman, he refused to see us. The next day members of our committee, mostly laid off workers, went into the plant to force the sellout chairman to go to the company with us. He refused and a huge argument followed.

Workers, overhearing, came to join in jamming this hack. He was "saved" by the personnel director who came huffing down the aisle, threatening to fire everyone who came into the plant off their shift.

The next day we went in again to force a meeting. Some workers from the floor came in with us. The head of the company refused to come out of his office. We went in after him, jamming into his office. He was so scared he called the cops, who arrived within minutes, just after we left the office.

Excellent Lessons

All this struggle provided perfect, living lessons of the role of the cops and union sellouts in supporting the company's exploitation.

Before, people summed up that "you can't fight city hall," that the company was too strong. Now, all over the plant, discussion centered on how to fight. "Did you see how scared that personnel guy was?" said one worker. "I thought he was going to have a stroke."

Instead of "what's the use?" people were saying, "That's the kind of action we need more of around here. It's really clear who's afraid of who." The next week, the entire first shift stopped work when the company called a worker back from layoff out of seniority.

In the course of developing the struggle and class consciousness, the draft programme states, "members of the Revolutionary Communist Party put forward (in the caucuses) the policy of relying on the rank and file... They work to develop the life of these organizations and to continually recruit new workers to them ... through this whole process, active fighters for the class will continually come forward, and unite to lead struggle... and many of the most advanced among them will develop into communists and join the party."

To do this we unite with the advanced workers to lead the intermediate. We feel that it's crucial to have a firm grasp on who really is the "advanced worker" in order to carry out work correctly.

The concept of an "advanced worker" is not mechanical but means the workers who come forward to fight and lead others. Though these workers may not have a very developed understanding of the system when they first come forward, the core of our caucus has been made up of fighters who have seen the links between the struggles of our class and that the problem is the system. Some active workers who have not grasped these links are more on the fringes of the caucus and come forward in certain struggles.

This is not static, as some workers may come forward in a particular struggle and either continue to lead or drop back. Of course, the development of these advanced workers is not a spontaneous thing but will develop only by relying on the initiative of these advanced workers, fighting the day to day battles and by linking these struggles with the overall class struggle and the long-range fight for socialism.

A key part of this is to study MLM with these workers and thus arm them with the science that will light the way for revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The point here is not to artificially divide the class with our imaginations. This question of who to rely on—the workers with a heavy rap or the ones who will fight, or neither—has been a constant source of discussion in our caucus. The important point is to unite and rely on the initiative of the advanced in leading the struggle and to consciously develop these fighters into fighters for the whole class.

No! To Baggage

In the overall struggle in the plant in the last years a number of things have come clear that we have summed up in the draft programme. The working class has been struggling against its exploitation ever since its existence. Workers have summed up and learned certain things in these struggles.

This fight continues and is intensifying today. As future members of the Revolutionary Communist Party, we understand these day to day struggles are the center of the working class struggle at this time. Our own experience and MLM has shown us that only by boldly going into these struggles and helping lead them will the revolutionary workers' movement continue to grow and move forward.

These day to day struggles by our class against their exploitation, if led by our party in a correct manner, will only bring closer the fall of the bourgeoisie and the rule of the working class. The struggle

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gles are battles in our overall war with the ruling class. They can serve to weaken our enemy and build our movement.

Our job is not to sit on the sidelines and watch and criticize for being too narrow, or to criticize the workers for being too backward. Our job is not to put our subjective hangups on the workers and artificially divide the class or substitute what we think is important.

We say No! to this baggage. The working class learns through its day to day struggle. We will continue to go into these struggles, help lead them and give light to them by linking them up with the overall revolutionary workers' movement and our fight for socialism.

As the draft programme states, "The party of the proletariat must bring to the workers, through all their struggles, the understanding of the antagonistic contradiction between themselves and the bourgeoisie, and consistently guide the struggle to its final aim." ■

Class Stand Key In Boston Busing Struggle

The key question for communists in the Boston busing struggle has been: what class stand do we take in the fight? The answer is clear in theory. But in practice, applying the correct class stand has been a difficult process of learning. The draft programme, which is clearly written from the outlook and stand of the working class, has helped us to sum up some important lessons of class struggle.

The main thing we are learning is that the multinational working class is the only class that can lead this struggle and all struggles against oppression. The workers learn this in the day to day struggle against attacks from the ruling class and for the things they need in order to live like human beings.

If communists are to help move that struggle forward toward revolution, we must see things from the point of view of the working class. The interests of the working class cannot be subordinated to those of any other class or strata in society. The working class is the only really revolutionary class.

"The proletariat will learn more sharply the nature of society and the monopoly capitalists who rule it, as it sees the bourgeoisie attack not only its ranks but the other strata as well. In this way, it sees also the vacillation of the other strata toward the bourgeoisie, their narrowness and self-interest. With the aid of the party, it sums up that none of these other class forces can represent its interests..." (p. 33)

This is happening in reality. The struggle for education and equality, which the bourgeoisie has tried to divert with the Boston busing plan, has brought many social forces into the field of battle. The ruling class is faced with a worldwide crisis which is bringing it new defeats. It is confronted by a rising workers' movement that is forging unity in struggle.

The rulers have responded with intensified attacks on the schools and communities of the working class and oppressed nationalities. They have desperately attempted to use the Boston busing plan to divide the workers and to drive a wedge between the struggles of the working class and the struggles of the oppressed nationalities. They have sought to intensify the historic competition among the masses of people for the things they need to survive, in this case, education.

Vicious Campaign

In carrying out its divide and conquer schemes, the bourgeoisie has waged a vicious campaign to blame the people for the problems in Boston. In this, they have made use of other strata which, while having contradictions with the monopoly capitalists, also "own some of the means of production or stand above the proletariat." (p. 33)

On the one hand are the forces of the Boston School Committee and ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights)

which have posed as the defenders and protectors of the "little man" against the Beacon Hill Establishment while in fact organizing around the white chauvinist line that "criminal Black people are taking everything away from hard working white people."

On the other hand, there are forces led by the NAACP and Black politicians like State Senator Bill Owens, who have pushed the narrow nationalist line that "the racist white people of Boston are keeping Black people from their rights. We'll just have to take it from them." Included here are the groups of the morally outraged petty bourgeois movement (OL, YAWF, SWP, Weather Underground, etc.)

These forces have tried to rally the working class and other people to their banner. In the absence of leadership from a revolutionary communist party, ROAR has had some temporary success, while the narrow nationalists have remained isolated from the masses.

The Boston School Committee (BSC) and ROAR. The BSC and the leadership of ROAR come from and represent the last remnants of the old Irish political machine that once ran Boston. It is being smashed by the monopoly capitalists led by Mayor White. ROAR's base is mainly among the petty bourgeoisie in the city and suburbs.

In South Boston especially, working through the Home and School Associations, they have established tight organizations which enforce a strict discipline in the community based on fear and hatred of all "outsiders." They are the main force pushing the "Blacks cause all the problems" line.

In the early stage of the busing struggle, many white workers looked to ROAR for leadership and supported the school boycott. Some still do. ROAR was the only organized force offering to lead resistance to the attacks on the schools and neighborhoods of the city. They do all they can to misdirect this resistance and turn it against Black people and away from the ruling class.

The draft programme correctly characterizes ROAR. "As crisis deepens and the revolutionary working class movement develops, the bourgeoisie increasingly attempts to mobilize the petty bourgeoisie against the proletariat and even to use it as a social base for fascism. The bourgeoisie tries to turn the desperation of the ruined petty bourgeoisie into frantic attacks against the working class." (p. 24)

But in the course of the struggle, the working class is seeing how ROAR cannot lead its fight or serve its interests. For instance, in Southie we hear increasing talk of how all the school boycott has done is to lead to more youth street crime.

One life-long Southie family told us that they had been knifed in the back by ROAR after the mother of the family had appeared on TV (with ROAR's backing, she thought) calling for Black and white parents to or-

ganize to keep the peace at Southie High so that the school would stay open. The husband, a longshoreman, said that ROAR had mounted a smear campaign against the family, even though they have been close friends of Louise Day Hicks. Hicks did nothing to defend them. There are many examples of this kind.

Growing Contention

ROAR's narrowness and self-interest has been exposed to white workers in the growing contention among its leading politicians who want to use the busing issue to run for office. One of the most popular of these is State Rep. Ray Flynn of Southie, a candidate for mayor. But even he is now being attacked by some in ROAR for upstaging ROAR's march on Washington by going there a week before the march. The thieves fall out and the workers grow more disgusted.

ROAR's recent March on Washington has further exposed it to white workers. First, the march was a \$57.50 holiday which few workers could afford. Second, it was part of ROAR's attempts to get a constitutional amendment against forced busing. Few workers support this. And so, even though it was ROAR's only mobilization since early December, only 1500 people from around the country "marched" on Washington.

One more example. When the Nazis opened an office in Southie recently, ROAR, realizing that most people in Southie are sickened by the Nazis, sponsored a picket line outside their office "to distinguish itself from the Nazis." But it is clear to more and more workers that the line of ROAR and the Nazis is essentially the same and that therefore ROAR will not build a campaign against the Nazis.

This is not to say that ROAR and the Boston School Committee have lost all influence among the white workers. It does show that the petty bourgeoisie can't lead their struggles and that the workers are seeing this in the course of the struggle.

Black bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces. The Boston busing plan is an attempt by the bourgeoisie to turn around the struggle of Black people for education and equality. The bourgeoisie is trying to turn this struggle from an attack on itself into an attack on the multinational working class. In this they are making use of narrow nationalist forces.

The Boston busing plan is the immediate result of a suit brought against the Boston School Committee by the NAACP in 1972. The court's decision "proved" what everybody knew: the BSC has consciously kept Boston schools segregated. Boston's Black students, overall, go to the worst of Boston's lousy schools and are discriminated against in many ways.

In the 60s and early 70s, the Black people of Bos-

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Busing...

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ton filled the streets in their struggle for decent and equal education and against discrimination. That struggle suffered greatly from the lack of workers involved and leading it.

The draft programme says, "During this period, the ruling class, panicked by the powerful upsurge of the Black people and bringing down more savage repression against them, also rushed to build up bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces among them to put a brake on their struggle, and lead it into a dead end. But because this could in no way change the basic conditions of the Black masses, it has mainly served to intensify class contradictions among Black people, as it becomes all the more clear that the Black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie cannot lead the Black people to liberation." (p. 36) This describes the situation in Boston.

Role of NAACP

The NAACP leads an array of forces that is helping the bourgeoisie to attack the working class and the masses of oppressed people. They are united behind the bourgeois line that "after all times are tough. There's not enough to go around. So since Black people suffer more than white people do, we should spread the suffering more equally. If white workers resist this, they are automatically racist and should be smashed."

During the height of the violence in Boston, these narrow nationalists were able to spread some confusion. Their greatest influence was on the groups of the petty bourgeois "left."

The NAACP, Senator Bill Owens and their symps appealed to the most narrow self-interest of Black people, saying "these racist white people in Southie are the same people who have kept Black people down for years." But even then the masses of Black people remained indifferent to their hysteria. Only one time did they get Boston's Black people to demonstrate in any numbers, 800-1000 during the Oct. violence.

The NAACP has never had a base in Boston. They have tried like hell to build themselves with the busing plan. But they are more isolated now than ever. They have shown that they cannot lead the struggle of Black people for emancipation.

The basic contradictions among the Black people have been intensified. In the busing struggle, Black workers are seeing that they have little in common with the NAACP and the other bourgeois and petty bourgeois nationalists. The NAACP shows its contradiction with Black workers by helping Fed. Judge Garrity push the line, "Busing for de-segregation first, education second," when Black workers clearly want education first. They will tolerate busing if it means better schools. But experience is showing that this isn't the case.

Every day the busing con game is more exposed and with it the hustlers who have been pushing it on the people. The political line of the Dec. 14 "March Against Racism" was exposed for the isolated garbage it is when it failed to bring out Black people from Boston. The march completely exposed Bill Owens as the agent he is when the newspapers reported how he had arranged with the cops to have himself arrested as a martyr in order to avoid any militant confrontations.

Black Parents Organize

At Hyde Park High School, where there has been a lot of racial fighting, some Black parents organized themselves to help keep the peace inside the school. Recently, the principal kicked them out. The parents called a meeting to discuss the situation in the school and over 50 angry Black parents and students showed up. The NAACP sent its lawyers to the meeting saying that they would be glad to take the case to court. They were attacked by some and ignored by most of the parents.

At the next meeting half as many people showed up. A Black Muslim speaker put people to sleep with a long speech about how Black people shouldn't go to the white man's schools. The next meeting still fewer people showed. Despite the efforts of a poverty pimp to stifle any real discussion, the workers and communists at the meeting talked about the need to take the fight to the community.

The struggle continues around how to do this, as well as for a position on the busing plan in general. Meanwhile, several students have initiated a petition in the high school. It demands that the parents' group be brought back into the school and the cops be kicked out. Over 500 Black and white students signed the petition. This provides a beginning on which to build the struggle from the perspective of the proletariat and

further expose the role of the bourgeois nationalists.

The point of all this is that the bourgeoisie has been able to play upon the contradictions among the people and to build up to some degree its agents in order to mislead the working class and oppressed nationalities. But the working class is learning in the course of the day to day struggle who its friends and enemies are. "With the aid of the party, it sums up that none of these other class forces can represent its interests." (p. 33)

The role of communists. The Boston busing struggle clearly shows how the absence of a revolutionary communist party has held back the struggle of the working class. We need a communist party that is based on the outlook of the working class and relies on the masses.

Our efforts to develop a program for the day to day struggle of the working class for education and equality in Boston have revealed certain tendencies which must be struggled against as we move forward to the party.

Our main weakness was our tendency to underestimate the working class and to look to other strata for leadership in the struggle. We tended to adopt the outlook of the petty bourgeoisie and especially to view things from the perspective of the Black bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

Ignoring the historical development of the single multinational U.S. working class, we didn't grasp that we are in a new period when the principal contradiction is once again between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat—when that contradiction is more influencing than influenced by every other contradiction in society. We didn't understand what it means to say *the proletariat must lead*. This held back work in several ways.

Initially, we correctly summed up the Busing plan as an attack by the bourgeoisie. This was in part due to discussion with several workers, Black, Latin and white, who either had kids in school or had themselves gone through the Boston schools. We did not see, however, that this was primarily an attack on the working class. Further, we didn't understand just how important education is to the working class.

Our failure to see the busing attack in the context of the struggle of the working class for better schools and against discrimination resulted in a one-sided acceptance of the bourgeoisie's terms. We put forward the slogan, "People Must Unite to Smash the Boston Busing Plan." This put the working class in a defensive position by not seeking the most favorable ground on which to fight.

Main Error

But then for a while it was "freak out city," as our old "friends" from the moral movement mounted their attacks on the working class and on our line. The roar from the left that "the RU and the working class is racist" caused us to look over our shoulders to our petty bourgeois past and to lose sight of the future and its class.

Our main error in this period was to look to the bourgeois nationalists for leadership. Some of us began to think maybe the main thing behind the school boycott was white workers' racism. We struggled over whether Southie was built on "privilege" and thus should be smashed so that Black people could exercise their "democratic right to go to any school they choose."

We put out a one-sided line that implied support for the NAACP and CORE. When we finally did attack the NAACP as bourgeois agents, some comrades said we were breaking the united front. Our Bundism came out in a tendency to see Black workers as Black, but not as workers. We underestimated Black workers and tended not to struggle with them on the basis of their being part of the working class.

All of this was clearly exposed in our approach to the Dec. 14 March Against Racism. We didn't grasp that the line of that demo was a bourgeois line in clear contradiction with the views and interests of the working class. Our line was "yes, the essential thing is to fight racism and aim it at the ruling class which is its source."

We tried to unite with the line of the narrow nationalists when we should have attacked it. We dropped "Fight the Boston Busing Plan" as a slogan for the contingent we were leading. Then we didn't even bring signs or banners putting out the slogan at all. This was mainly out of fear that we would be attacked by the nationalists and their movement allies.

Another way that a bourgeois outlook has held back the struggle was our misunderstanding of the relationship between struggle and consciousness. We failed for a long time to develop a fighting program that was based in an understanding that the contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat is *material*.

Our tendency has been to think that if only the working class and oppressed nationalities *understood* that the ruling class is the real enemy, then we could unite and fight. Before we would unite with workers to fight, they had to agree with our slogan "Fight the Ruling Class Divide and Rule Attacks." This reflected a subjective idealist approach to how the working class moves and learns in struggle.

Basing Ourselves on Proletariat

We are learning that the struggles of the working class are *objectively* against the ruling class. That communists must build these struggles on the basis of summing up the ideas, needs and desires of the masses, not on what we wish the level of consciousness would be. We are learning that the working class learns in the day to day struggle who its friends and enemies are. We must persist in building the mass struggle and develop unity and consciousness in the struggle.

By basing ourselves in the outlook of the proletariat we are now more patiently concentrating on building the fight for education and equality. Our slogans "Fight for Decent and Equal Education, Fight the Boston Busing Plan, Stop Police Attacks—Organize Self Defense," reflect the reality of the struggle in Boston and provide the basis for developing unity and consciousness in the struggle.

These slogans are being taken out to the working class and oppressed nationalities with leafleting, picket lines, rallies, marches and motorcades. We have taken them to particular fights—to kick Kerrigan (BSC pig) out at Boston State College, to throw the Nazis out of Boston, to expose Garrity and the Gillette Co.'s role in the schools and busing plan, to kick the cops out of Hyde Park High and get the parent groups back in.

A firmer grasp of the proletarian class stand is being developed in the mass struggle and in turn is releasing the initiative of communists in leading the masses in struggle. ■

Lessons from the Farmworker Struggle

Work began in the farmworker movement in Salinas in 1971, a year that the farmworker movement and the United Farmworkers Union had hit a high mark. The year before had seen the victory in the grapes after five years of strikes and boycotts, and the victory in the lettuce fields, a result of the massive strike of 7000.

Union membership stood at over 40,000 and the future for the union looked good. The fields were boiling with activity and enthusiasm for struggle, part of the rebellion and class hatred unleashed by the Salinas general strike. Struggle was erupting in other parts of the country, in the Northwest, in Florida's citrus and cane fields, and elsewhere, ignited by the sparks of struggles in California. The UFW leadership was asking the question, Where to organize next; how long would it take to organize the country's farmworkers?

The year 1971 was a high point in the struggle which began six years before when Filipino grapeworkers in Delano struck growers, demanding higher wages. The year before, in 1964, the bracero contract labor program with Mexico was ended. Though the growers opposed its ending, they tried to take advantage of it by lowering wages below the limit guaranteed for braceros.

The Filipino strike, under the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee of the AFL-CIO, was not unlike many struggles throughout the "lull" period of the 50s and 60s. But this strike came at a time of rapidly changing conditions as decaying imperialism was setting in motion forces against it.

The struggle of Black people helped set in motion other sections of the population, especially other nationally oppressed people. Mexican farmworkers under a union led by Cesar Chavez joined the strike shortly after it began. A protracted battle for unionization in the fields began.

Pressuring the Bourgeoisie

The organizers of the union movement led by Chavez had the goal of winning for farmworkers the advantages organized industrial workers had won. They set out especially to do away with the more outrageous abuses of farmworkers. This they believed could be done by waging a fight against the growers directly through the use of the strike and boycott, but with the real aim of pressuring the bourgeoisie to grant some of the concessions that other workers had won, convincing them at the same time that this movement did not challenge their basic interests, did not set itself against their system.

Yet the conditions which for a brief time made it possible for the bourgeoisie to grant minor concessions to workers, at a high point in its domination of much of the world, were quickly ending as imperialism headed rapidly towards crisis engulfed in struggle by the world's people. The period of the late 60s was marked by increasing attacks on working people to take back the concessions workers had won. The 1970 Salinas general strike exploded the myth that farmworkers were just a humble mass resigned to their fate under capitalism while politely asking for a little better treatment.

The bourgeoisie's memory wasn't so short as to have forgotten the massive upsurge in the fields during the early and mid-1930s, struggles often led by communists. The massive Salinas strike and the activity it aroused across the country sharpened their hatred and fear of farmworkers. The gains farmworkers had won in the previous five years were bound to come under heavy attack. And they did.

It was under these conditions that communists began work in Salinas in 1971. Communists who went to the fields were ourselves products of the upsurge in the mass struggle in the mid to late 1960s. We came to the fields with some understanding of imperialism and a hatred for it, and the consciousness that it was the historic role of the working class to lead the struggle to overthrow it. This could only be done if communists brought Marxism-Leninism to the workers, so that it could become the ideological weapon in their struggle.

But this general knowledge had to be deepened. Grasping how to apply the theory of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of the farmworker movement had to come through experience, struggle, summing up of experience, etc. There were no manuals on the subject of farmworker organizing in the period of the final fall of imperialism to go by, and reliance on an understanding of just the general conclusions

of Marxism-Leninism would not do. We had to get involved in the on-going class struggle in the fields and learn from it. This much we understood.

Pacifism, Moralism

One of the first incorrect tendencies in our thinking was to view the farmworker movement as not really "heavy," not really militant. This amounted to taking in the pacifist and moralist line put out by the United Farmworkers Union at face value, as though it were the beginning and end of the farmworker movement.

The actual struggles, and the militant attitude of farmworkers themselves, helped us to overcome this view, and we began to grasp the significance of farmworkers' struggle for the movement of the entire working class. Farmworkers have a tremendous amount of class hatred for their oppressors and are constantly struggling in the fields in various ways. They have a long and rich history of struggle.

Most farmworkers come from oppressed nations, particularly Mexico, and have a great deal of perceptual experience and knowledge of imperialism as a worldwide system. Mexican people, as well, have a rich history of armed revolutionary struggle extending into this century which is part of their culture and tradition. Farmworkers in recent years have waged massive and hard fought battles and shown great heroism and self-sacrifice within them.

These are valuable lessons for the whole class. The farmworker movement has also been a spur to the movement of the Chicano people in the U.S. Given this, it is understandable that the bourgeoisie would do everything in its power to try and hem in the consciousness and struggle of farmworkers, to prevent its being linked up with the overall class struggle, to keep it within the bounds of trade unionism.

Failure to grasp this well led to a second incorrect tendency, a rightist view that the UFW leadership were basically just practical people who were doing everything under the existing conditions to advance the farmworker movement. They united with certain forces within the bourgeoisie because the working class movement overall was too weak, and they did so only in order to play on contradictions within the bourgeoisie.

Experience in struggle proved this assessment incorrect. In fact, the leadership of the UFW are agents of the bourgeoisie in the farmworker movement who have and will continue to fight against the spread of revolutionary consciousness among farmworkers in order to keep the struggle within bounds acceptable to the bourgeoisie.

This does not mean that the UFW has not played a progressive role in organizing struggles that otherwise could not have been sustained, in developing the boycott as a weapon, of spreading to masses of people understanding of the role and conditions of farmworkers, as well as helping to arouse farmworkers as participants in the trade union struggle. But to see only this side, and not to see the line of the union of putting the movement at the tail of the bourgeoisie, would leave us blind to the fact that as imperialism decays and the struggle against it mounts, the union line would become more and more an obstacle to advancing the farmworker struggle against attacks, and a roadblock to advancing the farmworker movement into a powerful section of the revolutionary workers' movement.

Had this tendency not been struggled against, summed up in the course of our own experience in light of the workers' movement as a whole as summed up by the Revolutionary Union, it would have led us to become not communists, but social democrats, militant fighters perhaps in the trade union battles, capable of saying nasty things about imperialism, and even talking about the revolutionary struggles of other people, but incapable of waging a struggle against the restrictions of trade union ideology. We would have been left incapable of bringing to farmworkers an understanding of their role, both as necessarily leading their struggles against attacks and leading the revolutionary movement against imperialism—to build such a movement.

Two Lines Develop in Practice

In the spring of 1972 a comrade and an advanced worker put together the first issue of the *Worker of the Salinas Valley*. The intention was to develop a paper which could popularize the struggles of work-

ing people in the area, to unite workers in common struggle. Its first issues reflected the grasp of things that had been developed to that point—it was essentially a left trade union (vaguely anti-imperialist) paper which was distributed largely through the union, including at times by shop stewards to various union crews.

The staff of the paper took a position in opposition to the union's line for the first time around the struggle against Proposition 22, the last of the major battles against anti-union legislation in California. In that campaign, and others that preceded it, the union put forward the slogan, "The Republican Party Hates Farmworkers," advancing the line that Republicans were behind the attack on the union, while it backed the campaign of George McGovern for president.

While we actively participated in the campaign to defeat Prop. 22 (including canvassing in the cities), we put forward that the attack represented by 22 was an attack by the entire ruling class, part of the general attack on all workers. If Prop. 22 passed it would be a blow to the entire class. Several thousand copies of a special issue of *The Worker* containing this line were passed out at factories and other work places in the Valley.

The Worker also came out (after correcting some initial incorrect ideas) in opposition to both Nixon and McGovern, pointing out that both represented the ruling class despite their supposed differences. If McGovern sounded more "friendly" to farmworkers (or to the Vietnamese fighting for liberation) it only amounted to some slight tactical differences on how best to defeat the farmworker movement (and carry out the imperialists' policies in Indochina).

In the winter of '72-'73 the ruling class was preparing its campaign to beat down the union struggle using the Teamster Union as one of its clubs. Communists united with some progressive people in the Salinas area to build an organization to support farmworkers in upcoming battles.

Our approach was to go out actively to other workers in the area, particularly in the sheds and canneries, with a class line. In this we opposed the union's line that we should organize a group of liberal supporters who could hold press conferences once in a while to speak out on the latest outrages of the Teamsters and growers. More than five thousand leaflets were distributed around the Valley calling on workers to support the farmworkers as part of the struggle of the class against attacks.

A petition campaign demanding the Teamsters leave the fields was launched, gathering over 800 signatures, mainly among non-farmworkers. A militant demonstration was held at the Teamster office and included a few Teamster rank and filers from the canneries as well as a white truck driver who joined the line as he saw it driving by. The committee also put out a pamphlet summing up the history of the farmworker movement, *Si Se Puede*.

Great Potential

order to mobilize working people and other progressive forces in the cities, we made contact with communists in the Bay Area and Los Angeles. Other support committees were formed, and it soon became apparent that the potential for mobilizing mass support among workers for farmworkers was a real possibility with a militant class line.

As the committees began developing support, the UFW launched a vigorous attack on the committees, claiming they were attempting to usurp the union, take over leadership of the farmworker union, make money off the movement, and other lies. In this attack they united with AFL-CIO hacks, and were aided by the Communist Party and other opportunists.

The attack on the effort to mobilize support was like being doused with cold water—a sobering experience. We summed up from it that our grasp of the nature of the union leadership was weak. We had believed that faced with the possibility of masses of workers mobilized to support the union struggle, the union would welcome it, or if not welcome it at least accept it. We were wrong.

Connected with our lack of firm understanding of social democracy as an ideology that defends the bourgeoisie (with a "progressive" cover) was a failure to grasp the need to rely on the masses. We had tended instead to rely a lot on lower level union officials who,

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though basically honest, and in fact in basic agreement with the idea of mobilizing broad worker support, were nevertheless organizationally attached to the UFW leadership (all local officials were appointed, not elected).

While it is correct to "unite with those in the lower levels of union leadership who can be won to stand with the working class," this can only be done once communists "mobilize the rank and file around a program representing its interests." Because we had failed to do this well, once we were attacked, the lower level officials, under threats from above, dropped their support of us like a hot potato. At that point we had to go out to the rank and file and explain what had happened. Since the workers had not been involved from the beginning, many rank and filers, though sympathetic, did not grasp the real significance of what had happened, nor were they in a position to really strongly support us.

Workers Fight Back

In the middle of April the growers had launched their head on assault against the union in Coachella, using Teamster goons as shock troops backed up by the courts and county sheriffs. One hundred and fifty farmworkers from Salinas (called the Division of the North) helped launch the strike. In spite of massive arrests and other acts of repression, workers fought back vigorously. Within a week the local court was forced to withdraw its injunction, dropping charges against strikers.

The militant stance of the workers aroused other workers to join in the struggle. Workers who had stayed away from the strike, doubtful of its possibility of winning, now joined in in large numbers. Nearly 1500 workers carried the strike through to the end of the harvest season. Several contracts were won and growers suffered considerable losses.

The strikes that followed the Coachella strike were like a hurricane sweeping north up the Central Valley. In the grape areas of Arvin-Lamont, Fresno, Modesto (Gallo), powerful strike struggles were mounted. These battles contained countless acts of heroism on the part of farmworkers and truly revealed their strength and determination. The government, a "tool in the hands of the employers," was not able to bust up the strikes despite thousands of arrests and the brutality of sheriffs.

It became apparent that it was not the growers, courts, and cops who were "almighty," but the masses of farmworkers mobilized to fight. They literally broke through all direct assaults and forced the cops and goons to back down. These big battles sparked other strikes in Mendota's melon fields and in Salinas with a wildcat against the Bruce Church company. The determined struggle in the fields aroused widespread support in the cities, giving a boost to the boycott and literally closing the growers in a vice—the campaign to smash the UFW was turning into an offensive against the growers.

As stated in the Draft Programme, "In these struggles, the workers begin to throw off the foot of the employer from their necks, to raise their heads. And in raising their heads they are able to see farther and more clearly. The face of the enemy and the forces fighting him begin to come into sharper focus. This gives rise to vigorous discussion among workers not only about every question of the immediate struggle but also about events throughout society and the world. Through all this the workers begin to see themselves as more than mere individuals but as members of a class locked in warfare with the opposing class of employers."

"Vigorous discussions" on various questions were a constant part of the struggle. What is the goal of the struggle; what are the best tactics; violence vs. non-violence; who are our real friends—Kennedy, the Democrats, the AFL-CIO, other workers? What are the connections between this struggle and other struggles, and so on.

On the first day of the strike in Coachella, a worker spoke on a picket line just as preparations were being made to enter a field to convince other workers to join the strike. The real enemy we face, he said, are the big corporations, banks, railroads, etc. who control the country, our fight is part of the fight against them.

Later in the strike a worker spoke over a microphone to strikebreakers in a grape vineyard about how the struggle against the Coachella growers was part of a battle of oppressed people all over the world against a common enemy. "In Vietnam they are fighting these same imperialists. Look what they do to our country, Mexico." These same ideas were expressed at a rally in Livingston by a Gallo striker a few days after

the murder of Nagi Daifullah, a Yemeni worker on strike in Lamont. While linking up the big struggles going on in the fields with a worldwide movement against imperialism, he stated strongly that the murder of a brother would not stop or slow down the struggle, but spur people's determination to carry forward the strike.

Communists Join Struggle

Communists joined in the on-going struggle in the fields. In addition we attempted to put forward the more advanced ideas of the struggle, especially the connection between the immediate fierce struggle and the developing workers' movement, pointing out the need to consciously build a movement against imperialism.

In Salinas, a May Day rally was organized by a committee made up of members of the Citizens Committee (farmworker support group), *The Worker*, and a number of active farmworkers including veterans of the Division of the North, and a few cannery and factory workers. This May Day rally, which drew nearly 400 workers from the fields, canneries and local factories, put forward the farmworker struggle in the context of other battles the class and oppressed people were waging against a common enemy. This included the Farah strike, Mexican-American cannery workers who were fighting against company and union discrimination, and Iranian people in their struggle against the Shah and U.S. imperialism, and others.

A local theatre group put on a teatro exposing the treachery of the Teamster bureaucrats and growers and pointed to the invincibility of the farmworkers united with their closest allies, workers in the cities. A speaker from *The Worker* summed up some of the on-going struggles, pointing out how problems people face can only ultimately be solved through revolution to overthrow imperialism.

Throughout the summer a number of caravans of workers, students, and others, mainly from the Bay Area, were organized to support farmworkers' struggles. These were organized on the basis of solidarity with the heroic farmworkers' struggles, an important battle for the entire class. These caravans and several rallies held in Livingston at the camp where striking Gallo workers lived, were militant, spirited affairs.

In the rallies farmworkers on strike and workers from the cities, auto workers, rank and file teamsters, longshoremen and others, spoke about their feelings for the struggle. These actions not only were important for farmworkers in boosting their struggle, but were ways in which the sparks of the struggle were carried directly into the shops and factories in the Bay Area where they inspired large numbers of workers.

Leaflets and newspaper articles written during the strikes attempted to fan the spark of consciousness, to clearly identify the enemy and promote struggle against them. After the killings of Nagi Daifullah and Juan De La Cruz, a leaflet was put out by the Revolutionary Union, pointing out the connection between the heroic struggles of immigrant workers with the struggle of the class as a whole against the common enemy of the world's oppressed people.

The leaflet said: "Farmworkers were forced to come to this country by the same money hungry corporations that control California's fields. People come here because monopolies like Safeway, Bank of America, United Fruit Company and Tenneco are plundering countries all over the world, robbing their resources and trying to turn these countries into a new type of colony of the U.S. So workers come to this country from nations like Mexico, the Philippines and the Middle East hoping that in the U.S. they will be able to provide a decent life for their families. So when farmworkers come to this country they bring with them an understanding of imperialism and what it means for the people of the whole world. This is something American workers are beginning to understand also, that the workers of other countries are not our enemies trying to take away our jobs, but that all workers are part of the same class and that we all have a common enemy—imperialism."

Bourgeoisie's Representatives

The bourgeoisie of course had its representatives on hand during the struggle to promote their views to the workers. As the workers attempted to lift their heads, it was their role to try and push them down into the dirt. The AFL-CIO in particular was out in force from the beginning of the strike in Coachella. The AFL-CIO provided the strikes with 1.6 million dollars to pay out fairly large strike benefits, and AFL-CIO officials were on hand as strike captains—to promote their line and their organization's influence in it.

It was rare that one of these officials opened his mouth without prating about "labor solidarity." But while solidarity was on their lips, it was betrayal that was on their minds. They pushed their filthy "Buy America" chauvinism and promoted the attack on "illegals" as the problem that prevented farmworkers from

winning their battles—a problem that could be solved by uniting with the bourgeoisie to deport workers without papers. They also acted to try and dampen militancy on the picket lines and, in at least one occasion, in Coachella, got workers in jail to keep quiet when the sheriffs couldn't.

Without the AFL-CIO and other bourgeois forces hiding under a progressive cover within the movement, the growers and the ruling class might have suffered a serious defeat. As the growers were becoming more desperate, unable to break the strike with injunctions, mass arrests and police violence, and as the struggle mounted with the approaching harvest in the key Delano area, two strikers were killed, one by a sheriff and the other by a scab.

At this crucial point, the strike was stopped. The AFL-CIO did not come through with the additional money it had promised. The UFW leadership announced to the public that the strike was ended due to violence, while striking workers were told that the funds had run out. (In at least one incident in Fresno, workers offered to turn in their benefits checks if that would help continue the strike.)

Wolf in Sheep's Clothing

"For all it pimps off of the working class movement, social democracy works day and night to protect the rule of the bourgeoisie. It tries to tie the workers to the trade union bureaucracy, to 'liberal' politicians and the bourgeoisie's farce of 'democratic elections.'" For all its aura of progressiveness, for all the image it has among broad numbers of people for being honest, down to earth, close to the masses, etc., the United Farmworkers Union leadership promoted the same collaborationist ideology that the AFL-CIO and other spokesmen of the bourgeoisie pushed.

It championed the same chauvinist campaign against workers without papers; it spread pacifism; it downplayed the role of the masses in the struggle while promoting the "liberal" bourgeoisie. At the same time, it attacked communists and other progressive forces within the union, attacking *The Worker* for articles exposing Meany and other traitors; recalling and burning an issue of the union's paper, *Malcriado*, which carried an article speaking favorably of the Detroit autoworker wildcats against Chrysler in the summer of '73. It publicly attacked a pamphlet on the history of the farmworker movement (*Si Se Puede*) because of a sentence referring to United Steelworker Union president Abel as a "sellout."

The UFW leadership opposed the progressive movement of Arab people, including Arab farmworkers in this country, and publicly allied with Zionism. It attacked forces within and outside the union that aimed their attack at the imperialist ruling class while working to mobilize rank and file workers to support farmworkers on the basis of class solidarity. The UFW fought tooth and nail to protect the bourgeoisie's hold on farmworkers—this was the crucial lesson learned in this period of intense struggle.

If communists fail to put above everything else their concern for the class, and instead follow along behind what looks progressive and seems popular, they will never be able to help lead the class out of the swamp of bourgeois ideology and onto the road of a revolutionary workers' movement.

In the United Farmworker convention held in the late summer of 1973, after the massive strikes had been ended, the UFW leadership attempted to consolidate its line of alliance with the bourgeoisie. It did this under the cover of "democracy" while every step was taken to discourage real discussion and struggle around the most important question facing farmworkers. The question of "illegals" was never discussed, nor was the union's strategy, the reasons for calling off the strike, the main emphasis on the boycott, etc.

Dividing One into Two

Communists involved attempted to understand the convention by dividing one into two. The fact that such a convention, with delegates representing 50,000 farmworkers and union boycotters, took place at all was a tremendous victory for farmworkers in resisting the bourgeoisie's union-busting plan. A number of resolutions passed at the end of the convention, many of which came from the floor, in support of woodcutters, opposing the fascist junta in Chile, in support of miners in South Africa, and Farah strikers in Texas, showed the consciousness and militancy of farmworkers.

This was in stark contrast to the parade of demagogues posing as friends who spoke at the convention—such scabs as Woodcock, Paul Hall, John Hennings (head of the AFL-CIO in California), and of course the imperialists' pretty boy, Kennedy. Their message, thinly veiled behind their speeches of support, was, "Farmworkers are nothing without us, we've gotten you this far, but remember, step out of line, take up a fight against our class, and we'll crush you!" These pimps tried to reduce the long, heroic struggles and sacrifices of farmworkers into a picture of beaten down beggars

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unable to do anything but hope for a kind hand from "men of good will" (the bourgeoisie).

In work done around the convention, and later in summing up in *Revolution*, communists attempted to expose how these rotten traitors were out to derail the farmworker movement, posing as friends exactly because whenever given the chance to really fight, farmworkers have kicked the teeth in of the dogs the bourgeoisie has unleashed against them.

The October League, who had people at this same convention, had a far different line on it, since they were unwilling or unable to divide one into two. They stated in their paper, *The Call*, how fine it was that Kennedy and company had been forced to support the farmworker struggle. It's a wonderful world these OLeers live in, a world where the bourgeoisie can be forced to support the workers' struggle. Of course this is not the real world, because in the real world the bourgeoisie uses its show of support to attack the movement in a way it cannot do in open, violent attacks.

"As an important part of its overall struggle, the working class will fight to organize unions, to unite the masses of workers in unions in common battle against the capitalist exploiters, to make unions militant organizations of class struggle, and to replace agents of the bourgeoisie with true representatives of the proletariat in union office."

"But the working class and its party cannot base its strategy on 'taking over' the unions by electing new leadership, and it cannot restrict its struggle to the limits set by the trade unions at any given time. The policy of the proletariat and its party is to build its strength in the unions as part of building its revolutionary movement, and not to reduce the class struggle to the struggle for control of the unions."

"Mobilize the rank and file around a program representing its interests and in doing so 'jam' the union officials—expose the traitors at the top and roll over them, break the union bureaucracies' stranglehold on the workers, and unite with those in the lower levels of union leadership who can be won to stand with the working class—this is the policy of the proletariat and its party in the unions."

This is in essence the line we attempted to put into practice once our grasp of the struggle within the union became clearer through practice and sum-up. Further, we saw this line in clear opposition to the line that covered over the differences between the militancy of the rank and file and the collaboration of the union leaders. We opposed the scheme of "moving the unions to the left"—uniting with union officials and encouraging them to sound more progressive, rather than uniting with the rank and file in struggle, promoting their leadership in it. Within this, let the officials line up as they will. If they want to sound more progressive so as to not lose face (and, of course, position), so be it. But we will never call on the masses to put their faith in them, but in themselves, in their struggles, and on the masses, especially the working class.

Gallo Boycott

In working on the Gallo boycott in the winter of '73-74, we attempted to distinguish our view of the boycott from the view often put forward in the UFW. We saw the boycott as a continuation of the mass struggle in the fields, rather than as a struggle made necessary because farmworkers are weak and can't really win anything. Also, we attempted to aim the boycott at the masses of workers which can not be done saddled with the tired, moralist line of "help the poor farmworkers."

In opposing this line we not only pointed out the struggles of the workers themselves, which put to lie their "helplessness," but drew from examples where farmworkers had gone to support other struggles and brought militancy and a fighting spirit to them. For example, farmworkers supported the strike of glass bottle blowers in the Central Valley, and encouraged the workers to stand up to court injunctions and police harassment—not to give in to it. "Challenge the injunction, like we did last summer!"

In the boycott, as in any other struggle, the enthusiasm and energy of the workers is aroused more when the immediate struggle is linked up with the larger struggle. This is because workers have a hatred for oppression and of the system that breeds it. The more a struggle is clearly shown to be part of the struggle waged by other oppressed people, the more wholeheartedly the workers will fight.

This is 100% the opposite view put forward by the trade union leadership, which is forever talking about how workers can only concentrate on one thing at a time, and how talking about other struggles diverts

energy from the boycott, etc.

How to unite with the workers around the boycott, while breaking out of the restrictions the union attempts to impose on it? This can only be accomplished by fighting for the leadership of the rank and file. To this end, communists wholeheartedly supported, worked on and with, a rank and file boycott committee elected to head up the boycott.

Under the leadership of this rank and file committee, a very militant and spirited boycott was built up in the winter months in Salinas. It included mass picketing, regular meetings of 200-300 workers each week, a linking up of the boycott with local school struggles, guest speakers from the Farah Strike Support Committees, from workers involved in other struggles in the Bay Area. Meetings eventually also included regular showings of anti-imperialist films on Latin America, songs, impromptu skits to popularize events that occurred on the boycott lines, etc. The boycott itself was extremely successful, with an estimated 85% of the liquor and small grocery stores having removed Gallo wine within the first month.

Sharp Struggle

All this did not happen without some struggle, some of it quite sharp, within the union itself. While the union leadership agreed with the existence of a rank and file boycott committee, they of course had a different view of it than the workers. For the officials it was a good thing to have a rank and file committee that could do the organizing work and lead the meetings, as long as the political leadership was in the hands of the officials who could veto any decisions or plans they didn't like while directing things their way.

Thus when the committee decided on inviting a member of a Farah Strike Support Committee from the Bay Area to speak, they were told "no" by the officials because it would confuse the workers with too many outside struggles and detract from the boycott!

The workers had different ideas. The following meeting of the boycott committee was held without the local leading official, who was locked out of the room. After a decision had been reached he was asked to come into the meeting and was told that the Farah speaker would be coming, and that from then on he would have the same say at committee meetings as every other member, and could advise them when they were violating union rules but would not make decisions for them.

This struggle, though minor, had a noticeable effect. It led to a broadening out of the weekly boycott meetings and contributed to arousing greater enthusiasm and spirit for the boycott itself.

The boycott came under heavy attack from the bourgeoisie and their agents. A court injunction limiting picketing of several hundred stores carrying Gallo wines was obtained. The workers under the leadership of the committee responded by organizing a demonstration to oppose the injunction. Leaflets were distributed to local factories and other work places and schools, calling on support to defend farmworkers' right to boycott. The leaflet linked up this injunction with one brought against the Teamster drivers during their strike the previous summer, and with the general attacks on the working class. A march of 400 workers and students to the courthouse was held on a weekday. Later the marchers went to the Board of Education where demands were raised in support of the struggle of local Chicano high school students.

Boycott Continues

The injunction was a blow, but the boycott continued, without the mass picketing. But it was still strong and was hurting one of the major stores in the area (Montemart) which depends heavily on farmworker business. At this point the boycott was attacked by the "friends" of the UFW, the labor "leaders." Local officials of the United Rubber Workers passed out a leaflet at a local Firestone plant asking workers to take advantage of a special shopping night where Firestone workers would be entitled to a discount—at Montemart. When the night arrived, however, the only people from the plant to show up were the local officials and a few rank and filers, of whom no more than two or three crossed the picket line. The embarrassed URW officials were surrounded outside Montemart by a crowd of angry farmworkers who demanded an explanation!

Not long after this incident, a petition was passed among Montemart's employees, Retail Clerk members, opposing the boycott. Though it was not an official union petition, it had been encouraged by the Retail Clerk hacks. The local reactionary newspaper used it to attack the boycott, and the petition wound up with Meany who used it as an excuse, among others, to get the UFW to call off the secondary boycott. Shortly after the secondary boycott was suspended a letter was read to a boycott meeting in Salinas from a Retail Clerk member on strike at Sears in San Francisco. The letter denounced Meany and the Retail Clerks union leadership who "did not speak for the rank and file."

Although some work was done to sum up these events, to point out the class nature of the AFL-CIO leadership, both directly with workers and through *The Worker*, communists did not take a bold enough approach in doing this. Instead of farmworkers having summed up out of these events (in fact the whole winter's boycott) that they must rely primarily on their own efforts and ally more closely with other workers to oppose the treachery of certain phony allies, and move their struggle forward, it was more like having come up against a brick wall with no visible way around it.

Anti-Imperialist Demonstration

"Throughout the country workers are coming forward in greater numbers to lead struggles not only in the shops and unions, but also in many other battle-fronts against the bourgeoisie—for example, against police repression or imperialist aggression and war. Through their experience in struggle and the leadership of communists, these workers have developed a basic understanding of the nature of the enemy and the class struggle against this enemy. These workers are the backbone of working class organization that is built on a more permanent basis and on a higher political level than caucuses—directing its spearhead squarely at the ruling class."

About 40 workers went to Oakland in January to participate in an anti-Nixon, anti-energy freeze demonstration which linked up a number of on-going struggles, including the Gallo boycott, with the fight against imperialism. The workers who participated in the march and rally brought enthusiasm and some hints of a broader view to the boycott. New chants were heard on the picket lines. Through discussions with workers summing up the importance of these kinds of demonstrations, it was decided to organize an anti-imperialist demonstration in Salinas to link up the main struggles locally (Gallo boycott and student struggles) with the main struggles nationally (Throw the Bum Out and against the freeze).

After some discussion among ourselves, including a criticism of OL's "united front with the left" approach to organizing demonstrations, it was decided that our approach would be to build an anti-imperialist demonstration, uniting all who could be united under the leadership of the workers. In order to put the workers in the leading position, and in a better position to fight for a proletarian line, a committee of workers was formed first.

This committee, made up of between 20-30 active farmworkers, met several times over a period of weeks frankly discussing what kind of demonstration it would be, what would be its politics and demands, and why it was necessary for workers to have leadership in it. Workers wanted to unite all who could be united, around a program that pointed the finger squarely at the common enemy. Other forces were invited to the final three meetings. These included some students, teachers and a few others.

Ten thousand leaflets were distributed around the Salinas area, mainly at work places. A few workers, in addition to being on the overall committee, also worked on the propaganda and program sub-committees.

The march and rally were held March 24 and drew over 400 people, mostly farmworkers, some students and other workers as well. The action overall pointed to imperialism as the enemy, and the need for people to unite and fight. The final speech of the rally by an RU member also pointed out the need to unite the entire working class, not only to fight the immediate struggles, but eventually to overthrow the imperialist class and build a new society, a step that the Chinese people, for instance, had already taken.

Step Forward

Over all the preparation and the rally itself marked a step forward in bringing revolutionary politics to workers, linking it up with the immediate struggles. Still there were a number of important weaknesses. The key weakness was that the workers involved failed to see clearly the difference between the politics of the rally—reliance on the masses, combining the immediate struggles with education around the long range goals of the class, directing the struggle against the ruling class—vs. the union's line of reliance on the bourgeoisie and narrow trade unionism.

Partly this was due to amateurishness in the way the rally was conducted, in the lack of clarity of some of the speeches. More, it was a failure to do more careful work with some of the more advanced workers to go more in depth on what exactly were the differences between lines and why, for example, the UFW leadership did not try to mobilize people to the rally.

The leadership's position towards the rally was to lay low, and on the surface, at least, to support it. In fact, the top union leadership sent a message wishing the rally well, but this was due to the fact that they were in no position to attack it even though it had politics they clearly opposed in the past, like opposi-

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tion to Zionism.

After the rally, the union local leadership went around bad-mouthing the rally, though not publicly. It spread the idea that the action was adventurist—since so many farmworkers had attended, many of them union members, the rally would be identified with the union and would lead to greater repression (especially because of the RU speech and because Marxist-Leninist literature was sold at the rally). They played on a weakness of the rally, that few workers outside the fields showed up to it. They did this from the point of view of, "See, it's really hopeless to try and unite the working class."

Apple Strike

"But the class struggle itself provides the basis for the working class to cast away illusions and cast aside the front men of the bourgeoisie who promote them. These social democratic agents of the imperialists will be exposed and dealt with as enemies, as the working class, led by its party, is mobilized to fight for its immediate interests, and its long-term goals—the dictatorship of the proletariat, socialism, and communism."

The decay of imperialism forces the bourgeoisie, in a desperate attempt to save itself, to viciously attack working people. They attack farmworkers not because they "believe their own propaganda" that farmworkers are a threat to them when they are not, as Cesar Chavez stated in a recent speech in Modesto, but because they cannot survive without increasing the burdens they place on the people.

In 1974, the growers, harvesting the fruit of their temporary victory the summer before, which succeeded in breaking up organization among a large number of farmworkers, launched further attacks on farmworkers' living standards, in some places instituting wage cuts.

In the tomato fields around Stockton and in citrus orchards in Yuma, Arizona, workers fought back vigorously against these cuts, waging two of the larger battles that swept California and parts of Arizona from the spring through the fall of '74. In many if not all of these battles, workers without papers, the object of attack by the bourgeoisie and the leadership of the UFW, fought in the front ranks. Such was the case in Watsonville, in the apple orchards.

The apple strike at Buak Co. was significant, not because it was a huge battle—in the scheme of things it was a skirmish—but because of important lessons that could be summed up from it, for the workers involved and the entire class. The previous winter ('73-74) the Teamsters signed sweetheart contracts with Watsonville apple growers which like all their contracts did little but add an additional deduction from workers' checks.

The UFW set out to prove that the Teamsters would not be able to "control" apple workers, no matter how many scraps of paper the growers and Teamsters signed. This was the motivation for the union's promoting the strike, but once it had begun, it clearly had the potential to break through these narrow bounds, because the workers, rather than just prove a point, wanted to win!

The workers were handicapped from the beginning with the union's chauvinist line on "illegals," especially considering that 90% of the strikers did not have papers. The position raised doubts in workers' minds about how sincerely the union would defend them. Also, the union leadership used this as an excuse not to involve workers in running the strike, or really mobilize them to fight (it was said that "illegals" were too scared to really fight, to do things like chase scabs out of the orchards).

If this wasn't enough, one of the union strike leaders promoted the most disgusting pacifism and class collaborationism, going so far as to want to take a group picture of strikers, Teamster thugs and sheriffs arm in arm—to prove that we were not really enemies! (and this after a Teamster thug had broken a striker's arm with a pipe). To be fair, this kind of gross nonsense even embarrassed other UFW officials. This official lost his influence in the strike after about the first week. But these obstacles thrown up in the path of the strikers contributed to many of them leaving by the beginning of the second week.

Battling La Migra

On the first day of the strike, workers had stood up to the immigration police who had come to raid the picket line. For the strikers, it was the first time that they'd ever seen la migra and not run. The migra could not get anyone because the strikers stood together, which was too much for the migra to handle. This was an important lesson which communists in-

olved in the strike summed up with the workers and later popularized to other workers through discussions, leaflets and *The Worker*.

As morale began to drop during the first week of the strike, communists, along with a number of advanced workers, discussed some of the errors that had been made and attempted to overcome them. This included the electing of a committee of strikers to head up the strike—though this committee was never recognized by the union leadership and only functioned briefly—organizing a caravan of strikers and supporters from the Bay Area around the city, and helping to organize a union rally in downtown Watsonville for the middle of the second week. Preparation for this rally included leafleting local canneries and other work places.

Communists also openly struggled against the pacifist line, instead promoting militant actions, like following scab cars and buses, chasing scabs out of fields, and other actions to discourage scabbing. Finally, in opposition to the line promoted by the union that restricted the struggle to just the immediate gains (and this within the strategy of pressuring the bourgeoisie to come through with favorable legislation), communists put forward a line that linked up the strike with the larger struggles against the ruling class.

This included pointing out that "illegals" are a part of the working class, and more than that, they are victims of imperialist domination of their homelands. This line was not just rhetoric—it played a material role in boosting morale and therefore helped sustain the struggle. Also it proved to be the most effective line in influencing a number of scabs to walk out of the fields.

Through the strike itself, through the struggles around line, and through discussions that took place throughout the strike, a number of workers began to see their struggle as part of the class struggle. The restrictions thrown up in their path, the blinders the social democratic leaders attempted to keep in place, were not enough to prevent some workers from developing class consciousness. This was a modest but important development.

Since the struggle itself does provide the *basis* for the working class to cast away illusions, it is no won-

der that social democrats and all traitors to the class always seek to discourage struggle, even to claiming that farmworkers can't win strikes and therefore they are hopeless and some other form of struggle must be found—not in addition to the strike, but instead of it. But since workers will fight back against oppression, social democrats within the struggle always seek to keep them within the most narrow bounds, opposing class consciousness, treating revolutionary ideas like the plague.

Break Through Obstacles

Illusions can not be cast away automatically, spontaneously—exactly because the bourgeoisie is continually promoting them. Therefore communists must unite with the workers and help them break through the obstacles thrown in their way—fight for the immediate needs—work to unite the class—struggle to build a revolutionary movement against the enemy.

The work over the years in the farmworker movement has had its advances and setbacks. Even in the aftermath of the Buak strike, with the role communists played in pushing forward the struggle, did not prevent us from being attacked, which created some confusion in some workers' minds—especially over our stand on "illegals," but also on "what these communists are up to."

But these difficulties must be seen in the context of the advances made. These difficulties will be overcome in time. The development in our work, as in the workers' struggle itself, is upward, and it is a certainty, despite difficulties that lie ahead, that if communists persist in carrying out a revolutionary line, rely on the masses, oppose incorrect ideas and promote correct ones, we will succeed in building a revolutionary movement among farmworkers as a powerful section of the revolutionary workers' movement as a whole—one that will overthrow imperialism and create a new world.

Long live the revolutionary movement of the working class!

On to the Revolutionary Communist Party! ■

Stand For and With the Workers- In Their Day to Day Struggles And In Making Revolution

To take the stand of the working class—this is something that as communists we constantly strive for in everything we do. But how to do that, how to uphold the outlook of the proletariat is no sure thing, especially since there has been, for so long, no vanguard party of the working class, and because of that, many of us have come to Marxism-Leninism from the "movement," bringing with us enough petty-bourgeois baggage to fill a small luxury liner.

But we have made advances, and these advances have come as a result of us going to the workers, learning from them and deepening our understanding of what Marxism-Leninism applied to the concrete conditions of this country at this time means.

The main work our collective is doing, the work in basic steel, has reflected this advancement. But this hasn't come without a lot of struggle and a lot of getting rid of wrong ideas. And what we've found is that when our ideas didn't correspond with reality, the masses will let us know about it, they'll be telling us about it all the time, if we're willing to listen and learn from them.

As May Day of last year approached, those of us in the RU, the active and advanced workers that were working closely with us and other revolutionary-minded people were going out all over the city building for May Day. Those of us working in the mills had begun to do agitation around May Day, stressing how the working class has to lead the struggle against all oppression, how May Day was a time when the working class puts out its demands for the coming year as well as their long range demands.

And last year our work in the steel industry was an important thrust of May Day, with the event being held in the neighborhood right by the mills and the fight against the no-strike deal, the ENA, being an important part of the march and rally.

While this was going on, we were in the process of trying to get a better understanding of what our experience in the mills had been, the strengths and weaknesses of our work there and how to best move it forward. We had been active in some of the struggles going on, had won some amount of respect from some of the advanced and intermediate workers. But we really weren't linking these struggles to others that the working class was taking up, helping to raise the consciousness of the workers and developing and training communists from among the most advanced workers.

In talking about these errors that we were making we talked about making sure we didn't get "bogged down" in the struggles that were going on in the mills. And there was a lot of struggle going on.

Left and Right Errors

At that time the capitalists were in the midst of a big productivity drive. Guys were getting sent home for looking the wrong way, were getting fired for the least little thing, accidents and serious injuries were increasing rapidly and the union leadership was spending most of their time telling us what we were doing wrong and that we all better watch our step.

In the face of all that the workers were fighting back in various ways. In the locker rooms after a shift, spontaneous meetings took place, petitions were drawn up, taken out and signed by broad numbers of workers, and in several cases a number of workers tried to change things themselves by punching out some of the foremen.

In one of the mills we tried to take up the struggle there, but didn't put forward anything other than calling for more and more meetings. We didn't really understand that the working class learns through struggle. We made both right and left errors around this. On the one hand, saying that the workers weren't ready to struggle, that all we could do is call more meetings until some huge number of workers were ready to do something. On the other hand, figuring that if we could just get a whole bunch of workers in a room together, we could lay out a line and move the workers close to revolution.

As we were trying to build for May Day, the workers in one shop wrote up a petition and took it out and got about a hundred people to sign it around "Muzzling Malkowski," the assistant general foreman, and some of the other harassment going on in the shop. At that

time we thought that we didn't have time to get involved in that, that we should go to the more active workers there and get them to see the importance of May Day.

When we talked to them, they wanted us to get involved in the struggle at the shop, and help provide some leadership for it. They wanted to fight the productivity drive, discrimination, the ENA and the rotten union leadership. What we told them is that we wanted to fight this too, and if they would only get involved with May Day and help build the overall struggle, it would move forward the struggle in the shop.

Actually, in essence it came down to saying, "later for your struggle. Get involved with May Day and maybe later we could do something about these day to day struggles." In reality, if we'd have gone into that struggle, help provide leadership for it, link it up with the other struggles that the class was waging and May Day, we could have really made a breakthrough in the work in the mill and in building a powerful May Day.

But we hadn't yet understood the importance of the exploitation and oppression that the working class suffers daily, and the importance of what the working class learns through their struggle against this. We still tended to look at things through the eyes of the "movement."

These couple of examples generally characterized our work around May Day, and consequently, while it was an advance overall and a spirited and militant event, only a small number of workers came out from the mills. But out of this, and out of struggling with and learning from other members of the RU, we really began to see more clearly the importance and the relationship between the battles that the working class is fighting every day and the war against the bourgeoisie.

We were able to do this because, from the beginning, even though our work contained many errors, we tried to base ourselves on the working class. While some forces in the movement were busy chasing after trade union leaders, begging these "reformers" to help them "move these backward workers to the left," and while others were issuing "proclamations" at the gates while making sure not to get their hands too dirty, we understood that it was the proletariat that was key, that was the only thoroughly revolutionary class, the only class that as a class could grasp and apply Marx-

ism-Leninism.

Since that time we have been making a lot of advances around our work in the mills. Through studying and through learning from the working class we have been better able to apply Marxism-Leninism, build and lead struggle and build greater multinational unity.

Through the course of uniting with various struggles that have broken out in the different mills and shops in the plant, we've been able to pull together a plant-wide organization that bases itself on the struggles that steelworkers are presently fighting and links them up with other important struggles of the working class. At the same time we've been much bolder at taking up the question of developing communists from among the workers and have made advances in this.

We have still much to learn and much incorrect thinking to rid ourselves of. But if we stand with the working class, if we unite with them and help give leadership to the struggles that they are already waging day in and day out, we will strengthen our class, weaken the enemy and move closer to revolution. In looking at the importance of these struggles, the Draft Programme correctly points out:

"In these struggles, the workers begin to throw off the foot of the employer from their necks, to raise their heads. And in raising their heads they are able to see farther and more clearly. The face of the enemy and the forces fighting him begin to come into sharper focus. This gives rise to vigorous discussion among the workers not only about every question of the immediate struggle but also about events throughout society and the world. Through all this the workers begin to see themselves as more than mere individuals, but as members of a class, locked in warfare with the opposing class of employers."

At the present time, in looking at our struggle, two things are clear. One, that the "radical" movement of the 60s, the movement of the old period, is fading into the twilight. But secondly, and most importantly, the working class today is coming forward—as a social force toward the building of a revolutionary communist party; in the struggle to lead the fight against the oppression it along with other classes and strata in society suffer at the hands of the capitalist system; and as a class to lead its allies in overthrowing the capitalist system and build a new society. ■

Summing Up A Defeated Wildcat

Workers at Plant X wildcatted in November 1974, a week before our contract expired. The plant was shut down for a day and half the 750 workers stayed out. Communists were in leadership of the strike, but an incorrect line led to confusion among the workers. The company took advantage of this, crushed the strike quickly and moved to smash the workers' struggle there altogether. More than 100 were fired and the company came down hard on the rest of the workers with a campaign of harassment and intimidation.

What were the conditions at Plant X and why was it ripe for struggle?

1. Wages tremendously depressed in relation to the rest of the industry (\$1 to \$1.50 per hour less).
2. Intense speedup in the plant (coinciding with the development of monopolies in the industry over the last 15 years. In cut-throat competition for their survival, they're forced to increase the exploitation of the workers.)
3. Super-exploitation of Puerto Rican and other Latin workers (who in response to their oppression were active in fighting company attacks).

These conditions, accompanied by effects of the general crisis of imperialism, such as skyrocketing prices, increased police repression in the city where Plant X is located, government attempts to limit wages through the Pay Board, and the active betrayal of the workers' interests by local union officials—all this led to increasing anger and willingness among the workers to fight.

As Mao said, "At certain times in the revolutionary struggle, the difficulties outweigh the favorable conditions and so constitute the principal aspect of the contradiction and the favorable conditions constitute the secondary aspect." The conditions at Plant X were favorable. However, "favorable conditions can be transformed into difficulty if the revolutionaries make mistakes."

Workers understand clearly that in any battle we're faced with a two-headed monster—"the capitalists and their henchmen in the trade unions." Just how to fight it is not always clear. There is a spontaneous tendency among workers to confuse the fight against the main enemy, the company, with the fight against union hacks because of the workers' experiences with sellout after sellout.

Organize A Wildcat

At the contract ratification meeting the majority of workers voted NO. All hell broke loose when the union president switched the vote and announced that the contract was accepted. The workers wanted to fight, so we organized a wildcat for the next day. This anger was turned on the union hacks because the workers saw the need to fight and the labor traitors stood as an obstacle.

At the heart of this struggle was the fact that the contract wasn't enough to live on for the next three years. The correct strategy at this time would have been to remove this obstacle by relying on our own strength, mobilizing the workers and fighting the company. Our line should have been, "We rejected the contract, so we're walking." The immediate thing put forward by some of the workers was to demand a re-vote. The communists tailed after this and didn't struggle for a clear line of fighting the company, so the wildcat took on the character of a protest against the union.

This demand for "No honest vote—No work" turned the workers' struggle into a struggle for union democracy. It forced many workers to abandon the strike when union officials failed to show up to negotiate with the wildcaters. If you shoot the beast in the heart, you kill both heads. We struck our blows at the union hacks and let the company off free.

This obscured the face of the enemy and made it impossible to organize and win the strike. We confined the struggle within the trade union bounds and made the struggle for reforms the principal thing. As the draft programme states: "The policy of the proletariat and its party is to build its strength in the unions as part of building its revolutionary movement and not to reduce the class struggle to the struggle for control of the unions." In this case, for union democracy.

The correct strategy would have been to "mobilize the rank and file around a program representing its interests and *in doing so* (our emphasis) 'jam' the union officials—expose the traitors at the top and roll over them, break the union bureaucracies' stranglehold on the workers..." "The method of the proletariat and its party is to mobilize the masses of workers to take matters

into their own hands and wage a blow for blow struggle against the enemy inside and outside the unions."

During the three months before the wildcat we organized workers into a large committee and started putting out a shop paper. In the committee, workers formulated contract demands and discussed strategy for our fight.

In these discussions and in the paper we dealt with many important questions: the role of trade union officials, the ways the bosses try to pit different nationalities against each other, men against women, and that the workers' labor is the source of the bosses' wealth.

The correct handling of these contradictions was essential to moving the struggle forward. But we saw all of these as more or less equal, rather than seeing that the key contradiction, the one around which all the others unfold, is the exploitation of the working class. As the draft programme says, "This *exploitation* of the workers to create private profit for the capitalists is the basis of the whole capitalist system and all its evils."

The bosses and the workers are locked in constant battle for their survival. Failing to bring out clearly that the capitalists are driven by the laws that govern their system, we contributed to the illusion that capitalists can reorder their priorities to meet the needs of the people.

But, "Capital chases after the highest rate of profit, as surely as iron is drawn to a magnet—this is a law beyond anyone's will, even the capitalists', and it will continue in force so long as society is ruled by capital." At times we portrayed the company as rich, a monopoly unshaken by the crisis (somehow not bound by the laws of capitalism) and eager to avoid a strike at all costs. But the capitalists are driven towards the highest rate of profit, and the workers' needs be damned.

This view led to a line that if we were well organized and really threatened the company with our unity, that would be enough to scare them into meeting our demands. This clouds the true nature of the enemy and portrays the class struggle as nothing more than reasonable workers pressuring reasonable capitalists to look after our interests. It ultimately denies the need for proletarian revolution.

Incorrect Understanding

We had an incorrect understanding of the fundamental contradiction in society, which leads to an incorrect strategy on any front. In this case it came out most sharply in the relation of the class struggle to the trade unions. It led to battling the union hacks as a stepping stone to then engaging in the class struggle. In practice, relying on the union to take up the class struggle.

Because we left the struggle within the bounds of the trade union, we made negotiations primary and vacillated on the question of the strike. We started out with a position to make strike preparations—that it was necessary to strike in order to win a decent contract. But through the course of the struggle we tailed after the view that you use the strike as a last resort—workers use the strike as a defensive rather than an offensive weapon.

In the history of the company, there has never been a strike. An example from our shop newspaper: "Does the [paper] think there will be a strike at [Plant X]? We can't say for sure. If we can't win what we need... then we will strike." And from a leaflet put out by the committee: "If the company refuses to give us what we need we can say no again and go on strike... We think [Plant X] workers have a good chance to win a decent contract because we're better organized and because [the big monopoly of which Plant X is a part] wants to avoid a strike."

How this vacillation came down in practice is demonstrated dramatically by events at the union contract meeting. Several hundred workers stood up to applaud when a shop steward, a communist, spoke out against

the contract. He asked the workers to turn it down, but called for more negotiations, not a strike.

And later, when the majority of workers realized they had won the vote (by body count) and began to chant "strike, strike, strike," the communists should have led the workers to take over the meeting, since at that point the union officials had no control and the workers were ready to move into battle against the company.

Role of Communists

Our mistaken view of the class struggle was also reflected in our neglect of the role of communists. There was an open communist in the committee. But in this mass organization we limited the role of communists to being the most militant fighters rather than also "educating workers to the revolutionary interests of their class."

The shop paper, initiated by communists and meant to play a leading role, had no spokesman on the committee. We were successful in fanning the flames, actively involving hundreds of workers in struggle, summing up their needs, and developing programmatic unity. But at many crucial points we did not provide them with leadership, did not fight for the correct line to lead the struggle forward.

For example, at the meeting where we planned the wildcat we did put forth the necessity of striking. But a number of workers were afraid that we didn't have enough support to pull it off and argued for a job action leading up to a strike a week later (at the end of the contract). Others were for a protest against the switching of the vote. We did not deal with the legitimate fears of the workers about battling the company without enough preparation, and we didn't struggle enough with those who saw union treachery as the main problem.

We failed to see how crucial it was to consolidate workers around the correct line of "strike the company, no contract—no work." As a result, we led hundreds of workers in a "wildcat against the union," with communists and some of the advanced workers calling it a strike against the company, and with many others seeing it as a protest of union policy.

Although the wildcat was defeated, the Plant X workers did not give up the fight when they were fired. "Where there is a temporary setback, it spurs discussion among the workers as to the cause of the defeat." Advanced workers, along with the communists, summed up that it was an incorrect line that set us up for defeat and not that the bosses are all-powerful.

Our answer to the firings was mass struggle. A [Plant X] Workers Support Committee was formed which united Plant X workers and workers from many different industries. The committee developed a program to continue the struggle and win back all the jobs. We built support for it widely in the working class, mainly through taking up collections at plant gates for an emergency fund to help the fired workers to feed their families.

The committee also started a campaign at the plant to refuse overtime in support of those still out on the street, and the Unemployed Workers Organizing Committee passed out leaflets urging workers not to scab on the Plant X workers. We made it plain to the company that we would continue the fight. Over 60 workers have been reinstated. The remaining 47 workers' cases are in arbitration, and it's being exposed by continued struggle as a government tool in the hands of the bosses.

In the course of the fight for a good contract, the wildcat, and the struggle to get the jobs back, many Plant X workers have seen the need to fight back as a class. They've joined in many demonstrations against unemployment and police repression. A few are now in Marxist-Leninist study groups and actively involved in building for May Day.

In the struggle at Plant X, the workers began "to throw off the foot of the employer from their necks, to raise their heads. And in raising their heads they are able to see farther and more clearly. The face of the enemy and the forces fighting him begin to come into sharper focus. This gives rise to vigorous discussion among the workers not only about every question of the immediate struggle but also about events throughout society and the world. Through all this the workers begin to see themselves as more than mere individuals, but as members of a class, locked in warfare with the opposing class of employers." ■