

STRIKING TEACHERS AND "LEFT-WING" SCABS

The proposals coming from Mayor Lindsay, Governor Rockefeller and Dr. Allen, State Education Director, to take over the OceanHill-Brownsville school district and place them under "state trusteeship" as a solution to the extended city-wide teachers' strike is of course no solution at all. Albert Shanker, president of the striking United Federation of Teachers, was quite correct in his observation that, "It is not a question of who is in paper charge of the district." Indeed, it can only further exacerbate that polarization along racial lines which has led to the long series of strikes, confrontations and harassments over the implementation of the Lindsay-inspired school decentralization plan.

For Marxists, there can be only one basic issue here: the assault by the City Administration and the whole of the capitalist class upon the union, all the "left"- and liberal-inspired rhetoric notwithstanding. Consequently we offer our critical support to the teachers out on strike and their demands for job security ("due process in firings and job reassignments) and freedom of speech. Further, we condemn those would-be Marxist groupings like the Communist Party, Peace and Freedom, the Socialist Workers and Progressive Labor Parties, and the like (along with internal union formations like the "new caucus")- all of whom have thrown their weight, influence and Cadre behind the union-busting combine of Lindsay and the City Administration, the Office of Economic Opportunity and its agencies, the Times and the New York Post, Rhody McCoy and his demand for Taylor Law enforcement, the Urban League, former Presidential advisor McGeorge Bundy and the Ford Foundation--as scabs and strikebreakers. The predictable ruling-class combine is bad enough; it is literally criminal for the "radicals" however much, like PL, they hold their noses, (or like the SWP's Presidential nominee, <sup>Fred Halstead</sup> who revels in his anti-teacher role), to simply clutch their opportunist aims more securely to their breasts while they wade in.

The "socialist" anti-union thrust arises from a clash between two principles! on the one hand, community control and decentralization; on the other, defense of unionism. ~~The anti-union thrust arises from the fact that in the OceanHill-Brownsville district is largely black and Puerto Rican, the majority of the teachers are white.~~ Marxists usually support black people when they clash with prejudiced and/or privileged white workers (not for sentimental, super-class motives, however, which seems to be the motivation for many of the elements around the strike-breaking "left") because it aids in bringing ~~the~~ minority, super-exploited segments of the working class into struggle against the exploiters. But such a tactic applied here merely pits black workers against white workers, divides the working class as a whole and blames the union for the wretched condition of ghetto education: as if it were the fault of the teachers or their union! And the real culprits in the case--the Administration, which is attempting to solve its financial crisis by cutting away at the education budget, and Rhody McCoy, the loyal flunkey of Mayor Lindsay--get off free!

The black working class has nothing at all to gain by smashing the UFT--but the black bourgeoisie does, precisely for the same reasons as do their allies in the white ruling class. Like Lindsay, like the Ford Foundation (which finances and controls the experimental school districts) they have one aim--direct the community's discontent against the union and smash it.

Decentralization is not at issue here, only a smokescreen raised on the part of elements of the "left" in order to maneuver their more trusting cadre into strike-breaking activities. The UFT has made its position quite clear: "We support meaningful decentralization and experimentation. We stand ready to join with any community in innovation and change. Our one condition: That due process and free speech be maintained." Even so, the issue is largely a fraudulent one: most of the impetus for "decentralization" and "community control" has come not from the OceanHill-Brownsville community, but agencies of the anti-union combine listed above.

As for the UFT: under the Shanker leadership, it has been extremely insensitive to the exceptional needs of the Black, Puerto Rican and super-exploited people in New York's ghettos; it must go far beyond the simple "bread and butter" trade-unionism which has been its approach to date. The Shanker leadership has tried to smear much legitimate concern from ghetto-dwellers as "extremism", it has called upon the racist police for protection of the teachers from their students, it has constantly called on the Mayor and the City Administration--the very people responsible for ~~the~~ profiting from the crisis--to solve it by cracking down on the community; it has hardly ever sharply separated itself from the reactionary, bitterly racist, "law and order" calls. The leaders of the Shanker regime must be replaced, replaced with trade union-conscious <sup>white</sup> teachers who will attempt to build unity with the ghetto communities, respond to their needs, and who will call for a program of joint parent-teacher-student administration of the schools. For the UFT to call for the closing of schools like PS 271 is simply to play McCoy's-Lindsay's game. The union must rely on a unity forged with the community in struggle to keep the schools going, and ~~not~~ with a discredited City Administration or School Board.