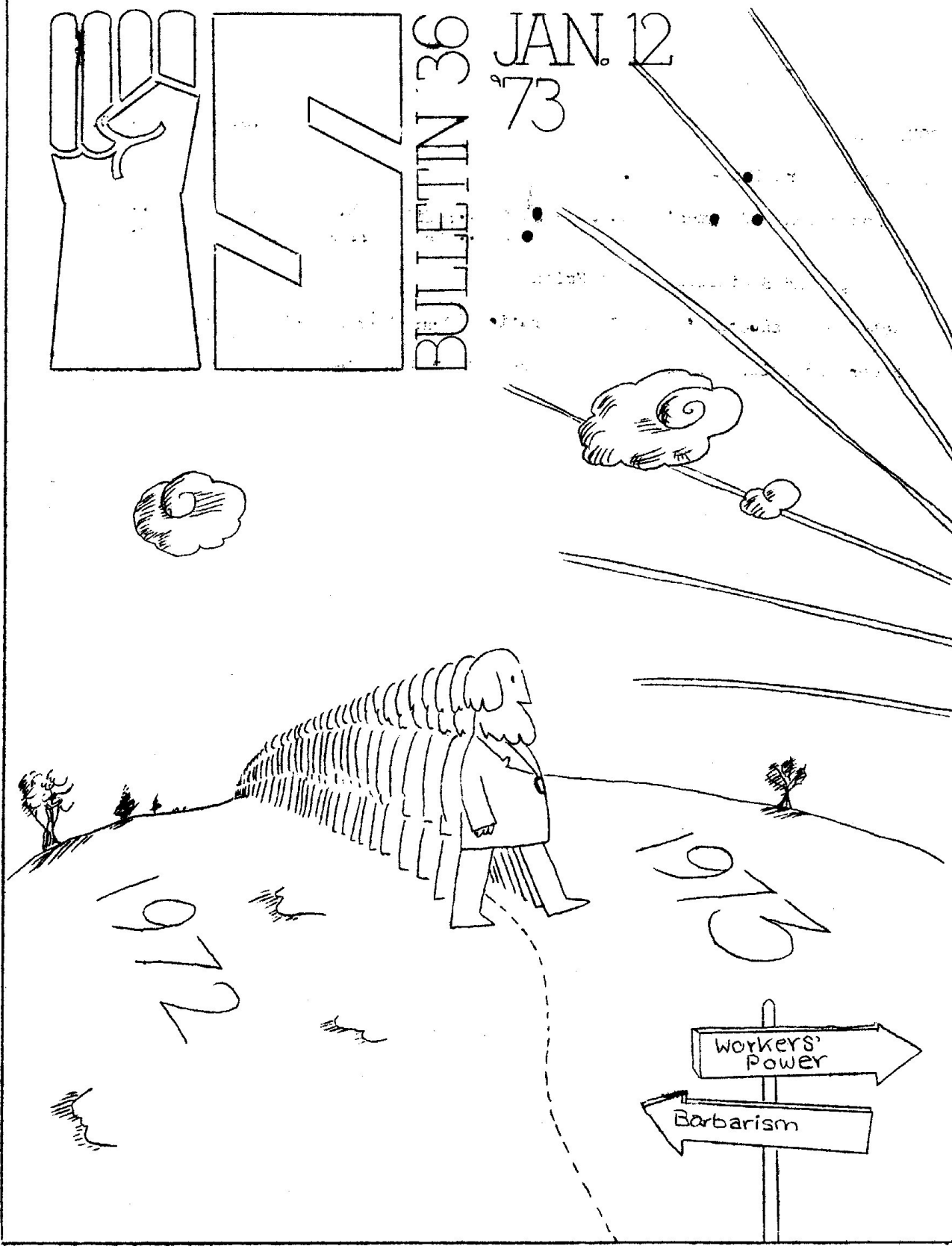


BULLETIN 36

JAN. 12
73



CONTENTS

I.S. BULLETIN NO. 36

On Black Liberation - Jack T.

Announcement of Women's Caucus - Diane C., Eileen K., Gay S., Ilene W., Jackie A.,
Joan M., Laura G., Pauline B., Ruth A.

Of Dope And Socialism - Mark Smith

Notes on Lynn Jones' Women's Liberation Perspectives - Andrew B.

Recent Additions to the Book Service Catalogue - Jim W.

ON BLACK LIBERATION

Jack Trautman

This document is an effort to continue the discussion on black liberation begun for the IS National Convention of 1972. It is an effort to lay out the Leninist position on the national question -- the position which I contend must form the basis of any perspective for unifying the struggles of blacks and whites in America -- and to discuss the positions put forward primarily though not exclusively in the light of Lenin's analysis.

There is no disagreement on the need to fight nationalism as a political ideology and as a strategy for attaining black liberation. The aim is to create working class internationalism between blacks and whites. The question at issue is how best to accomplish this exceedingly difficult task.

The strategy put forward in the Trautman document can be quickly summarized from a sentence in the document: "The purpose of all of this is to create working class internationalism -- to break down the nationalism of the oppressor nation, upon which is built the nationalism of the oppressed nation," (Jack Trautman, Black Liberation, page 13, paragraph 20, emphasis in the original).

This is the key to focus on: the necessity to break white workers from their bourgeoisie. It is only on this basis that any "unity of the class" can be successfully attained. Any other "unity" would be on the basis of blacks being willing to accept the fact that their "allies," the white working class, support the oppressive, racist policies of the ruling class. The consequence of this would be the acceptance of blacks of their subordination to whites. Any such "unity" is illusory and unacceptable to socialists.

The key position of black workers in the society, and their advanced consciousness, enables them to play a leadership role in developing a united class struggle and in helping to win whites from their nationalism. But that is the key task -- not saying to blacks, "It would be such a catastrophe for you to separate that your self-conception as a separate and distinct people is illegitimate." (More on this later.)

Lenin and Luxemburg on the Right of Nations to Self-Determination

This is the same strategy that Lenin developed in Russia for dealing with the aspirations of oppressed nationalities. His conception was that it was necessary for workers in the oppressor nation to break decisively from their own bourgeoisie and to support the national aspirations of the oppressed nation. This, then, provided the basis for pointing out to workers of the oppressed nationality that their interests lay in linking up with their fellow workers and not with their own national bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie.

Lenin's was a strategy for building a united working class movement not by denying the legitimacy or reality of nationality and the rights of oppressed nations, but by asserting them and fighting for them and thus aiming to break through the historical enmities which had kept workers from different nations apart.

Needless to say, Lenin did not have in mind merely the obligation of members of the oppressor nation to fight for the right of oppressed nations to secede; but rather the fight for all rights of the oppressed nation. The right of secession then logically flowed, and Lenin presented this as a strategy for attaining unity. Thus:

"Is it not clear that the more liberty the Ukrainian nationality enjoys in any particular country, the stronger its ties with that country will be? One would think that this truism could not be disputed without totally abandoning all the premises of democracy. Can there be greater freedom of nationality, as such, than the freedom to secede, the freedom to form an independent state?" (Lenin, The Collected Works of Lenin, Vol. 20, p. 422, 1964, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination").

Nor did he mean by this that the national rights of oppressed nations were limited to the right to secede. If they did not secede they were to have -- and the revolutionaries were to fight for -- full national rights within the larger state:

"Complete freedom of secession, the broadest local (and national) autonomy, and elaborate guarantees of the rights of national minorities -- this is the program of the revolutionary proletariat," (Ibid., Vol. 24, p. 73, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution").

Lenin's perspective was not a nationalist one, no matter how hard he fought for national rights, including the right to secede. The following sums up his position well:

". . . on the one hand, the absolutely direct, unequivocal recognition of the right of all nations to self-determination; on the other hand, the equally unambiguous appeal to the workers for international unity in their class struggle," (Ibid., Vol. 20, p. 432, "Right of Nations to Self-Determination").

Lenin's policy was harshly criticized by Rosa Luxemburg who perceived it as a capitulation to bourgeois nationalist tendencies. She felt the policy would tend to subordinate the workers to their bourgeoisies and would tend to fragment rather than unite the international working class movement:

". . . it is in this that the utopian, petty-bourgeois character of this nationalistic slogan resides: that in the midst of the crude realities of class society and when class antagonisms are sharpened to the uttermost, it is simply converted into a means of bourgeois class rule. The Bolsheviks were to be taught to their own great hurt and that of the revolution, that under the rule of capitalism there is no self-determination of peoples, that

in a class society each class of the nation strives to 'determine itself' in a different fashion and that, for the bourgeois classes, the standpoint of national freedom is fully subordinated to that of class rule," (Luxemburg, The Russian Revolution and Leninism or Marxism?, Ann Arbor Press, 1967, pp. 50-51).

Although most of her writings on the national question remain untranslated, Max Schachtman provides us with a useful summary of her views in an article in the March, 1935, New Internationalist entitled "Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg." It is instructive in the current debate in the IS to examine Luxemburg's arguments and the response Lenin made to them.

". . . she did not deny the right of all nations and national minorities to dispose of themselves as they saw fit, for this was to her an 'obvious and uncontested' right, 'conforming to the elementary principles of socialism.' It was not, however, to be realized under capitalism. 'Socialism,' she wrote during the war in the famous Junius pamphlet, 'grants every people the right to independence and freedom, to independent disposal over its own destiny . . . International socialism recognizes the right of free, independent nations having equal rights, but only it can create such nations, only it can realize the right of self-determination of the peoples.' But to advocate the independence of Poland would produce, she argued, precisely what Lenin, in polemicizing against the Polish nationalists in 1903, warned against: the corruption of the class consciousness and independence of the proletariat, the confusion of the class struggle, the impregnation of the workers with petty bourgeois democratic phraseology, the disruption of the unity of the proletariat throughout the empire in its common struggle against czarism.

"To proclaim this right, Rosa contended, would not result in a positive solution of the national question. In defending it, the proletariat would inevitably come under the domination of the nationalist bourgeoisie, eventually become the football of the big imperialist powers, and lose both its independent identity and the possibility of fulfilling its historic mission. From the international standpoint, also, socialist policy could not include the establishment of an independent Poland (under conditions of capitalism, be it always understood), for that would bind the social democracy to demand the separation of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine from Germany and their return to France, the promotion of the separatist aspirations of the Czechs, the acquisition of Trieste by Italy, etc. -- support to all of which would simply mean that the social democracy obligates itself willy-nilly to serve one national imperialism or another in a capitalist war, that being the only means by which any of these aspirations could be realized outside of the socialist revolution. Examination into the concrete possibilities of realizing the right of self-determination, she therefore concluded, especially when it is considered that the right is worldwide and consequently includes the colonial empires of imperialism, excludes the struggle for it under capitalism as utopian, and makes it realizable only in the socialist society."

Luxemburg counterposed the struggle for national rights to the struggle for socialism. Paul Frolich in his biography of Luxemburg makes this very

clear in his paraphrase of her ideas: "Rosa confronted the apparent but in reality impossible unity of the proletariat and bourgeoisie in Poland with the unity of the proletariats of all the nations within Russia," (Paul Frolich, Rosa Luxemburg, Pluto Press, 1972, p. 28).

But Lenin pointed out that from the standpoint of democracy it is impossible to deny the right of any people to self-determination. The proletariat of the oppressor nation cannot refuse to support such a demand without becoming an accomplice in its oppression. As Lenin put it:

"When, in her anxiety not to 'assist' the nationalist bourgeoisie of Poland, Rosa Luxemburg rejects the right to self-determination in the programme of the Marxists in Russia she is in fact assisting opportunist tolerance of the privileges (and worse than privileges) of the Great Russians.

"Carried away by the struggle against nationalism in Poland, Rosa Luxemburg has forgotten the nationalism of the Great Russians, although it is this nationalism that is the most formidable at the present time," (Lenin, Works, Vol. 20, p. 412, "Right of Nations to Self-Determination").

Of course, supporting the right of any nation to self-determination did not obligate one to be in favor of nor to advocate secession. That question is determined by the needs of the class struggle: will that struggle be advanced or not?

And Lenin went into great detail in various places, to explain how his attitude toward the right of nations should be applied in concrete situations. Lenin had a different attitude toward the nationalism of the oppressor nation and that of the oppressed. Nationalism of the oppressor nation is chauvinism: the fight for privileges, for the "right" to subject other peoples. But the nationalism of the oppressed nation could still be progressive, still be the banner under which the battle for democratic rights was fought:

"In the Western countries the national movement is a thing of the distant past. . . . The position is different in Eastern Europe. As far as the Ukrainian and Byelorussians, for instance, are concerned, only a Martian dreamer could deny that the national movement has not yet been consummated there, that the awakening of the masses to the full use of their mother tongue and literature . . . is still going on there. The 'fatherland' is historically not yet quite a dead letter there. There the 'defense of the fatherland' can still be the defense of democracy, of one's native language, of political liberty against oppressor nations, against medievalism, whereas the English, French, German and Italians lie when they speak of defending their fatherland in the present war, because actually what they are defending is not their native language, not their right to national development, but their rights as slave holders, their colonies, the foreign 'spheres of influence' of their finance capital, etc." (Ibid., Vol. 23, pp. 39-40, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism").

Lenin derived political consequences from his analysis of the different nationalisms. That of the oppressor nations was an unmitigated evil which must only be fought. Workers who refused to abandon it were not welcome within the ranks of the revolutionary socialist movement. But for workers of the oppressed nation the story was quite different. Lenin made this distinction crystal clear, using the example of Norway, which separated from Sweden in 1905.

"Could a Swedish worker who did not recognize Norway's right to secession remain a member of the Social-Democratic Party? He could not . . . The Swedish worker could, while remaining a Social-Democrat urge the Norwegians to vote against secession . . . But the Swedish worker who, like the Swedish aristocracy and bourgeoisie, would deny the Norwegians the right to decide this question themselves, without the Swedes and irrespective of their will, would have been a social-chauvinist and a miscreant the Social-Democratic Party could not tolerate in its ranks," (Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 52, "Imperialist Economism.").

This, however, did not mean that the revolutionary of the oppressed nation had no internationalist obligation. He did, but it was different from that of the revolutionary of the oppressor nation:

". . . a Social-Democrat from a small nation must emphasize in his agitation the second work of our general formula: 'voluntary integration' of nations. He may, without failing in his duties as an internationalist, be in favor of both the political independence of his nation and its integration with the neighboring state of X, Y, Z, etc. But in all cases he must fight against small-nation narrow-mindedness, seclusion and isolation, consider the whole and the general, subordinate the particular to the general interests," (Ibid., Vol. 22, p. 347, "The Discussion of Self-Determination Summed Up").

Why did Lenin take this position? Because he was an internationalist. He was seeking international working class unity and his, not Luxemburg's, was the road to its realization. Lenin's perspective was absolutely necessary if it was to be possible to break workers from the oppressor nation from their own native bourgeoisie.

"The Swedish workers would have had the right and the opportunity, without ceasing to be socialists, to agitate against secession, but only if they had waged a systematic, consistent and constant struggle against the Swedish government for Norway's freedom to secede. Otherwise the Norwegian workers and people would not and could not accept the advice of the Swedish workers as sincere," (Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 57, "Imperialist Economism").

Thus revolutionaries were unequivocally and always for the right of self-determination of oppressed nationalities, for the right to secede. That, however, did not mean that revolutionaries need be in favor of secession itself. That depends upon the concrete situation. Lenin was explicit on this point:

"The right of nations to self-determination implies exclusively the right to independence in the political sense, the right to free political separation from the oppressor nation. Specifically, this demand for political democracy implies complete freedom to agitate for secession and for a referendum on secession by the seceding nation. This demand, therefore, is not the equivalent of a demand for separation, fragmentation and the formation of small states. It implies only a consistent expression of struggle against all national oppression," (Ibid., Vol. 22, p. 146, "The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-Determination").

Why was it necessary to take this position? Was there a material basis for it? There was. It was the objectively different circumstances to which the proletariat of the different nations were subject. The workers of the oppressor nation were privileged relative to those of the oppressed and because of the oppression of the subject nation:

"Is the actual condition of the workers in the oppressor and in the oppressed nations the same, from the standpoint of the national question?

"No, it is not the same.

"(1) Economically, the difference is that sections of the working class in the oppressor nations receive crumbs from the superprofits the bourgeoisie of the nations obtains by extra exploitation of the workers of the oppressed nations. Besides, economic statistics show that here a larger percentage of the workers become 'straw bosses' than is the case in the oppressed nations, a larger percentage rise to the labor aristocracy. That is a fact. To a certain degree the workers of the oppressor nations are partners of their own bourgeoisie in plundering the workers (and the mass of the population) of the oppressed nations.

"(2) Politically, the difference is that, compared with the workers of the oppressed nations, they occupy a privileged position in many spheres of political life.

"(3) Ideologically, or spiritually, the difference is that they are taught, at school and in life, disdain and contempt for the workers of the oppressed nations," (Ibid., Vol. 23, pp. 55-56, "Imperialist Economism").

Lenin also asserted that the attainment of independence was possible under capitalism, even if that independence did not end economic domination. Luxemburg argued that under those circumstances self-determination is illusory:

"Can one seriously speak about the 'self-determination' of the formally independent Montenegrins, Bulgarians, Rumanians, Serbs, Greeks, partly even the Swiss, whose independence is a result of the political struggle and the diplomatic game of the 'concert of Europe'?" (Quoted in Lenin, Ibid., Vol. 20, p. 338, "Right of Nations to Self-Determination").

Lenin's response was that such an idea was ridiculous:

"For the question of political self-determination of nations and their independence as states in bourgeois society, Rosa Luxemburg has substituted the question of their economic independence. This is just as intelligent as if someone, in discussing the programmatic demand for the supremacy of parliament, i.e., the assembly of people's representatives, in a bourgeois state; were to expound the perfectly correct conviction that big capital dominates in a bourgeois country, whatever the regime in it," (Ibid., Vol. 20, p. 399, "Right of Nations to Self-Determination").

In fact, part of the genius of Lenin's formulation is its ability to tap the revolutionary aspirations latent in the national struggle under capitalism. It was the support for these aspirations by the Bolsheviks and their being ignored by the Kerensky government that gave impetus to the only successful socialist revolution the world has ever seen. As Schachtman put it:

"The territorial disintegration of the Russian revolution, and its consequent collapse, proved to be an unjustified fear expressed by Rosa in her 1918 criticisms, in which she so acridly ridiculed the idea of a 'Ukrainian nation.' That centralization, 'big-statism,' which is the socialist ideal, was realized in Russia not along a rigid and straight line, but dialectically as a process, which began with recognizing the right of each nation to separate, actually granting the separation, strengthening the proletarian movement and sharpening the class struggle in the separated nation, the victory of the proletariat in the struggle, and finally the federal reaffiliation into a centralized union of Soviet states," (Ibid.).

Luxemburg's views, on the other hand, were implemented by the Hungarian Soviet Republic and led to its defeat. When the Rumanians invaded Hungary they were welcomed by the captive Russian minority of Hungary as liberators because they had not been allowed to exercise their right to self-determination.

None of this makes Lenin into a nationalist, despite his vehement defense of national rights. Rather, he was aware of the dangers of national chauvinism. To fall into that trap would be to capitulate to bourgeois ideology. What was necessary was to find the correct formulation that would recognize the progressive aspects of the national struggle, even under bourgeois leadership, while pointing out its reactionary aspects insofar as it was counterposed to the class struggle. In no case did this position in any sense mean that the working class must subordinate its struggles to the bourgeoisie. Rather, the proletariat must always, in every case, be organized independently. It is from that point of view that Lenin put forward his position:

"The proletariat . . . values above all and places foremost the alliance of the proletarians of all nations, and assesses any national demand, any national separation, from the angle of the workers' class struggle. By supporting the right to secession, we are told, you are supporting the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations.

"Our reply to this is: No. To the workers the important thing is to distinguish the principles of the two trends. Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, we are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, in favor, for we are the staunchest and the most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism, we stand against it. We fight the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation," (Ibid., Vol. 20, pp. 411-412, "Right of Nations to Self-Determination").

Lenin refused to run away from the concrete application of his point of view when the world presented a test. Speaking of the struggle of Serbia against Austria in World War I he pointed out that if the world war had not made every struggle part of an imperialist war, socialists would have to support the struggle led by the Serbian bourgeoisie:

"In the present war the national element is represented only by Serbia's war against Austria . . . It is only in Serbia and among the Serbs that we can find a national-liberation movement of long standing, embracing millions, 'the masses of the people,' in a movement of which the present war of Serbia against Austria is a 'continuation.' If this war were an isolated one, i.e., if it were not connected with the general European war, with the selfish and predatory aims of Britain, Russia, etc., it would have been the duty of all socialists to desire the success of the Serbian bourgeoisie (Ibid., Vol. 21, p. 235, "The Collapse of the Second International").

Lenin filled in more precisely what he meant:

"The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a genuine democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support. At the same time we strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness; we fight against the tendency of the Polish bourgeoisie to oppress the Jews, etc., etc.," (Ibid., Vol. 20, p. 412, "Right of Nations to Self-Determination").

But Lenin's opposition to "national exclusiveness" did not mean opposition to the national struggles of the oppressed. The main burden was on the proletariat of the oppressor nation to break from its tendency toward national exclusiveness.

Lenin rejected Luxemburg's counterposition of the national and social struggles of the oppressed nations: insofar as that counterposition took place, it was reactionary.

". . . Kievsky bypasses the central question that belongs to his special subject, namely, how will we Social-Democrats abolish national oppression? He shunts the question aside with phrases about the world being 'drenched in blood,' etc. (though this has no bearing on the matter under discussion). This leaves only one single argument: the socialist revolution will solve everything!

"From the theoretical standpoint that view is nonsensical; from the practical political standpoint it is chauvinistic. It fails to appreciate the significance of democracy. For socialism is impossible without democracy because: (1) the proletariat cannot perform the socialist revolution unless it prepares for it by the struggle for democracy; (2) victorious socialism cannot consolidate its victory and bring humanity to the withering away of the state without implementing full democracy," (Ibid., Vol. 23, p. 74, "Imperialist Economism").

Moreover, he argued that a policy demanding the right of self-determination of oppressed nations was necessary from the point of view of the working class of the oppressor nation -- that, given their own interests that was the course they must pursue. And it was on those grounds that the policy could be argued to them:

"Let us consider the position of an oppressor nation. Can a nation be free if it oppresses other nations? It cannot. The interests of the freedom of the Great-Russian population require a struggle against such oppression. The long, centuries-old history of the suppression of the movements of the oppressed nations, and the systematic propaganda in favor of such oppression coming from the 'upper' classes have created enormous obstacles to the cause of freedom of the Great-Russian people itself, in the form of prejudices, etc.

"The Great-Russian Black Hundreds deliberately foster these prejudices and encourage them. The Great-Russian bourgeoisie tolerates or condones them. The Great-Russian proletariat cannot achieve its own aims or clear the road to its freedom without systematically countering these prejudices.

"In the leaps which all nations have made in the period of bourgeois revolutions, clashes and struggles over the right to a national state are possible and probable. We proletarians declare in advance that we are opposed to Great-Russian privileges, and this is what guides our entire propaganda and agitation," (Lenin, Works, Vol. 20, pp. 413-414, "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, emphasis added).

Lenin went on to point out that, from the standpoint of the class struggle, the main task facing revolutionaries was the combatting of the national chauvinism of the working class of the oppressor nation.

"In her quest for 'practicability' Rosa Luxemburg has lost sight of the principal practical task both of the Great-Russian proletariat and of the proletariat of other nationalities: that of day-by-day agitation and propaganda against all state and national privileges and for the right, the equal right, of all nations to their national state. This (at present) is our principal task in the national question, for only in this way can we defend the interests of democracy and the alliance of all proletarians of all nations on equal footing," (Ibid., Vol. 20, p. 414, Right of Nations to Self-Determination").

The analysis Lenin presented for resolving the apparent conflict between the national and the class struggles provides the basis of a perspective for unifying the apparently contradictory struggles of black and white workers. The tendency of the black movement in America to develop in an anti-white direction can best be countered by an open appeal on the part of white workers to champion the demands of blacks. White workers must be willing and able to show blacks that they do not and refuse to participate in the oppression of blacks in any way -- that it is the ruling class that is responsible for that oppression.

A Theoretical Analysis of Blacks in America

I am arguing, in contradistinction to the Landy-Coleman-Finkel pyramidal caste conception that it is most appropriate to view blacks as a national minority and, in overwhelming proportions, as a super-exploited section of the working class.

In any but a mechanical sense, black people possess most of the characteristics of a nation (though not a nation state). Specifically, they have a separate and distinct culture, common traditions, a community, and a self-consciousness of themselves as members of a distinctive people set apart from the rest of the society -- as well as an awareness of their common plight as distinguished from the rest of the society. (So, it should be remembered, do whites have that consciousness of blacks.)

This is not to say that blacks as a people necessarily have a consciousness of or a desire to create a black nation state, nor that there is widespread acceptance of nationalism as a political ideology or strategy for black liberation. It is the latter which both Landy and Coleman (the latter in two discussion documents) try to pin their case on.

Throughout the debate they have tended to confuse nationalism as a political ideology or strategy (including the desire to create a nation state) with a national self-conception or struggle. The first Trautman document by not directly addressing the question may have permitted such confusion to continue.

Rosa Luxemburg was a Pole and thought of herself as such. That certainly did not make her a nationalist, nor did it make her willing to countenance any tendencies toward privileges or exclusiveness, any more than Lenin who was a Great Russian was willing to do so.

To think of oneself as part of a distinct nation is quite different from adopting a nationalist perspective. Black nationalism as a political ideology or strategy means tendencies toward separatism, pan-Africanism, black capitalism, or other efforts to carve out a black colony; or black "exclusiveness" toward whites -- the belief that it is white workers who are the real enemy or the refusal to act in class solidarity with workers or to appeal to whites to join blacks in a class struggle and in the struggle against racism. All of these are blind alleys. But, they are not the same as national consciousness.

(Now, it should be remembered, are they the same as the progressive aspects that black nationalism has taken and does and can take: assertion and defense of black culture, black self-worth, black rights.)

Blacks do not have a separate language, territory or economy. Landy and Coleman make much of these failings. But, why are they so important? Because they are conditions which tend to create a national consciousness and self-awareness. But, then they are not definitions, but characteristics that tend to create and be associated with national self-consciousness. When Stalin enumerated these characteristics he was doing no more than listing the characteristics that were common to most nations. In most cases (but not all) that is sufficient, so long as one understands that is what is being done. To elevate these characteristics to criteria, or to a method is thoroughly inappropriate.

In fact, there is evidence that Lenin held precisely this point of view. In Trotsky's The Stalin School of Falsification, he includes an appendix in which he inserts his transcription of Lenin's speech to the Bolshevik Party Conference after he returned to Petrograd. This speech was the substance of what went down in history as the April theses, although this version of it does not appear in Lenin's Collected Works (at least not in the current edition, which is the only one to which I have access). Lenin stated:

"What is peculiar in Russia is the gigantically swift transition from savage violence to the most delicate deceit. The fundamental condition is the renunciation of annexation, not in word, but in action. Rech is yawning over the declaration of the Sotsial-Democrat that the incorporation of Kourland (Estonia) into Russia is annexation. But annexation is the act of incorporating any country distinguished by national peculiarities, every incorporation of a nation against its will, regardless of whether it has a language of its own, so long as it feels itself to be a distinct nation. This is a prejudice of the Great Russians, cultivated for centuries." (Emphasis added, pp. 290-291).

For Lenin, what was key obviously was social justice and the breaking down of the subjective barriers of nationalism for the purpose of making proletarian unity a true possibility.

It is significant in this regard to note that despite Lenin's tutoring of Stalin in the production of "The National Question" and despite Lenin's referring to it approvingly, Lenin himself did not draw the conclusions about black people that Landy does. In a little-known work, entitled "Statistics and Sociology" which was meant to be a large book on the national question, but which was interrupted by the February Revolution, Lenin makes the following statement:

"In the United States, the Negroes (and also the Mulattos and Indians) account for only 11.1 percent. They should be classed as an oppressed nation, for the equality won in the Civil War of 1861-65 and guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic, was in many respects increasingly curtailed in the chief Negro areas (the South) in connection with the transition from the progressive, pre-monopoly capitalism of 1860-70 to the reactionary monopoly cap-

italism (imperialism) of the new era, which in America was especially sharply etched out by the Spanish-American imperialist war of 1898 (i.e., a war between two robbers over the division of the booty)," (Lenin, Works, Vol. 23, pp. 275-276). He made similar statements in a few other places, as well.

That Lenin said it does not make it so; it is not even an argument in favor of the thesis, since black people in America were hardly among Lenin's areas of expertise.

What is significant about the statement is the method employed: Lenin was aware of the fact that black people did not have a separate language, territory or economy. Nonetheless, he was willing to state that they were a nation. (His reference to blacks being concentrated in the South was not the basis upon which he argued his case. It was their being deprived of equality with whites.) Whether Lenin was right or wrong is not the point. He, unlike Landy and Coleman, was able to see that the categories themselves, even if generally correct, do not determine the issue. As usual, Lenin was right.

Hal Draper in another context, that of the Jews in Palestine, provided a valuable statement of Marxist method, one which is quite applicable in this debate:

"A question of Marxist method is in order here. One can dispute everlastingly whether a certain people constitute a 'nation'. One can usefully go over various criteria for nationhood, among the varying criteria which have been weighed by Marxists among others. Such theoretical discussion can be very good. But for Marxists above all others, the test of theory comes in life. If 'theory' has told us that X is not a nation, but if this people acts historically and collectively in every way that a national people acts, then something is wrong with the theory, or else some important change has taken place which theory has not yet caught up with," (Zionism, Israel, and the Arabs, ed. by Hal Draper, page 163).

In the case of blacks in America they have gone through a set of historical experiences which have created a national self-consciousness: the whole history of racist oppression of the past 400 years. It is necessary to begin with this understanding.

The black community has its base in and is fundamentally created by the racist oppression blacks face and their resistance to it. In the North blacks are usually forced into ghettos because they cannot move wherever they want. In Chicago black migration outside the ghetto is met with a wall of fire bombs. Public housing is overwhelmingly black because whites refuse to live in integrated housing (except for the liberal middle class). The resulting tremendous overcrowding and high rents for worse facilities are the result of the fact that the white community in its entirety -- state, realtors, bankers, building contractors, bourgeoisie, middle class, and working class -- do not want to live with blacks and force blacks to live in ghettos.

In the ghettos blacks receive an inferior education in the schools with less spent per pupil for racist reasons, with an education taught by racist

go over various criteria for nationhood, among the varying criteria which have been weighed by Marxists among others. Such theoretical discussion can be very good. But for Marxists above all others, the test of theory comes in life. If 'theory' has told us that X is not a nation, but if this people acts historically and collectively in every way that a national people acts, then something is wrong with the theory, or else some important change has taken place which theory has not yet caught up with." (Zionism, Israel, and the Arabs, ed. by Hal Draper, page 163).

teachers. They face an occupying foreign army, the police force, which lives outside their communities, which oppresses them in ways entirely different from the oppression of white working people. They face a welfare system designed to demean them, to split up their families, and to put them in a de-meaning position fitting to the white conception of black subservience.

In the economy, blacks still participate to an extent in a separate, racist labor market, with a job ceiling to it. They often do not get jobs in the same way, are not eligible for the same jobs, enter different job channels, are barred in reality if not in law from the highest, best paying, most prestigious jobs. Even when the economy expands, along with growing employment, blacks do not get their due share of new jobs but they do get twice their share of unemployment.

The very material basis for the popularity of black capitalism derives from the cohesiveness of the black community. Success in this society derives from success in capitalist enterprises. Poor blacks often feel an obligation to strengthen black capitalists, their people, as part of the success of the black community. Not just that they should succeed in the white community, but develop their own economy.

One might legitimately ask, what is the historic direction of the black community? Is it moving more towards becoming a nation, or more towards disintegrating? This question was touched upon in the first Trautman document on page 7, paragraph 32. It is stated there that because blacks lack a common, separate territory the tendency is not toward their becoming a finished nation. However, that possibility is by no means excluded, including their taking territory. In the long run what determines the outcome is the actions of the whites. To the extent to which black oppression continues, or even increases, the likelihood of that historic option being taken likewise remains or increases. To the extent that white workers adopt a position of championing black interests as part of a class-conscious strategy, and thereby present a real solution to black oppression, this alternative is likely to be avoided. Given this fact alone, Landy-Coleman-Finkel's aims should dictate to them the pursuance of the policy presented in this document.

In analytic and political terms, the value of the analysis of blacks as a national minority is that:

First, it describes best the character of oppression that blacks have suffered.

Blacks have experienced the oppression of a people. All blacks -- even those who have attained the greatest wealth and status, are subject to many of the same humiliating and galling actions.

Blacks have the consciousness of a people. They see themselves as set apart from white America. They have a different community, culture, historical associations, interests, etc., and perceive themselves as such.

Blacks undergo the same oppression as that which other national minorities have undergone. This includes the suppression of their culture and history, discrimination in all walks of life, and generally poorer living standards. Economically they are kept in a position that lays them open to super-exploitation as a people.

Second, it describes best the tendency for development of the black movement.

Blacks tend to develop a sense of cohesiveness and community; they have a tendency toward self-organization that is much stronger than that of any ethnic group in this country; in a struggle there develop tendencies toward separatism, and also toward a greater assertion of black consciousness as struggle tends to escalate. Unlike ethnic groups, blacks cannot assimilate, which accentuates these tendencies. Furthermore, the culture of resistance blacks have developed has great positive significance. If black oppression ended tomorrow, it would not end black culture. This culture includes music, poetry, literature, independent black organizations such as the church and social clubs, different family patterns from whites, different values -- all of which have a positive meaning to the black community.

Third, and most important, it prescribes the Leninist policy on the right of nations to self-determination as the correct way to find the path to working class unity between blacks and whites in a revolutionary struggle to destroy capitalism.

It is certainly not pro-nationalist to make these assertions. We must fight nationalism as a political ideology, and as a program for liberation. But the most effective way to fight it is to produce tangible results on the part of whites in terms of demonstration of their willingness to support and fight for the rights of blacks. It is not to put the onus on blacks by saying that for them to develop in a national direction would be such a catastrophe that national self-conceptions are not legitimate.

Concretely, while the understanding of blacks in America as a national minority is necessary for formulating a strategy, it is not sufficient. We need to know more about the specific relations between blacks and whites, and especially black and white workers in this country. It was this need which the second characterization, blacks as a super-exploited section of the working class, was designed to fill.

Brian M. is correct in his "Critique of Landy on Black Liberation" (Bulletin No. 26, page 3) when he points out that not the whole black community is a super-exploited section of the working class -- only black workers are. But this critique is not really a very telling blow against the thesis advanced here.

In the Trautman document explicit recognition of this fact was made in the section entitled "Blacks as a Super-Exploited Section of the Working Class."

"The black community is multi-class. There are different strata, and that, of course, is one reason why there are different strategies for black liberation.

"This overwhelming dominance of the working class in the black community has significant implications: it means that the social weight of workers is so great as to tend to force support for working class demands from other strata. It means that the focus of struggle for black liberation has an inevitable tendency to move to the working class as its base of power. For example, during the formation of the CIO the NAACP and many black churches played a significant role in encouraging black workers to join the movement. The social dynamism generated by the new union movement began to transform the political orientation of virtually the entire black community," (Page 10, paragraph 5).

Nonetheless, Macdonald's reminder of the need for precision is a valuable one, as is the rest of his document. Most everything in it is quite true, if beside the point in relation to this particular dispute. But, if we are to be precise, let us look at the matter with still more care.

What is superexploitation in the scientific sense? Exploitation alone involves the selling of labor power at its value as a commodity. The exploitation involves the expropriation of what the worker produces over and above the value of his or her labor power by the capitalist, which is surplus value. The rate of exploitation, then, is the ratio of surplus value to necessary value, that is, the amount of what is produced which is necessary to sustain and reproduce the working class at an historically determined level, etc.

Scientifically, then, superexploitation is the selling of labor power below its value as a commodity. Seen in this light, not only is it the case that not all blacks are super-exploited, but in fact not even all black workers are super-exploited.

However, blacks as a people, just like colonial peoples or women, are through their oppression kept in a position to be super-exploited. Scientifically, only some of them are, but it is the oppression of blacks as a people that produced their super-exploitation, so that as a people they earned only 63 percent of what whites earned in 1968 (before the recession, which hurt blacks worse than it did whites).

It is the very fact of blacks becoming overwhelmingly workers, and thus a significant part of the American working class that, together with the advanced consciousness that they hold -- consciousness produced by the struggles for national rights -- that enables blacks to play a special role in the development of a revolutionary movement. They can play a leadership role in developing a united class struggle and in helping to break whites from their nationalism. But the latter, as Lenin argued (quoted on page 9 of this document) is still the principal task; the extent to which whites can be gotten to break from their nationalism will determine the extent to which it will be possible to build a united class movement. The same asser-

tion simply cannot be made concerning black nationalism. (That is, breaking blacks from their nationalism does not necessarily mean it will be possible to break whites from theirs.)

As Trotsky put it: "The argument that the slogan 'for self-determination' leads away from the class basis is an adaptation to the ideology of the white workers. The Negro can be developed to a class standpoint only when the white worker is educated," (Trotsky on Black Nationalism, page 17).

Blacks have the potentiality of playing a vanguard role, and we should urge them to do so. But we must recognize that if they do not do so, the fault is not theirs. We should reject strategies that would counterpose their struggles as blacks to the class struggle: we should not call upon them to give up their struggles for the class struggle, but to partake in both struggles. If, for reasons of distrust of whites or whatever, they reject the broader struggles, we do not for that reason refuse to join in and support their struggles, and urge whites to do so. To fail to take this position would be to indicate to blacks that they were right -- that whites cannot be trusted, that the only reason they join them in struggle is for their own purposes. It would be to make any future unity impossible.

Coleman's "Brief Comments on Trautman's 'Black Liberation!'"

Coleman's "Brief Comments" is an attempt to criticize various aspects of the Trautman document. Many of them are small points, and they cannot all be taken up.

For example, on page 3 Coleman reminds us that E. P. Thompson was incorrect simply to define class in terms of class consciousness, implying that I was unaware of that fact (perhaps even laying the basis for his later attack on the section on racism as being philosophically idealist).

However, the Trautman document recognizes this fact quite explicitly:

"There are material conditions which give rise to the class consciousness of the working class of which Thompson spoke. And there are material conditions which give rise to black nationalist consciousness. Most important of these conditions is one which is given very little treatment in Landy's document: white racism," (Page 6, paragraph 24).

It is worthwhile to take the matter a bit further and to defend Thompson and to set the matter straight on Marxist methodology.

For Marx, both the objective conditions and the subjective understanding of those conditions (consciousness) were necessary factors in defining class. But they referred to different aspects and conceptions of class. The former refers to people in a similar relation to the means or production, having interests opposed to another class ("class-of-itself"); the latter to a political entity capable of acting in its own interests ("class-for-itself"). E. P. Thompson was obviously referring to the latter -- a class

conscious English working class -- and the whole of the book refers to how that consciousness developed.

Marx illustrated the two concepts in reference to the peasantry, which he did not consider a class in the latter sense:

"In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. In so far as there is merely a local inter-connection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national bond and no political organization among them, they do not form a class," (Marx, The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, page 124, International Publishers, 1963).

More substantively, Coleman takes issue with the statement in the Trautman document that "black nationalism, like any nationalism, has contradictory tendencies. It is the locus for struggle against oppression, and as such we support it. It is also the attempt to put a break on the struggle developing into a class struggle . . . and as such we oppose it," (page 9, paragraph 38). Coleman (page 6) presents this statement as equivocating on the question of nationalism.

But this statement is virtually identical (and its content is identical) with Lenin's statement on the nationalism of the oppressed nationalities, quoted on page 7 of this document. Does Coleman disagree with Lenin also? Does he feel that there is no difference between the nationalism of the oppressed nation and that of the oppressor nation? Perhaps Lenin was mistaken in going to all the trouble he went to to distinguish between the two kinds of nationalism? If not, why not?

He argues that "in any specific sense, nationalism is not at all an adequate solution and that in any specific sense it is the wrong locus for struggle," ("Brief Comments," page 6). He attacks the tendency of black nationalists to see "separate organization as a principle flowing from black national identity, rather than as a tactic of self-organization leading to broader forms," (page 6). He condemns the tendency to see "white workers as at best a vacillating social force rather than as a force presently hostile, yet indispensable to black liberation," (page 6).

Here is expressed some of the real bankruptcy of Coleman's position. He might as well have chastised them for not being revolutionary socialists: for not seeing the existing situation as part of a process, for not understanding the material reasons that have led whites to racist attitudes and actions, for not understanding that the economy is moving in such a direction that the possibilities of class struggle are re-emerging after a quarter-century lull -- in sum, for not understanding that "all of history is the history of class struggle."

This is not to say that we do not criticize tendencies for not being revolutionary socialists. But, in the case of a movement this is not suf-

ficient: it is necessary to present a strategy to move it to a revolutionary socialist perspective. Coleman not only fails to do this, he doesn't even see it as an important problem.

Given the experience of the last two decades (at a minimum) it is little surprise that blacks should have a tendency to view whites as at best a vacillating social force. That is what they have been.

Is that attitude Coleman expresses here limited to black nationalism, or does it apply to all nationalisms? He says nationalism is not an adequate solution. That is correct; it is for that reason that we are socialists. But the question is, is it a solution at all to national oppression? Is it wrong and to be condemned for blacks to struggle against that national oppression without generalizing the struggle -- just to fight against their national oppression?

Nationalism is not an adequate solution anywhere. Coleman goes further; it is always the wrong locus of struggle. Why then should we be in favor of self-determination . . . ever? Why is he for self-determination? Why isn't Rosa Luxemburg correct? She, too, felt it was the wrong locus for struggle, that it was not an adequate solution, and therefore counterposed socialism to nationalism. How would Coleman answer her?

Coleman is ultimatic and therefore conservative, like all ultimaticists. He sees a struggle taking place, and his attitude is to tell the people involved in that struggle to stop struggling. They're engaged in the wrong struggle. They should be in "this" struggle, not "that" struggle. They should not be in the struggle for national rights, but in the class struggle. Of course, since "this" struggle is not presently occurring he is saying that they should go home.

That should obviously be the wrong approach. We revolutionaries support national struggles of the oppressed. We do not counterpose ourselves or socialism to them, nor is there reason to think that we need to do so: socialism stands for the national rights of the oppressed. We attempt to demonstrate that the goals of that struggle can best be fulfilled by broadening them to a class struggle. If, however, that understanding is not accepted we do not then shrug our shoulders and walk away. We recognize that the basic reason for the failure to see things from a class standpoint is the failure of the workers of the oppressor nation to indicate that that is how they view things. We fight for the independence of the working class in the national struggle, and for a working class "national program".

Coleman's hostility to the politics of the nationalists is correct, but he is at a loss to formulate a strategy for coping with it. What he ignores and fails to understand is that the key to breaking black workers from their nationalism is breaking white workers from theirs. The reality of the situation must be changed. The way to overcome it is to show that not all whites are vacillating -- the revolutionaries are not. Needless to say, denial of national rights, or of the legitimacy of national struggles, doesn't help. Coleman's lack of understanding of this basic fact leads him to turn his ire

on the conception of blacks as a nation and on the black nationalists as the main problem, rather than turning where he should: to white workers.

The attitude that Coleman takes demonstrates that he does not comprehend the Leninist methodology for treating oppressed nations and national minorities. He (like Rosa Luxemburg) sees the problem as the nationalist tendencies in the oppressed nation, forgetting what feeds that nationalism. The fact is, Luxemburg was wrong. Lenin's methodology of supporting and fighting unremittingly for the national rights of the oppressed nation was the only method which could link the national and class struggles into socialist revolution. The same is true here.

White Racism

This section of the document has come under attack more than any other save only the section on blacks as a national minority. It is no surprise: the two are related.

The "telling" point made over and over again -- if it were true it would indeed be a telling point -- is that the thesis put forward is classical philosophical idealism. ("Trautman makes of white racism not a powerful ideological prop for the subordination of blacks, but the cause of the subordination . . . This gross idealism . . .") ("Brief Comments," page 5).

Some of the misunderstanding can only be described as obscurantist, given what is in the document; some of the rest of it involves a failure to understand the Marxist view of the role of ideas in history.

On much of it the document itself is unequivocal:

"Racism is an ideology (emphasis added) that was consciously developed by the ruling class," (Trautman, page 13, paragraph 4). "In any case, racism was developed and elaborated as an ideology. It served to legitimate the enslavement process; as a means of social control (attempt to instill its ideas into the slave class itself); and as a means of undercutting opposition from lower class whites -- who were given a higher status than blacks and a certain (false) identity of interests with the ruling class as a result," (pp. 13-14, paragraph 7).

"Racism is a tool that has continually been utilized by employers to help prevent the development of class consciousness," (page 14, paragraph 9). "The terrible thing is that the white working class accepted and embraced the ideology. As a result, the history of the United States is replete with stories of white working class violence against blacks," (page 14, paragraph 10).

The section includes a discussion of how class struggle and consciousness have in the past partially broken through that racist ideology -- particularly during the populist movement and the CIO -- and a discussion of the material basis for the acceptance of the racist ideology on the part of the white working class. The argument is made that it is the exploitation

that white workers suffer themselves that leads them to be open to easing their exploitation by accepting the increased exploitation of blacks. It is pointed out that it is in the nature of capitalist competition not only to create class solidarity, but also to create intra-class conflict because under capitalism everyone is in competition with everyone else.

In America a great historical effort -- largely successful -- has been made by the ruling class to create the racial hatred between blacks and whites. Under conditions where class struggle has been minimal the tendencies among whites for an individualistic, rather than a class view of how to get ahead in the world has emerged dominant. With only so many jobs, so much prestige, income, etc. allocated to the working class, black efforts to increase their share are seen by whites as a threat to themselves. In a certain sense they are -- given the limits prescribed by capitalism: the distribution of wealth, income etc., and given the acceptance of those limits by the working class as characterized by the lack of struggle. This lack of struggle tends to lead to viewing the situation as a "rat-race" in which each individual must do as best as he or she can within the limits prescribed. (Incidentally, it is no accident that whites are less inclined to struggle and therefore to break through bourgeois ideology -- of which racism is only one part -- less rapidly than are blacks: they do not feel the oppression with anything like the intensity that blacks do.) The problem is that white workers accept those limits as given.

Moreover, it should be noted that white workers, as well as whites of other classes, take part in the oppression and super-exploitation of blacks in large numbers and benefit from it. Thus, they are insulated by blacks from fears of unemployment, from getting the worst jobs with the lowest pay, and so on. In that sense, the oppression of blacks is a gain to the whites.

But unlike the Weathermen and RYM-2, we do not conclude from that fact that white workers are a privileged class in the society. Many of them are privileged in relation to blacks, but their fundamental condition in the society as a whole is that of an exploited class.

As stated in the Parker 1970 convention document and reiterated in the Trautman convention document, it is the privileged position of whites relative to blacks which leads them to accept their exploitation. But, it is the fact of their exploitation which opens them up to class struggle and to be willing to fight for the interests of blacks and to overcome their racism as part of a strategy to build a united class movement.

(It is the same dynamic operating within virtually the entire American working class that makes them accept American imperialism. The privileged position of American workers in relation to, say, Vietnamese workers -- and partly based upon their oppression and super-exploitation -- weds them to support for the imperialist policies of the American bourgeoisie.)

The document goes further to maintain that whereas there is an objective basis for racism in capitalism, in the conditions in which the working

class is forced to live that, nonetheless, an analysis of the dynamic of the racist ideology cannot simply be pinned to these conditions. As the Trautman document puts it: ". . . racism often prevails even when it contradicts the immediate material interests of white workers . . . (it) . . . has taken on a life of its own," (page 17, paragraphs 28-29). It is this contention on which much of the claim (if not Coleman's) that the document is idealist has rested. The hostility to this point of view represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the Marxist view of the role of ideas in history.

The viewpoint is not written down and therefore cannot be discussed in detail. The only way to deal with it is to lay out the Marxist view of the matter (briefly).

The basis for the critique is expressed in several places in Marx's writings:

"In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage of development of their material powers of production. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society -- the real foundation, on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production in material life determines the general character of the social, political, and spiritual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence determines their consciousness," (Marx, "Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy," in Feuer, Marx and Engels, Basic Writings, page 43).

"In direct contrast to German philosophy (idealism), which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this, their real existence, their thinking, and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second it is the real, living individuals themselves, as they are in actual life, and consciousness is considered solely as their consciousness," (Marx and Engels, The German Ideology in Feuer, pp. 247-248).

It is on the basis of these statements, and of statements like these, wrenched out of context, that Marx has been misinterpreted -- sometimes by

"Marxists", including Kautsky and the Stalinists, both of whom often wished to avoid consciously acting to change historical development in a revolutionary direction; sometimes by bourgeois theorists who wished to portray Marx as a vulgar materialist -- to mean that ideas play no role in history.

From that point of view, what does it mean to say that "religion is the opiate of the masses," or to speak of some people as having "false" consciousness, i.e., a consciousness which does not correspond to the objective reality?

If religion is the opiate of the masses, that means that ideas play a role in how people act -- in this case a certain set of ideas instill acceptance of what is, instead of struggle against it.

Engels was explicit in disavowing the laternative interpretation in a letter to Joseph Bloch in 1890:

"Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasize the main principle vis-a-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we have not always the time, the place, or the opportunity to give their due to the other elements involved in the interaction. But when it came to presenting a section of history, that is, to making a practical application, it was a different matter and there no error was permissible. Unfortunately, however, it happens only too often that people think they have fully understood a new theory and can apply it without more ado from the moment they have assimilated its main principles, and even those not always correctly. And I cannot exempt many of the more recent 'Marxists' from this reproach, for the most amazing rubbish has been produced in this quarter, too," (Feuer, pp. 399-400).

He states it again more explicitly in a letter to Mehring in 1893:

"Hanging together with this is the fatuous notion of the ideologists, that because we deny an independent historical development to the various ideological spheres which play a part in history we also deny them any effect upon history. The basis of this is the common undialectical conception of cause and effect as rigidly opposite poles, the total disregarding of interaction. These gentlemen often almost deliberately forget that once a historic element has been brought into the world by other, ultimately economic causes it reacts, can react on its environment and even on the causes that have given rise to it," (Feuer, p. 409).

In the above-cited letter to Bloch, Engels also stated the correct relationship:

". . . According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I has ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract,

senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure -- political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious dogmas -- also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amidst all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree," (Feuer, pp. 397-398).

The relations of production are the ultimately determining element: in the long run. But that long run allows much play to ideas, including racism, playing an important role, even in opposition to the objective conditions.

Given all of this it is difficult to maintain seriously that I did not see that racism is a powerful ideological tool for the subordination of blacks and that capitalism is the underlying cause of their subordination. But once that is said, a number of questions remain.

Coleman objects to the statement "Racism is the objective basis of black national oppression and super-exploitation," (changed from "material" basis), (p. 13, paragraph 1 in the Trautman document). He might have something of a case if the statements previously quoted from the Trautman document were not there. Given them, his position that I maintain that racism is the only objective basis of black oppression is incomprehensible ("... white racism is advanced as the only explanation for the position of blacks in America" -- p. 5). What I am saying is that insofar as blacks are oppressed as blacks, racism is the basis of that oppression. Where the racism originated and is fed is a different story, discussed above and see paragraphs 5-6, 8-9, and 19-25 in the Trautman document in the section on racism.

Coleman may object to the use of the term "objective" in reference to consciousness. If so, he would be making a big mistake. The consciousness of the working class is one of the objective factors that we must take into account when we analyze our situation. Of course, we identify it, or take it into account for the purpose of changing it. The recognition of this true fact has often been the basis for the opportunism and reformist actions of the Stalinists who recognized the backward consciousness of the masses as one of the objective conditions facing them, but who failed (or refused) in those periods to understand the importance of the subjective factor -- the ability of the revolutionary party to intervene in the historical process to help to transform the consciousness of the masses.

Coleman objects further to the claim that "... what makes the institutions function in a racist manner are the widespread existence of racist attitudes throughout the society," (p. 13, paragraph 3). What else makes the

probation period in auto racist, except that the foremen who do the firing are racist -- that they fire blacks because they are black? It is true that the first Trautman document made too categorical a statement on this matter. The statement captures an important aspect of what makes institutions racist. Malcolm X refers in his autobiography to white welfare workers purposely destroying his family. Why did they do it? Because they were purposely malicious? No. In their own racist way they thought they were helping the family and were incapable of viewing a different culture from their own as healthy, viable and acceptable. Of course it is the fact that racist ideas, conceptions, attitudes are spread throughout the society that makes virtually every aspect of the society racist. Does Coleman seriously maintain something different? If so, what? Where these attitudes, etc., come from is, of course, another question -- one which is discussed though not thoroughly in the document.

It is also true that the very nature of the institutions encourages racist attitudes and behavior, and makes it difficult to resist them. For example, teaching in a ghetto school tends to foster racist attitudes, even among "idealists". The individual teacher who accepts the framework of the educational system does not oppose it and thereby ends up taking responsibility for it, is pressed in a racist direction even if the school administration does not intentionally foster racism.

Moreover, the results of past generations of racism makes the institutions function in a racist manner, as well. Thus, blacks have been for years systematically kept out of the job market. As a result, when lay-offs take place, because blacks have low-seniority they tend to get laid off first. Thus the economy, in its normal ups and downs is racist (to take one example). The outline of this analysis was inserted into the document by my acceptance of the following amendment by Mike Parker:

"White racism is not just an abstract set of ideas held by some people. It is manifested in objective social institutions. The discrimination against blacks has put them in a different employment market from whites, a different housing market, a different consumer market, as well as a different education system. These are the objective conditions of white racism in the present day US. They are a part of the conditions which make the experience of blacks different from European ethnic groups," (Bulletin No. 27).

The Landy Document

The Landy document gives us very little analysis of black people in America. Whereas Comrade Landy spends a good deal of time arguing that blacks are not a nation he spends virtually no time at all on his conception of blacks as a "pyramidal caste." Even in this discussion, besides his mechanical application of Stalin's method (under Lenin's tutelage), all he is really arguing is that nationalism is not a viable strategy for black liberation. No one has disagreed with that. But, what is a pyramidal caste? What is its relation to nations, to other social groupings. None of these questions are answered, or even approached, in a satisfactory manner.

Almost nothing is told us about blacks in America. All we are told is that ". . . blacks differ from the white majority in that they, as a special caste, have been denied throughout their history the benefits of bourgeois democracy," (Landy document, Bulletin No. 18, page 7). We are told that blacks are not simply a super-exploited section of the working class. But, there is no discussion of the extent to which they are such a section, or its significance in terms of building a revolutionary movement.

And, Landy draws the political conclusion from his analysis. He rejects the right of self-determination for blacks, and in so doing rejects the whole of the Leninist perspective on the national question as a way of approaching blacks. He says:

"Because the black movement is not now a national movement we do not put forward self-determination as an imperative, agitational or prominent slogan. We state educationally and propagandistically that we favor and would fight for the right of blacks to such a state in the event of a catastrophe which forced such a national status on American black people," (Bulletin No. 18, p. 33).

Since blacks are not a nation (after all, they don't match up on our list of categories, do they?) they are not entitled to national rights. If at some time they should become a nation (things finally get bad enough), then we will be generous and grant them those rights. If there were ever a strategy calculated to drive a wedge between black and white workers Landy has found it.

Given these problems, what on earth could have led Coleman and Finkel to claim that Landy's document ". . . constitutes the beginning of a theoretical re-examination and reanalysis of the position of blacks in the US," (Bulletin No. 25, "Amendments to Landy's Black Liberation," page 1)?

Coleman gave an answer to that question when he presented the amendments at the convention. He stated then that the advantage of the pyramidal caste conception is that it states that blacks are an inextricable part of American society that only a catastrophe could change. No effort was made to defend the conception itself from which the conclusion follows. Anything else which stated the same would have been sufficient from his point of view.

The fact is there is no such thing as a "pyramidal caste," despite Landy's claim that there are many of them all over the world. It is an invented category which permits avoidance of the national questions: that is why Coleman is so fond of it. Once you have such a category, you can then be hostile to the national struggles in America, to national rights, to the progressive aspects of nationalism.

The category provides the theoretical basis for opposing blacks when they engage in struggles against their oppression. Unless they generalize it to a class struggle, it is false consciousness and thus to be opposed. If blacks conceive of their struggle as a national one, what do revolutionaries say? "We will defend you?" No. "It's false consciousness. It's you who are creating the problem, not the oppression, but you."

Without this manufactured category, they would be theoretically naked. Blacks may be an "inextricable" part of American society from Coleman's point of view. That notion might be a bit more difficult to sell to black people who have been nothing if not excluded from this society.

Moreover, there are "catastrophes" and "catastrophes". W.E.B. DuBois points out in his autobiography that:

"But one thing is sure and that is the fact that since the 15th century these ancestors of mine and their other descendants have had a common history; they have suffered a common disaster and have a long memory," (DuBois, Dusk of Dawn, Schocken, 1968, p. 117).

Who is going to decide when a sufficiently catastrophic catastrophe has occurred to blacks that we will support them in a struggle for self-determination? Why do we set up conditions? Why does Landy tell us that "we state educationally and propagandistically that we favor and would fight for the right of blacks to such a state in the event of a catastrophe which forced such a national status on American black people"? Do we favor the right of self-determination only when we favor its exercise?

The method employed here is similar to and as mistaken as Luxemburg's. She, too, felt it would be a catastrophe -- reactionary -- for Poland to separate from Russia and felt that her main job was to inveigh against the Polish nationalists. She even opposed affiliation of the Russo-Polish Social-Democratic Party with the Russian Social-Democratic Party on the grounds that the Russians had a clause in their program favoring the right of nations to self-determination.

Far from being a step towards a Marxist analysis, Landy's document represents a step toward no analysis, or towards one with disastrous political conclusions.

The Coleman-Finkel Amendments

The Coleman-Finkel Amendments accept the basic problems of the Landy document mentioned already:

Where Landy pins his analysis on the denial of bourgeois democratic rights, they back away from that notion (in the process gutting what there is of Landy's conception of what blacks are). For them, the denial of bourgeois democratic rights is only a part of black oppression ("... the oppression of blacks must be analyzed in part -- but not entirely -- as the denial of bourgeois democratic rights," (Bulletin No. 25, "Amendments," p. 4). (Emphasis theirs)

Instead they argue that the concentration of blacks in the proletariat plus discrimination creates a "unique" position differentiating blacks as a community from whites. This unique position tends to create a "unique consciousness". What is this consciousness? It is not national consciousness according to Coleman and Finkel. Is it "pyramidal-caste consciousness"?

Not likely. They do not seek to describe in any way what this consciousness is, or what its significance is, while at the same time they give explicit recognition to the fact that blacks are set off distinctly from whites in a separate community -- something that both they and Landy went to some pains to argue was untrue.

Nor do they at any point seek to explain why blacks are so disproportionately concentrated in the working class, except in terms of the economy as a whole.

This alternative to Landy's thoroughly inadequate theory which they provide is the most ambitious section of their amendments. Unfortunately, it is not adequate either.

"Placed at the bottom of society by history they are kept there partly by racism (deriving from a narrow group self-interest conception on the part of whites) and more fundamentally by the history and present structure of American society and its economy, which is unable to integrate and develop its most backward sectors," (page 5).

(1) Though they refer to racism, it plays no real role in their analysis of black oppression. Like Landy, they fail to recognize the importance of racism in defining blacks and in defining the conditions under which blacks live. This is why they are blind to the importance of white chauvinism in creating black nationalism.

(2) Their concept of racism ("... a narrow group self-interest on the part of whites...") is too narrow. It ignores the fact that the racist ideology has its own dynamic. The significance of their failure to recognize this is, once again, that they underestimate the importance of racism -- its likely staying power.

(3) The guts of their conception is that it is the history and structure of the society and economy which have made black oppression inevitable. As they put it again "... of underlying importance is the fact that the black position at the bottom of the economy is locked in by the instability of the economy to expand massively or to develop its backward sectors," (page 6). The problem with this formulation is as follows:

We all know that capitalism always creates scarcities. It is incapable of providing a decent life for all, even though the material basis for this exists. But, that axiom is certainly insufficient to explain why blacks as a group must suffer the worst circumstances. That question simply cannot be answered in terms of the weaknesses of an economy. Someone is forced to bear the worst brunt of the oppression. Why blacks? Their answer is the history and structure of the American economy is fundamentally the specific cause of black oppression.

In the past the American economy has gone through enormous expansions. The period of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a period of huge expansion of the economy. But blacks scarcely benefitted at all.

Since 1955 the American economy has added 20 million jobs -- as many as there are blacks in the whole population. Why is it that blacks continue to be on the bottom, continue to have monumental unemployment rates, to suffer the worst jobs, the lowest living standards?

The answer to this question should certainly be as obvious to us as it is to blacks themselves. It is the racism which oppresses blacks economically, culturally, psychologically, legally, etc. that gives rise to the nationalism (here is meant not simply autonomy or a separate state, but all of the forms of black nationalism enumerated above). Coleman-Finkel and Landy seem blind both to this dynamic and to its importance. Thus the whole emphasis is on attacking black nationalism. ". . . we reject black nationalism as an ideology and attack its ideologically developed expressions uncompromisingly," (page 9).

Is there any statement about racism and its relation to black nationalism? None whatsoever. Is there any statement of the dual nature of the nationalist movement such as Lenin formulated? None whatsoever. They emphasize (page 9) that "Our goal of class unity can only be won if we recognize that, in general, blacks will constitute a motor force in such collaborative efforts and will tend to provide leadership for the class as a whole." It appears that discussions of class unity revolve only around what blacks can and must do -- and never around the whites. In fact, we are forced to conclude by paraphrasing Lenin: Carried away by the struggle against black nationalism, Coleman and Finkel have forgotten the chauvinism of the whites although it is this nationalism that is the most formidable at the present time.

As stated above, they have no strategy to break the nationalism except to lecture the black nationalists for not being sufficiently class conscious to overlook the racism of the whites.

Given their theory, what would happen if the economy were to expand again? Do Coleman and Finkel believe that that would fundamentally change things? It is no accident that they focus virtually solely on the economy which is clearly a critical underlying aspect of the problem. It points only in the direction of class struggle, without raising the concrete problems that black people face as black people in this society. Neither Landy taken alone, nor Landy amended even begins to deal with these questions.

Coleman and Finkel make a big point of the "utopianism" of nationalism -- meaning the concept they have of what nationalism is -- especially in amendments 7 and 13, page 7 and 8-9. What do they mean by this? In amendment 13 they state it means that nationalist programs cannot end the oppression of blacks by US capitalism or significantly affect it. Elsewhere they say that such programs are impossible (page 7): ". . . no viable and stable nationalist program is possible." At the same time, however, they state this would change in the event of a "catastrophe". Why? If it is impossible now, why does a greater urgency make it more possible? The only meaning that allows this formulation to make any sense is that a catastrophe would convince more blacks of the urgency of separation. But if that is what they

mean then all they are saying is that most blacks today are not for fighting for an independent state or black autonomy in this one -- hardly an earth-shattering statement.

As to their contention that nationalist programs "represent no solution for black workers and the unemployed," (page 8), what they should say is they do not represent a full solution (only the overthrow of capitalism can do that). They forget that a good part of the problem of black workers and the unemployed is racist discrimination -- that's why blacks don't get jobs. A black nationalist program in the sense that Coleman and Finkel describe it can have a certain impact on that.

Finally, it is commendable that Coleman and Finkel back away from Landy's position on self-determination. They do not make the right of self-determination conditional on catastrophes. They state: ". . . we demand the removal of all barriers placed by white society in the path of black national development, confident that the option of nationalism will be most decisively rejected by black people through their own free choice," (page 9). But what if it weren't rejected, or they were not so confident that it would be? Would they then still be willing to carry out the policy? It would still be correct to do so, including to fight alongside of blacks in a struggle for self-determination -- even though we might oppose that particular exercise of the right of self-determination.

The Coleman-Finkel position on self-determination is an advance over Landy's. But it has no justification and is thoroughly ad hoc, pragmatic and empirical.

What is the purpose of identifying blacks as a nation or not, if not to follow the consequences in policy? When the Bolshevik Party argued that the Jews did not constitute a nation in Russia they drew the political consequences from it: Jews did not have the right of self-determination. But, in the case of blacks the comrades back away from this conclusion and throw in the demand on a thoroughly ad hoc basis. Why do they throw it in? Is it that they are unwilling openly to abandon the Leninist position, even though that is what their theoretical premises drive them to, and even though the whole rest of their position does abandon Lenin's strategy for uniting the workers of the oppressing and oppressed nations?

Postscript

This document does not, by itself, provide a strategy for building a class movement, nor does it provide a strategy for linking the struggles of blacks and whites. What it does do is to provide the basis for such a strategy. It lays out the premises upon which such a strategy must be built. Such a strategy must be based on Lenin's strategy for uniting the working class of the oppressed and oppressor nations. It is that strategy that lay at the base of the dispute between the documents, and not simply a question of how black people in America should be "defined". Future documents will develop this point further, and will begin to lay out what our strategy should be.

Appendix #1

The following book review appeared in Newsweek magazine on August 14, 1972. I append without comment because I myself have not read the book. As for myself, its correctness or incorrectness makes little difference regarding my position. But Landy and Coleman-Finkel have made much of the lack of a separate language for blacks. If Dillard's thesis is correct, their stance is, from their point of view, that much weaker.

"Talking Black"

Black English: Its History and Usage in the United States. By J.L. Dillard. 361 pages. Random House. \$10.

"'An' so I comin' down an' she out there blabbin' her mouth told my sister I was playin' hookey from school.' The speaker is obviously black and probably poor. And to many white Americans his speech seems practically subversive -- illogical, ungrammatical, unclear and, well, lazy. J.L. Dillard's important, provocative study of the distinctive way the majority of black Americans talk is written out of a moral imperative to correct precisely this reaction. Black English is not a sloppy imitation of white English, Dillard insists, but a precise language with a history and grammar of its own.

"A teacher of linguistics at the University of Puerto Rico, Dillard writes in a laborious, take-nothing-for-granted style that makes for heavy going. But he marshals an impressive -- and often fascinating -- case. Until recently, he writes, many American linguists have myopically tried to trace black language patterns to archaic regional British dialects, thus creating an impression of 'a Negro who just can't catch up or keep up.' Close analysis of black syntax, however, reveals a far more plausible set of historical connections -- namely, with West Africa. The frequent use of done (as in 'I done went'), notes Dillard, resembles West African languages grammatically, as does the form 'I is'; the tendency of some blacks to ignore pronoun sex references -- as in 'He a nice little girl' -- is characteristic of Caribbean Afro-American dialects. Such usages are not imprecise, insists Dillard. 'He workin' when de boss come in' implies that the worker may be goofing off the rest of the time; while 'He be workin' when de boss come in' implies conscientiousness.

"Using seventeenth-century journals and several writings of Daniel Defoe as evidence, Dillard traces the origins of black English back to the slave trade, which forced the uprooted heterogeneous Africans to learn 'an auxiliary language in a hurry in order to establish communication.' The pidgin English that resulted incorporated Portuguese pidgin words (such as 'pick-aninny'), went through a process of 'creolization' (still intact in the Gullah dialect of the Sea Islands) and gradually 'decreolized' through the influence of white English.

"Dixie: The influence was not all one-way. Dillard not only shoots down the assumption that the Negro got his dialect from the Southern white,

but asserts that the Southern white dialect was in fact heavily influenced by Negro speech. Before the Civil War, he notes, the typical Southern white child of landed gentry was 'bidialectal' -- fluent both in white English and the Plantation Creole learned from his mammy. Indeed, writes Dillard, that most hallowed white Southern word of all -- Dixie -- probably comes from a Plantation Creole pronunciation of the second surname in the 'Mason-Dixon line.' And to whites who cite the blacks' fondness for grandiloquent speech (as in the Kingfish-Sapphire exchanges in 'Amos and Andy') as proof of their desire to imitate white English, he suggests that such 'fancy talk' may have its roots in the West African tradition of high-blown oratory.

"Ultimately, of course, the real test of black English is its usefulness in present-day America. On this score, Dillard has no doubt. It is high time, he argues, that white teachers and testers stop putting down slow-learning black children as 'nonverbal.' He proposes that white teachers be tested on the difference between, say, 'He done go' and 'He been go.' And he suggests that black children first be taught how to read black English so as to learn the principles of reading before being taught standard English. His cause is not his own: in recent years, black militants and a few frustrated white educators have been saying the same things with a vengeance. Now, anyone who reads 'Black English' will find it hard not to agree."

Charles Michener

Note: The following letter has been sent out to women comrades nationally, by the women who signed it. It is being published in the bulletin both to advise all comrades of our position and activities, and because we would like to hear the responses and comments of male comrades as well.

Dear Sisters,

We are a group of women in New York who are the most strongly in favor of the existence of an organization such as a women's caucus in the IS, both nationally and locally, to deal with the problems of women. Recently the question of the existence of a women's caucus/fraction in the NY branch, and the whole question of the advisability of the self-organization of women in the IS in general, has been under debate and under fire in NY. We would like to sketch out our situation to you in the hopes of initiating a discussion among women in other parts of the country.

What has happened in NY is this: after the virtual non-functioning of the women's caucus/fraction for over a year, the question "Should there be a caucus/fraction?" was finally pushed to a discussion among the women in the branch this Fall. This question arose mainly because of the weakness of the caucus/fraction, which had been further undermined by constant questioning of its very existence. This is something unheard of for any other group in the organization. When a committee, fraction or group functions poorly, its performance is examined, its reason for existing is not debated. But the caucus/fraction had been subjected to constant over-scrutiny and questioning and had consequently suffered a continuous identity crisis, which hastened its recent dissolution.

A discussion on the question was held, attended by nearly all the women in the branch, including opponents of a women's caucus sanctioned by the organization, and women who had not been participating in the caucus/fraction for one reason or another. As it turned out, almost half of the women seemed to be either opposed, or indifferent, to a caucus. We represent most of the women in favor of the concept of the independent organization of women within the IS.

The political discussion was on the following grounds:

1. The advisability of the self-organization of women within the IS.

2. Whether such organization is possible or desirable now.

There was no controversy over the advisability of maintaining a women's liberation fraction.

Our position was, and is, that it is advisable for women to be self-organized in the IS. It is essential for the raising of consciousness, as well as to guarantee that women's questions are an integral part of the IS program. We feel that only women themselves can see that this is done, and that the very process of self-organization is essential for us, as well as for other oppressed groups. We feel that the attack on the women's caucus is not an isolated organizational question, but is part of a larger change that we sense is beginning to take place in the politics of the IS. We believe that opposition to the women's caucus is related to many comrade's reluctance to advocate the independent organization of oppressed groups outside the IS as well.

The following tasks present a tentative outline of the functions of a women's caucus:

1. Guarantee that women's questions are a serious part of the IS program.

2. Insure that theoretical work on women be done.

3. Defend ourselves against male chauvinism in the IS;
 - a) Insure that women's problems and political work are taken seriously;
 - b) Pressure the organization to consider special problems such as child care.
4. Pressure the organization to integrate women into the industrialization process, and to do discussion and back up work for industrialized women comrades.
5. Extend to women comrades the informal education and oral tradition of the IS, now more readily available to men.
6. Guard against exclusion by omission of women from opportunities for political responsibility and development.
7. Deal with the special problems of female recruitment.
8. See that the women's movement and issues of women's liberation receive regular coverage in WP.
9. Keep up with the women's movement, and participate, however critically, whenever possible.
10. Maintain regular correspondence between women in different branches.

We feel that all of these tasks are now being neglected. Regardless of the outcome of the national discussion on women's liberation, these concrete internal tasks remain neglected. Women are in retreat in the organization. We are playing an increasingly minor role in the internal life of the IS, and the question of women workers, and women's liberation, is by and large ignored programatically. We see this, of course, as a reflection in part of the waning of the women's movement. However, we feel that the waning of the IS's interest in the problems of women is inexcusable, and very dangerous, both for the members of the IS and its program. What we find especially grave is the fact that women are industrializing at a slower pace than male comrades, which will of course increasingly affect the leadership composition of the IS and the place which women workers have in the IS program.

We feel that the problems of women in society in general, and in the IS in particular, are not being dealt with by the organization. Problems are either ignored or pushed aside.

In addition, we have strong disagreements with what seems to be emerging as our position in WP on the women's movement: ignore it. Although the movement is dramatically weakened and almost totally bourgeois in composition and program, it is by no means dead or negligible. Its ideas permeate society, and are permeating the working class, as never before. Most important, we find some of these ideas necessary for the motion of women workers. Therefore, we don't want to see them ignored, as is apparently the policy of WP now.

Since our discussion took place the question of a caucus has been up in the air, with documents in preparation.

We are forming a caucus of women, who are in political agreement on the need for the self-organization of women in the IS, in the NY branch. Proposals to the branch for improved methods of providing child care for IS members and contacts will be one of our first

concerns. We would welcome any ideas or comments about the issues we have raised, information about the status of the women's caucuses in other branches, and suggestions about specific proposals for its functioning.

Yours in struggle,

Diane C.
Eileen K.
Gay S.
Ilene W.
Jackie A.
Joan M.
Laura G.
Pauline B.
Ruth A.

Please write to us c/o

Laura Guggenheim
320 W. 87th Street
New York, N.Y. 10024

OF DOPE AND SOCIALISM

by Mark Smith(Austin-San Antonio)

(The political perspective of the following document was adopted unanimously by the Austin-San Antonio chapter.)

Most ISers would agree that a socialist organization should not make drugs a primary point of internal debate. This is especially true when we are devoting our energies to industrialization and do not want our trade union agitation to be slowed down by quibbles over trivia. But when there appears to be a line developing that is so bad that it makes the IS look ridiculous to our contacts and makes us embarrassed to sell WP, then that line should be brought out in the open and examined in detail.

If someone had ever accused me of belonging to a political organization that looked at heroin like the 1930s "scare posters" hysterically portrayed marijuana, I would have told him that was blatantly absurd - the IS is perhaps the one organization that demands scientific Marxist analysis. We wouldn't even listen to anything that opportunistically ridiculous as a serious minority tendency. Then I read WP #67 "Smash Smack" and find I'm pushing a newspaper that presents just that position, implying it is endorsed by the IS.

The article clearly signalled that internal discussion is necessary to determine what our organizational line on drugs should be. As a beginning for discussion I want to go over what the article said, explain exactly what was wrong with it, and make some suggestions for a socialist perspective.

The article, which was a reprint from United Justice Train(a UAW R&F publication), started off with a very good point: crime is up tremendously because heroin addicts rip people off to supply their habits and working people are hit hardest by the thefts. Next, it goes on an incredible morality tangent, presenting heroin as some sort of ungodly demon that is out to eat up your soul if you don't watch out: "It destroys working class solidarity! It reduces good human beings to robots!...It brings criminals into the shop! It breaks up families!" (Sound like something from a Dick Tracy comic book? No, it's straight out of the organ that represents you and me.) Then the article makes a brief attack on capitalism as it points out how the bosses couldn't care less how much workers are messed over by what's going on, while interestingly making no mention at all of how the capitalist productive system allows the Mafia bosses to reap tremendous profits off the junk. Lastly, it presents the incredible program for riding ourselves of the demon. The program is about right between the typical Pig Dept. scare-propaganda and the Pentacostal Church. Grab every young worker and give him the Word; we all get together and pledge not to let ourselves be seduced by the demon; "refuse to talk to any worker ~~who~~ on the stuff;" Jesus will descend the second time as a cold turkey for methadone is yet another demon.

In making a case against this jibberish, there are four points I want to cover: first, heroin is not a dangerous drug in a medical sense; second, heroin is made dangerous by capitalism; third, to attack the unfortunate people who are on smack instead of the bankrupt capitalist institutions that cause the evils associated with addiction is one of the most extreme and vicious forms of opportunism a socialist organization can degrade itself to; and, fourth, any solution to the problems of heroin must begin with a demand for free heroin to all addicts and incorporate an uncompromising attack on the profits of the Mafia and other drug companies getting rich off people's habits.

"Dangers" of Heroin

Let's begin by looking at the mythical fantasies and the scientific realities of heroin. Mythical fantasy has it that getting addicted to smack is the beginning of death - the drug slowly works away at your body so that within a few years you've completely deteriorated physically; you probably won't last a few years cause you'll get wiped out by an overdose or hepatitis first; after the drug has completely homogenized your brain you can't even think enough to hold a job and do simple work; so you have to start stealing and fucking other people over to get enough money to pay for your habit. All of this stuff happens. but the mythical fantasy part is the belief that it is directly caused by the heroin and inevitably results from it.

Heroin is the most powerful derivative of opium. Various opiate derivatives have been used by doctors for centuries to eliminate pain during surgery. The reason that opium has been a favorite over other drugs like alcohol is that opium is the one drug that does not destroy bodily functioning and make a person more susceptible to disease. Many people, after getting an opiate addiction because of an operation, chose to remain on it rather than go through the hassle of withdrawal, and continue to lead a normal life for years. The most problem they get from the addiction is having to shoot up every so often (more similar to a diabetic with insulin than a devil with a pitchfork) and they have a lousy sex life.

But the smack a junkie gets from his neighborhood pusher is not the same as heroin produced in a clinically pure lab. Maybe 10-15% real heroin; 20 or 30 % powdered sugar; 30 or 40 % baking soda; a little bit of strychnine to pep it up; maybe a pinch of rat poisoning to pull it down; and, of course, a smudging of Johnson's Baby Powder to smooth it out. So junkies may well get sicker than most people - but it's the non-heroin additives that make up 80-90% of his fix that do it. The disease potentialities are helped out by the price going up so much that addicts frequently spend almost everything they have on junk so they don't eat their minimum daily requirements. It's the impurity of the poorly manufactured street smack that causes overdosing. Getting 30% pure stuff when he's been getting 10% pure hits has killed many an addict that wouldn't have died if he had had a drug store habit. Being hounded like they are, junkies don't bother with the other niceties of life like washing out their needles and hepatitis follows. Going through years of injection non-heroin crap and getting harassed by pigs is what screws up a person's head so much that he can't hold a job. It has almost nothing to do with the addiction itself. A study of 25 addicts who migrated from the Canadian holy war system of dealing with addicts to the more humane British system showed that in Canada 4% held steady jobs, while in Britain 68% were regularly employed. (These and other statistics I'll mention on crime rate and cost of heroin are from Edgar May, "Drugs without crime: A report on the British success with heroin addiction," Harpers Magazine, July, 1971 pp. 60-65.)

Of course, what really gets people uptight about junkies (and is of primary importance for a political analysis) is how much they rip off other people to pay for their "expensive" habits. There is a strong myth that heroin is an extremely expensive drug to produce. The fact is that a heroin addiction should cost no more than a cigarette addiction. The same quantity of heroin that sells for \$1000 on the streets of New York goes for \$2.16 in a British clinic. The Mafia markup is clearly what causes the burglaries. Without such a tremendous margin of profit there would be no need for crime. The above-mentioned study also found that in Canada addicts spent 25% of their addicted years in jail and only 2% when they were in England. Other investigations find the typical British addict, who is given heroin free, commits fewer crimes after addiction than he did before.

Capitalism the culprit

This puts us right in the middle of point two, that the evils of smack are caused by capitalist property relations. The key to the whole social nature of heroin is the \$997.84 difference between what it costs to produce it and the \$1000 it sells for on the streets. Capitalism started out producing commodities that people needed. But as it became the dominant mode of production, the profit motive became the basic reason for production rather than the usefulness of the things produced. Advanced capitalism gives rise to a whole number of industries that don't produce anything at all but exist simply because they are profitable: advertising, competitive insurance companies, military products. All worthless junk that cannot be consumed, but makes profits and/or increases profits of consumptive industries. These areas of worthless production have one thing in common - they take advantage of a human weakness and twist it away from its normal social surrounding of people trying to make up for it and use it for profits. Capitalism exploits and magnifies every human frailty that is susceptible to profit-making.

Heroin does have one bad feature - it addicts you. And it does that better than anything else the Lord has set on this earth (other than sex and revolutionary politics). Because of this powerful human weakness, heroin provides another way for the blood thirsty swine to steal from working people without producing anything. The Mafia sets up a whole corporate structure, becomes the monopoly in its field, and is now the ultimate MiniMax -- minimum expenses with maximum profits. The chain of relations is exemplary of our free, competitive economy: The addict breaks into homes to attack workers and steal their belongings, which he sells to pay the petty bourgeois pusher, who gives the lion's share of the profits to the big Mafia bosses, who invest their profits in police equipment and encourage drug crackdowns to wipe out small competitors and ensure their monopoly position.

It's a classic capitalist screw job. Just with a little more intense suffering along the line. The whole thing clearly reveals that the bourgeoisie is perfectly willing to cause any amount of suffering necessary to maximize profits, since without the profit motive over 99% of the pain that goes along with smack would disintegrate. This sector of the bourgeoisie needs a few things to help them along. They need people who are so messed up that they need some kind of junk to get by; and the "free enterprise" system does an excellent job of providing this. They need something like illegal marijuana to insure their expanding clientele have ready access to dealers; and the alcohol lobby willingly does what it can to help with this. But most importantly, they need mass hysteria against the demon drug so it will never be distributed to addicts free; and WP pitches in to provide some of this.

OPPORTUNISM

In elaborating on this third point, the WP attempt to degrade the IS into extreme opportunism, there are four subpoints I need to make: firstly, that attacking addicts is not an IS original but is a vulgar SWP-like try at recruiting black militants by tail-endingsome absurd idea they come up with; secondly, that the moralistic puritanism that is the basis of attacking the oppressed has no place in revolutionary Marxism; thirdly, that this current binge is completely alien to the Marxist tradition of always attacking the oppressor and never attacking the oppressed; and, fourthly, that bypassing these Marxist traditions plays right into the hands of the bourgeois attempts to divide the working class.

Subpoint #1: Tail-ending. For a couple of years now various black militants, especially those coming out of the BPP tradition, have been on a nut tangent to purify the black community by purging it of smack dealers. Partly its a blend of a Maoist "serve the people" orientation and a Muslim "get-right-with-Alah" trip. But more than that, it reflects the BPP's inability to relate to the working class. With a failure of a proletarian outlook, they fell into ultra-leftist attacks on the nearest thing looking like an enemy. When this got them jailed and clubbed, they needed something a little less dangerous than cops to attack, and found junkies. Instead of criticizing this path, WP gave tacit support as it included junkie-baiting along with fairly good articles on Jackie Robinson and NY bussing in the "black issue", #67.

We had a distasteful experience with the "smash smack" orientation in Austin a little over a year ago. When people started freaking out on burglaries by addicts a group of liberals called a public meeting over it, and they were quickly supported by the Community United Front, Austin's version of the BPP. They hopped up and down and made a lot of noise on the news and had a moralistic program foreshadowing the WP article. They also got a pledge from the City Council to act on the problem. The Council proceeded to pass an ordinance offering a \$500 bounty for anyone informing on a person who gets convicted of a narcotics charge. The result of the whole thing was several bounties being paid for grass busts and none for heroin, some liberal politicians getting more publicity, and a great number of leftists becoming discouraged and cynical. We made a bad mistake in our intervention. But our mistake was not that we failed to yell "me too!" when the do-goodies slobbered out their morality crap. Our gross, terrible error was that we were too timid to stand up against the prevailing winds and scream out, polemicize, and leaflet what we knew to be correct - that there was nothing wrong with heroin per se and a program must demand free heroin to addicts with an attack on Mafia profits. The winds blew so strongly we knew they would never change. But they did. A number of the best people read up on heroin independently, found out about the drug, became disgusted with what was going on, and left the whole mess. If we had had the courage to present the correct line at the beginning of the thing we would have been hounded and ridiculed; but when those people with the best consciousness had found out for themselves that the one group that publicly put forth the wierd, isolated position was absolutely correct, there is no doubt we would have made some very good contacts. But we would have gained absolutely nothing by just being another sect vying for the title of loudest me-tooer. We will not win respect from blacks by abandoning the socialist role of criticizing well-intentioned mistakes of other leftists and tail-ending every half-assed tangent the dashiki militants are off on.

Subpoint #2: puritanism. While reading the "Smash smack" article, it occurred to me that the non-opiate drugs alcohol, barbituates, and methadrine all have four things in common that distinguish them from heroin:

- 1) they are all a worse problem in terms of numbers of people addicted;
- 2) they all cause definite physiological damage;
- 3) they are all more socially acceptable addictions;
- 4) none of them were explicitly condemned in the WP article.

It was clearly heroin's lack of social acceptability rather than any of its innate characteristics that provoked the attack on it. This attack would fit better with PL's condemnation of gays as representing bourgeois degeneracy than the Marxist position that a person's private behavior is not subject to regulation by state or party. I'm sure a lot of the search for medical substitutes for heroin that do the identical thing as it does

follows the same line of reasoning - the ecstasy of the rush a person gets off a heroin injection is vaguely reminiscent of the ecstasy of sexual climax and anything which has even the remotest resemblance to sexual pleasure certainly has no place in medicine. A socialist position should be that what drugs a person takes, like his preference for copulatory positions, should be left solely for him to decide. Of course, there should be laws prohibiting taking drugs or fucking while driving a car or operating machinery since this could endanger other people.

Subpoint # 3: Who do you hate? People who shoot smack rip off other people. So they become the most immediate target for the hostility of the people who get ripped off. The real question is whether the role of a Marxist should be to follow the immediate, reflex responses of workers or try to lead workers and redirect this hostility toward the ruling class. The first unions on the west coast were formed to keep out cheap oriental labor. I think the Marxist orientation would have been to demand equal wages for all workers, i.e., that oriental as well as white workers stop getting attacked by the bosses, rather than tail-end the primitive racism of the workers. Women who have illegitimate children are fucking over other workers just as surely as junkies are. There is no question that an illegitimate kid is much more likely to be a tax burden and later a criminal. Is the socialist position to attack poor women who have the audacity to have sexual intercourse outside of marriage or to demand free, legal abortion and an improved quality of life for everyone? When unemployed blacks resort to robbery we don't tail-end Nixon and demand more pigs on the streets. We put forth a socialist program of demanding a decent standard of living for the unemployed and defend the rights of the prisoners.

A primary characteristic of oppressed people is that they are fucked up. As long as there is capitalism there will be people race-baiting and shooting junk. The task of socialists is to point to the ruling class and say "there is the pig" and not to expect the problems of capitalism to be solved by workers being more virtuous. To base a revolutionary program on the personal morality of oppressed peoples is to expect socialist man before we have socialism - a program the groovy, cosmic communalists get into well enough without our encouragement.

Subpoint #4: Divisions. Perhaps the greatest single factor keeping the capitalist class in power is the deep divisions of the working class. Their first goal is to get people to compete for jobs. But their more subtle aim is to create antagonisms off the shop floor that will prevent broad class unity from developing. The U.S. ruling class has been incredibly successful at convincing a huge number of workers their biggest enemy is "the welfare moochers". Liberation movements very easily fall into attacking the most degraded sector of society because its one of the few attacks they can make without the heavy hand of the state coming down on them. When left movements fall into this trap, it is the historical role of Marxists to point out what's happening, not to fall into the same trap.

One type of broad class unity that is essential for revolutionary developments is ~~the~~ building a working class perspective in the G.I. movement. Suppose we take the "Smash Smack" line of "refusing to talk to workers who use heroin" for a G.I. program. Then we have the fantastic idea of recruiting enlisted men by not talking to those who shoot junk. Given the number of G.I.s who are on smack, this would be one of the best ways to destroy any potential of influencing that movement.

(It's interesting to contrast this attack on addicts with the NAC's recent line on "war prisoners." While going apeshit over the penny-ante crimes of the lumpen, the ruling class loves to excuse their criminal lackeys and even make heroes out of them. One of their most blatant and successful tries is the recent "POW" campaign. These "POWs" are mainly career airforce officers who volunteer to burn school children and hospitals to speed up their next promotion. Look at the ranks on some of the bracelets: Major Whoozis, Colonel Whizbang, Captain Asslick, ad nauseum. Not exactly typical enlisted men. When the NAC calls for the release of all "war prisoners", but does not specifically exclude these butchers, the implication is a cowardly bowing to Nixon's pressure. Make no mistake about these vicious animals. They are not prisoners of war and they should not be released - they are war criminals and they should be executed. For once in their Stalinist careers the North Vietnamese beurocrats were correct when they used to insist on their right to bring these war criminals to trial. I hope the NAC's action was an oversight. But if they insist on defending the capitalists' most bloodthirsty swine while attacking its most oppressed victims, they might also consider changing our revolutionary symbol from a red star to a yellow stripe.)

Program

The fourth major point is what a Marxist program for drugs should be. As a beginning, we should consider slogans like the following:

- 1) Reduce crime - federal clinics for free heroin to addicts
- 2) Fight burglaries - smash Mafia profits
- 3) Fight addiction - no drug advertising and propaganda - nationalize drug companies under workers' control

Actually, these would make lousy slogans because the wording is awkward. But the ideas need to be there. It's important to mention federal clinics since people would be well aware that isolated local clinics would attract huge numbers of addicts to their area. It's important to hit drug advertising since everyone has at least some primitive consciousness aroused when the TV has one blurb right after the other to put more crap in your body. The essence of socialist propaganda on drugs must be to link robberies and the pain people feel in their personal lives to capitalist profits. While most drugs are sort of half-good, half-bad in what they do physiologically, heroin provides us with a crystal clear picture of how a decaying socila system can make a drug 1000 times worse than it has to be. We must agitate on this point whenever we're talking about drugs.

There are at least three general ways capitalism messes people over with drugs:

- 1) Capitalism makes some drugs more dangerous than they have to be (heroin is the prime example).
- 2) Capitalism creates conditions that makes workers take speed like methadrine to keep up with the line (this is

important and deserves attention in WP, but I'm not going over it since there probably isn't any internal controversy over it) 3) Capitalism results in certain drugs that are more dangerous being pushed over others when there is a higher margin of profit. Marijuana and alcohol provide a good example of this and there needs to be discussion on this point, since the usual Marxist position is that leftists shouldn't even waste time talking about grass.

Pot and booze tend to be consumed in a "one-instead-of-the-other" fashion - you might well substitute smoking a joint for drinking a beer when you get home from work, but it's very unlikely you'll substitute cocaine or aspirin. Since marijuana is in an almost ready to consume form when it ripens, it will never be a source of high profits. Its production cannot involve very much labor to exploit and its price would quickly be driven down were it to be legalized. Alcohol requires considerable labor in its production and therefore is a source of surplus value and profits. This means alcohol industrialists probably could not make up the lost brewery investment following legalization.

On the other hand, the scientific evidence consistently and strongly implies people would, in general, be much better off if they were potheads instead of boozers. Even though the U.S. government has spent vast amounts and offered large rewards for research proving the harmful effects of marijuana, they can't find any. Yet alcohol clearly does such nice things as rotting out your liver and causing most of the injuries from auto accidents. (The typical results are like those of the Bureau of Motor Vehicles of Washington State that found marijuana causes the same amount of errors on simulated driving performance that taking no drug at all does, but alcohol significantly increases errors. Grinspoon, "Marihuana," Scientific American, Dec., 1969.)

In the last few years the type of people (whites) who smoke grass has broadened from a few campus freaks to a huge sector of working class youth. Long hairs are frequently recruited, along with blacks and Chicanos, to do the worst jobs with the lowest wages. Unlike the rich hippy who has no job to lose and whose daddy pays off the D.A., it is these working class dope smokers who get hit hardest by the anti-marijuana laws. Socialists should be pointing out how anti-dope laws are not devoid of class content but attack a sector of the working class to protect the interests of the alcohol industry.

It seems that some comrades, in order to prove the purity of their industrialization motive, feel guilty about coming from a middle class college and do everything possible to deny their background. Since middle class college kids were the ones who made dope popular, it becomes unsocialist to even mention it. While we don't propose centering socialist agitation around blacks

wearing Afros of women going without make-up, when these issues come up on the job, we certainly give full support and point out that only with a socialist revolution will personal liberties be fully protected. Failure to do the same for marijuana is to give up a revolutionary socialist analysis and retreat into basing a program on guilt feelings. This guilt approach is more characteristic of slobbering liberal reformism than the perspectives the IS should be taking.

In conclusion, we should all agree that heroin, marijuana, and other drugs are not primary arenas for our political work. But occasional leaflets and articles in WP are entirely consistent with a socialist organization. If we are going to win respect for the IS, it will have to be based on the way we present revolutionary ~~Marxist~~ Marxist analyses and programs rather than our ability to be quicker than the SWP in opportunistically jumping on bandwagons.

NOTES ON LYNN JONES' WOMEN'S LIBERATION PERSPECTIVES

by Andrew B.
12/25/72

What follow are two brief comments on the use of statistics in Lynn Jones' document, "Women's Liberation Perspectives," BULLETIN, No. 34 (December 9, 1972).

The first comment concerns the likely misinterpretation of the distribution of U.S. women workers into the "blue-collar," "white-collar," and "service" categories in Jones' Table 1-- Employment of Women, By Type of Work, 1940, 1950, 1969 (page 3) and Table 2--Employment of Women, By Occupation, 1969 (page 4). The Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor (DoL) is the source of the data in Jones' tables. The two Women's Bureau publications cited by Jones utilize the same Census Bureau categories which Andrew Levison has usefully criticized for grossly understating the number and percentage of blue collar/manual workers in the U.S. (See his "The Working-Class Majority," Nation, CCXIII, no. 20 (December 13, 1971), pp. 626-628.) His methodology was applied to the 1969 Census data (the same year used in Jones' Tables 1 and 2) for the working population as a whole, disaggregating significant numbers of blue-collar workers from the "service" category and other manual workers from the "white-collar" category. Similar arithmetic manipulations of the data used by the DOL's Women's Bureau would give us a more precise notion of the gross occupational distribution of U.S. women workers.

The second comment concerns the comparison of women's median wage compared with that of men during the past decade and a half. The table below is derived from Jones' Table 5 (page 19):

Table 1-- Dollar Gap Between Women's and Men's Median Annual Wage, 1955-1969

Year	Women's Median Wage as A Percentage of Men's	Dollar Gap	Biennial Increase In Dollar Gap
1955	63.9%	\$1,553	---
1957	63.8	1,705	\$152
1959	61.3	2,016	311
1961	59.4	2,313	297
1963	59.6	2,417	104
1965	60.0	2,552	135
1967	57.8	3,032	480
1969	60.5	3,250	218

Thus, in fifteen years, while women's median annual wage increased 83 per cent, the dollar gap separating women's median annual income from men's increased by 109 per cent! Jones writes, "This gap in earnings has been on the increase in recent years (See Table 5), although women did make a slight gain between 1967 and 1969, undoubtedly the result of the impact of the women's movement." (page 19) Not so! In the 1967-1969 biennium, the dollar gap between men and women workers widened by \$218 to a chasm of \$3,250. Jones pays too much attention to the 2.7 percentage point increase in women's median income as a percentage of men's (1967-1969) to notice that women continued to lose ground to men during this two-year period--as during the entire period under consideration.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE BOOK SERVICE CATALOG

Imperialism and World Economy - N. Bukharin	\$ 2.50
The Employers' Offensive - Tony Cliff	1.00
Party and Class - Cliff, Hallas, Harman & Trotsky	1.00
Quebec Labour - Confederation of National Trade Unions	2.95
Carlos Feliciano - Committee to Defend Carlos Feliciano	1.95
Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America - Andre Gunder Frank	3.45
Sociology of Development and Underdevelopment of Sociology - Andre Gunder Frank	.50
Direct Action - Wm. Gallacher & J.R. Campbell	.50
Marxism and the Sociology of Trade Unionism - Richard Hyman	.75
The 4th International, Stalinism & the Origins of the International Socialists - British I.S.	2.50
Communism and the Family - Alexandra Kollantai	.35
Marxism and Philosophy - Karl Korsch	2.95
Three Essays on Marxism - Karl Korsch	1.25
The Accumulation of Capital - Rosa Luxemburg	4.50
8 Hour Working Day - Tom Mann	.50
Preparing for Power - J. T. Murphy	2.50
Antonio Gramsci - A. Pozzolini	2.25
Lenin's Moscow - Alfred Rosmer	3.75
The Black Worker - Sterling Spero & Abram Harris	4.45
Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1932-33	3.45
The Spanish Revolution (1931-39) - Leon Trotsky	3.95
Natalia Trotsky and the Fourth International	.25

Order from: I. S. BOOK SERVICE
14131 Woodward Avenue
Highland Park, Michigan 48203

On orders under ten items, please add 5% for shipping expenses. A discount of 20% is available on orders of ten or more items (not including buttons).

Individuals please enclose payment with order. Make checks payable to: "I. S. BOOK SERVICE."

Write for complete catalog.

2/1/73