

Spark Plug 3-29-74

This document is not a counter document to JGs, but is an attempt to clarify the meaning of JGs "strategic next step" in terms of organizational resources, time energy etc. It is followed by a motion that will be presented for a vote.

It is my opinion that the two main things that make the "strategic next step" a worth while project are:

1. It is a way of breaking out of our own isolation and stagnation and of reinvigorating and enlarging our ranks.
2. The creation of a network of radicals in industry will enhance our ability to recruit indigenous workers.

Having said this, it is also true that the arguments in the document have some mistakes and weaknesses.

1. It is not made clear whether this project is intended to replace the work of recruiting indigenous workers. Further, it is my opinion that the position lying behind the arguments is the position that says that it is either too hard or impossible to recruit small numbers of workers today.
2. Problems arise from a tendency to over exaggerate the impact of industrialized radicals on the working class.
3. The document fails to discuss problems of assimilation that would follow a large scale recruitment.

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4. The document suffers from what I believe to be some misconceptions concerning the famous "organic link" and party embryos.

These points will be taken in order

1. Joel presents the project as an urgent one that must be carried out before any serious recruitment of workers can begin. This is shown most clearly in the last paragraph on page 16 and the first one on page 17. "While this conjuncture remains, we must rapidly move to organizationally growing, building our industrial fractions and trade union caucuses, and laying the basis for the embryo of a party, or else we risk missing GW an historic opportunity which would set us back for years. Recruiting from this layer (industrialized radicals GW) is in no way a substitute for building a party of industrial workers--it is part of our road to the working class.

"This layer of people we can recruit today, the strategic next step we must take to put us on the road to building a party, is the independent radicals who are organized in local collectives"

While it may prove to be true that the industrialized radicals are a part of our road to the working class. It is also true that the other part is in the person of the few advanced workers who are today recruitable to our organization. Joel describes in the first pages of his document the international processes that have been producing a layer of revolutionary workers. Those processes have been at work in the US as well and have produced not what you could call a layer, but rather a handful of revolutionary minded, advanced workers. These few workers, mainly black, are the products of the only thoroughly revolutionary class in society, they have class instinct and once recruited, will quickly learn the necessary skills to become mass leaders. Further, the conditions of life faced by these workers puts them in a position to rapidly assimilate and understand our view of the world, and therefore to become leading members of the ~~the~~ IS. These advanced workers will have a value for us something on the order of 1 to 15 as compared to recruits from other than working class backgrounds. Any talk of "building a workers leadership within the IS" must proceed on the basis of real accomplishments in terms of recruitment of these self same workers.

2. Once you have shown the extent of the impact radicals have had on the working class, or rather, once you have claimed the extent that is claimed in the document, you are then in a position to show how urgent it is to recruit them. While it is true that radicals have had some impact on the working class the extent and duration of that impact is being exaggerated in the document.

The claim is made that a majority of the recent working class actions have either been led by radicals, or that radicals have emerged during the course of struggle as leaders because of their skills. So far as the actions that are mentioned go (Jefferson, Forge, Mack, Ford contract, St. Louis GMAD, Lordstown Detroit truck,) the claim is accurate, however not all the actions are equally significant. In fact the Ford contract rejection overshadows the others, and that action was only marginally participated in by radicals, (unless you count those with 25 years or more seniority). The most significant actions, as far as having an impact on the Labor Movement goes, were left out altogether, possibly because there was little or no radical influence involved in them. For example, the MFD take over in UMW and the wave of wildcats that followed and is still going on, the Independent Truckers Strikes, the UFW strikes, and the long and unsuccessful strikes at Lordstown and Norwood following the 1970 GM strike.

The UMW contract fight coming up in November, an event which will very likely set the pace in the Labor Movement for some time to come, will only be marginally participated in by radicals.

It is commonly known that in the IBT you are considered an upstart if you don't have at least 10 years in the industry. Furthermore, if, as our analysis indicates, the rate of unemployment continues to rise and throughout industry the 4 and 5 people begin to get hit, instead of having 2-3 thousand industrialized radicals we will have 2-3 thousand unemployed radicals. Any talk of building a network of radicals in industry depends on their position in industry, not on their position in the unemployed queues. The politics of many of the radicals in question has caused them to seek jobs in peripheral industries, and in many cases the first thing we would want them to do would be to get a different job, a fact which would cause them to have even less seniority.

All that this goes to say is that while radicals are present in the working class and often in the leadership of local formations, they are not yet "imbedded in the working class" and in fact are still on the edges of it.

3. While it is true enough that a large number of industrialized are devoted partisans of the working class, it is also true that the milieu of the industrialized radicals is a petty-bourgeois milieu, and is shot through with petty-bourgeois political conceptions, the main one being the "alternative institutions" or IWO (independent workers org) syndrome, but also on questions of party and class organization and spontaneity, mainly produced by the wide spread admiration of Chairman Mao and his writings.

There will be serious problems of assimilating people, not to mention accommodation on our part to this milieu. Joel projects a time schedule of 6 months to a year for his project. In my opinion that is something of a dream. As a timetable for recruitment, fine. But what about assimilating these people? If anybody thinks we are not going to spend a lot of time shaking ~~little red books~~ little red books out of peoples pockets and drumming IWOs out of their minds they are wrong.

We are not yet the hardened cadre organization that is capable of large scale recruitment and easy assimilation, of people who themselves have a fair amount of political experience and who have a series of fairly well formed political conceptions, many of which are incompatible with our own. Where we may be prepared to take on large scale recruitment of industrialized radicals, we will be hard pressed to assimilate them. This is not to say we should not try the recruitment and assimilation, but we should be prepared to spend something in the neighborhood of 2 years to do it.

Joel argues in the beginning pages of his document that the conjuncture we find ourselves in is producing the "organic link" ~~exactly~~ internationally for the basis of revolutionary partys. What is this "organic link" exactly. Well, the "organic link" is the real live, revolutionary minded, organic workers. The link consists in this: The advanced workers provide the link, that is the direct pipeline, for organized revolutionaries to influence the rest of the working class. In the closing pages of the document this fact is lost sight of. There we find in the above cited paragraphs (P16 last P17first) that in fact the ingredient that will allow us to "lay the basis for the embryo of a party" is not the "organic link" at all, but instead is "the independent radicals who are organized in local collectives".

A ~~weak~~ word on embryos or even basis of embryos: Embryos of partys like all embryos are, simply put, an undeveloped form for what can develop into a mature being. That means that all the main ingredients are there, but need to be developed.

Before we can seriously discuss, not to mention, expect to be an embryonic party formation, we must gain our first few worker recruits, to provide for us an embryonic pipeline to the rest of the ~~ix~~ advanced workers.

One last point: As mentioned earlier the recruitment of industrial radicals and their formation into a network in industry will enhance our chances of recruiting ~~x~~ worker members. It is also the case that the recruitment of the first few industrial workers will thrice improve our chances of recruiting industrialized radicals.

Motion

Our single most glaring deficit has been our failure to recruit indigenous workers, especially, black and latin workers. There are today, in the working class, a small number of workers, mainly black, who are winnable to our politics and strategy. An example that everyone is familiar with is the Fellow in St. Louis. The only sure fire method of recruiting these people is hard, tedious and above all systematic individual contact work. Our main job has been and remains to carry out and step up this work. Any strategic next steps we may find necessary cannot replace but must be subordinated to the recruitment of indigenous workers. The particular next step outlined in Joels document should be carried out with all vigor but not at the expense of the work laid out in this motion.

Bolshevik Class Struggle Journals

YAW - Spark Play

SWA - Crank Call

'BT -

1. Trotskyist groups R.S.2
2. Maoist groups