

International Socialists

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INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS CONSTITUTION

Article I. Name

The name of this organization shall be the International Socialists (I.S.).

Article II. Political Principles

The basic political principles of the IS are those contained in the "Program in Brief." The Program in Brief may be amended only by the National Convention by majority vote. Proposed amendments must be circulated to all chapters at least 60 days prior to the National Convention which is to act on the amendments.

Article III. Membership

All individuals who are in general agreement with the Political Principles and meet other requirements of this constitution are eligible for membership in IS.

The IS is an activist organization. Its members are expected to maintain a high level of activity, and joining the organization should be seen as a serious commitment to work either within the organization helping to build it, or in arena work, helping to advance its politics. Members are expected to accept political assignments on a regular basis, taking into account their personal situations.

A chapter may accept into membership by majority vote, or by an alternate procedure adopted by majority vote any applicant meeting the requirements herein. Members at large who live in an area in which the IS does not have a branch may be accepted into membership by the National Secretary or by other procedures adopted by the NAC, subject to the approval of the NC. In areas in which an IS branch exists, there shall be no MALS without the specific permission of the NAC subject to the approval of the NC. In the event that a Chapter refuses membership, the applicant may appeal to the NAC and NC.

Members who are unable to maintain regular political activity for periods of time may apply to the chapter executive committee for a Leave-of-Absence. Members on leave-of-absence are not entitled to vote at membership meetings but retain speaking rights. Members who do not meet chapter requirements for political activity may be placed on an involuntary Leave-of-Absence by the membership. Such decisions may be appealed to the NAC and NC. Members on leave of absence must pay full dues, must still coordinate their political activities through the IS, and are still subject to its discipline.

Article IV. National Convention

The National Convention shall be the highest governing body of the Organization.

The NC shall call a National Convention every year.

The NC shall issue a call for the National Convention 90 days prior to the date set for the Convention. This period may be shortened by a 2/3 vote of the NC.

Special Conventions of the Organization may be called by the NC or by 25% of the membership.

Delegates for the Convention shall be determined as follows:

Apportionment of delegates from the chapters and unorganized areas shall be proportionately determined by the NAC on the basis of the size of chapters and the Organization as a whole as of

90 days prior to the opening of the Convention.

The NC shall determine the delegate-membership ratio. Each chapter and organizing committee shall be entitled to at least one vote. Chapters may elect as delegates members of the IS who are not members of that chapter.

If the delegate-member ratio is 1 to n (so that each delegate represents n members) then each MAL who attends the Convention shall have 1/n votes. Or, what amounts to the same thing, each delegate shall have n votes and each MAL 1 vote.

Major documents for decision at the Convention shall be distributed to branches at least 4 weeks prior to the Convention. Counter-documents shall be distributed at least 2 weeks prior to the Convention.

Article V. National Committee

The National Committee and alternates shall be elected by the National Convention. No more than 1/3 of the members may be from any specific chapter.

The National Committee shall meet at least three times per year or upon call by the NAC, or upon request of 1/3 of the membership of the NC.

A quorum of the NC shall be equal to a majority of the NC and shall consist of members and alternates with written designations from absent NC members. Remaining vacancies shall be filled by alternates present in the order of election except where political division shall have been used in election in which case vacancies shall be filled only with alternates from the same political grouping.

Between Conventions the NC shall be governing body of the Organization and may make all political and organizational decision for the organization in between Conventions except those specifically excluded by this Constitution.

The NC shall appoint all national officers and the National Action Committee by majority vote and may remove them in the same way.

Any member of the NC who fails to attend two consecutive meetings of the NC is automatically removed from office unless action to the contrary is taken by the NO.

Article VI. National Action Committee

The National Action Committee shall be elected by the NC and may be replaced or changed at any time by the NC.

The NAC may act for the organization on all political and organizational matters except as otherwise provided for herein between meetings of the NC.

Any two members of the NAC or five members of the NC may request a mail vote of the NC on any action of the NAC within 10 days of the action.

Article VII. National Officers

The NC shall at its first meeting following a convention elect a National Secretary, Publications Editors, and any other national officers as it may deem necessary. These officers, if not elected members of the NC, shall be Fraternal members of the NC with voice but no vote. These officers may be replaced by the NC at any time. Officers shall be politically responsible to the NAC between NC meetings, although recallable only by the NC.

Article VIII. Organization

Members at Large shall be responsible to the NAC for the conduct of political activity.

Five or more members in any locality may be chartered as a chapter upon application to the NAC. Chapters have the right and duty to perform all IS activity in that locality. The National Organization retains the power to supercede any decision of a local branch regarding its external functioning.

Three or more members in an unorganized area may be constituted an organizing committee upon application to the NAC and carry on activities subject to review by the NAC.

Where more than one chapter exists in any locale, a district organization may be chartered by the NAC in which case the district organization shall be the highest governing body within the locale. This district organization will be elected by a district convention called at the initiative of the chapters in the locale.

National fractions of members involved in common political work may be initiated by the members themselves or by the NC or NAC. These fractions may elect their own officers and committees. These fractions are responsible in their political work to the National Organization as a whole through the National Convention, NC, and NAC. The NC and NAC may establish any procedures deemed necessary to insure political responsibility.

Article IX. Finances

The NC shall have the power to set national dues. Chapters shall be responsible for the national dues of their members.

Local chapters and districts may assess such additional dues as deemed necessary.

The NC may set special assessments and organize special fund drives.

Only members in good standing may vote or hold office at any level in the IS. A member who is more than three months arrears in dues and has not made satisfactory arrangements with the appropriate executive committee shall be deprived of the right to vote or hold any office. Members who are more than 6 months arrears in dues and who have not made satisfactory arrangements with the appropriate executive committee shall be dropped from membership two weeks following a letter or warning.

Article X. Referenda

Motions, proposed constitutional amendments or resolutions to be voted on by referendum shall be submitted to the membership upon request of 1/3 of the NC, 25% of the membership of the organized chapters.

The vote on each referendum shall close 30 days after submission to the membership. A majority vote of those voting (not including abstentions) shall determine the result except that no referendum shall be valid unless 1/3 of the membership in good standing vote.

Article XI. Membership Rights

The NAC shall establish a year-round information and discussion bulletin where all political and organization disagreements may be expressed fully. Reasonable space and technical requirements may be imposed by the editor of the discussion bulletin. The NAC may refuse to publish in the discussion bulletin any article which lists the names or actions of specific individuals or groups when publication would subject them to repression from the state apparatus or seriously impair an individual or organization's political functioning. Such decisions by the NAC may be appealed

to the NC.

There shall be no secret balloting on any committee of the IS. All votes shall be recorded and minutes of meetings except those in executive session shall be made available to all members who request them. All meetings of the NC and NAC are open to all members except when the bodies vote by 2/3 to go into executive session.

The rights of the majority shall be protected:

All members of the organization shall be guided in all of their politically relevant actions by the decisions of the IS. No member shall externally organize against or oppose through public activity in any mass work any decision of the IS which has been specifically determined by the organization to be a disciplined matter. If a member disagrees with a decision of the organization, he may abstain from activity on that question.

No votes, substantive or procedural, shall require more than a simple majority of those voting (not including abstentions) for determination except for those specified in this Constitution.

The rights of the minorities shall be protected:

There shall be no restriction on the formation of caucuses within the organization.

There shall be no restriction on the rights of individuals or caucuses to publish their own points of view for distribution solely within the organization, except that the editorial restriction applying to the discussion bulletin also apply to all other publications.

Minorities are free to express their differences with an IS position outside the organization. This includes the right to publish opposition bulletins or journals. Specifically, members or caucuses may publish their own point of view in non-IS publications except in particular cases where such publication would in a substantial, immediate, and concrete way undermine the effectiveness of the organization's action program. This decision shall be made by the appropriate group, fraction, or leading body and may be appealed to the NAC or NC. Also, members may publish in external IS publications without limitations. Pamphlets and special supplements of the IS may be limited to the majority point of view.

No individual or chapter may be suspended or expelled from membership in the IS for political positions. The only basis for suspension or expulsion shall be political activity contrary to the decisions of the organization or actions which seriously threaten or discredit the organization. Disciplinary proceeding against an individual must be sent in writing to him and notification of discipline proceedings must be sent to all chapter members and the NAC at least two weeks prior to the general chapter meeting called to act on the discipline. A member has full rights to defend himself at the chapter meeting. An individual may appeal disciplinary action of a chapter to the NAC and NC.

The NAC may initiate disciplinary proceedings against Members-at-

Large or chapters. The NAC shall notify the individual or chapter of charges and evidence and allow reasonable time to arrange for the individual or chapter to be present at the NAC meeting which will consider disciplinary action. The individual or chapter has full rights to defend himself at this meeting. The decision of the NAC may be appealed to the NC. In the case of disciplinary action against chapters, the decision may be appealed to the National Convention.

During the entire proceedings and appeal procedures, individuals and chapters have full rights to the use of the discussion bulletin and other procedures for internal communication.

Minority political views shall have full rights of representation on all committees of the organization. The outgoing NC and the executive committees shall submit in nomination a slate of candidates for the election of the new committee after consulting the different political tendencies within the organization. If any political tendency believes that it is or may be unrepresented or underrepresented on any committee of the organization, it is entitled, by submitting a motion or resolution as the basis for political representation, to that proportion of the seats on the committee as the proportion of those voting in favor of the motion or resolution as a basis for political representation, to those voting at the meeting where the election is carried out.

Political tendencies also have the right to the procedure of political division in the election of delegates to the National Convention.

Article XII. Amendments

This Constitution may be amended by membership referendum as described above, or by Convention in the same manner as the Program in Brief.

(NOTE: A constitutional provision for the recall of National Committee members was referred to the NAC for adoption.)

independent
radical
newsweekly

Guardian

... What program for Black liberation?

The recent Washington, D.C. conference on racism and imperialism, organized by the African Liberation Support Committee, raised questions of vital importance to the present and future course of the Black liberation movement. The following contribution to the Radical Forum by Phil Hutchings takes up many of those questions. Hutchings is the former national chairman of the Student National Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who now works in Detroit, Mich.

Guardian readers are encouraged to submit articles to the Forum on a wide variety of subjects from many ideological perspectives. Articles should present a strong point of view, avoiding sectarianism and sloganeering. Send manuscripts [typed, triple-spaced, 2000 words or less] to the Guardian, 33 W. 17 St., New York, N.Y. 10011.
By PHIL HUTCHINGS

What is the principal problem facing Black people at this time in history? What is imperialism? What is racism? What is the difference between class struggle and national liberation? What is the correct strategic program for Black liberation at this stage in our movement?

These and other major questions concerning labor and the unemployed; youth and education; women in the struggle; justice, the police and prisons and the general political direction of the Black struggle were the highlights of the recently completed Conference on Racism and Imperialism held at Howard University on May 23 and 24. This national conference on the Black movement was called by the steering committee of the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC) in recognition of the fact that Black people are at a stage in the struggle which required regroupment and the development of a new approach. In some ways it was a new kind of conference, specifically designed to put before Black activists alternative theoretical positions and to combat ideological deficiencies or in some cases a total lack of ideology.

Much of the conference debate centered on the two-line struggle occurring in the ALSC itself, between a dominant position asserting that the chief enemy of Black people in the U.S. (and Africa) is monopoly capitalism and imperialism, and an opposing line which argued that racism (or European society) is the primary enemy and

that capitalism and imperialism are secondary. Those stating the first position argued that the extension of this line was to attack and overthrow the stronghold of monopoly capitalism and racism—the United States system of capitalist and racist exploitation. Advocates of the other position which saw racism as primary pushed for separate Black institutions and developing a unified Africa as a precondition to Black advancement in the U.S.

The conference generally reaffirmed the stand in favor of the anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist position taken by the ALSC as the logical outgrowth of its "Statement of Principles" adopted in the summer of 1973.

THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

Unlike many of the Black conferences in 1972 which were chiefly concerned with the unity of the established Black leadership or the relationship of Black America to making demands on the capitalist political system, this conference dealt with problems of a theoretical nature as a precondition for base-building and renewed emphasis on organizing new strata within Black communities, particularly Black workers. Much of the credit for this direction can be attributed to the ALSC leadership and especially those from the Youth Organization for Black Unity (YOBU).

Since the demise of the Student National Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Black Panther party in the late 1960s, YOBU has probably been the major radical Black organization which has pushed mass struggles as the way to increasing revolutionary development and growth in the Black movement. The organization has been located primarily in the South with its nucleus grouped at the now dissolved Malcolm X University in North Carolina. A cadre organization, YOBU members for the most part began their political activity on college campuses and in the then emerging Pan-African movement of the early 1970s. Probably the driving force among the initial YOBU cadre was Owusu Sadaukai, the organizer and first chairman of the ALSC. But Sadaukai has worked with a number of top level YOBU organizers such as Nelson Johnson, Tim Thomas, Mark Smith, Ron Washington and many others. Through their monthly newspaper *The African World* and their organizing efforts on college campuses, struggles in Black communities and the ALSC, the influence and direction of YOBU has had a strong and positive effect on much of the Black radical movement.

At the conference YOBU pushed the primacy of Black struggle in the U.S.; the importance of mass work in Black communities with Black workers taking the lead, in addition to giving more serious attention to the organization of Black workers themselves. All of this came within a framework of linking the struggles in Africa and the U.S. from anti-imperialist, anticapitalist perspective to destroy monopoly capitalism at its roots.

It is this emphasis on the dialectic from practice to theory to higher practice which has allowed YOBU to go from a strict Pan-Africanist line to studying Marxism, without repudiating their experiences or losing most of its original mass base. To this extent YOBU members conceived of the conference as a fight for a correct mass line and its implementation as an inseparable part of the fight for ideological clarity that is a key task for left forces in advancing revolutionary struggle in the U.S.

To many, the major surprise of the conference was the support of Imamu Amiri Baraka for the anti-imperialist, anticapitalist position. Baraka, from Newark, N.J., who is the secretary-general of the National Black Assembly and the chairman of the Congress of Afrikan People (CAP), attacked neocolonialism, the Black "pseudo-bourgeoisie" and upheld the need for a vanguard party committed to scientific socialism to lead the struggle.

Quoting extensively from "The Awesome Responsibility of Revolutionary Leadership" by Detroit Black theorist, James Boggs, Baraka said that Blacks could no longer

pretend that whites did not exist. He asserted that Blacks could only resolve their own exploitation and oppression in the U.S. by resolving the contradictions of the total society through revolution. He specifically argued against the main emphasis being placed on Africa—at one point asking, "If we put our main energy into Africa, what do we say to our brothers and sisters we see everyday here in America?"

But to some observers Baraka's position was not so surprising. Some had seen a change after reading an important article by Maulana Ron Karenga (a close Baraka associate) in a fall 1973 special issue of *Black Scholar* magazine on the Black movement. Others felt Baraka's position came from his respect for African revolutionary leaders such as Amilcar Cabral. But the main basis for what Baraka has called "a new era in our politics" can be traced to Newark itself where the experiences of Baraka with "Black" Mayor Kenneth Gibson have clearly shown the role of neocolonialism and the relationship of Black front-men for monopoly capitalist and multinational corporations. Baraka and the CAP have seen from their own social practice that the neocolonialism inherent in the Black situation today vis-a-vis U.S. capitalism makes for a different form of struggle than that of peoples dominated still by classical colonialism.

Baraka's conception of the vanguard party may be similar to what Boggs wrote in his 1970 pamphlet. If this is so, there will be continued debate between this concept of the party and that of the more traditional Marxist-Leninists in the Black movement. But even this is a newer level of unity and struggle than has heretofore existed. It is this type of advance which shows which forces are moving forward and which have lost ground.

REJECTION OF CARMICHAEL

From this perspective one consequence of the conference was the rejection of Stokely Carmichael and the line of his All-Afrikan People's Revolutionary party. According to Carmichael, the only question facing the Black community was that of "nationalism." He argued that the primary goal was to struggle to liberate and unify the African continent under socialist principles. He said building socialism in the U.S. could not be the main objective for African people in the U.S.

But many in the audience questioned these assumptions, asking Carmichael to state just what program of struggle he had for Blacks living in the U.S. who could not regularly commute between Africa and the Americas. To this Carmichael could only reply by debater's logic that he, as a Pan-Africanist nationalist, was concerned with Africa and that once this was properly understood all else logically followed. It was Carmichael's failure to see that nationalism was not the issue because it was accepted in form and general content by all the tendencies present. The real issue was how to go beyond much of the narrow nationalism of the past to deal with the ruling imperialist bourgeoisie and its Black petty-bourgeoisie agents of the comprador class.

Other groups also received setbacks at the conference. Even though the conference was only sparsely attended by members of the Young Workers Liberation League (YWLL) and the Communist party, they had no influence upon it at all. Angela Davis did not attend the conference although she was at the African Liberation Day march the following day. Up to now the leaders of the ALSC have had to fight a two-sided battle with narrow nationalism on the right while guarding against CPUSA encroachments from the "left."

Last fall the CPUSA, eager for new Black recruits (who were termed "left Pan-Africanists") and realizing that the largest element in the Black liberation movement was organizing the yearly demonstrations around the ALSC committees, sponsored a huge conference on Africa in Chicago with the purpose of forming a counterorganization

under their leadership. Angela Davis went to Africa returning with the "proper credentials" right before that conference began. But the CP blitz failed and the ALSC leaders and membership for the most part have remained unimpressed with the brand of "socialism" advocated by the CPUSA or their views on Black liberation as outlined in CP national chairman Henry Winston's hatchet attack on the movement in his "Strategy for a Black Agenda."

SWP BID

The bid by the Trotskyist Socialist Workers party (SWP) to get the Conference to endorse their line on independent electoral politics was likewise rejected. Despite a number of well-known top SWP Black cadre who tried at every opportunity to raise the question of elections and a third electoral party to a question of principle, this line was repeatedly rebuffed. The position on electoral activity was openly repudiated by Carmichael who, quoting Lenin on parliamentary action, showed that for revolutionaries "this was a tactical question and not one of electoral politics as an end in itself." Later the same day in even stronger language, Owusu Sadaukai stated that he was opposed to "abstractly supporting the two capitalist political parties along with the third noncapitalist party in the electoral process."

In a national Black conference dedicated to ideological clarity it was worth noting that the major theoretical authority was not Karl Marx, Lenin or Frantz Fanon but Amilcar Cabral, the assassinated leader of the PAIGC in the new republic of Guinea-Bissau. Cabral is popular with all tendencies in the Black movement for their own reasons. He is upheld by those close to the CPUSA because he was public in supporting the Soviet Union and the existence of the world socialist countries. Cultural nationalists in the movement like the attention Cabral gave to culture and identity in the national liberation movement. Black Marxists admire his dialectical and historical materialist approach to the problems of Guinea and struggle in general. And then there are those who like Cabral because he was a Black man leading a successful armed struggle against Western colonialism in Africa.

However, Cabral's importance goes beyond his simply being a Black leader who advocates scientific socialism. First, it is in Cabral's writings that we find the most advanced and specific application of class analysis to an African situation. Secondly, his concept of the national liberation struggle in theory and practice both borrows from and goes beyond earlier critiques of the failures of African national independence movements described by Fanon and Kwame Nkrumah. (One wonders if Cabral's murder by Portuguese agents was not so much directed at stopping an already successful armed struggle as it was in halting the rise of an African leader who concretely understood the post-independence struggles against neocolonialism and imperialism that have been the downfall of so many African governments.)

Third, a major portion of Cabral's theoretical writings have discussed specific points around cultural and historical identity questions which some Black militants in the past have felt were neglected by classical Marxism. He has dealt straightforwardly and honestly with questions such as class struggle and the role of the productive forces in precapitalist society; national liberation as the highest form of a people's cultural expression, and the role of the national liberation struggle as a rejection of the negation of a people's historical process.

(It is this point which James Forman's column in the May 29 issue of the Guardian misses when he writes that many current Black Marxist-Leninists have gone from "identification with Africa and the study of the science of Marxism-Leninism... (to where) the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and others become required reading." Forman does not see the specific historic questions dealt

with by Cabral which unless tackled and resolved in favor of historical materialism would have continued to make Marx and Engels unpalatable to many Black activists. To cloud this step in the process is also to miss how the ALSC leadership moved not only themselves to the left but the majority of the Black radical movement as a whole.)

'BLACK WORKERS TAKE LEAD'

Although the conference attendance of 700 to 800 persons reflected a student-based movement with few workers being present, the organizers and participants from practically all ideological positions agreed with the slogan "Black workers take the lead." Distinctions were made between agitational work among workers and that of actual organization of workers. It was generally conceded that ALSC was not the organizational form to organize Black workers and that for this task another yet to be formed organization (or party) was necessary. Having consolidated the movement at a higher level around anti-imperialism and for scientific socialism, most of those present felt they could go beyond the student and youth base to approach worker and other strata in the Black communities. What "Black workers take the lead" means in practice is still debatable. But this is the starting point for more unity and struggle relating to theory and practice.

As usual the question was raised about alliances with white radical groups. This delicate issue was often spoken around without any direct resolution. However, I would think that such alliances will not be forthcoming in this immediate period. Most everyone seemed satisfied with the national form of the movement along with the realization that the job of organizing Blacks is yet to be done. But the type of issues discussed and the level of anticapitalist, anti-imperialist organizing planned practically insures some form of working coalitions in the

future. As Baraka stated, "we cannot act as if whites do not exist. We cannot have a skin brotherhood for the Black united front is not the ultimate weapon but that of a true vanguard revolutionary party is."

What is important and one of the historic points of the conference is that for the first time before a mass Black assemblage the language and methodology of Marxism-Leninism became legitimate within the Black liberation movement. There are still those who resent this but the clear majority as symbolized by Sadaukai, Baraka and Abdui Alkalimat along with most of the workshop leaders and conference participants have moved in this direction.

Thus the national conference called by the ALSC to examine and clarify the theoretical direction of the Black movement ended with a movement unified at a higher level of unity and struggle. Splits and divisions will undoubtedly still occur but now on a new and different basis from the past. Already around the country from such areas as Boston, Houston, North Carolina, Berkeley, Detroit and Mahwah, N.J., independent Black groups of organizations and collectives are surfacing and talking to each other after the momentary decline of the movement from 1969 to 1972. The conference provided a place where these groups and others could meet, discuss and get to know each other better. This too was historic, a first meeting in the 1970s for fraternal debate among many future comrades.

But practice will be the key. For it is in the field of practical work that all differences become clearly focused at every turn—at every point where a choice of what course of action to follow must be made. As increasing theoretical development can only come from new and higher forms of practice, the future theoretical direction of the Black revolutionary movement (and the total revolutionary movement in North America) can go forward to the extent we begin to put into practice what was consolidated at this conference.

NATIONALIZATION UNDER WHOSE CONTROL?

Several issues ago, WORKERS POWER, in what appeared as an oversight, or perhaps an over-zealousness in agitational formulation, called for nationalization of the American Oil industry "by the U.S. Government." A following issue of WP compounded this mistake with a second similar article and boxed series of demands which omitted any call for workers control, nor even a Socialist view on the question of indemnification of a nationalized sector—both of these might have been useful subjects for the edification of our readers. In response to what we assumed was laxity on the part of the editorial staff the N.Y. exec (with the exception of one exec member who didn't think discussion of this question germane) asked the NAC to discuss the question of nationalization.

While the NAC has only had a preliminary discussion, a brief discussion piece submitted by Comrade Finkel changes the nature of the discussion by providing programmatic justification for what we here at least, assumed was just sloppiness (in itself not excusable, but not as serious).

There is nothing reticent about Finkel—he comes right to the point—he says, "a number of comrades apparently hold the view that it is never permissible to raise the demand for nationalization in a concrete case without immediately coupling it to the demand for workers' control." That happens to be my view (though I wouldn't quibble about *immediately*, just so there is a close proximity). With such seeming alacrity Finkel develops a viewpoint that I believe is totally new to Trotskyism or to any precedents that I am aware of in IS politics. (While this in itself should not preclude the correctness of an idea, it is mind boggling at what ease a new position is taken by some IS leaders.)

Let me quote some parts of Finkel's discussion piece to give you a feel of his new position: (all italics mine) "The demand for nationalization of *inflation-producing* monopolies under workers control . . . is part of the fundamental program of the IS . . ." *Where* have we before qualified our demand for nationalization under workers' control to *inflation-producing* industries? (Are these industries really the cause of inflation?) We have singled out certain industries for this transitional slogan where their flagrant profit-minded disregard of human needs make them a clear focus for such a demand, but the use of the term *inflation-producing* here is only intended to justify abandoning the call for workers' control, *part of the fundamental program of the IS*, for that is what Finkel does when a real issue like the energy crisis comes along.

Finkel goes on: "But there seems to be some confusion as to what the meaning of this demand is and *what aspects of it* should receive the greatest emphasis under various circumstances." To be sure, the WP articles we objected to didn't emphasize one *aspect* of the workers' control slogan—it never mentioned workers' control. Secondly, the demand "nationalization under workers' control" is not a demand with two aspects, it is a single demand which points toward first dual power and finally towards state power by the workers. It is a transitional demand aimed at raising the level of consciousness of the working class. (This does not mean that we should not find new and perhaps better ways to express this idea, so as not to appear "sectarian" considering the relatively low political level of the American working class.)

We are next told what nationalization under workers' control does not mean: "'nationalization under workers' control' does not mean that the enterprise should be 'turned over to the workers' to be run as some kind of workers' cooperative." (Who proposed a "workers' cooperative"?) Finkel goes on: "The demand does not mean that workers should receive the deed to the factory, which is utopian" (who asked for the deed?). And even more demolishing: "we do not propose *some scheme* for the workers to 'run the industry' within the framework of capitalist property relations."

After having admonished us for presumably demanding in turn a "workers' cooperative", "the deed to the factory" and "some scheme for the workers to 'run the industry'" Finkel then tells us what the demand does mean: "the enterprise must be taken over by the [bourgeois] state . . . and then that it be subsidized by the state to meet the needs of the workers . . . This is possible only under conditions of 'workers' control', i.e., that the workers' organizations take over organizing production, controlling working conditions, and other measures . . ." It may come as a surprise to Finkel, but that is what we thought "nationalization under workers' control" meant all along. Our dispute was not over its meaning but rather why WORKERS POWER didn't call for it.

Further, my objection to the formulation of the WP demand of "nationalization by the U.S. Government" is the same made by Trotsky in the 1938 Transitional Program: "The

difference between these demands [demands for expropriation of key sectors of capital made upon the bourgeois state—CF] and the muddleheaded reformist slogan of 'nationalization' lies in the following: 1) we reject indemnification; 2) we warn the masses against demagogues of The People's Front who, giving lip service to nationalization, remain in reality agents of capital; 3) we call upon the masses to rely only upon their own revolutionary strength; 4) we link up the question of expropriation with that of seizure of power by the workers and farmers." (Trotsky). (No, I did not call Finkel a reformist, a demagogue nor an agent!)

To be sure the exact formulation of "workers' control" is not stated by Trotsky here, but isn't workers' control really one way of leading toward the idea in point 4, above. To be really correct we should say "nationalization, without indemnification, under workers' control."

Finkel does not in general abandon the workers' control slogan. He believes that ". . . it cannot be won under 'normal' circumstances, but it is a very useful demand to be raised when concrete circumstances make it comprehensible to people." In this Finkel is certainly right. The whole point of a transitional demand like nationalization under workers' control is to pose a logical and plausible (to the workers) programmatic demand that exposes the true nature of capitalism thereby expanding worker consciousness and opening up the road bridging the transition of capitalism to socialism. It is highly unlikely that such a demand can be won under the bourgeois framework. More likely, the struggle for such a demand would lead to a total and complete revolutionary confrontation between the workers and capitalist class and move immediately to the question of state power and "we would have not workers' control of production but control of production by the workers' state" (Trotsky). But is it not conceivable that under extreme conditions, a highly unstable dual power with workers' control over a sector of industry could be forced upon the bourgeois government? Such a dual power situation would immediately show the need for control over all industry, central banking and finally state power.*

Should we however pose such a demand as "nationalization under workers' control" whose realization presupposes such an advanced situation—Yes! *propagandistically*. To raise it agitationaly as an action demand makes it appear "sectarian" as it would be, hence the discomfort with this slogan in WP articles oriented toward agitation. No such discomfort exists for the demand "nationalization by the U.S. government" since this is today an action slogan (an incorrect one for us, in my opinion). Finkel understands this, he says: "but [workers' control] only weakens it [the demand] by reducing it from an action demand to a standard educational propaganda notion . . ." And that is the crux of our dispute. What, of course, is involved here is a judgment—a judgment over the nature and level of class consciousness and how best to relate to and affect it by the revolutionary organization.

As comrades already know from previous discussions, *the Transitional Program* or a transitional program, if you like, was designed to supercede the minimum-maximum program of the reformists and to be a programmatic bridge between present mass consciousness which lagged historical needs and the struggle for power. It did not replace or reject all minimum demands provided these still remained valid and retained progressive features like democratic rights, the right of workers to organize, etc.

A question then remains: is the call for nationalization of the oil industry by the bourgeois government a progressive (reformist) demand that we should support or even more—call for?

Finkel states two basic reasons for advancing this demand. First, American exceptionalism: "we live in a country where not only is private property enshrined as sacred, but where the working class by and large approves of this . . . in Britain . . . we would unquestionably pose workers' control inseparably from nationalization. . ." And second, ". . . as a solution to the energy crisis, it is precisely nationalization—yes, that's right, by the bourgeois state!—which would be the answer."

*A strange sidelight to this question appeared in 1938 in Mexico when the Cardenas government nationalized the Anglo-American oil interests. Trotsky, of course, supported this nationalization of foreign imperialists. The Cardenas government, based on a weak bourgeoisie, appealed to the Mexican Trade Unions to manage (not control) the oil industry. Trotsky argued that while there were enormous dangers for the unions becoming ensnared by the ruling class and their state, it would be sectarian not to participate in this management of industry, however, immediately posing the issue of workers' control and pointing toward state power. Trotsky emphasizes that the Mexican bourgeoisie is weak, that the nationalization was done by the bourgeois government and that this weak government felt compelled to ask participation of the workers in the management of the nationalized industry. He explained that this situation was not the same as joining a bourgeois government but rather like winning a municipal election and using that as a power base to counterpose and undermine national bourgeois power.

If it is centrally the fact that American workers "approve" of capitalism and therefore the need to expose the system, wouldn't then the demand for "workers' control" expose the system to a greater degree and wouldn't it better counterpose this acceptance of capitalism by the U.S. working class? On the contrary, while exposing "the fact that this bourgeois government won't nationalize it. . ." (Finkel) such a demand tends to create illusions in the government, the beneficence of nationalization by the state and state capitalism, and in reformist solutions, generally.

Further, what is so great about exposing the fact that the U.S. Government "won't nationalize" the oil industry. It will hardly shake up American workers, many of whom are already suspicious of statist solutions.

Is it really completely improbable that the U.S. Government could nationalize the oil industry in the interests of the ruling class and the system as a whole? Is it totally improbable, when scoundrels like George Meany and that indefatigable Senator from Boeing Aircraft, Henry Jackson, talk about nationalization of the oil industry? And while we don't have to say "no" everytime these gentlemen say yes, it might be nice to keep our distance—perhaps by staying ahead of them.

Should the U.S. Government ever decide to nationalize the oil industry and maybe as important, create a government monopoly of foreign trade in oil, it would mean that there is a serious crisis for the system and a need for the government to step in, in the interest of the ruling class *as a whole*. This would eliminate some of the anarchy in production, resource development and fuel import, but it would not eliminate the "energy crisis". While present oil monopoly manipulation can cause short-term scarcity and price rise, over a longer period, more fundamental factors regulate these—world market price, rate of profit, etc. However, even if this wasn't so and nationalization "would solve the 'energy crisis' in a matter of days," as Finkel claims, this, in my opinion, would not be sufficient reason to enlist support for "nationalization by the government" without linking it to workers' control, much less call for it as a progressive demand. I said, even if I agreed with his analysis, I wouldn't favor calling for it.

The reason for this opinion is that I don't think that is what we should be doing. It is not just a question of priorities; it is a question of the primary, particular and unique function of the revolutionary socialist organization in history and the role of its program for the working class. Put another way, the working class does not *need* us to advance such demands as nationalization, and the reason for our existence is their *need* for a revolutionary party. It is true that we are on the side of all progressive ideas and movements, but we must not dissolve ourselves in such generalized progressiveness that we dilute our specific purpose for being. Of course, should reformist ideas lend themselves to workers going into actions that in their course permit them to possibly gain conditions and rights which advance their position, and even permit the possibility of going beyond the initial demands—we must find ways to intervene, participate and even lead such struggles, while at the same time proposing program and organizational forms that permit going beyond the limitations set by the original reformist demands. (The criminal error of the SWP in the anti-war movement was that while advancing a single slogan of "immediate withdrawal" to build the largest possible demonstrations, they refused to raise the level of the movement by orienting it toward the working class, move it toward anti-capitalist political action, or to even build an anti-imperialist caucus within the existing movement. The result is that the movement collapsed after the troop withdrawal without any meaningful residue of comprehension of the next stage of struggle, nor of organized forms to wage such struggles.) The demand for nationalization of the oil industry hardly lends itself to such mass action.

Not only does the working class need an insurrectionary organization to plan, lead, and help carry through the overthrow of capitalism—it needs for an entire epoch preceding that overthrow, an organization capable of giving leadership in class actions and programmatic direction which point toward taking state power.

The peculiar aspect of our giving programmatic direction to the working class is that these directions are not like a map, but like a platform which elevates class consciousness so that the working class may see *for themselves* which road and through what actions they may achieve liberation. No other class in history has needed such a developed instrumentality of consciousness raising as the revolutionary socialist party and program in order to achieve state power. Such is the nature of capitalism and bourgeoisie ideology, which permeates everywhere, that no lesser instrument will achieve the *inevitability* of socialism. If it seems slightly Lamarckian that historical necessity creates the organism, suffice it to say that the organism will be created only if *we* do it and the *inevitability* of socialism will come about only if the working class determines it.

The transitional program was developed to aid in this process of consciousness raising and is the unique program of the revolutionary socialist organization. In the last faction fight our discussion of the transitional program got disoriented and distorted. For some, the program became a catachism rather than a method. To be sure, it is not our only tool—but it must remain central for us.

Lastly, a not unimportant matter, possibly more so in this period than in previous ones. This is a period where molecular changes in consciousness are taking place but, as yet, little action. Anger and disillusionment, mainly with the government, is widespread, but political consciousness and ideological awareness is low. Capitalist instability is great but the class is not sure it wants to rock the boat; and yet the potential for sharp combativity and class confrontation is growing. In short a period of variegated and mixed levels of consciousness of the working class with uneven potentials for mass actions. The key for us, especially with our small size and resources, is to be closely attuned to the pulse of the working class, so that we may adjust our propaganda, our agitation and our intervention to best advance the struggle without being either sectarian or opportunist, tailist or adventurist. That's not easy, but then no one said it would be.

— C.F.

Nationalized Industry and Workers' Management

By LEON TROTSKY

In 1938 when the Cardenas government of Mexico expropriated the oil industry from the Anglo-American imperialists, such newspapers as the *N.Y. Daily News* ascribed the act to the influence of Leon Trotsky then in exile in Mexico. This, of course, was untrue.

Trotsky had made an agreement, which he scrupulously observed, that in return for asylum he would not intervene in Mexican politics. He was forced consequently to limit himself to stating his position in general on the expropriation. He supported the act, explaining his views in an article dated June 5, 1938, published in the *Socialist Appeal* (now *The Militant*) of June 25, 1938. It was not known that Trotsky had written more fully on another aspect of the expropriation—the placing by the Mexican government of the oil industry under the management of the workers.

In April 1946, Joseph Hansen, former Secretary of Leon Trotsky visited Natalia Trotsky. He also called on friends of Trotsky. Among them was one who had made a study of the expropriation. This friend

told about talking with Trotsky for a whole afternoon on the uniqueness of workers' management of an expropriated industry in a capitalist country.

Trotsky promised to consider the subject more fully. Some three days later, Trotsky's French secretary called on the telephone that Trotsky had written a short article.

This remarkable article had never been printed anywhere. Comrade Hansen examined the manuscript. Typewritten in French, it was undated and unsigned but the interpolations and stylistic corrections in ink appeared to be Trotsky's handwriting. The style and above all the method of analysis and the revolutionary conclusions were Trotsky's beyond question. Comrade Hansen immediately had a copy typed and brought it to Natalia. She too is convinced of the authenticity of the article. The probable date it was written can be fixed as May or June 1938.

In the industrially backward countries foreign capital plays a decisive role. Hence the relative weakness of the *national* bourgeoisie in relation to the *national* proletariat. This creates special conditions of state power. The government veers between foreign and domestic capital, between the weak national bourgeoisie and the relatively powerful proletariat. This gives the government a bonapartist character *sui generis* of a distinctive character. It raises itself, so to speak, above classes. Actually, it can govern either by making itself the instrument of foreign capitalism and holding the proletariat in the chains of a police dictatorship, or by maneuvering with the proletariat and even going so far as to make concessions to it and thus gaining the possibility of a certain freedom toward the foreign capitalists. The present policy [of the Mexican government—*Trans.*] is in the second stage; its greatest conquests are the expropriations of the railroads and the oil industries.

These measures are entirely within the domain of state capitalism. However, in a semi-colonial country state capitalism finds itself under the heavy pressure of private foreign capital and of its governments, and cannot maintain itself without the active support of the workers. That is why it tries, without letting the real power escape from its hands, to place on the workers' organizations a considerable part of the responsibility for the march of production in the nationalized branches of industry.

What should be the policy of the workers' party in this case? It would of course be a disastrous error, an outright deception, to assert that the road to socialism passes, not through the proletarian revolution, but through nationalization by the bourgeois state of various branches of industry and their transfer into the hands of the workers' organizations. But it is not a question of that. The bourgeois government has itself carried through the nationalization and has been compelled to ask participation of the workers in the management of the nationalized industry. One can of course evade the question by citing the fact that unless the proletariat takes possession of the power, participation by the trade unions in the management of the enterprises of state capitalism cannot give socialist results. However, such a negative policy from the revolutionary wing would not be understood by the masses and would strengthen the opportunist positions. For Marxists it is not a question of building socialism

with the hands of the bourgeoisie, but of utilizing the situations which present themselves within state capitalism and advancing the revolutionary movement of the workers.

Participation in bourgeois parliaments can no longer give important positive results; under certain conditions it even leads to the demoralization of the worker-deputies. But this is not an argument for revolutionists in favor of anti-parliamentarism.

It would be inexact to identify the policy of workers' participation in the management of nationalized industry with the participation of socialists in a bourgeois government (which we called *ministerialism*). All the members of the government are bound together by ties of solidarity. A party represented in the government is answerable for the entire policy of the government as a whole. Participation in the management of a certain branch of industry allows full opportunity for political opposition. In case the workers' representatives are in a minority in the management, they have every opportunity to declare and publish their proposals which were rejected by the majority, to bring them to the knowledge of the workers, etc.

The participation of the trade unions in the management of nationalized industry may be compared to the participation of socialists in the *municipal governments*, where the socialists sometimes win a majority and are compelled to direct an important municipal economy, while the bourgeoisie still have domination in the state and bourgeois property laws continue. Reformists in the municipality adapt themselves passively to the bourgeois regime. Revolutionists in this field do all they can in the interests of the workers and at the same time teach the workers at every step that municipality policy is powerless without conquest of state power.

The difference, to be sure, is that in the field of municipal government the workers win certain positions by means of democratic elections, whereas in the domain of nationalized industry the government itself invites them to take certain posts. But this difference has a purely formal character. In both cases the bourgeoisie is compelled to yield to the workers certain spheres of activity. The workers utilize these in *their own* interests.

It would be light-minded to close one's eye to the dangers

which flow from a situation where the trade unions play a leading role in nationalized industry. The basis of the danger is the connection of the trade union top leaders with the apparatus of state capitalism, the transformation of mandated representatives of the proletariat into hostages of the bourgeois state. But however great this danger may be, it constitutes only a part of a general danger, more exactly, of a general sickness, that is to say, the bourgeois degeneration of the trade union apparatus in the imperialist epoch not only in the old metropolitan centers but also in the colonial countries. The trade union leaders are, in an overwhelming majority of cases, *political* agents of the bourgeoisie and of its state. In nationalized industry they can become and already are becoming direct *administrative* agents. Against this there is no other course than the struggle for the independence of the workers' movement in general, and in particular through the formation within the trade unions of firm revolutionary nuclei which are capable, while at the same time maintaining the unity of the trade union movement, of struggling for a class policy and for a revolutionary composition of the leading bodies.

A danger of another sort lies in the fact that the banks and other capitalist enterprises, upon which a given branch of nationalized industry depends in the economic sense, may and will use special methods of sabotage to put obstacles in the way of the workers' management, to discredit it and push it to disaster. The reformist leaders will try to ward off this danger by servile adaptation to the demands of their capitalist providers, in particular the banks. The revolutionary leaders, on the contrary, will draw the conclusion from the sabotage by the banks: that it is necessary to expropriate the banks and to establish a *single national bank* which would be the accounting house of the whole economy. Of course this question must be indissolubly linked to the question of the *conquest of power by the working class*.

The various capitalist enterprises, national and foreign, will inevitably enter into a conspiracy with the state institutions to put obstacles in the way of the workers' management of nationalized industry. On the other hand, the workers' organizations which are in the management of the various branches of nationalized industry must join together to exchange their experiences, must give each other economic support, must act with their joint forces on the government, on the conditions of credit, etc. Of course such a central bureau of the workers' management of nationalized branches of industry must be in closest contact with the trade unions.

To sum up, one can say that this new field of work includes within it both the greatest opportunities and the greatest dangers. The dangers consist in the fact that through the intermediary of controlled trade unions state capitalism can hold the workers in check, exploit them cruelly and paralyze their resistance. The revolutionary possibilities consist in the fact that, basing themselves upon their positions in the exceptionally important branches of industry, the workers can lead the attack against all the forces of capital and against the bourgeois state. Which of these possibilities will win out? And in what period of time? It is naturally impossible to predict. That depends entirely on the struggle of the different tendencies within the working class, on the experience of the workers themselves, on the world situation. In any case, to use this new form of activity in the interests of the working class, and not of the labor aristocracy and bureaucracy, only one condition is needed: that a revolutionary Marxist party exist which carefully studies every form of working class activity, criticizes every deviation, educates and organizes the workers, wins influence in the trade unions and assures a revolutionary workers' representation in nationalized industry.

Translated by Duncan Ferguson