

MORE
CONVENTION
AMENDMENTS
AND REPLIES

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CONTENTS

REPLY TO DANTON AND FINKEL ON THE UNIONS
-- KEVIN B

WORKING WOMEN, CLUW AND IS WORK-AN
AMENDMENT -- LESLYE R.

AMENDMENTS TO SECTION V OF "BUREAU-
CRATIC COLLECTIVISM" -- D. CREES

CLUW - not a substitute for industrialization -

REPLY TO DANTON AND FINKEL ON THE UNIONS

BY Kevin Bradley

Danton and Finkel make much out of the fact that I deleted the following sentences from the "State of the Unions" document: "Capitalizing on the relative quiescence of NEP, the labor leaders have gone further than at any time in the past to hold down militancy, the in context of a general move to the right by the bureaucracy. (Emphasis added by MD/DF). Their outrage is entirely misplaced, since I objected to "further than at any time in the past" since I believe the labor bureaucracy went much further to their right during World War II with the No Strike Pledge, War Labor Board, etc. But DF and MD go further to say "No wing of the labor leadership will take on the attack on living standards and working conditions by the corporations" and further, "that we can organize groups on the basis of willingness to lead struggles which the bureaucracy won't."

I believe that some labor bureaucrats will meet the government's attack on living standards and will lead struggles at times, of course in a totally inadequate conservatizing and ineffectual way, but will lead some struggles. It sounds glib to say that no wing of the bureaucracy will take on the attack and it won't lead struggles, but the reality is something different. MD and DF are forced to deny reality, as in the case of the construction strikes, to prove their point. They claim the big wage increases recently won in construction simply swapped higher wages for increases in productivity. All of them? In the San Francisco Bay area plumbers won 15.7% the first year, other construction workers in San Francisco 19.3%, in San Mateo 22.2% and the plumbers in Salem Oregon 40%. Were there really first year productivity gains that big each year-of course not.

DF and MD allege that I believe in an "inconsistent class struggle leadership". Nowhere in my amendments did I use that term. I said "The International unions represent a continuum of policy between outright class collaboration and struggle although there is no union under a consistent class struggle leadership." (Emphasis added.) Do DF and MD deny that International leaderships ever use struggle as an instrument of policy. DF and MD claim that I "simply ignore" that the UFW and UMWA leaderships are "tied to various wings of America's liberalism" where they "see their own success and future. It is through these ties that they believe gains will be made." No one would deny that Miller and Chavez have liberal allies, but is that how they really expect to have victories, do they solely rely on them, or is that the key determinant of our analysis of them. Of course Ron Tabor tried to argue that Arnold Miller was simply the creature of Joseph Rauh. That simplistic argument was put to rest when Miller blatantly refused Rauh's advice not to can the Bpylites from the Executive Board. Does Miller think he is going to get a big settlement from the coal companies by relying on the liberals or by leading a struggle. The Use of five days of the Memorial period show that Miller is quite capable of leading struggles.

MD and DF are astonished that I said Miller and Chavez are "in many ways more politically advanced than most of their members". What I had in mind is that when Chavez approaches a new field to organize it many of the workers are not sure they want a union, want to go on strike or are ready to stand up to the boss. Chavez comes with an understanding that it might be necessary to have a sit in, to violate injunctions, to prepass, to mobilize mass public support in distant cities to invalidate the injunction, to call on labor unions in Canada in boycott productions, etc. MD and DF go on to the ridiculous extreme of saying "Anyone in the UFW who openly opposed Chavez on any question eg, came out against the 'illegals' policy, would be instantly denounced as a traitor, politically destroyed and driven from the union without a moment's hesitation." This is patently false. Dissenting staff, it is true would be removed, but it is not at all true for working farm workers in the fields.

What this rhetorical flourish ignores is that this is not the way Chavez controls the union. Finkel and Danton say on p 3 that the UFW and UMW leaders "don't allow rank and file democracy. . . in their own unions!" Again this is completely false. The UFW Convention was quite democratic, with everyone being allowed to speak, they simply couldn't stand up to Chavez. He could simply out argue them, had more knowledge at his fingertips and had thought through every situation. This is what I meant by "more politically advanced". The trouble is that Chavez does not educate the ranks and that real, functioning democracy is impossible without political education. What I conclude from this is not that we should orient to Chavez as being more politically advanced, become his speech writers and assistants, etc., but that we have to educate the rank and file farmworkers to be just as sophisticated politically, we have to help train a new class struggle, revolutionary leadership in the farmworkers that can take Chavez on and challenge him.

The growing division in the unions then, is not where the State of the Unions document tried to draw it between the Meany crew and the old and new social unionists. I would contend that the UFW and the UMW represent a potentially different direction than the US unions. They are not part of the general rightward drift of the US unions, but represent potential left wing development. The UMW is the first union the rank and file have reclaimed and turned around. Of course it has a new leftist bureaucracy, but one that it is more prone to lead struggles than any established union in this country. Unlike MD and DF I believe the MFD has restored democracy to the union, changing around one of the most bureaucratic unions in the country, rather than as they say basically crushing it. The UFW represents the most militant organization of the unorganized and the especially oppressed national minorities.

MD and DF say, "It is not our view that any wing of today's union leadership either on the International or secondary level, can be the basis for a class struggle wing of the labor movement." Although this is basically true, I do believe many committeemen and working local officers may well become a big part of a class struggle movement. Mine worker local presidents who work in the pits, and Black and Latin militants who become committeemen in auto or chief stewards in telephone may well become part of this movement. Because I said International officers will lead struggles does not mean they are a class struggle leadership/ Let us say they have experienced a period of stable contractual relationships with the corporation and suddenly because of changed market conditions the corporation suddenly makes an attack which threatens the life of the union. DF and MD would have you believe that because they accept their place in capitalism they will be unwilling to fight, or perhaps they simply respond to rank and file pressures from below. I believe, however, that often, not always, they will be willing to call a strike, or initiate a struggle to protect the institution which they head. DF and MD's analysis lapses into an idealistic interpretation at times, because they bureaucrats accept capitalism they won't fight. Like Hoffa they may think struggle is inevitable, but this doesn't mean they work for the end of the wage system or try to advance the workers as a class to (illegible--typist note).

Yet when discussing CLUW and the CBTU the State of the Unions document presents a crude mechanical explanation: the officials use the movement from below to advance their own careers. DF and MD say that Black officials have an ideology, and come under pressure from below, but "That is far from saying that the CBTU leaders are motivated by a commitment to black liberation."! Black bureaucrats happen to be victims of racist discrimination in this society, and furthermore, many are committed to doing something to bettering the conditions of black people. This does not mean they want to overthrow capitalism, and of course we know that is necessary to achieve black liberation.

Finally on the Labor party question, may amendment #2. There is some talk in the IS about the dissatisfaction with the Democratic Party. The NAC rejected by short amendment with no reason given. I do not believe that the Democratic Party is seen as an enemy, as an anti-working class, strike breaking party, rather than merely corrupt and a subject of disdain. Illusions in the DP are still rife and a major obstacle to our work. If the NAC rejects this amendment I believe it should argue that the Labor Party question is now an actionable one and take the appropriate actions.

WORKING WOMEN, CLUW AND IS WORK

Amend by addition

substantially

Collecting on the promise of CLUW will largely be determined by the membership question. The bureaucracy's CLUW is primarily a women's caucus within the AFL-CIO and other international unions. To be sure this isn't a bad thing by itself. But compared to the potential of CLUW to be a class-wide working women's movement, the lost opportunity would be sad indeed.

one of

For our purpose, the most important group of women in the work force are those who are beginning to organize and struggle. These women are often either outside the traditional unions or in some limited relationship to them. For example, CUE (Union of Clerical Employees of Contra Costa County California) organized their jurisdiction into their own ("Non-official") union and led a militant and important strike over wages and working conditions. Another example are the women in IBT Local #315 who organized themselves over a period of months and then went to the union which had earlier denied them membership. They are currently on strike. A third example are the workers now in AFSCME 1695 who were an organizing committee for almost two years before they were admitted to a union. Each of these examples show how quite often the most important activity goes on either outside unions altogether as in the CUE strike or in various stages of organization and officialness as #315 or #1695. (CUE is now in AFSCME--but that developed some time after their strike.)

amongst these

If your goal is to organize a broad social movement these women must be the heart of it. If your goal is, however, to organize a caucus, then only those people who are bona fide members are legitimate.

Hence our fight within CLUW for it to be a democratic, rank and file women's movement depends on whether those women who are at the moment fighting to become part of the labor movement are included. This will continue to be the most significant fight within CLUW in the coming period.

a major

WORKING WOMEN, CLUW AND IS WORK

Amendment by addition except for areas of overlap (Page 1)

The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) presents two important opportunities for revolutionaries today. The first is its potential for building a class-wide working women's movement and implicit in that is the impetus for organizing unorganized women workers, about 8(?) million in the U.S.

CLUW is a significant national cross-union organization. Such a formation is indispensable for winning class-wide demands. Socialized child-care, for example, raised within the confines of a single union has little, other than rhetorical resonance because an individual union is not an adequate vehicle for pursuing such an issue. It is only when unions together as a social movement fight for these demands that they can be won. CLUW's cross-union character, in that sense, is a unifying force within organized labor and potentially within the entire working class.

It is the job of revolutionaries to try to collect on the promise of CLUW.

The formation of CLUW itself rests upon important changes and movement within the American working class. The most important of these is the entrance of millions of women into the labor force and the smaller though significant increase of the numbers of women in trade unions. Between 1962 and 1970 over one million women joined unions. This was a huge increase of women in the labor movement. The proportion of women in CWA, ACWA, ILGWU and IBEW has grown, but the most dramatic growth has been in government and service unions such as AFSCME, AFT, AFGE, SEIU. To a lesser extent the proportion of women in other unions such as UAW, IAM and railway clerks has increased.

Parallel with this development is the continual decline of the family. Nearly half of all working women are either self-supporting or heads of households. Even for married women, though, their income is a significant proportion of the family total and their family's standard of living depends on their earning power.

No longer can women in the work force be considered "temporary." The characteristic history of women has changed. In the past women, as part of the reserve army of the unemployed, have been hired during periods of expansion (particularly in new industries) and replaced by men during recession. Even in the post-World War II period this pattern seemed to hold. But by the post-Korea recession the proportion of women in the work force maintained at about 33%. Since then the rate of growth has slowed and the percentage of women in the work force is now about 40%.

In the current recession women are again losing some ground though it is too early to tell how significant that will be. It seems likely that if unemployment does not reach depression levels women will maintain about a 35% level.

However, even if women are forced out of the work force in larger numbers, in the context of the degeneration of the family and the influence of the women's liberation movement, it is highly unlikely that women will return to their traditional "place." The aspirations of women to break through their traditional subservience to men and to a higher standard of living generally may actually increase their militance in the coming period despite the possibly conservatizing effects of threatened lay-offs.

AMENDMENTS

Omit paragraph 2 (V, p. 1) and replace with:

"In Bureaucratic Collectivist systems, property is owned by the state. Classes are therefore defined according to who controls the state, who holds political power. The ruling class under bureaucratic collectivism is the bureaucracy which controls the state and thereby owns and controls the means of production. Economic and political rule are fused.

Decisions regarding production are made to protect the class interests of the bureaucracy, its political and economic supremacy. Depending on specific circumstances production may be used to a) expand the power and apparatus of the military, b) develop heavy industry, c) subsidize the growing size of the government and party, or even d) improve the conditions of the working class, as the needs of industry or growing working class discontent may require.^q Each of the above represents a common interest of the bureaucratic class as a whole but each of them is subsidiary to the primary class interest of maintaining political (and thereby economic) supremacy.

As the Bureaucratic Collectivist class stabilizes and consolidates itself there is an additional common interest in ~~the~~ acquiring additional material benefits or "luxury" consumption. For example, the production of limousines and the development of "high fashion" industry. Such benefits, however, emerge only after the basis of its class rule are secure.

The common interests of the Bureaucratic Class in no way implies that differences within the class are totally absent."

(At this point return to paragraph 3 (V, p. 1) and continue the paragraph)

Omit the entire section "the Interests of the Entire Class" except for the last three ~~xxx~~ paragraphs which should be carried as footnote q above

Section V, pp. 8-9: Omit point 1) which is on the bottom of p. 8 and the top of p. 9 and replace with the following:

"The central ~~xxx~~ economic contradiction of Bureaucratic Collectivism arises from the conflicting class interests of the Bureaucratic Collectivist class (which seeks to maintain its hold on power and privilege) and the working class. The goals of the former lead to countless political and economic policies which attack the interests of the working class. The subjection of the working class makes it impossible for it to identify with the goals of production. The creative energies of ~~x~~ the working class become channeled into self-defense, resistance and escape. The ~~x~~ the coercive system as a whole becomes a fetter on production.

Some of the policies which are employed in the attack on working class interests include: 1) overemphasis on heavy industry at the expense of production for social consumption, 2) production of luxury goods which the masses are unable to afford, 3) productivity drives 4) imposition of labor discipline including the abolition of the right to strike, 5) repressive taxation, 6) limitation of consumption through rationing, pricing policies and other means, 7) heavy military investment coupled with imperialist foreign policies, 8) limitation of civil liberties including freedom of speech and association, and 9) the manipulation of family structure, marital and birth policies.

