

(This statement was prepared by the Executive Committee of the I.S. as political guidance for the organization during the height of the first anti-busing offensive, in early Fall, 1974. It was written in late October, 1974. While some minor points may be dated by events, the central thrust is sound, and it remains the basis of our politics around busing.- Mike H.)

### IS Statement on Boston School Busing Crisis

1. The issue in the Boston school battle is, first and foremost, racism. Vicious attacks on black children and on a "nigger" that dares to come within their reach mark the Boston mobs as no different from their Southern counterparts in the fifties and the sixties. The ugly mob scenes, the recent beating of a lone black who drove into South Boston to pick up his daughter from school, the persistent stoning of buses carrying black children by the police who are supposed to be guarding them all raise the dangerous possibility of a race riot. Such a race riot would not look like what the press and politicians called race riots in the sixties: blacks militantly rebelling against their unending oppression, refusing any longer to accept it and to bow down before an oppressive authority. The race riot that threatens to break out in Boston would look more like the terrible racial atrocities that occurred in Detroit in 1943 and in the post-World War I period.

While blacks are attacked, while racial epithets and code words for Jingoism abound -- "This is God's country" and "God Bless America" -- the official line is that the opposition has nothing to do with them. Just as in the South it was a fight for the Very Democratic Principle of States' Rights, of Local Government, in Boston there is also an official guess. It is the right of a child to attend a school in his or her own neighborhood, the right not to be forced into a High Crime (read: black) neighborhood, even the right to quality education, or even "Rights" in general (the organization nominally leading the battle having named itself ROAR (Return Our Alienated Rights)).

*Restore*

But although the ideological battle is waged primarily against the forced busing of whites into black schools, the physical battle is being waged against blacks who are being bused into the whites' schools, especially in South Boston. There, in the center of resistance, the expression of the racist attitudes comes out clearly. The "niggers" are animals. They must be shown they cannot and dare not invade the Sacred White Territory. The KKK and the Nazi Party, smelling the stench-ridden atmosphere, have sent their organizers to sniff around.

2. For the black community it began as a fight for a decent education for their children. In Boston, as everywhere else, black schools are discriminated against in funds, teachers, equipment and every other way possible. This included the poor quality of buildings (bad everywhere in Boston where almost no new schools have been built in decades, but worst in black areas) lack of textbooks, a pattern of shifting the experienced teachers out of Roxbury into white schools, of the School Committee (school board) using federal funds in place of regular school funds (rather in addition to them) in black areas but not in white, and an ever increasing tendency toward segregated schools. Previous efforts to win improvements in the schools have failed, as have attempts to bring whites into joint struggle to improve the quality of education. Attempts were made for years to get increased funding for the Boston school system, to raise standards for all schools. To no avail. Attacks were made on the racist system of education, which included violence on the part of teachers against students. All appeared fruitless.

With other doors closed blacks turned to desegregation, reasoning that racist discrimination would be far more difficult in integrated schools. As one black mother stated:

"When you talk about quality education, it's insulting to a black parent for a white person to think a black child has to sit next to a white child to learn. There's no guarantee that my child won't sit next to a moron. It just seems that teachers with a majority of white students take more interest."

In fact the turn to desegregation became a self-conscious strategy to bring black and white parents together in a struggle for quality education. In this respect it has had a certain small degree of success. In some black schools where parents had been demanding changes, when white parents saw the conditions of the schools to which their children were to be bused they put pressure on for these changes, and indeed some were made.

This course of action is a perfectly legitimate effort to equalize educational opportunities on the part of blacks.

The struggle has come to be much more than one for quality education. As the whites in Boston have drawn the race line blacks have come to view the struggle as one against racist oppression: against the effort of whites to shove blacks back into their "place" -- a place on the bottom of American society, a place blacks have had the audacity to say they would tolerate no more. And, viewing the struggle as such, the black community is solidly in support of the right of blacks to go to school anywhere, and what has become the issue: the right of blacks not to be excluded by force from any area of this society.

3. This is really what the issue has become for both the blacks and the whites. The white mobs are engaged on a program to defeat the school integration program by mass action and to draw the line for blacks: no blacks will be allowed in the white enclaves. The issue is not simply school integration, or more narrowly, forced busing. The current disturbance would pale into insignificance before the response that would occur to any attempt to integrate the neighborhoods themselves. If they are successful in their actions it will be a serious defeat -- the first time in modern times that black advances will have been clearly beaten by mass action on the part of whites. The implications of such a defeat are staggering. It would give impetus to other whites to act similarly when faced with attempts to integrate, whether it be schools or other areas. It would give a successful launching pad for right-wing organizations. Wallace's successful sweep of the Michigan Democratic primary based on the racist anti-busing movement in Pontiac, Michigan illustrates the potential of this issue. While such a defeat would not lead to any sustained right-wing movement because the country is not in the crisis required to sustain one, it would be a watershed.

4. A victory on the part of the blacks, on the other hand, providing that it involved mass mobilization of the black community, could help to raise the self-confidence and combativity of the black community. It could, therefore, help to contribute to a new black movement.

5. For all these reasons there can be no question of the point of view of revolutionaries: we are unequivocally in support of the black struggle. We are for the black struggle against racism and ~~against~~ for defeating the racist movement. We are for the busing effort as a legitimate means to attain some measure of equality for blacks.

There can be no equivocation on these questions. Any effort to back down or to avoid them or to oppose the busing movement as destroying class unity are nothing more no less than a capitulation to racism. As we have said over and over class unity does not exist today. It cannot exist on any basis except that of equality between blacks and whites. Calls for blacks to hold back their legitimate struggles as are being made by the Revolutionary Union today because they are supposedly endangering class unity are really ~~an~~ an acceptance of the subordination of blacks to whites, an attempt to attain a spurious unity based on the maintenance of black oppression. This attitude has nothing in common with our revolutionary approach.

~~of the liberal corporate elite -- the liberal power structure that represents the ruling class in Boston and in Massachusetts.~~

6. Standing outside of it all, appearing supremely guiltless, made unhappy by the mob actions so distasteful to them, wringing their hands over the unwillingness of the "Southies" to submit to law and order is the liberal corporate elite -- the liberal power structure that represents the ruling class in Boston and in Massachusetts. The role they are playing out is a familiar one and an old one for them.

It is they who are responsible, who created the situation that inevitably pitted blacks against whites, a situation that continually reduced the crumbs ~~is~~ available to both in order to increase their own share of the pie, a ~~an~~ situation that forces black and white working people to view each other as enemies and thus makes present and future unity against the ruling class more difficult to achieve and thereby increases the stable rule of the latter.

For years the schools in Boston have been deteriorating, as they have everywhere else. As usual they refuse significantly to tax the businesses to force them to pay for the training which is necessary to provide them with an adequately prepared work force. Thus, as usual the burden falls on small property-owners. In these times of soaring prices and outrageous taxes it has almost become reflex action to vote against school taxes, mainly because they are the only taxes on which people get to vote! Since costs of everything from food and fuel to personnel are increasing the school systems have no choice but to cut back. Of course they do this unevenly, cutting back most from blacks, but still cutting everywhere.

Thus, education is deteriorating. So long as the system is structured as it is, a gain for blacks is seen as coming at the expense of whites. This is, of course, particularly the case when it involves busing blacks into the white areas.

Taken in the context of the social decay in the capitalist world in general and in this country in particular -- a decay that means a generally declining standard of living, fewer social services, fewer jobs and thus more competition to get them -- the possibility of blacks and whites being at each other's throats are immense.

Right-wing politicians have capitalized on this rotten situation in the white areas by defining the issue as a racial one and deflecting concern away from quality education and therefore away from any real solution. In this act they are in fact carrying out the program which the liberals set up but from whose practical consequences they shrink.

Meanwhile the ruling elite -- what is often referred to as the Boston Brahmins -- is thoroughly insulated from all of these problems. Of course, worries about unemployment, about adequate pay, about security are not difficulties for them. Neither are deteriorating schools. Their children go to private schools. They are simply not subject to the problems facing those who are affected.

This fact is known and perceived by the participants. It was crudely reflected in the vulgar comment to Kennedy at the rally in Boston on September 9, when he tried to speak: "Let your daughter get bused there so she can get raped", and in the demands made upon him: that he should use his influence to get the busing plan stopped and failing that he should put his own children on buses "and send them into a high crime area."

7. However this perception -- how widespread it is cannot be said -- has not been translated into any action. This is the tragedy of the situation, the tragedy of a lost ~~kill~~ opportunity. The form of action which such sentiments would imply would be joint class action. It would mean the uniting of blacks and whites together to fight for quality education for both, to increase the share of the pie available to each.

That, of course, is what the aim of the blacks has been all along -- to better the conditions of education as the only means of bettering black education.

Taking up of the demand of better education for blacks by the whites would not simply mean supporting a black demand by the whites; it would certainly not mean supporting any deterioration of their own schools. It would mean creating the conditions which would be necessary to wage a joint fight for improvement for both and to prevent a further deterioration for both. The fight for black equality in this case, as in all others, is not simply a black demand -- it is a class demand. It is a class demand because it is a prerequisite for the joint struggle of both blacks and whites. Without it, only further defeats are inevitable. f

The whites have gone out in mass action for a reactionary goal. They are attacking one section of the working class in a fruitless effort to retain their already deteriorating standards. But if blacks and whites were in struggle together, in mass

action, making real demands for quality education, to be financed by corporate taxes it would be a difficult struggle to beat. It would be much harder to use the police against them because there would be no just cause which they could claim to be supporting. It is obvious that such an alliance, once forged, would have potential in other areas as well. It is just such an alliance that must be forged.

8. In no sense does aiming for that alliance mean a slackening off of the struggle on the part of blacks. The black community in Boston has been much too passive. The leadership of this effort appears to be in the hands of the traditional middle class elements, and they have refused to organize for action. There has been no attempt on the part of black parents to protect the buses from the rock throwing, and very little has either been said or done to mobilize the community for this struggle. This situation, which meets the needs of the black petty-bourgeoisie by keeping things within bounds, within law and order and by maintaining passivity in the black masses, is an intolerable one. It cannot lead to any meaningful victory because there cannot be any real victory won by means of the police. Continued passivity of the blacks while the whites continue their militant mobilizations could even lead to defeat -- that is, could provide an atmosphere whereby the officials, through one means or another would have an excuse to weasel out of the busing program. Such a turn of events would signal to the blacks that they could not go out of the ghetto. It might even lead to a reversal of the more successful desegregation in other areas of the city. No mobilization of the blacks would almost certainly mean no ability to forge any form of coalition with the whites in the future. Such a coalition must be premised on mutual support and respect in struggle. If there is not a black struggle which wins the desegregation demand it will be hard to develop a movement for better schools to which white parents could be won. Black passivity now will make that alliance more difficult to attain later. In any case it would mean giving a free hand to the state to proceed as it wishes -- in the long run this would be to the detriment of blacks and whites alike.

More recently there have been indications of black activism. Black youths responded to the vicious beating of a black man in South Boston by attacking whites who came into the black area. That action is, of course, unfortunate. It comes about because no more organized and politically effective channel has been provided for the healthy fighting spirit the black youths were demonstrating. That is the failure of the black leadership.

Also in response to the escalated violence, black state legislators, members of the small black caucus in the Massachusetts legislature announced in a press conference that they would defy attempts at racist intimidation. They said boldly: "We will walk in Southie, we will work in Southie, and we will live in Southie."

These are tough words. To back them up requires serious organizing. There is no reason to believe that they will carry through on such organizing. They did hold a march and a rally in the Boston Common. This was a positive step since up to then the Common had been dominated by racist demonstrations.

Revolutionaries can use the call for a black demonstration to begin building a base. We can organize more consistently than they and can be ready to expose the vacillations of the black democrats as they look for compromises with the power structure of the city.

Organized black action is an absolute necessity in this case and revolutionaries must help to build it while of course maintaining independence from the black petty-bourgeois leadership.

9. In the course of the struggle the NAACP and black politicians have demanded that police, including state police and federal marshalls or troops, be brought in to protect them from the white mobs. This call is, of course, consistent with the strategy of the NAACP, which is to rely upon the state. Their role is to prevent the independent mobilization of the strength of the black community. Were this development to take place in Detroit or Chicago where the black communities are more militant and independent of the NAACP it would take a different course.

At present the IS will not actively agitate for bringing federal troops to Boston. Nor will we actively oppose this demand insofar as it is being raised by elements of the Boston black community who are insisting that the federal government enforce its own federal school desegregation court order. We do not, however, take any responsibility for federal troops or their actions.

The thrust of our agitation is the need for the black community to organize its own defense -- that it cannot count on the federal government or other law enforcement agencies to defend or protect it. In particular we pose the need for organized armed self-defense. We condemn and will organize opposition to any use of troops of other police agencies to attack the black community.

The use of federal troops is in reality a defense of the social order, which is racist. This was shown during the movement of the sixties when troops were brought in, supposedly to defend the black communities, but in reality they were used to put down those militant forces in the black community who attempted to organize a defense and to fight the racist social order. Therefore our opposition to the call for the use of federal troops in the South where the black community was presumably "weaker" than in Boston, our hostility to the slogan raised by the Socialist Workers Party of sending troops to Mississippi. The "weakness" of the black community is political: its leadership's reliance on the state, the illusions they pedal about the national guard, and their failure to politically organize and mobilize the black masses in militant self-activity. Ififififil

Instead of relying on troops and farming out the defense of the black community or the struggle against racism to the national guard and the state we are for unleashing the enormous potential power of the black community in Boston and the country. We are for calling for the mobilization of the black community, armed self-defense, job actions by black workers and the trade unions and a national mobilization of black and radical activists to Boston to help demonstrate, fight racism and win this battle.