

Mike

International Socialists

**Basic
Education
Program**

BOSTON INTERNATIONAL SOCIALISTS
P. O. BOX 8488, J.F.K. STATION
BOSTON, MA 02114

Price .25



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CONTENTS

- Intro...What the Program Is and How to Use It**
- 1. What is Capitalism Anyway?**
 - 2. But is Socialism a Realistic Alternative?**
 - 3. The Big Step—From Capitalism to Socialism**
 - 4. Class Struggle Unionism—Our Answer to the Bureaucrats**
 - 5. Racism—The Bosses Favorite Weapon**
 - 6. Sexism—Divide and Rule and Again**
 - 7. The Capitalist State and Its Democratic Party**
 - 8. Imperialism—Capitalism by Its International Name**
 - 9. Russia—The First Workers' State**
 - 10. I.S.—From Words to Action**

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Intro...

What the Program Is and How to Use It

This program is not designed to be an exhaustive statement of IS politics or a complete guide to Marxist theory. It is a brief introduction to revolutionary socialism intended primarily for industrial workers. The use of this program will be just one part of the process of arming ourselves for the struggle. The overall aim of the ten sections is to provide an overview of not just the system we live in but the road to socialism as well. Karl Marx once said that "the point is to change the world." That will only be possible if we first understand it.

Past experience demonstrates that the program will be most effective if it is used along the following lines.

a) The program should be discussed in a small group of IS workers. The size of the group is important to its functioning, so ideally there should not be fewer than three, or more than six. If at all possible, the group should be stable from the first meeting so that there is no time wasted in trying to explain what has been discussed previously for newcomers.

b) One section of the program should be covered each week with the participants reading that section in advance and making a note of anything that isn't clear. The program has been laid out in such a way as to leave plenty of space for notes and comments.

c) Discussion should be started by a brief (no more than 15 minutes) introduction of the particular section by an experienced IS member. That introduction should not be a re-hash of the text though it should focus on the same main ideas, giving new examples from current Workers' Powers, filling in any obvious gaps, and raising some questions.

d) The tutor should try to guide and focus the discussion by raising key questions, encouraging participants to speak their minds and not be afraid of being "right" or "wrong." Others should be encouraged to speak up, commenting on each other's ideas. In the course of the discussion, the tutor can and should speak as well. As much as

possible, examples should be drawn from current events and especially from Workers' Power.

e) The key to success for this program rests on the discussion it starts. No one should feel that they cannot interrupt the speaker for clarification. All questions that people have must be taken up in the discussion period. The speaker is not the only person present capable of answering different questions raised. Everyone will have something useful to say and speakers will have failed to do their job if they dominate the discussion in any way. There is no doubt that the discussion will range wide. That is all to the good because that is how everyone learns something. Discussion need only be redirected if it is clearly totally irrelevant or firmly focussed on the subject of a later discussion.

f) The meetings need not be long, but they should end with a two minute summary of the discussion by speaker and a one minute introduction to the next week's section. If some of the participants want to stay around after for more informal discussion over a couple of beers then that is even better.

It is our intention to produce a second edition of this program sometime in the new year. It will be an improved version which incorporates what we learn from using this edition. We need to hear from you if those improvements are to be made. Criticism does not upset us in the least, we know already that this program is far from perfect. We also want to improve our ideas on how to use it too, so it would be good if when a group has gone through all ten sections there was a general discussion of the weaknesses of the program and the way it had been used.

**Glenn Wolfe
IS National Secretary
September 18, 1975**

1. What is Capitalism Anyway?

There are millions of people living and working in this country today who have a deep hatred for the whole system, for the way it is run. But unfortunately only a few thousand have any real understanding of why the system runs this way. Unfortunately because, without this understanding, every rotten thing about this society seems like an isolated problem. Added together they are overwhelming, and it is then hard to see a way out.

But there is, in fact, a total system that needs poverty and violence and oppression and starvation in order to run at all. In order to solve the individual problems the whole system has to be ripped down and totally rebuilt from the ground up. Armed with an understanding of the capitalist system, the idea of changing it begins to take on an order.

EXPLOITATION

A key to understanding capitalism is one simple word—exploitation. It's the word for the legal robbery that takes place when the capitalist gives the workers their wages. The few who own the corporations live off the labor of those who work for them. One of the goals of employers is to give their workers as little as possible. We are granted just enough wages to keep us in line. We are worked just as hard as they can work us without creating an open revolt. Our housing is as poor as they can get away with, our health care is the minimum required to keep the workforce working. We are educated enough to make us efficient workers. And all together, it doesn't add up to nearly the value of what we create when we work. They keep the vast bulk of that wealth.

There is an old story in the labor movement which explains how this exploitation works. It involves a conversation between a boss and a visitor he is showing around the factory. It goes like this:

VISITOR: What did you just tell that man to do?

BOSS: I told him to hurry up.

VISITOR: What gives you the right to do that?

BOSS: I pay him \$100 a week and I expect him to work as hard as he can.

VISITOR: Where do you get the money to pay him?

BOSS: I sell products.

VISITOR: Who makes the products?

BOSS: He does.

VISITOR: How many dollars worth does he make a week?

BOSS: About \$200 worth.

VISITOR: So really you don't pay him \$100, he pays you \$100 to tell him to work harder.

BOSS: No, that's not right because I own all the expensive machinery that he needs to do the work.

VISITOR: And how did you buy the machines?

BOSS: I sold products and bought the machines.

VISITOR: And who made those products?

BOSS: Shut up. He might hear you.

That is how it works. Whether you are building Cadillacs for General Motors, collecting garbage for the banks that own New York City, or clearing up after MacDonald's 16th billion hamburger, you are being exploited. For every dollar they pay you they are making another one out of you, more or less.

The capitalist class keeps its own figures on how efficient exploitation is, and sometimes they print them in papers like the WALL STREET JOURNAL which very few workers read. One ad printed earlier this year mentioned that in American production industries, workers produce and average of \$3.43 in goods for every \$1 they are paid. From this you can easily figure out that if you work an eight-hour day in an average US industry, with average machinery for average wages, you spend the first two hours and twenty minutes producing the value of your wage—and the other five hours and forty minutes for the employer's profits!

COMPETITION

The next question is why every boss, in every capitalist country of the world operates in the same way. It can't merely be that they are all uniformly evil. Or even that they have to go on doing it to maintain their extravagant way of life. After all, Henry Ford could continue to live like a king for the rest of his life if another car never rolled off the assembly lines. In truth, even if Henry Ford was penniless today, as long as he could take just 1c per day from every worker in his international empire he would have a pay check big enough to satisfy his every whim.

So Henry Ford exploits workers not because he is a sadist who gets his kicks from screwing people, or even because he wants to live well...if his life were one continuous shopping spree he couldn't spend a fraction of the billions of dollars he rips off.

No, Henry Ford exploits auto workers in Dearborn, Cologne, Liverpool and New Jersey because if he didn't he wouldn't make a profit. And for Henry Ford, as for all capitalists, it has to be the biggest possible profit and therefore the worst possible exploitation.

Ford has to make the same rate of profit that General Motors makes so that he can compete with General Motors. If GM made more profit, they will get better machines, they will spend more on advertising, they might even price-cut him out of the market. The system

dictates that Ford must be as big a bastard as GM or he won't sell cars. If he can't sell enough cars to make that big profit, he's out of business.

In order to live, we need the goods produced in factories. The only good thing capitalism ever did was to take us past the days when each family made all their own food and clothes and furniture by themselves, from scratch.

But all that people need from factories is the goods and services to live by. Yet the prices of basic necessities go way up, decent housing isn't built, while manufacture of bombs grows, luxury hotels continue to appear and companies rake in the profits.

This is because the factories are privately owned. Each manufacturer is out for himself, free to set his own price, change his product, or stop producing. They decide what to do based on what their company needs, not what the consumer needs. This is not the only way of doing things, even though they try to make us think it is. This way certainly isn't doing a very good job of providing for the vast majority of people.

But that isn't their goal. Their goal is to make profits, not to fill people's needs with their products. They don't care if they produce can openers, dirty books or Corvettes that are guaranteed to fall apart on the road, as long as they produce a profit.

Profits are what make the capitalist world go round. The profit system is also what causes racism, unemployment, war, poverty and starvation. This system treats human beings like laboring machines to be bought and sold, repaired and scrapped according to the needs of the corporations. Profits mean wealth and power to the tiny minority who do not work but own and control all production. To the working class profits bring wages and slavery. That is the capitalist class system.

In order to defend profits the ruling class pays starvation wages to vast sections of the workforce. To defend profits they force millions into the enforced idleness of unemployment. For profits, they encourage starvation on a world scale, keeping food prices high through restricted production and the destruction of "surpluses."

To defend profits they engage in the systematic murder of workers, not only through wars over which ruling class should control the riches of the world, but in the very process of everyday production as well. The vast majority of death and injury at work could be ended if human life was considered more important than profits.

PROFITS COME FIRST

For example, at the end of the last century in France, the first factory producing asbestos (fire-proof) goods was opened in France. Within ten years, a large proportion of the work force was dying of an incurable lung disease which resulted from inhaling asbestos dust.

By the 1930's there were laws in all the major industrial countries to restrict the amount of dust in the atmosphere of asbestos factories, but in all cases they were largely ignored. Why? Because although it was possible to cut out all that dust, it was also expensive. It was bad for profits.

Even today workers are still dying of asbestosis. In the USA alone, almost 100,000 workers have been murdered by the asbestos bosses since World War II. That's the system. That's what the ruling class does to the working class and it has a whole armory of weapons to stop the working class from fighting back.

RACISM

One of their most effective weapons against us is racism. In an attempt to hide the vast gulf between white workers and bosses, the system has consciously created a gulf between black and white workers. As long as workers can be convinced to fight each other they will be ineffective in fighting the ruling class. That is why capitalism creates and sustains racism.

The ruling class can do this because they don't just control the factories, the means of producing goods. They control everything else as well. Including our ideas.

Capitalists own and control the TV stations, the newspapers, the education system and use them to control our ideas. Your own experiences may tell you that work is fun, that you're getting cheated, but all over you hear how noble it is to work hard. They make sure we accept their corrupt principles, their racism, their exploitation and their naked oppression. And when workers in struggle begin to learn the truth, the capitalists use the courts, the police, and the army—which they also control—to hold on to their power.

That is capitalism. A class system that demands the oppression of the many in the interests of the few. No amount of reforms can alter that basic truth. No amount of liberal bosses, progressive trade union leaders or fair-minded judges can change the basic pattern of the system.

What is good for the ruling class is bad for the working class. What is good for the working class is bad for the ruling class. That has been the picture since the birth of capitalism, and it will continue until the day we execute capitalism. Only when the working class becomes its own ruling class, only when we seize control of society, only then will things change.

2. But is Socialism A Realistic Alternative?

To answer that question you have to define what socialism is. Socialism is a system which is controlled by working people and operated for working people.

In the US, talking about socialism also means starting with a clear statement of what socialism is not. It is not the Russian system where workers control nothing and are exploited by bureaucrats rather than bosses. Nor is it a system in which everyone wears the same clothes, eats the same food, and even thinks the same thoughts from the Little Red Book of the same Chairman.

The press the media publicize these images to discredit the whole idea of socialism in the eyes of American workers. Only in the US has the ruling class been able to convince the vast majority of workers that socialism is an evil, alien system that means regimentation and crushing human freedom. That is because our ruling class has been strong enough to convince most workers that workers by themselves are incapable of running anything, that real socialism is just an impractical, utopian dream.

In virtually every other country of the world, there are large sections of workers who understand that their needs as workers require replacing the madness of the capitalist profit system with a rational society that plans ahead for human need. They know that what the bosses say about the horrors of socialism is a pack of lies. Many also know socialism has nothing to do with the rule of the bureaucrats in Russia and China. For them, the question is exactly what socialism is and how to get there.

Socialism is not only practical and possible. It is the only sane alternative to an increasingly insane capitalist system that doesn't even work. It is a simple and straightforward method of organizing society on an equal basis, through the ability of workers to control of process of production.

It doesn't require workers who are saints and angels to make it work. All it needs is a working class strong enough to break the hold the bosses have over its ideas, and realize that what is good for one worker is good for all workers (and what is good for all workers is bad for all bosses!)

As the system forces more and more workers to fight

back and defend themselves, a growing number of brothers and sisters begin to understand, like us, that workers' power is a practical possibility.

WORKERS' DEMOCRACY

Socialism begins with the idea of genuine democracy—workers' democratically controlling their own workplace. Through an elected committee, which can be changed anytime it does not go along with the wishes of the majority, they decide how to carry on production.

This is the kind of democracy which is totally impossible under capitalism. Democracy is meaningless unless it can be backed up with some real power. In the Congressional districts set up for capitalist elections, for example, workers can have no power. They cannot cease to live there if they disagree with a decision of Congress. They may have to wait years to change a Congressman they hate and even then their only choice will be another rich candidate who has enough money to run for office. In the factory workers have power. They produce, and they can stop producing if necessary to enforce their decisions.

Socialism is not a blueprint drawn up on paper by dreamers. The reality of socialism will grow out of the conscious, collective effort of workers to run things, starting with the process of production itself. It is through that struggle that democratic workplace committees and everything based upon them will be created.

Workplace committees under socialism elect the bodies to run the state, to decide the overall pattern of production and how goods and services will be fairly distributed. Under socialism, production and distribution come out of the conscious, democratic decisions of those who work. It ceases to be an accident dependent on which hustler has the most outrageous plan to make the fastest buck.

When mistakes are made there is an ongoing mechanism to change things, a mechanism which also allows people to plan for the future and stop once and for all the situation where the vast majority of people are the victims of events they cannot control.

PRODUCTION FOR NEED

Another way of saying the same thing is that things are produced because of human need not because of profit. Profit and exploitation cease to exist for the simple reason that no one is going to exploit themselves. Once production is based on needs, the billions of dollars a year which are wasted in the capitalist profit system can be saved.

Each factory will not have to compete with all the others in order to produce. It won't have to worry about becoming the biggest company in the world, trying to make lots of money and then pouring it all back into

expanding itself and paying shareholders. Each factory will be part of a united economy that cooperates to make what's needed, instead of being thousands of competing units like it is now. This is because factories won't be owned privately, for the enrichment of one family. All the factories will be owned by the whole society, controlled by the workers, and used for everyone's benefit.

We will save money in other ways, too. We will not be building mansions and luxury hotels for the rich, but good housing for workers. We will not be producing jet-fighters and nuclear missiles which bring the corporations super-profits but washing machines, dryers and other household commodities that workers need. We will not be wasting vast resources to put some clown on the moon, we will be insuring that workers can perform the even more difficult feat of obtaining excellent, free, medical care. The change in priorities will be gigantic.

Under capitalism even things that we need are produced in a totally irrational fashion. Take cars for example. The technology exists to produce a car that will last for twenty years. Yet what we get is a heap of flashy scrap metal which will disintegrate in four or five years, which will then have to be replaced and will therefore guarantee the corporations regular profits.

Take a simple thing like detergent for washing clothes. We will always need that. What we don't need is the vast amount spent on advertising all the different brands that compete with each other. We don't need it because we pick up the bill in the form of a price which is double what it needs to be. Such gross waste will end under socialism. Factories, raw materials and workers will be freed to produce what is needed.

We also don't need the vast apparatus of the state which exists under capitalism and has to be paid for out of the sweat of the working class. The courts, the police, the Department of Commerce, the jails, etc., etc., all exist to allow for a tiny ruling class to keep control through persuasion or force. A workers' state exists only to serve the working class. Just take one example, law enforcement. When there is no ruling class with vastly unequal amounts of property to be protected, crime will be reduced to a fraction of what it was. There will still be some crime. Socialism is not perfect and ordinary working people will still need occasional protection.

But for the first time there will be collective protection. People will cooperate safe in the knowledge that someone who has ripped off a fellow worker will not be beaten senseless, framed on a dozen charges and then treated like an animal condemned to live in a cage.

This is merely a glimpse of what socialism will be like. Just a glimpse because volumes could and have been written on this subject. But it is enough to know that there is nothing fantastically complex, idealistic, or irrational about it. Those who say it could never work

either don't know or understand it or are victims of the hundred-year-old propaganda campaign that has been waged by the capitalist ruling class against it.

PORTUGAL

The barrier to socialism is not its impracticality. The barrier is rather the undeniable power of the ruling class. They will use any means to stop socialism. This fact is being proved once again in 1975 in Portugal. There, thousands of workers have already seized their factories and are producing under workers' control. They are doing it successfully despite the fact that their efforts are constantly being sabotaged both by the companies that the capitalists still control and the other capitalist countries of Europe and North America. In Portugal, some working class neighborhoods have been taken over by residents' committees. They set low rents which ignore interest payments to the big banks. There, peasants have seized the land in the south that they have cultivated for generations as the slaves to the landlords. There, key units of the army has started to elect their officers and done away with the officer mess and other privileges.

Whether they achieve final victory now or not, the Portuguese working class has already demonstrated once again that socialism is possible. Their struggle is fast becoming the foundation for building an international movement which will make socialism not only possible but inevitable right across the world.

When the bosses herded us together in factories, forced us to work as a unit to create their profits, they taught us a vital lesson. They taught us how to organize collectively. Out of that situation the working class has developed a genius for organization, a genius that is demonstrated in the smallest wildcat strike as well as in the Portuguese revolution.

Despite this, it is true that the destruction of the ruling class will never be easy. But let no one say it is impossible. When capitalism forced the majority of people into being wage slaves, when it created a working class, it created its own hangman. The question is no longer can we hang capitalism, but how will we get it to the gallows, and when will we release the trap door.

3. The Big Step- From Capitalism to Socialism

When talking about socialism in the previous section it was stressed that socialism was a system of equality, a system in which those who worked got the benefits of their labor. But it is important to understand that socialism is not a system of equal poverty, equal misery, equal hardship. No, it is a system in which people's needs are fulfilled, not just their basic need for food and shelter, but also for decent clothes, pleasant housing, good food, extensive leisure facilities and the time to enjoy them as well. The sorts of things that are available only to the bosses and the upper middle class under capitalism will be available to all of us under socialism.

That prospect is real only because capitalism has created a system of producing goods which for the first time can guarantee abundance for everyone. But it can do this only if it is controlled for that purpose. Once the vast waste and massive profits we have talked about are eliminated, the economic conditions of every single one of us can be improved fantastically. Once we abolish the individual rat-race and start running things together, the potential for a better life for all of us is virtually unlimited.

Just look at a simple example. At present boats are a luxury that few people can afford. And those people who are lucky enough to own boats do not use them all the time, anyway. Most of the time they sit idle in their moorings. They are wasted because in this society they are privately owned. Under socialism, we will not need one of everything for every single family because things will be shared. We can also make a decision to produce more boats if that is desired. Our resources can be used more rationally. We can produce what we want and need; not things that will be wasted and sit idle most of the time.

For instance, the technology exists to produce cars that will not fall apart in five years. Once we accomplish things like that, we will have the factories and labor power to produce so-called luxury items so that everyone can have a richer life. It may be boats, or air conditioners, or tape decks—we all have the right to these items.

With the destruction of capitalism there is a liberation of production, waste is stamped out. Under capitalism all sorts of inventions and technical developments are shelved because they cut down

long-term profits. The most famous example is the light bulb which never needs replacing. But there are hundreds more, and all will be used under socialism. Production for our needs will expand, and working together, the benefits of that production will be available for all. Socialism is the system of abundance. It is possible now, capitalism has gone far enough, increased overall production enough, to make the next big step forward to socialism possible and practical today.

CONTROL OF IDEAS

But things do not happen just because they are possible and practical. After all, there is a ruling class with control over everything, using all its vast power to stop the creation of socialism. Only the working class with its power to stop all production can hope to beat them. The basic problem is that capitalism maintains control over people's ideas too. It can only be defeated if workers reject the bosses' ideas and start to act for themselves.

That is the fundamental barrier on the road to socialism. For when capitalism is stable, when there are plenty of jobs around, when prices are not going through the roof and the workers' standard of living is slowly improving, there is no real chance of a mass of workers breaking with the system and fighting for socialism. Socialism is only on the agenda when capitalism is in crisis, when there is a depression and workers are under attack from every side. Only as workers begin to fight back against capitalism's periodic depression do they begin to break with the old idea that the system is good and unchangeable.

The whole history of capitalism proves that economic depressions are inevitable, and only during depressions do revolutions take place. The period after the first world war through the twenties and into the thirties was such a revolutionary period. It has become clear that the late seventies and eighties will be the next one.

The prosperity we have known for the last generation has ended. In 1970 a recession began. No sooner had we come out of it when the worst inflation since World War II hit. That was followed by a much deeper "recession"—actually a depression. The depression ends only for the capitalists, whose profits go up while the unemployment rate remains higher than at any time since the thirties. As it ends inflation takes off at new heights and promises to hit the highest levels of the century. After it, another depression, worse than the last. And so it is going as the world lurches toward permanent depression as in the thirties.

Once again the socialist revolution, the destruction of capitalism will become a real possibility. Only out of the misery of capitalist depression can a new age arise. And history proves something else. Unless there is a party that can lead the working class there can be no revolution even then.

The crucial question for all socialists today is the creation of a workers' revolutionary party. It is not a

party like the Democrats and Republicans, where only the leaders are active members who are struggling for power on the backs of the members. The revolutionary party is the organizer of the working class, and the bosses are too powerful to be defeated unless our power is organized. The bosses have the police, the courts, the Congress, the army, the national guard, the trade union bureaucrats, the foremen, the supervisors, the press, the television, the schools, the churches all working to keep them in power. Unless we have the party to organize us we cannot beat them.

THE PARTY

The party is the body that links up all the small and isolated struggles of workers into a mighty challenge that cannot be ignored. The party prevents the bosses from isolating workers and picking them off one at a time, the bosses have centralized power which can all be focused on defeating the smallest struggle. The party exists to insure that the centralized power of the working class can be focused on supporting that same struggle. If the bosses can mobilize nationwide to defeat workers, we have to be able to do the same to stop that defeat. How many times in the history of the labor movement have picket lines been broken by scabs until mass pickets of workers from dozens of plants were organized to stop the scabs? A party has to be built that can organize those workers from the dozens, hundreds and thousands of plants into an aggressive working class force.

The party is the major weapon of the working class in the struggle for socialism. But it is more than that, it is also the memory of the working class. Only through a party can we find out our own history and learn the lessons of the past. There is no school in the land which teaches the history of past workers' struggles, which explains why some revolutions failed and what can be done next time to avoid failure. Only a party can teach those vital lessons. And it is not just history either. When workers in Los Angeles make a mistake that costs them a strike, or develop a tactic which brings victory, only a party can spread that experience to workers in Chicago, New York and Atlanta. Only a party can prevent the same mistake being made over and over again in every state of the union, in every country of the world.

Only a workers' political party, organized throughout the country, can develop the resources to organize the meetings, publish the books and print the newspapers to counter the lies of the bosses' propaganda machine. Only a mass revolutionary party, with branches in the communities and roots in the factories all across the country can organize forces great enough to overthrow capitalism.

The party has another role too. It is not just a well-oiled fighting machine, it has social and recreational functions for the members and their

families which help strengthen the solidarity of the party. And it has cultural responsibilities towards its members and supporters. A party cannot be a reflection under capitalism of what socialism is going to be like, but it can insure that working class books, plays and films which are deliberately ignored by the commercial capitalist system get the audience they deserve. Finally the party exists to protect its members because when an individual makes the decision to fight for the overthrow of the system they are immediately at risk; the system will use every possible means to stop them.

That is why the tasks of the party must be carried out in such a serious, disciplined and dedicated manner. Revolution is not a game, it cannot be achieved without great personal risk, but the party exists to minimize those risks.

SOCIALISM OR BARBARISM

To go from capitalism to socialism requires a crisis in the capitalist system and a party to lead the working class. We are entering a period in which the absence of a party is the main problem. We have to understand that unless we create the party there will be neither socialism nor the capitalism of the last period.

When capitalism is in crisis it resorts to massive barbarism to solve its problems. We witnessed that barbarism in the form of fascism in Europe during the last crisis. We witnessed it in the form of World War II which was responsible for the death of tens of millions of workers. There is nothing the capitalists won't do to protect their rotten system. If we miss the opportunity to build the party we will face the destruction of the organized working class. That has always been the choice that capitalism posed to the working class: socialism or barbarism.

The party is of vital importance. It will be built out of the actual struggles of the working class. It will be several years before those struggles are openly revolutionary. At present they are mainly defensive, but revolutionaries have to give a lead in every one of these struggles nonetheless. It is in the everyday struggle that ideas are changed, new revolutionaries are created and the party is forged. Without constant agitation in the plants on every level there can be no party. Without the party, socialism is just an impossible dream.

The party is not the thing that creates the struggle, capitalism does that. It forces workers to fight back against the constant attacks of the system. In a period of crisis the working class builds up a fantastic head of steam by itself. The question is whether that steam is dissipated in the atmosphere or channeled into the piston of the party and through that machinery turned into a power that can change the world.

add. reading -
Struggle for Workers Power
Book - Tasks for Socialists

4. Class Struggle Unionism - Our Answer to the Bureaucrats

The hold of the ruling class over workers' ideas is extremely strong. Indeed it couldn't be anything else, given the incredible power they have. Yet the fact remains that this hold is a gigantic con job. The working class is not stupid, we can't all be conned all of the time. So from the dawn of capitalism, workers have organized in trade unions to defend themselves. And it is out of these working class organizations for defense that we will build the forces we need to go over to the offensive and build socialism. The trade unions are at the foundation of the socialist strategy.

When unions were first organized in this country, they tended to protect one set of workers against another. The AFL organized mostly the skilled workers, it kept its power and delivered the goods for its members by keeping other workers out and representing only the aristocracy of labor. But as mass production industry developed, new unions which would protect the interests of production workers were required. These unions were built under the banner of the CIO in the thirties, the steel workers, teamsters and auto workers all became massive unions in this period. **They were unions born out of the struggle of the rank and file, their real organizers were working men and women and their strength lay in their ability to learn from the defeats and fight again to establish the union. The teamsters would not be the power they are today but for the victorious struggle of the Minneapolis local against the "open shop." Without the heroic Flint factory occupants the big three auto makers would never have allowed the founding of the United Auto Workers. The defeat of most of the steel companies (known as "little steel") assured the United Steel Workers of America the right to organize the vast majority of the steel industry.**

Even then, back in the thirties, the bureaucrats tended to be cut off from the rank and file (though Walter Reuther, who emerged as the supreme power in the UAW, was beaten up by the Ford Company goons in the famous battle of the overpass). But they were

under constant pressure from the members which they couldn't ignore. The trade union bureaucrats had to ensure that the union existed to defend the members.

POST-WAR PROSPERITY

By the fifties all that had changed. The prosperity of post World War II capitalism allowed the bosses to provide workers with a rising standard of living without cutting into their profits. But they demanded something in return, and they got it. What workers actually did was to trade off what little control they had over working conditions for a higher standard of living. In the UAW steward representation went from one steward for every 25-40 workers to one steward for every 300-400 workers. Shop floor organization all but disappeared.

The political climate of the fifties—the "cold war" helped open the way for these changes. Revolutionaries, socialists, even tough militants were branded Communists (agents of Russia) and either blackballed or forced underground. Removing the most class-conscious workers and worker leaders from the unions made it all the easier for the official trade union leadership to move away from the rank and file.

At the same time, prosperity of the fifties made believable the ideas that the days of the class struggle were over. Marxism and the evils of capitalism were something of the past—all workers were now part of the growing well off middle class with two cars and a color TV for every family. This myth (and it was always a myth!) greatly affected how workers viewed their situation. And so, at contract time instead of collective bargaining being the way workers collectively confronted the bosses it became a civilized, friendly process in which owner and union bureaucrat sat down to iron out their small differences. The workers were left out in the cold.

BUSINESS UNIONISM

By 1955 the crusading spirit of the CIO was gone and it merged with the AFL to form a united trade union movement. The principles of that movement were the principles of business unionism, of working with the bosses to keep the economy (and profits) expanding, of running the union like a business venture in which the bureaucrats were the managers and the members were there to be managed. All talk of defending workers was dropped and the union leaderships were at worst corrupt collaborators with the bosses and at best mediators and negotiators who insured that the members didn't win too much or lose too much.

And that is the situation today. The UAW, which is regarded as the most democratic and progressive of the major unions did absolutely nothing to protect its members against the recent massive unemployment. Its president merely noted that the corporations had

“paper-thin profits” and nothing could be done. That happened, not because Woodcock is in the bosses’ pocket, their creature and collaborator, but because he sees himself as a negotiator in the system who must do nothing to undermine the system. He believes he only has the right to get something for the workers if the workers give up something in return and the whole deal doesn’t do any harm to corporate profits. He doesn’t understand that what is good for the bosses is always bad for the workers and you have to take one side or the other.

And there is no reason why any trade union leader should understand that. They are cut off from the people they represent. They themselves don’t face the long hours, poor conditions and declining real wages that they cheerfully accept on behalf of their members. They have no real fear of having to go back to the shop-floor, the democratic process is well enough controlled in all the unions to make sure of that. They live in a totally different world. The UAW leaders live in the richest suburbs of Detroit, tens of miles and thousands of dollars from the neighborhoods of the rank and file members. When the Teamster bureaucrats disagree and start blowing up each others’ cars, the newspaper reports always speak of Lincolns and Cadillacs, never Pintos and Vegas. Of course they defend the system, even when it is viciously attacking their members, because trade union bureaucrats do very well under capitalism.

RANK AND FILE POWER

The bureaucrats may lead the unions, control the unions, but they don’t own them. They belong to us, we can win control back. The unions can once more start doing what they were meant to do, defend the working class. But that battle has to start now. It is only socialists who can lead it because the battle we are talking about is the battle between business unionism and class struggle unionism, between those who collaborate with the boss and those who understand that the bosses are the enemy class.

The key to creating class struggle unions, to organizing real defensive and eventually offensive trade unions, is rank and file organization. It means caucuses in the locals that fight for union democracy, it means organization on the shop floor to establish some workers’ control over things like line speed, discriminatory hiring and firing, safety conditions, etc. It means organizing a mass of ordinary working people who can fill the local meetings, win the elections and confidently take part in mass job actions. That is the beginning of rank and file organization.

But only the beginning. Local organization is not enough. To achieve real success workers in different plants and different industries will have to support each other with solidarity action. They will have to unite black and white, men and women, young and old, skilled and unskilled in a common struggle. The rank and file movement will have to be strong enough to take political action as well as economic action and to do this

It will need a solid base in all the major industries and all the major cities.

THE MOVEMENT HAS BEGUN

Creating such a movement is a large task, but we don’t start from square one. The process of building a class struggle rank and file movement is already underway. In a number of auto plants across the country there are growing local caucuses. A few of them come together in the United National Caucus which, although it is a weak and uneven organization, has shown the importance of a national rank and file opposition in the industry as a whole.

This year a further tentative step was taken when the UNC joined with teamster, telephone, teacher, steel, rail, and retail workers’ caucuses to take joint action as the April 26th Coalition in the Washington March against Unemployment.

The month-long wildcat of 80,000 United Mine Workers in early Sept, 1975 also shows that workers from a single local are beginning to reach out to their brothers and sisters in other locals for support and solidarity. And as the wildcat grew—so did the demands—from getting one man’s job back, to a general demand of the right to strike over health and safety. Although the action was defeated it was only done with the reformist leadership of the union coming down solidly on the side of business unionism—and most importantly—it showed what can be done when workers actively move to spread their struggle.

We are still a long way from victory, but victory is possible. The CIO was built by a mighty upsurge of rank and file workers led by socialists. Today, in other capitalists countries the present crisis is producing a new upsurge. A new national rank and file movement was recently formed in Britain. There, during the last big crisis of the twenties, the rank and file Minority Movement had one and a quarter million paid up members, vast influence in the major unions and enough power to force the trade union leaders to call the 1926 general strike. We will witness again in the next few years events on this grand scale. It is our job as socialists to prepare the ground, and establish now the beginnings of a broad rank and file movement in the plants.

Socialism will not come without a party with a revolutionary socialist program that can lead the struggle. Socialism will not come unless the vast majority of the working class supports the struggle. The class struggle rank and file movement is the bridge between the party and the bulk of the class. It brings together larger numbers of workers around a limited but militant program and thus insures that the whole working class moves forward and fights off the bosses’ attacks. It also insures that the best most proven workers leaders become part of the working classes’ ultimate weapon, the revolutionary party. Without a rank and file strategy the best party in the world has no way to prove its ability or fitness to lead the working class to power.

5. Racism - The Bosses' Favorite Weapon

When the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers was formed in the late 1800's, it refused to allow black workers to join. The bosses were able to import black steel workers as scabs in one strike after another. Finally the union was forced the reverse its decision and admit blacks as union members.

A few years later, the union called a strike against US Steel. Many blacks from the Butler Street plant of the Carnegie Company went out on strike. Three of these workers, along with a white officer of their local, went down the river to see about getting work at a union plant not affected by the strike. The supervisor there agreed to give them jobs if the white workers at the plant would agree to work beside them. The white workers, their union brothers, refused. The blacks returned to their mill and told their fellow black workers what had happened. All of the black strikers returned to work.

In 1941 thousands upon thousands of auto workers walked out of the Ford Rouge Plant in Detroit. They were fighting for a union. At first, 1500 black workers remained inside the plant. Henry Ford immediately seized upon the situation. In the plant he encouraged the belief that the union would take black workers' jobs. Outside the plant, he sent paid agents into the black community to begin a back-to-work movement.

The union saw that it must fight and defeat the bosses' attempts to use racism to divide the strikers. It actively organized a movement for solidarity. This was possible only because the union already had an anti-racist position. The UAW had defended the rights of blacks to decent jobs at union wages in the past. The union quickly became one of the first integrated institutions in Detroit. It mobilized a group of respected black leaders to get black community support for the strike. The company's plot for a back-to-work movement was destroyed. Most of the black workers inside the plant left with safe conduct through the picket lines guaranteed. The strike was won.

The bosses don't like stories that end the way the UAW strike against Ford in 1941 did. They understand—better than the union bureaucrats at times—the meaning of labor solidarity. They know that if white workers spend their energy hating black workers, if black workers have no reason to support

whites, we cannot fight together against our real enemy—the bosses themselves. The ruling class is afraid of a united working class movement; its only hope to stay on top is to keep us divided and bickering among ourselves.

POISON FOR WORKERS.

And all too often, like in the first story about the US Steel strike, white workers buy the bosses' vicious propaganda hook, line and sinker. But when you swallow poison, it's your own body that must suffer. Everytime white workers swallow racist lies, like in the US Steel strike, they cut their own throats. Racism is the bosses' favorite weapon—not just against blacks and other minorities, but against white workers too.

And in the midst of a capitalist crisis, when the workers are pushing the bosses to the wall, if workers have not successfully fought against the racist lies, then those same lies get tied in with anti-union ideas to make the beginnings of a fascist movement whose only aim is to crush the working class for the bosses. One only has to look at the Nazi movement in Germany in the 1930s and see the role of anti-semitism in allowing the bosses to smash the working class and play a key role in starting World War II. And in this country, one only has to look at organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and the American White People's Party to see that as the right wing grows in this country, it will be blacks, not Jews, who will become the scapegoats for all of the evils of capitalism!

So long as the ruling class can maintain racist ideas, it has more than a weak and divided working class to manipulate. It has cheap black labor, which it gets more profit from and can use to threaten white workers with anytime they get out of hand. ("If you don't like the way we run things around here, there are plenty more cut on the street who'd jump for a chance at your job.") By keeping blacks unemployed, it has a huge force of reserve labor it can call in whenever it likes, during wars for instance—and strikes.

Racism is the bosses' favorite weapon for one reason—it has always been effective. It follows for us that in order to fight the bosses effectively we have to be united across the race barriers they put in our way. Solidarity is the key to victory for us. But we must be clear, white workers will not fight racism or accept the leadership of more militant black workers just because it the "right and proper" thing to do. If real solidarity is to wait until white workers get an attack of conscience, we will wait forever. Solidarity will come as the struggle heats up and the only alternative to solidarity left for white workers is to be screwed by the bosses.

It is our task to insure that white workers see that there is no alternative but to break with racism. That is why rank and file caucuses must have action to end racism as the first point in their program. There can be no compromise on that, because you cannot

compromise on the issue that can lead to the defeat of the whole movement. There is no way to involve large numbers of oppressed groups in revolutionary rank and file organizations if those organizations are seen to make even the slightest concession to racism. And because of their special oppression these groups are the toughest, hardest, most dedicated fighters against the system. When capitalism created a working class to exploit, it created its own hangman. When it chose to oppress some sections of the working class even more it guaranteed that the hanging would come sooner rather than later because it designated a leadership for a revolutionary working class.

SOLIDARITY

Without solidarity and unity we are doomed, but we cannot expect oppressed groups to hold back until that unity comes to full flower. A united revolutionary party must still support the independent organization of blacks, Chicanos and other oppressed groups because every fight these organizations win is another blow to the ruling class. Nobody in their right mind would say that black parents in Boston or Louisville should not organize themselves to defend the buses, nobody could argue they should wait until white workers have seen the light. The black caucuses arose, particularly in the auto plants at the end of the sixties, with all the illusions about black foremen, etc, were a step forward for the whole working class.

Independent organizations are a vital necessity today for oppressed groups and they are also the bricks out of which the united movement will be built tomorrow. And the foundations are already being laid, for the experience of independent groups has always shown that independence is not enough, only class-wide solidarity can solve the problems. The civil rights movement, the Black Power movement, organizations like the Black Panther Party, leaders like Malcolm X, the ghetto insurrections did much to develop fighting spirit, confidence and organization in the black community, but at the end of the day it became clear to countless militants that separate organization was a dead-end and that liberation was only possible with a revolution. The revolution can only be made with a united working class and a united revolutionary party.

6. Sexism - Divide and Rule Again

RICH WOMEN AND WORKING WOMEN

We live in a country that can spend billions of dollars to send a man to the moon, yet at the same time refuses to spend millions so that children can have decent child care. Joan Little, a black woman, was put on trial for her life for the "crime" of defending herself from rape. Women on welfare are finding it more difficult to pay for food and housing, while Richard Nixon, one of the biggest crooks around, gets a \$60,000 welfare check from Congress.

These are only a few of thousands of examples of the irrationality and viciousness of a capitalist society. While all working people are victims of this system, the drive to accumulate profits rather than meet human needs has a particularly brutal effect on the lives of tens of millions of women. But the oppression of women goes back way before capitalism: it is in fact the oldest division in human society.

Most of what we know about the earliest forms of society, even before society was divided into distinct social classes, indicates that there was a basic division of labor in which women were responsible for gathering food and related tasks while men took care of hunting.

Under this arrangement women actually had considerable power. They carried out very important productive work and in fact they were considered the heads of large or "extended" family units. But when society's productive power rose above subsistence level, large scale trade began and society divided into classes, women lost this power. Their control of food production, the home and the family was stripped away. Within the family they became practically slaves to men, part of the man's "property."

It is perfectly obvious that in a modern industrial economy, where the productivity of human labor is not based on crude strength but is multiplied a hundred thousand times by machines and technology, there is no basis for maintaining a division of labor in which women are stupidly called the "weaker sex" and expected to remain in the home looking after children and cooking while men do productive work. There is no basis for maintaining a situation in which, when women do go outside the home to get jobs they should be punished with the worst jobs at the lowest pay.

Yet this is exactly what capitalism does maintain. And it must maintain it, in order to keep its profits up and its repressive social structure intact.

All the women in this society, regardless of their social class, are affected by the fact that this system denies women equal rights, keeps them powerless and even tries to deny women control of their own bodies. But all women are not equally affected by this oppression—because women are not "just" women, they are also part of very different classes.

In fact, there are some women who, on the whole, benefit from the system that survives on the oppression of women. There are the rich, who hire maids (other women) to do their housework. These rich women are parasites, who are living from the surplus value produced by workers. But that's nothing special—their husbands are, too!

Ruling class, and upper middle class women, will sometimes revolt against the fact that a sexist society denies them certain privileges—like equal access to the GM Board of Directors. Sometimes they even support struggles, like women's suffrage or the right to abortions, that are progressive and are in the interests of all women. But because of their class position these women will not go beyond middle class protest, and they will never smash sexism or liberate women—because they will not challenge the system.

But there are many more women in this society who are not only oppressed as women, but are also exploited as workers. For working women, exploitation and oppression reinforce each other. They are part of a single rotten system which women workers face every day. Most important, women workers have the power to do something about it—their struggles will have a powerful role in actually bringing this system down.

Despite the common saying "A woman's place is in the home," 40% of all US workers today are women. Over 80% of all women will work at some point in their lifetime. But women get the lowest wages, work under the worst conditions, and get least union representation. Less than 12% of all women workers are in unions—many unions refuse to organize them.

Women have been told by their bosses, the government and union officials to accept this situation, and not fight back. When women struggle to get in to better paying jobs, like driving trucks instead of typing, installing phones rather than working as operators, or working in steel mills instead of equally backbreaking work in garment sweatshops for one third the pay, they are subjected to ridicule and hostility. Male workers are taught to believe they are a threat to jobs and security, that they don't have a right to good paying jobs because they don't have to support a family. The fact is that most women who work do so because they must do so to support or help support a family. Three out of every eight families in every urban area are supported by women.

The widespread idea that women are supposed to be paid less is a powerful tool in the employer's hands. It

is one of their best weapons for dividing men and women workers, and keeping the whole working class down.

WORKING WOMAN'S SECOND JOB

But that's only half the story. The woman worker has a second job, this one unpaid—in the home. The woman is expected to be the center of the private, "nuclear" family, which this system maintains as the basic unit for reproduction and raising children. Whether she is married or not, whether she has a job or not, she must take care of the children, cook, clean, nurse and do everything else to keep the family together. Even though it would be a fantastic saving of society's resources to make good child care, collective food and laundry service available for people to use when they wanted it, each family is forced to cope with these problems individually. Under these pressures many families themselves are poisoned and destroyed.

These conditions have created a struggle for women's liberation and the beginnings of a mass working class women's movement. Socialists have a central responsibility for building this movement, so that it will have the strength and self-confidence to take on all aspects of sexism in this society.

The struggle for women's liberation is not just in the interests of women. The problems of the masses of working women are not separate from the problems of the entire working class under capitalism. A working women's movement will include women's caucuses in unions, organizations of working women like CLUW (Coalition of Labor Union Women), organizing drives to bring masses or unorganized women into the unions, and the organizations of working women which are organized and led by women themselves. But it will also be part of a united workers' movement, a united rank and file struggles, a united fight for socialism. The revolutionary party will also be united, fighting to end all aspects of oppression.

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7. The Capitalist State and Its Democratic Party

We have already seen that the basic conflict in the system is the struggle against exploitation in the workplace. But recent years have seen mass anti-war struggles, student struggles, and consumer rebellions. The black liberation movement has ranged from civil rights to housing, to education, welfare, police brutality and more. The world is not just workplaces, and if the revolutionary party is to make its vision of a new world a reality, it must build every struggle against injustice and connect it to the struggle for workers' power.

The more successful we are in battle, on the job or anywhere else, the more we find ourselves up against not only our immediate ruling class enemy but the state as well.

What is the state? It is made up, first, of all public institutions that make decisions about our lives (legislatures, courts, bureaucrats, school boards, etc.) Then there is a massive violent organization to compel us to obey those decisions (police, FBI, military, prisons). The state does for the bosses what the party does for us. It organizes them, despite their cutthroat competition, to act in their own class interest. It provides the laws which are designed to keep workers passive in the workplaces. It protects the bosses' private property and it controls the rest of society in the general interest of profits. Its big advantage to the bosses is that it claims to be neutral, that it stands between the classes. But when push comes to shove it always exposes which side it's really on by issuing injunctions against strikers, imposing cooling-off periods, etc. So in fact we can't take on the bosses without taking on the state. How do we do this?

We live in a capitalist democracy. This means that a few of the state officials are elected by the people. Like everything else under capitalism, democracy is a product to be bought and sold by those rich enough to do so. Freedom of speech means anyone can publish a daily newspaper, or have a TV or radio station, if they have a few million dollars and the backing of corporate advertisers. You're free to assemble, if someone will rent you a hall and you can afford it.

Then there are elections. Any party can win an election, if it can buy enough organization and publicity to defeat the other. Your vote is only a rubber stamp to a whole series of decisions already taken by the bosses.

An average worker probably spends no more than twenty minutes in a whole lifetime voting. And then it's for hypocritical politicians rather than policies. This is not democracy, there is no "control by the people."

In the US the "two-party system" means that elections are bought and sold through the Republicans and Democrats. They are wrapped in slightly different paper—but the basic product is identical. The Republicans are pro-business and say so; the Democrats are pro-business too, but say they are for "the little man." Of course to get workers to think it's the "working man's party," the Democratic Party has to do a few things for workers.

But as New York's Democratic mayor Abe Beame showed, when it comes to choosing between the workers and the bankers it's no contest. The Democratic Party has been in power nationally for most of the last four decades. Inequality has not been wiped out; it has increased. Even the most minor promises like legalizing the union shop in "right-to-work" states have proven to be worthless rhetoric, to say nothing of vows to "wipe out poverty."

The Democratic Party is a capitalist party. One of the important roles it plays for the system is to tame and swallow up radical and militant black movements. These groups try to remain independent and radical. But they soon find they don't have enough power alone to make the changes they want. In the absence of a strong militant labor movement to support them, they are eventually drawn to the left wing of the Democratic Party. Once inside, they have to tone down so much that they become part of the establishment.

RADICALS BEWARE

A good example of this is what happened to the anti-war movement when Eugene McCarthy ran for the Democratic Party Presidential nomination in 1968. Thousands of young anti-war activists had been becoming more and more radical, more and more against the whole system. Many had been won to the support of Eldridge Cleaver, the Black Panther who was running for President on the Peace and Freedom Party ticket. They support the Black Panther Party's radical demands for black people. But when McCarthy announced he was running, this radical movement collapsed. The radical movement was not strong enough to hold its supporters when someone more "legitimate" with a better chance of winning his election came along. The young anti-war supporters "got clean for Gene" and spent their time campaigning for him instead of continuing to expose the whole system and build the alliance between the anti-war movement and the black movement.

Another example is the myth that it was President Roosevelt in the 30's who gave us the right to have unions, social security and welfare. He only signed those laws as a concession to a militant labor movement

that was demanding much more, and would have become far more radical if he didn't do something.

The purpose of the sometimes radical rhetoric of the Democratic Party is to integrate dissatisfied people into it and defuse their movements. On the surface, the John Conyers, Ron Dellums, and Bella Abzug make it seem different. But don't be fooled! Also in the Democratic Party is Mississippi Senator James Eastland, George Wallace, and numerous other racist reactionaries. The only people who get what they want out of this are the politicians who get elected, and the ruling class, who gets peace. The voters get what they always got—nothing but broken promises. To give the Democratic Party any kind of support—to vote for even the most radical of its spokespeople as “lesser evils”—is to fall for the whole shabby confidence trick.

NO CURE

The Democratic Party is no cure, it is part of the illness. Workers have to have their own party. It makes no sense to fight the bosses every day and then support them at the ballot box. Nor does it make any sense to ignore the ballot box. The election of real workers' representatives into office would give us another platform to use against the bosses, another means of bringing more workers into our camp.

The real question is which class the elected officials represent. We struggle to make the unions oppose the bosses nationally by breaking with the Democratic and Republican parties and organizing a Labor Party. This doesn't mean running George Meany for President. He is as hostile to us as Nixon and Ford and all his other friends. We are struggling for unions that will back a Labor Party which puts the workers' interests before the bosses. It means creating a party which can give us representatives who are not bogus “friends of labor” but actually those who do labor and always did.

LABOR PARTY

The ideas of class struggle unions and the Labor Party cannot be divided. After all suppose a Labor Party candidate was elected mayor of New York. Upon taking office the new mayor would immediately pay the city workers instead of the bankers. But, leaving aside the fact that the Supreme Court would immediately declare this illegal, there would still be a problem that the banks would refuse to lend any more to the city. They would probably organize their friends in the big corporations to refuse to pay taxes or move out altogether, throwing thousands of workers onto the unemployment lines. So a Labor Party that just saw the answer as electing people to office would be doomed to early and total failure. The Labor Party in Britain for instance, after years in power, is nothing but an absurd failure totally at the mercy of the ruling class.

A Labor Party that really represented the working

class and oppressed would have no choice, indeed we would allow it no choice, but to fight against the capitalist system and the capitalist state in all their aspects. They would have no choice but to champion the only alternative, workers' power.

It is the continuous struggle between the two classes which pose this stark alternative. As the crisis in the system develops, this struggle will get sharper and the alternatives more clear to millions of workers. It is the class struggle which will expose the real role of the state and the Democratic Party.

There is a story which sums up this section beautifully. In 1972 in a plant in Vermont, state troopers were being used to force a way through a United Electrical Workers picket line so the foremen could scab. As the crush developed and the picket line was forced back, an older militant remarked to a younger worker at his side, “Well, I guess this is what they call in the books class struggle.” The young striker came back with, “Class struggle, bullshit. Just a bunch of lousy cops brought out by this bastard company to beat our brains in.”

Ideas change, things are clearer when the struggle breaks out in the open. Whether you call it “the role of the state as the agent of the capitalist class” or “a bunch of lousy cops brought in by this bastard company” it is still the same vital lesson that has to be understood if we are to go forward.

8. Imperialism - Capitalism by Its International Name

In today's world there is no such thing as economic independence. The whole world is tied together economically. Even the most isolated South Pacific island is part of the world capitalist market.

Only last year Chrysler tried to blame its losses in Britain for creating some of the layoffs in the US. At the same time they were settling a strike in Britain with a 30% raise and making secret plans to start assembling French Simcas there. That is the scope of operations of just one of the smaller multinational companies.

And it isn't just the multinationals that are totally tied into world trade. Take a single-nation company like American Motors which has no overseas subsidiaries and doesn't export cars out of North America at all. In order to produce its cars it needs tools from Germany, electronics from Japan, chrome from southern Africa, rubber from Malaya. In other words, in order to make profits in America the capitalists have to organize exploitation on a world scale. The fight for socialism must be on a world scale too.

When you are organizing in a factory you cannot ignore the rest of the corporation. To take one example, the UAW local at the GM plant in Norwood, Ohio struck in 1973 against the inhuman conditions brought in by GMAD, GM's special speedup division. They struck for months, but lost—because the UAW leadership deliberately struck only one plant at a time and let the rest produce as usual.

The same thing is even more true when you attack capitalism as an international system.

When workers in the US take on their employers, the American ruling class, they are taking on the power that dominates the whole capitalist world. The reverse is also true. When the people of Chile tried to take over and run their own country, they were confronted by the American ruling class with its billions invested in Chile—ITT, Anaconda Copper, and the other multinational corporations backed up by the CIA.

The advanced capitalist nations of the world are tied up to the extent that a strike in one country can be beaten by increased production in another. Together

these advanced countries operate an imperialist system which totally oppresses the rest of the world. It is an integral part of the quest for the profits and power of the capitalist ruling classes. Such a system can be fought only by an international movement. That is what is developing at different rates all across the world.

In the US, the International Socialists is growing into a workers' combat organization with real links to the developing rank and file movement. In Britain, our IS comrades are further along the road with branches in the major plants and a newspaper which sells in tens of thousands to workers every week. In Italy our comrades have won their first seats in regional parliaments. In Portugal our comrades created the Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers and Sailors. We are not alone, the movement is growing everywhere. Each gain by our comrades abroad is a step forward for us and without them we cannot succeed.

THE UNDERDEVELOPED WORLD

Capitalism is an international system but that does not mean there is an equal rate of economic development across the world. Quite the reverse is the case. The rich and powerful nations take over the underdeveloped countries and ruin them. Even when these countries are independent in name they are dependent in economic fact. They cannot compete with the imperialist giants. They can therefore only produce what they are allowed to produce. Their whole development is warped and they fall victim to a gigantic and continuing rip off by the rich countries of the world.

And ruin means much more than economic dependence. It means developing misery on a fantastic scale. Take the example of India. When the British arrived in the late 1700's it had a developed textile industry and a higher level of culture than its conquerer. It had a system of agricultural production that was advanced enough to allow almost 40% of the population to live off in the urban areas.

By the time the British were kicked out in 1948 India's textile industry had been destroyed and its culture suffocated. Only 5% of the population lived in towns, while in the countryside there was mass starvation. That is the typical story of capitalism in its international form. In order to produce more effective exploitation at home, there must be the outright subjugation and oppression of the under-developed world. The poor countries are systematically forced to produce just raw materials that advanced capitalism requires to keep up its profit levels. Having specialized in only a few products they are then forced to accept whatever price the imperialist country wants to pay. Unless, like the Arabs, they have a plentiful supply of a very valuable and scarce commodity like oil. Then they can get together with other producers to enforce something approaching a fair price.

We must be clear that this whole rotten system of

imperialism depends on the oppression of the under-developed nations of the world. The struggle against imperialism is the same struggle as that of workers against capitalist exploitation.

That is why revolutionaries support every single liberation struggle against imperialism anywhere in the world. Even if that struggle is led by a bureaucratic Communist Party which is interested only in establishing a new form of oppression, as was the case in Vietnam, it still deserves the total support of socialists.

Just as we stand for the principle of workers taking democratic control of their own unions, so we support the right of all nations to take control of their own countries. This right of nations to self-determination is an important weapon in the fight against imperialism. Even when it only means that workers are now exploited by bosses of their own color it is still a blow for the world capitalist system. It still makes it more difficult (though not impossible) for the rich nations to carry on their calculated rip off.

Of course, it can be the case that such a change in ruling classes would create an even worse situation for workers of that country. Self-determination may not at times be in the interests of the working class. In that situation no socialist could advocate self-determination as a way forward. But the right to independence can still exist, in the same way as the right to divorce can exist in every marriage without creating a policy that every marriage must end in divorce.

INEVITABLE WAR

The products of imperialism go beyond underdevelopment and the oppression of nations. The imperialist powers fight among themselves to control markets, resources, and smaller nations. They create huge military machines and drain off hundreds of billions for arms races. They drag even the smallest, poorest countries into their power struggles. Eventually the result is World War, in which tens of millions of workers are sent to be slaughtered. Already in this century there have been two wars fought to re-divide the world. If we fail to stop the social systems that produce these wars, there will be a third.

One of the vicious tactics which bosses in different countries use against each other is called "protectionism." They set up tariffs, for example, to keep each other's products out and keep prices and profits high at home. For example, US auto manufacturers may argue for huge tariffs to keep out Japanese cars. To make the argument convincing, they try to picture Japanese workers as competing for US workers' jobs—when it's really two sets of bosses fighting each other.

Very often, union leaders fall for this trick. But the logic of protectionism is exactly what leads to war. Whenever American workers let themselves be tricked into accepting protectionism, they make any real

common struggle with Japanese or other workers impossible. Every success of protectionism weakens the working class.

INTERNATIONALISM

The internationalism of the revolutionary movement is not a luxury to be taken lightly but a vital and urgent necessity. Without the struggle of revolutionaries in Mozambique and Angola the Portuguese fascist regime would never have been forced into a costly war. Without that unpopular war the Portuguese revolution would not have taken place and without the revolution there would be not independence for Angola and Mozambique. Internationalism is a two-way street, it cannot be neglected particularly here in the belly of the capitalist monster.

9. Russia - The First Workers State

RISE OF BUREAUCRATIC CLASS

The working class that took power in 1917 was terribly weakened. The soviets ceased to function and bureaucrats moved into their places. Lenin, and after his death, Trotsky, tried to rouse the new inexperienced workers against this, but the tide proved irresistible.

At the same time, the peasants turned against the workers. The peasants had originally supported the revolution because they were given land when the big landlords were dispossessed. But now they started to try and starve the towns into paying high prices for food they produced, so the base of the revolution shrunk further.

Under Stalin's leadership, the bureaucrats finally took over the Bolshevik party, the last line of defense the workers revolution had. Once more the workers faced exploitation by an enemy class. Up to 1928 real wages were 151% of what they had been in 1913 while productivity (how hard they worked) was only 106% of the 1913 figure. The 1936 figures, after Stalin had taken over show the change: real wages were down to 65% of 1913 and productivity was up to 332%.

The majority of the original Bolsheviks were killed by Stalin in the purges of the 30's, while virtually every achievement of the revolution was systematically reversed. The soviets, independent trade unions, factory committees, and revolutionary workers' parties were abolished. Gains for women's liberation such as the right to divorce or free abortions were lost. Russia became once again a "prison house of nations" with the renewed oppression of Georgians, Ukrainians, Jews and others. Homosexuality was banned, authoritarian discipline was reinstated in the class room. The word "totalitarianism" was coined to describe a land where no freedom to dissent was tolerated.

And this became known as Socialism! Socialism, communism, words which had meant the greatest possible freedom came to mean their opposite.

For although these bureaucrats destroyed the revolution, they did not restore capitalism; that is, return the factories to private hands to be run for private profits. Instead they established "bureaucratic collectivism." In this new social system the state owns the means of production, but a new ruling class of bureaucrats "own" the state. They told everyone that this is what socialism really meant.

"Socialism in one country" also meant that Communists outside Russia were no longer trying to lead the working class of their country to power. Instead their first job was to "Defend the Soviet Union" by supporting or oppressing their rulers in line with Stalin's foreign policy. In Spain the CP actually brutally suppressed a workers' revolution to help Stalin's alliance with the rulers of France, Britain, and the US.

In October 1917 the Russian working class overthrew capitalism and established the first workers' state. This was achieved through the "soviets" which were the local councils of workers' delegates elected from their workplaces, soldiers from trenches and barracks, and peasants from the fields. These councils met in a democratic National Congress of Soviets and ordered the capitalist government arrested, factories turned over to the workers, the land to the peasants, an end to the war.

The Bolshevik Party, led by Lenin and Trotsky, had won a majority in the councils. The struggles of the revolution since February 1917 (when the Tsar was overthrown) convinced first the workers, then the soldiers and peasants, that workers' power was the only way to win "Peace, Land and Bread."

The workers' revolution was actively opposed by every capitalist class in the world. Within weeks of its founding, the new workers' state had to fight off not only the Russian capitalists, landlords and generals, but 14 invading armies from countries like the US, Britain, France and Germany, whose rulers tried to drown it in blood as soon as possible. Even though these capitalist powers were still fighting each other in World War I, they were even more interested in crushing the struggle for workers' power.

Workers' power in Russia inspired workers everywhere. In Germany, Italy, Hungary and elsewhere workers were rising up in rebellion and revolutionary workers' parties were formed in nearly every country. The workers wanted to rebuild war-torn Europe on a system of workers' councils.

But these new revolutionary parties had been formed too late to be successful. The revolution was already underway before they had the chance to really get organized. Lacking experience, the new Communist Parties acted before local conditions were ripe, or failed to act when they were. Piece by piece the workers' rebellion was snuffed out and capitalism rebuilt.

The revolution in Russia was strangled by this enforced isolation. For although the Soviet Union was never defeated, once it was isolated such a primitive country could not keep socialism alive.

By 1921 the years of war, revolution, civil war and famine were taking their toll in Russia.

INTERNATIONAL EFFECTS

Trotsky, who was exiled from Russia and later murdered, led the struggle internationally to continue fighting for workers' power. These were grim times, when many lost faith, and the Trotskyists were in a small minority, but they maintained the tradition of revolutionary socialism, of workers' control, for us today.

The triumphant armies of the US and Russia crushed the rebirth of a revolutionary workers' movement after World War II. Bureaucratic collectivism conquered in many more countries, either through Russian bayonets in Eastern Europe, or in Third World countries where anti-imperialist movements turned to Stalinism as the only opponent of capitalist imperialism.

As US domination of the capitalist countries began to break up, so did Russian domination of the bureaucratic collectivist world. China has emerged as a rival. Many revolutionaries in the US look to China's leaders to guide the world revolution in place of the now discredited Russians. But a struggle for workers' power internationally cannot be led by Mao's China where workers' power doesn't exist and has never existed. Mao supports in practice Stalin's idea that socialism means an elite controls everything and builds its power on the backs of the workers and peasants of a poor country.

He is also building an alliance with the US against Russia to protect the power of the Chinese Communist Party bureaucracy. This policy has already meant the betrayal by China of liberation forces in many countries of the under-developed world. In first Ceylon, then Bangladesh, and now Iran and Angola, China supported the most reactionary elements in the struggle. China linked up with the Americans to preserve the rotten pro-imperialist governments of these countries and thus lent its support to the continued oppression of millions of people.

In Portugal China's policy took a further step backwards. There they support the so-called Socialist Party, which is the main force trying to preserve capitalism in Portugal. A force which will assist the fascists to retake power rather than let the workers gain control. A force which has the full backing of NATO and all the capitalist countries of the world.

China takes this line because the only other forces in the field are the Communist Party, which has Russian support, and the Workers' Councils, which represent real workers' democracy and an end to the manipulation and power of the bureaucrats. It is no accident that neither the US, Russia, or China will support the third force in Portugal. The revolutionary socialist alternative is equally terrifying to all of them. Revolutionary socialists support the Workers Councils for we oppose both capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism no matter what form they take. We oppose them because their only interest is to prevent the

establishment of workers' power and a real socialist society in which people control their own lives and labor and are not controlled by bosses and bureaucrats.

CHINA'S INTERNAL POLICY

At home the regime exploits the workers and peasants. Strikes for better wages or working conditions—or anything else—are forbidden. Until recently they were illegal. Since they were legalized the government has sent in troops to break them, just as they do here.

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution antagonism broke out in the open. The vicious exploitation of the regime was exposed. City workers had been sent to the countryside; peasants were brought to the city—in name of breaking down divisions between town and country.

What had actually happened was that, in going to the country, city workers lost pay (pay was lower) and all fringe benefits. Many of these were "temporary" and received lower pay and fringes. In other words it was all a means of the bureaucratic ruling classes taking more of what the workers produced—the same game the ruling class plays here.

10. I.S. - From Words to Action

The early seventies have seen the dawn of a new era. From the second World War up to the last couple of years, all the usual ups and downs of the capitalist system have been acted out with a back-drop of general economic growth. Now those ups and downs, booms and slumps are part of a picture of steady decline across the capitalist world. The reasons for that could be the subject of a whole book and this is not the place to go into details. But it remains a fact that the dominance of the US over the world, the massive and wasteful spending on arms, and increased government assistance to the corporations which for twenty years prevented a new depression can no longer work.

We are at the beginning of a period which has more in common with the twenties and thirties than it does with the fifties and sixties. A period of economic crisis, mass unemployment, high inflation and consequently a vast upsurge of class struggle, as workers mobilize to defend themselves. And defend themselves they must, for in order to shore up their threatened profits there is nothing the bosses will not inflict on the working class. At one end of the scale we are faced with layoffs, speedup, wage cuts and black listings. At the other end the certainty that if profit levels require it, there will be war, fascism and the physical destruction of the best militants of the working class.

The working class will not take this lying down. There will be rapid growth of the workers' movement. Militancy will increase, strikes will increase, lock-outs, factory occupations and street demonstrations will become common place. The next decade will be a stark contrast to the last twenty years. Already other countries that faced the world-wide capitalist crisis earlier are experiencing these conditions. Italy, Spain, Argentina and Britain are the image of America tomorrow.

In those countries workers are fighting back. Those who believe that American workers won't follow suit should look at the history of the 1930's, the last time we faced similar conditions. There was street fighting in virtually every major city, general strikes, factory takeovers forced by armed National Guardsmen and the creation in a few years of a massive new trade union movement, the CIO. [Congress of Industrial Organizations]. That was in a period when workers had no high expectations of what capitalism could deliver, when organized workers were a tiny proportion of the workforce. So we should be clear, growth in size,

strength and militancy of the workers' movement is inevitable. Its defeat is certain without a workers' party to lead it. We are building IS to give that lead.

WHY THE IS

With its strategy of class struggle unionism, with its firm adherence to the principle of socialism from below, IS is the only organization that has the real potential for creating that party.

Other organizations on the left fall into three categories. There are several varieties of Stalinist/Maoist organizations (October League, Revolutionary Union, Communist Labor Party) which aim to build themselves into a "new anti-revisionist Communist Party."

However, because of their Stalinist politics these groups do not believe that the independent power of the working class is the basis of socialism. They believe that, as in China, the workers must be controlled by the party. In some cases they adhere to the idea of Mao's "bloc of classes," in which workers' interests are sacrificed for an alliance with the middle class controlled by the party from the top.

The politics of the Maoist groups also can change very rapidly. Because of all these factors, they are very inconsistent in their work in the plants. Where they build rank and file groups, they will often lead them into alliances with opportunist bureaucrats—or on the other hand into sectarian isolation. They are usually unfriendly to rank and file groups which they do not control. They are especially hostile to the IS and "Trotskyism," because they know we are fighting for the power of workers and not of a new set of bureaucrats.

The organization which the Maoists are trying to replace is the Communist Party-USA, or the CP. The CP has several thousand members and is bigger than the other left organizations put together at this time. However the CP has not been a revolutionary party since the early 1930's, when it became slavishly committed to every policy set down by Moscow. The CP often gives support to liberal capitalist politicians, especially prominent Black Democrats. It has no clear policy in the unions—often the CP tries to be friendly to bureaucrats and rank and file militants at the same time. However it is likely to be a major competitor to revolutionary socialists for a number of years, until we have built a mass movement of workers to its left.

There is also the reformist current (Socialist Workers Party, Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee, etc.) who believe that capitalists with their backs to the wall will grant more reforms than they did when they were enjoying record-breaking profits last year. There is finally a category of sectarian discussion groups who believe that socialism can be built by standing up in your armchair and shouting general slogans which do not even get a hearing in the working class.

Occasionally, on limited but key issues it may be possible to get together in a united front with some of these organizations. IS would always welcome such possibilities. But given their zero potential for building a base in the organized working class they will be increasingly irrelevant.

BUILDING THE PARTY

The massive burden of constructing a revolutionary party will fall on IS. IS is still small and pathetically weak. Being the only possible candidate for building a revolutionary party is a long, long way from being a guarantee that the party will be built. But despite the almost crushing weight of our responsibility, that responsibility cannot be shirked. The challenge must be faced by growing in quantity and quality at a faster and faster rate. That is why we are exerting every effort to build in the only place where the working class has real strength, on the shop floor. IS is first and foremost about taking action to organize revolutionary socialists at the point of production.

Our members are at the core of a growing number of rank and file caucuses. Where no caucus exists our members are devoting their time to creating them. Our limited resources are seriously focused where they can have most effect in some of the largest, most powerful unions, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, the United Auto Workers, the Communications Workers of America, and the United Steel Workers of America. In all these cases the new contract will be negotiated over the next eighteen months. At a time that will see the end of the recession and the return of double digit inflation. In a situation where high unemployment remains unaffected by the 1976 election year mini-boom, there will be harder fought contract struggles than we have seen for years. The possibilities for building the rank and file movement in this situation will be great indeed.

Already by seizing the initiative, IS/IBT members are playing a leading role in the developing, nation-wide Teamsters for a Decent Contract movement. As with the Post Office contract last summer, IS members, whatever their jobs, will be working in the spring to assist workers in places like the electrical industry to mount a militant contract fight and bring more of them into the IS.

It is over the next year that the beginnings of a rank and file movement must be constructed and the foundations of a workers' revolutionary party must be laid. For by 1977-78 we will once more be facing a gigantic recession, deeper than anything we experienced in 1974. This recession will carry with it attacks on the working class unparalleled since the thirties.

But IS is about much more than building the rank and file. Active solidarity work with the revolution in Portugal is a duty we cannot ignore. Fighting the growing racist organizations that will be the core of a

future fascist movement is also our job. Already our members in Louisville have faced up to the first test on that score in the busing crisis. It is our job to intervene in the Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW) and more than that, to lay the foundations for a strong working women's movement. This is just a small part of the activity we must take on in the present period and IS must grow to be able to fulfill these tasks.

We have not embarked on an easy journey. We will have many setbacks along the way before we are in the position of the British IS, which is on the verge of creating the first workers' revolutionary party that has existed in that country for fifty years. To succeed we will require a level of dedication and discipline much greater than we have today. The bosses and their state machine will use massive violence and intimidation to try and stop us. Only if we build a solid and large base in the working class, only if we seize every initiative at every level will it be possible to win. But win we must for the final alternative for the working class is exactly the same as it was in the thirties—war, fascism and the death of millions of workers.