

BAY AREA TDC REPORT AND EVALUATION
Bay Area Teamster Fraction

The following was adopted by the Bay Area Teamster Fraction after a number of discussions. We feel that such reports should be seen by the whole organization and not just the IBT fraction, so we are submitting it to be included in the internal bulletin. (This is a somewhat modified version of an earlier report circulated by Joel J. at the May NC.)

* * * * *

The Bay Area experience contains many lessons for the future about how and how not to build such movements, lessons which will apply to many future situations for the IS. Once learned, these lessons should considerably improve our ~~x~~ local as well as national performance. Locally, our main failures lay in two areas: 1) in applying the TDC national line too quickly without having built up the necessary base, and 2) in pushing the IS too vigorously without having worked long enough with other TDC activists. On the national level, the ~~x~~ main weakness seemed to lie in the lack of active participation by non-ISers in the national TDC which produced a ~~xxx~~ tendency toward IS substitutionism for the rank and file. This report shall deal with both in turn.

Comrades should understand that our situation was weak on two counts from the beginning: first, we had nobody with a full time job in freight, only two casuals recently in the union; and second, the Bay Area enjoys much better conditions than in the rest of the country. Wages are a little higher, we had a six day paid sick leave (now 9 days), an 8:00 AM starting time, a better grievance procedure, and an exclusive union hiring hall. This meant that while there was general opposition toward the international union officials, the local union officials had a much more solid base among the rank and file and especially the stewards.

But we went ahead anyway with what we had, which was mainly through The Fifth Wheel. Our first meetings tended to attract out-bureaucrat types just checking TDC out. But after we began to do mass leaflet distribution on car windshields, we began to get better attendance -- in quality as well as quantity. For the first few months we were mostly shooting in the dark. We had 5 or 10 people actively circulating petitions but precious few were in Local 70, our main area of concern, since it is the largest local in the area and dominates Joint Council 7. Our main problem was developing a rank and file TDC cadre who would take primary responsibility for TDC in their locals. This was accomplished in Local 287 (San Jose) and 85 (S.F.) in varying degrees and with different problems. After holding a meeting in San Jose in December, which was not all that successful, the local's dispatcher, a dynamic rank and file oriented guy, took responsibility for setting up a local TDC chapter. He set up a TDC table at the hiring hall. Without any help from us, except for the literature, TDC in San Jose began holding meetings with as much as 80 Teamsters attending, including every steward from the freight barns. They got close to 2,000 petition signatures, passed both TDC resolutions unanimously, and made up a good proportion of our March 13 rally. The problem was that they were almost completely isolated from the rest of the Bay Area TDC. Although they were ~~x~~ invited to all our meetings, they only attended one or two. The dispatch clearly made the group go, while other more opportunist elements took positions on the SJ steering committee without any commitment to its goals. One of these guys ~~xxx~~ who we had talked to about the IS very early on, actually ~~xxx~~ set up and organized TDC at the San Jose TDC meeting . . . and he was vice-chairman of the steering committee after the March 13 rally, and was ~~xxx~~ the only one who stayed in contact with the rest of the

supporters of Ray Talavera, now Sec.-Treas. of the local, who as elected as an insurgent a few years back but who is now offering little leadership in the local. Most of these people are respected by the better rank and file elements in the local. They are quite clear about wanting to be part of a rank and file movement which would go beyond the contract. Their problem, however, was undo cautiousness about bringing up TDC in the local, either in the barns or at meetings. They tended to like organizing quietly rather than publicly, like with mass leafleting. During the campaign, they improved upon this. It was also relatively easy to be open socialists with these people, although they are by no means immediately recruitable. The real problem was always Local 70. After our initial contact with the out-bureaucrats, we began to draw some rank and filers to our meetings, including a few stewards, around the middle of January (we had already been working with Local 85 people for about a month before that.) With these few rank and filers we began to try and build a base in the barns with the intention of passing the two TDC resolutions at the February membership meeting. Our problem was that only a few Local 70 people could hold these barn meetings, so that only 3 were actually held before the membership meeting, all of which were quite successful. This, along with mass leafleting, helped produce a good turnout at the membership meeting, although we were still reduced to one or two spokespeople. The President, Jimmy Muniz, and the Sec.-Treas. Chuck Mack, were in Chicago although they sent a telegram advising the membership not to vote for the TDC motions. The motions passed anyway, 102-67, though clouds were quick to form on the horizon.

The next day Mack and Muniz flew back and began to organize some stewards against TDC. They couldn't have picked a better time. In the past, many rank and filers had stood back from TDC as an unknown quantity. Now that the local had actually passed the TDC resolutions, TDC was suddenly respectable. This didn't last long. Mack, along with a number of BA's, held barn meetings in every major barn attacking TDC as a small group of power hungry socialists. Mack had somehow got a hold of the Art Fox letter, had "selections" from WP and even the Conspiracy pamphlet-- all to prove that TDC was really just a part of a communist plan to make a revolution. This red-baiting had little immediate effect on the rank and filers we were working with, although it immediately cooled off most of the rest of the rank and file. As events showed, even our active rank and filers, who were completely inexperienced at dealing with red-baiting, eventually succumbed to it.

We always expected to be attacked, but we were clearly not ready for it. We knew that Mack was kissing Fitz's ass so as not to lose our starting time and hiring hall, which the companies were threatening to do. The last thing Mack wanted was for his local to endorse TDC. He had to prove the local was well in hand. After all, his had been the only local in the country to pass the TDC resolutions over the opposition of the local leadership. We were simply unable to hold enough barn meetings to convince people that we were a genuine rank and file movement because we lacked the base to do so. Our mass leafleting didn't help much because it had to be anonymous, whereas the officials were quite out front. Nobody in particular was attacked so that we could arouse sympathy, as in Pittsburgh.

This meant that by March 13, we had already lost much in Local 70, so that the turnout from 70 was relatively small. But the worst was yet to come.

Meanwhile, the plans for the rally were going well. We had large steering committee meetings in February (around 35 at one of them), which caused us to elect a real steering committee so that business could be conducted. Essentially, this had the most active people on it from all the locals in the area. We put out a good leaflet, with different texts on the back for different locals. We sold raffle tickets beforehand, which helped raise a good deal of money. And most important, our steering committee was functioning well. People took it seriously by attending regularly. They took on assignments for the rally, in publicity, leaflet writing, security,

etc. Indeed, the rally was the culmination of a great deal of rank and file involvement.

The rally itself came off very well, but a number of events occurred which weakened its impact, especially on the TDC cadre. First, we expected that the Sparts would be there to disrupt the rally so the steering committee made sure a security squad was set up to stop any publically anti-TDC activity, at the same time defending the right of groups to sell papers. We had people selling WP and Conspiracy pamphlets there. It turned out that this invited a great deal of antagonism, primarily from the San Jose people, who didn't want non-Teamster "rads" "using" their rally. Some of the more rotten elements in the San Jose contingent actually formed their own little goon squad to move sellers away from the rally. One of our most committed activists was in charge of security and was therefore in the unenviable position of having to defend our sellers from fellow Teamsters, who were not about to go along with the steering committee policy anyway. This situation bummed him out so bad that he began to be more receptive to tales of socialist manipulation of TDC.

The week following the rally, Mack held a number of discussions with another one of our activists in Local 70, a steward who had made the TDC motions at the membership meeting but who was actually quite conservative about TDC and the role of socialists in it. During these discussions, Mack convinced him that TDC was socialist manipulated, "proving" it to him with the Conspiracy pamphlet and with lies that TDC was out to call a national wildcat. Without talking to anyone else, this steward got up at a stewards meeting and denounced it as an IS front, and announced his intention to withdraw the TDC motions at the upcoming membership meeting. This was a disaster. We lost a few more people from the steering committee, leaving us with a few militant die-hards and a totally discredited movement in Local 70. At the next membership meeting, which was well attended, this same steward made the motion to delete any mention of TDC, which was passed almost unanimously. Only one of our people, not in freight, spoke

At this point, we figured that the only thing that could save us would be a sellout. So we leafleted the strike vote meeting with an expose of the union's final compromise offer, which the local leadership contradicted on the wage demands. But we had no one to speak at the meeting, no one to provide any direction. Meanwhile, the officials, unlike any other major local in the country, made detailed plans of how the strike would be run, right down to issuing picked instructions. In Local 70 the strike was a lack luster affair, leaving the ranks apathetic and confused. There was little sentiment against going back even without seeing the local supplement, unlike Local 85, whose stewards almost called a wildcat strike until they got assurances that the starting time and hiring hall had not been touched in negotiations.

This was the final "blow." Local 70 held a huge meeting explaining the terms of the contract and the local supplement. Basically nothing was lost and even a few gains were made. The overwhelming sentiment was favorable. Chuck Mack got a standing ovation for his role in negotiations. Of course, the main problem the local faces--loss of work--was not discussed, but this was almost forgotten as the local breathed a sigh of relief that our best conditions were not taken away. The ~~chances~~ chances for a rejection vote in this area are nil. There is virtually no opposition. The only question is: who takes the credit? The best, most pro-TDC rank and filers credit TDC for having pushed Mack to get assurances from Fitz that we would keep our conditions, lest the rank rebel. For most, however, TDC was not visible enough and too discredited to get the credit, even though our pressure must have played its part.

In retrospect, we could have come out of this in ~~much~~ better shape if we had not applied the national line so mechanically. We might have been mistaken for seeking the local endorsement knowing that it could

unleash a redbaiting campaign we could not stand up to. Of course, we expected Mack and Muniz to be present at the local meeting and that because of this opposition we would probably have lost the vote. If this had happened there can be little doubt that the officials would not have conducted as through a campaign. As it turned out our victory was accomplished at our own expense later on. Perhaps we should have used the time to mobilize for the March 13 rally and given ourselves more time to work with those we had only recently met and involve new people.

We made a number of mistakes regarding our role as socialists. Our problem was not that we were not open enough, but that we were too open, without having enough credibility in the industry to back it up. We were not sensitive enough to this weakness, which left us vulnerable to the attacks by the officials. It's one thing to tell the TDC activists who we are in steering committee meetings or individually, which we certainly did. But we should not have pushed the IS further that that given our own weakness, the weakness of TDC, especially in Local 70, and the extreme anti-communism of this particular section of the work force. The question of socialist presence is a tactical, not a moral, question, which depends upon all these factors. In our ~~x~~ concern over being too cautious about coming out as socialists, we must be just as careful not to march into the rank and file movement as if it were the anti-war or some other middle class dominated movement. Viewed in this light, we must be more careful in the future of how we carry on our public presence in view of our rank and file activity and what effect one has upon the other. (Unlike other places, WP had been sold widely at freight barns since the beginning of TDC.) In particular, we feel that we made a mistake to announce ~~xx~~ that one of us was a socialist at the rally, since that person had been the most public spokesperson in the past, was giving what was really the major political speech, and had never been personally baited as socialist the way, for instance, Mel had in Pittsburg. And besides, our group was much too new, too tenuous, to bring this into it in that way.

Similarly, it definitely was a mistake to have five people selling the paper or the pamphlet at the rally, people who were obviously not Teamsters. At the very least, we should not have insisted on selling once we encountered opposition.

And finally, on the pamphlet itself, it was not very clear on the relationship of socialists to TDC, and so in some ways left us open to attack. It was obvious that the last few sections of the pamphlet were not written with as much care as the rest. This was too bad since this would obviously be the area that any red-baiting Teamsters would take the most care to read. In particular, we should have laid more stress on the fact that socialists build the rank and file movement because of the real gains it can win rather than stressing the role of the rank and file movement in building toward socialism. Also, more care should have been given to make the reader feel that the writers themselves were Teamsters living and working under these same conditions, rather than some strange implant into the union. Finally, there was far too much rhetoric more typical of the "left" than working class militants. This rhetoric itself was enough to convince some rank and filers that an evil conspiracy was behind TDC. The pamphlet should not have been given mass distribution among the rank and file (ie, selling at the rally or at barns). We think that more care has to be given to identifying the exact audience for and purpose of our pamphlets.

ON THE NATIONAL TDC

On the whole, the national TDC intervention was very good, especially on overall strategy for the development of the contract fight. The timing of the petition, the petition itself, and the March 13 demonstrations, plus the generally good quality of the ~~xxxxxx~~ CONVOYS helped us a great deal as did the national and regional TDC/UPSurge travelers.

However, there were areas that revealed serious weakness and confusions at the national level which hampered us in our local work. Mostly,

these problems seem attributable to the a lack of active involvement by non-IS'ers in the national TDC resulting in a tendency toward IS substitutionism. Since the Bay Area TDC was so affected by red-baiting, we were particularly sensitive and vulnerable to this problem.

Here are a few examples. The issue of Convoy immediately following the March 13 demonstrations could have been very useful to us to combat the Local 70 red-baiting campaign. But we couldn't even use it. For one thing, we made a special point of sending in different pictures of the rally to Convoy and WP only to find that WP and Convoy managed to use the same one. This meant that anyone seeing WP, which is sold widely at the barns, and Convoy would make the obvious connection, making it more difficult to dispute the charge that IS was directing TDC, etc. x We were told this was just a fuck-up, but its the kind that can occur much too frequently in an almost totally IS-run operation.

Another indication of substitutionism was the tendency to substitute somewhat crude rhetoric for agitational propaganda. One of TDC's best activists in Local 85 wrote in an article to Convoy on the Joint Council 7 supplement. When it was published, the x main point was lost, and some heavy rhetoric about the "workers" and the "bosses" was added. This really pissed him off towardd the national leadership of TDC. The Convoy story about our rally also demonstrates this. Without even checking with the Bay Area, someone in Cleveland wrote a bombastic article proclaiming how the success of our rally proved that we had beaten back the red-baiting campaign in Local 70. Of course, just the opposite was true. This is not just any fuck-up: its a fuck-up with a political direction.

A corollary to these forms of substitutionism was the tendency to substitute the democratic centralist organizational form and style x of the IS ~~xx~~ for that of TDC. This tended to be most pronounced in the TDC activist bulletins, one of which even referred to TDC's "line" on an issue. In particular, the TDC activist newsletter #4 just prior to the late March strike vote meetings was a big embarrassment to us with its commanding and even patronizing tone: "Read this carefully so that you will know what to do." It's one thing for IS members to get instructions from the center. But the same kind of instructions coming from a virtually unknown and untested national leadership just led to more disaffection with the center.

As the red-baiting came down, we realized just how much the total IS domination of the TDC national office hurt us. As some TDC activists began to drop out as a result of the red-baiting, we couldn't even ask the national office to call them for fear that they might ask about the organizational affiliations of our national organizers. Sure the TDC national steering committee was more broadbased but how many of those people were taking part in the day to day decisions and implementation? Every traveler to the Bay Area was an IS member as were all the people in contact with us in Cleveland. It even got to the point where Joel G. was calling us on TDC business!

It's good for socialists to be part of the rank and file leadership, but at least on the national level we appeared to be all of it. This raises the important political question: Why? Could we have involved more people? Was it a matter of our weakness in Cleveland? Or could it indicate the lack of readiness of the rank and file to support and throw up a leadership for national rank and file movement at this time? We know that TDC was successful in a number of places though we have yet to get a political evaluation of it--area by area. We were a bit disturbed, for security reasons and otherwise, to read Glen's national report about our role in funding TDC, how much did TDC depend upon this as opposed to contributions from the rank and file?

We must have clear answers to these questions if we are to be at all serious about the very ambitious project of building an ongoing national rank and file organization~~xx~~. Again, we were surprised that the perspective for an ongoing organization was not even signed by anyone though it obviously represents the work of a few people. After all that we have learned

~~REPORT FROM LOCAL #4~~

- 6

about the rank and file's fear of manipulation, we should not be issuing fully worked out perspectives anonymously to our TDC activists.

At any rate, we hope that these questions will be taken up not only by the National Teamster fraction but also by the NC and the national convention.