

PITTSBURGH LOCAL STEEL FRACTION REPORT

The fraction is again functioning, meeting about every two weeks, after a lull during TDC when the branch became a Teamster branch and the steel fraction was temporarily disbanded. There are four members, two with jobs, one looking, and the organizer. No one has ~~their~~ their time in. Probation will be up for the two with jobs in mid-July.

There is some hiring in the industry going on, but very slow. We expect it will pick up in the fall when the summer help is gone.

There is not too much to be done while our working members are still on probation. For that reason too, our prospects for recruits from the fraction during the coming recruitment campaign in the fall will not be numerous. We do not expect to be able to build a periphery by that time. However, there are one or two people already (who do not yet know we are political) that we think are very likely strong recruitable contacts. We hope to be able to find a few more individuals between the time we are off probation and the beginning of the campaign. We will shortly be beginning WP sales at the plant our members are at, which will be our first sales at mills in some time.

For the near future, the fraction is concentrating on education. We are beginning with the basic steel contract, going thru it section by section and page by page. After that, we'll begin a modified version of the proposal Chicago came out with (for education) some time ago.

~~In the last two meetings of the steel fraction, we had major discussions on perspectives toward RAFT and Sadlowski.~~

On RAFT: The consensus was that our formal position on RAFT has not worked. We do not believe that IS comrades can function within RAFT in such a way that it will be built into a real organization. One reason this is true is the mild hostility from the RAFT group to our presence within it. We expect this hostility to us and our politics will only increase, now that Michelle has won a union position, and therefore probably more credibility within the group, and because Ken has left.

In some ways this means an even worse situation that we faced before, with all the problems that were already there - i.e., their politics and strong resistance to the most minimal organizational measures, our weakness and having no base to bargain with, our inability to manoeuvre sufficiently in the past to get our proposals through, etc. So, we are for formally abandoning our position of trying to make RAFT into a nat'l rank and file organization. We are for maintaining friendly relations with the group, even remaining RAFT members and where most appropriate building local RAFT groups if necessary. We are for working with them on national issues, particularly at convention and contract time when possible. The nature of that working relationship will have to be decided separately, and is a tactical question - it might mean in some cases forming a coalition with RAFT and other groups, it might mean us working under their umbrella.

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In the Sadlowski discussion, two of the comrades felt they did not have enough information or weren't ready to take strong positions. The other two felt that, based on information from Chicago that the Sadlowski campaign will most likely be built on rank and file organization, that we should be for critical support, in the same way that the British IS calls for support (without illusions) to the Labor Party. That means that we should take his victory, and pushing for it, quite seriously and as a real gain for us. That must be made very clear to the people we are working with. However, it will not be a victory for us because he is a Good Guy or anything of the sort - in fact, we expect to be forced into opposition to him once he is in - but because it will leave openings for the rank and file to organize. We of course will be very clear in our work and propaganda, WP, etc., that our strategy is class struggle unionism, that what is important and can win is not one well-intentioned will-be bureaucrat who won't take firm positions on anything, but rather growing organization and ~~movement~~ movement on the part of the rank and file - relying on our own strength. We want to use the campaign to push his supporters to take the illusions he feeds them seriously - primarily to build something around the ENA. We did not discuss what our organizational relationship should be in all our cities to his campaign apparatus; altho we believe it will be quite different and more difficult at least in Pgh. - up til now there has been no talk, publicity, or interest around him. It is very unlikely that we would want to go out and built Sadlowshi groups here.

The fraction is in desperate need for more people to apply, particularly men. (but we're not picky).

2. The majority of black people remained on the bottom rungs of society. For this reason blacks have been hit hardest by the current crisis. The capitalist crisis also threatens to wipe out most of the gains won by the black movement of the 60's. Blacks who had been excluded from the better-paying jobs until the late 60's were the first to lose them when the depression hit.
3. The attack on blacks is not limited to the loss of jobs and services. As the crisis deepens, racism is rising. The capitalists want to promote racial divisions. They do not want to have to contend with a united working class. The subtle racism coming from the ruling class creates an opening for the overt racism of groups like the KKK which is organizing and growing. In the face of this attack, the current middle class leadership of the black community has proven to be completely bankrupt. For years the middle class leaders have directed the black struggle into "legitimate" channels, in particular, toward legal battles and support of the Democratic Party. Now, both of these strategies have failed .
4. A new movement for black liberation must be built. Slowly and painfully that new movement is beginning in the shops and factories. The majority of white workers are still racist. Blacks still have many of the worst jobs. But compared to the rest of society, the workplace is integrated. And it is here that blacks and whites are forced to recognize their common interests.
5. Over the past decade there has been a substantial rise in the number of blacks who have been promoted to supervisory positions. But the very existence of large numbers of black foremen, black cops, black social workers and blacks working in a host of other capacities to help control the black community, drastically undermines the appeal of black nationalism as a strategy for black liberation. The managers have no answer. And when the chips are down, they side with the "man"---not with the black community. More than at any previous time in U.S. history, experience points toward the class struggle as the key to black liberation.
6. It is not enough to fight over issues that affect all workers. To build unity, white workers will have to support black workers' struggles for equality. To grow, to bring in black as well as white workers, the rank and file movement will have to take up questions of racism on the shop floor. As the workplace does not exist in a vacuum, the rank and file movement will have to take up questions of racism in society as a whole.
7. It is clear that a new black movement is beginning. The response to the Gary Tyler campaign, the growth of the Red Tide, the increase of black consciousness in the plants and communities are all indications of this. Because of the history of the IS our theory and practice on the black question is rusty. Over the last year, however, the IS has recruited and begun to train a black cadre. Over the next year the black members of the IS, with the help of the leading political bodies of the IS, will have to lead in advancing the theory and practice of the IS on this question. This process must receive the active support of the entire organization.