

MAIN DOCUMENTS OF THE OCTOBER NC
For The Attention of The IS Members

The recent NC took a number of important steps towards ending the current morass of the organization and putting our perspectives back on course. The frankness and seriousness of the discussion at the NC was, itself a step forward for the IS. But if we fail to skillfully implement the new (age old) ideas and directions charted by the NC, we will only end up in greater confusion. The major documents are meant to give political depth to the periphery campaign already adopted by the EC. These documents are: "Mass Work, Politics and Party Building", "The Bargaining Round, Employers Offensive And Effect On Our Industrial Perspective", and "Changes in Workers Power". While the Portugal documents, which will be issued next week are of a slightly different character, the establishing of our position in the clearest of terms and the defense of the mass work methods of the PRP in a revolutionary situation, are also a step forward for us.

In general, the NC documents affirm the fundamental correctness of the mass work method, but begin to turn the organization to the much neglected work of building the IS. The NC has made it clear that any retreat from mass work would spell disaster for the organization. But it has also shown the way to begin to correct our failures in party building work. Since the periphery campaign is the heart of the first steps toward getting the IS moving again, we wish to make a few remarks about just what a periphery is.

WINNING A POLITICAL PERIPHERY: AN ESSENTIAL TASK IN BUILDING THE PARTY

In the introduction to Vol. II of Lenin, Tony Cliff explains how Lenin, the individual leader, could have such an enormous influence on historic events. It was the party (with thousands of members) that moved the masses (of hundreds of thousands or even millions) and it was Lenin who moved the party. For Lenin to be able to decisively influence the party he had had to win the confidence of the party cadre. Similarly, the party could move masses because, over the years, through great and small struggles, it had fought at the side of the workers, given them political clarity and direction, and had dug deep roots in the working class. Cliff's descriptions of one event after another show how the party cadre influenced the class. While he doesn't use the term, Cliff shows that the party moved masses by moving its periphery. That is, the party cadres commanded the political loyalty and confidence of the thousands of workers. The party and its periphery were, together, a large enough mass to move millions at key moments.

Our own experience, positive and negative, indicates again and again that without a political periphery, a group of people larger than ourselves with some confidence in us, we cannot make our mass work succeed. TDU has reality today because over a year's time we have gathered around our small cadre enough non-ISers who have confidence in our ideas, and as a result more confidence in their own as well, to move larger numbers of workers. To a large extent, the failure of CGC resulted from the lack of troops to move significant numbers of production workers. The fact is, whether it is one comrade in one department of one plant, or dozens in a large union, we will never have enough cadre to move masses of workers at crucial moments as the demands of the struggle become greater, if these cadre don't have an effective political periphery.

The recent NC meeting agreed that much of the demoralization of the organization springs from our failure to grow. Failures in our external

work have had their impact as well., but the fact is that without growth we necessarily lose our bearings. After all, a revolutionary organization exists to grow. It is obvious that we cannot grow and recruit unless we have a political periphery from which to recruit. But as the opening paragraph should make clear, periphery building is more than a matter of immediate recruitment. We can and do recruit to some extent even without a serious periphery. There are always small numbers of people who will join on the basis of our ideas - workers included, - regardless of our practice at the moment. This, in general is how a political sect recruits. Long ago we abandoned that sterile method for bolder method that combines party building with mass agitational work. This approach not only increases our numbers, but it increases our influence in the working class in geometric proportion to our numerical growth. But, this only happens if we are building and train a political periphery.

A periphery is not composed solely or even mainly of close contacts. If our periphery is so small as to be in constant "danger" of being recruited then it is not a genuine periphery. It must be admitted that this is generally the situation we are in most of the time. If we have fallen down on recruitment, we have failed even worse at building a periphery.

To be effective a periphery should be composed of fellow travelers, political collaborators in our mass work, independent politicians who will take our lead, IS contacts, and ex-members. (Don't laugh. (How many movements has the CP built around its ex-members.) Fellow travelers are those who agree with our politics on most questions, but for one reason or another won't join. Collaborators don't necessarily agree with our politics but who agree with our perspectives for a particular kind of mass work. Contacts are, of course, those who are actively trying to recruit - which isn't everybody. The question of ex-members is not so important today. But the history of the Bolshevik party shows that any party will experience ups and downs and will lose and gain again members from time to time. Even those who won't rejoin or whom we don't want to rejoin can function as collaborators in our mass work. There are examples of this even today.

As already stated, we exist to grow. But in building and training a real political periphery we have to make choices about how we relate to different people. We do not, for example, want to push potential collaborators away by pressuring them to join when they make it clear they don't want the pressure. For this reason the tone of the periphery campaign will be different from that of the 1975 worker recruitment drive.

We will, of course, hold a number of events in which we show workers different aspects of IS politics - not only our mass work but issues like Southern Africa and the question of revolution itself. But building a periphery is more than a matter of impressive events. Winning the confidence of workers often takes time. So there is a sense in which the periphery campaign is not so much a campaign as it is an organized attempt to train ourselves to do what we will have to do for years to come.

The history of the Bolshevik party, and Cliff's book about it, also make it clear that the heart of building, training, and keeping a political periphery is the newspaper, the one way in which the party can consistently reach thousands. Like everything else there will be ups and downs in the response the paper gets, but history shows that if the party uses the paper consistently, over time, it will be an "organizer" for the party. Today the paper cannot generally give a lead on immediate actions, but as it builds a loyal following it will be more and more able to do just that.

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The paper also trains the periphery by drawing lessons and conclusions from the events of the day. We can have all the meetings, educationals and socials we want, but if in the end, we do not succeed in learning how to use the paper - and improving it in that process - we will not have built a genuine political periphery.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
October 10, 1976

MASS WORK, POLITICS, BUILDING THE PARTY

Introduction:

Agitational mass work is the bedrock of our perspective to build a revolutionary party. The commitment and ability to engage systematically in mass work - based on realistic efforts to win victories and to improve the balance of forces - is what distinguishes a revolutionary organization on the road toward becoming a party from a sect. The main accomplishment of the IS over the past two years has been our turn toward agitational work and through that turn, growing organizational experience and maturity in the methods and techniques of mass work.

The IS turn toward mass work and agitation - like every major turn in a revolutionary organization was marked by some excesses and errors. It can be no other way. It is now necessary to sum up the major lessons we have learned from our agitational work and identify the main weaknesses and deficiencies in this work so that we can chart a course for continuing organizational growth and maturity in this central area. It follows that it is also now necessary, wherever possible to correct the errors.

The IS turn to agitation was well in progress by the time of the 1975 IS Convention that officially adopted the perspective for the organization. The timing for that turn was convenient. The country was in a period of sharp economic decline. Class struggle showed signs of heating up. The growing employers' offensive and the paralysis of even minimally effective trade union leadership promised increasing agitational opportunities. We believed that there would be a real likelihood of splits in the trade union bureaucracy. A fear of impending economic crisis was sweeping the working class. Indeed, in many cases, the mood was more catastrophic than the situation warranted. But at the same time, the mood of the working class, and particularly the mood of black workers, was very pessimistic. Most workers had little or no confidence that it was possible to accomplish anything positive by organizing and struggle to resist the employers' offensive. While this was clear to us, at times we underestimated the impact of this profound alienation.

Against this backdrop, we raised three important ideas: 1. We were in a period where even a small, weak, relatively isolated and roofless organization of revolutionaries could lead mass struggle - so long as we concentrated our efforts on attainable issues of widespread concern and so long as we sought the broadest unity possible without allowing our hands to be tied by those committed to ineffective, bureaucratic, legalistic, collaborationist, and cowardly methods. 2. The only way to combat pessimism in the working class on any scale was through showing, in practice, that it is possible to fight and win - however small the victory. 3. Under impact of the crisis, and in response to the crisis mood in the class, we would be able to recruit large numbers of workers to the IS by demonstrating that we were the organization that knew how to organize the "fight back" and how to win.

The turn to agitation was logically linked with the other major innovation of the 1975 convention: the worker membership campaign. To successfully carry out the agitational turn would require an enormous marshalling of resources. For a small organization like ours to put its total emphasis on efforts to lead mass struggle would require us putting enormous strain on each of our members, and particularly a strain on the cadre of the organization. At the convention, opponents to the turn warned that we were running the risk of burning out the membership. We responded stating that the turn would produce results, and that these results would convince the best cadre of the organi-

zation that even though they were under enormous strain, it was well worth the effort. We projected that by carrying out this turn, we would begin the process of rapid worker recruitment. This, in turn, would strengthen the organization, provide it more resources in carrying out agitational campaigns, and reduce the strain on the cadre.

Looking back as we did at the 1976 Convention, we could see that the perspective of the 1975 Convention was only partially achieved. In part, this was caused by limitations of the perspective. And, in part, by somewhat exaggerated views of the pace of events, questions that are covered in a separate NC document. But most important, our perspective failed in the vital area of recruitment. We fell far short in our efforts to recruit workers in the priorities, to integrate new worker members into the organization, and to advance worker cadre into the leadership at all levels.

The health of the IS now rests on our ability to quickly overcome this failure. The watchword for the next period is "party building". The periphery campaign is our first systematic effort in this direction. But we are not carrying out a new turn. Rather, we are beginning to develop correctives for the errors involved in our turn to agitation and mass work. We will carry out our party building efforts in the framework of the agitational method that we are continuing to develop and perfect. For that is the only way to build a workers' revolutionary party.

Mass Work

In the realm of shop work and economic struggles, when we speak of mass work and of the agitational method, we are referring neither to the size of the venture, nor to the consciousness of the people involved. It is possible to do mass work in relation to an issue effecting only a fairly small number of people with limited traditions of struggle, for example: 100 workers in a small shop, 150 workers in a department or even 75 workers in a particular classification. Our use of the term "mass work" in fact, may be misleading. Where much of our fraction work has been in relation to national contracts, we sometimes forget that our activities in the Fleetwood strike, the Local 51 COLA demonstration or a struggle over womens' bathhouses in steel are no less examples of mass work, than is the TDC.

What characterizes mass work, is that on the issues involved, we seek support from the mass of the workers involved, not just from a self-defined radicalized or militant minority. With the radicalized and more militant workers in the lead, we actively go after support from a significant number of those who are effected by the issue. This does not mean we can necessarily achieve organization or mobility of the majority or that mass work which fails to move the majority is wasted. But it does mean that we seek to create an atmosphere among workers effected by a specific issue or problem, where large numbers of those who have an opinion, support us, both on the issue itself and on the methods used.

In mass work on shop and economic issues, we try to give a lead to the backward, reactionary, and cowardly workers as well as to the militants. It means we have to undermine the ability of any force to counter-organize against the struggle. We work for a situation in which the greatest possible number of those affected who do not support the struggle stand neutral, and in which those who actively oppose the struggle are isolated and fearful to act. However small the number of workers actually involved, we appeal to them on the basis of class, of shared material interests, and not primarily on the basis of politics.

This fact has often blinded us to the need to do consistent revolutionary political work in the midst of a mass work campaign. Putting an emphasis on party building is designed to turn that around. For the simple truth is that agitation, rank and file work, mass organizations, will all add up to precisely zero gain for the working class IF no revolutionary party is built.

It is instructive to note that in mass work initiatives which are not tied to the work place and where the need to relate to the most backward elements is not a daily consideration. Work such as the Gary Tyler Defense. The tendencies to play down the party building aspect of our strategy are much less marked. In those situations, one seldom hears talk of "our responsibility to the rank and file" being counterposed to "responsibility to the IS".

But to return for a moment to the actual methods of industrial mass work itself, for these are some important guidelines to work from in the many different situations we confront.

- a) It is important to choose and formulate the issues at stake properly. The demands must meet real and substantial needs that workers will feel to be important and feel to be obtainable with the forces that can be mobilized. If the issues are not real and substantial, support can be undermined in the midst of the struggle. Until an issue is widely felt to be important, it is impossible to generate active support - no matter how objectively important it may be. And unless the demand is felt to be obtainable, most workers will be unwilling to make sacrifices, take risks, or even waste their time.
- b) In mass work, we must avoid sectarianism, seek the broadest possible unity within the constituency, and seek the ability to brand our opponents disrupters and disunifiers. In actual struggle with the boss, workers correctly resent any division or disunity that they do not see to be necessary to the success of that struggle. We want to be in a position to make it clear that anyone who actively opposes the mass struggle or stands aside, does it by their own choice: because they disagree with the goal, because they oppose the means, because they are pro-company, because they are cowardly, or because of selfish personal interests etc. This is why we must always seek an all-inclusive approach, showing that we are willing to work with anyone - that the mass struggle is not the private property of any party or group, that whatever disunity exists is not caused by us.
- c) In seeking broad unity and avoiding sectarianism, however, we must avoid having our hands tied and having the struggle confined to ineffective means. We seek for ourselves, the greatest possible initiative. We seek programs and strategies for mass action that break through bureaucratic collaborationist, legalistic, or cowardly limitations on the struggle. Where the mass of workers accept these limitations, we patiently explain and seek a program of action that will help the mass overcome this conservatism and move the struggle forward. Where conservatism exists among leaders - but where the mass is willing to move beyond them, and this will carry the struggle forward, we are prepared to lead the struggle at the cost of breaking old alliances.
- d) The mass work approach can also be used by minority groups within the workforce that have special problems with management: blacks, women, national minorities, low seniority workers etc. Here, there is even a higher premium on tight unity within the constituency involved. The issue should be formulated in a way that minimizes the threat it poses to the majority of the workforce. Open appeals for support and solidarity should be directed to the majority, and any support should be welcome. Issues should be formulated to make those who oppose the legitimate demands of the oppressed to come off looking like bigots who are pro-company and who are responsible for the lack of unity and solidarity in the workforce.

Every mass struggle or organization of mass work (however short lived) has its own politics and its own political life. At each step of the struggle, new questions are posed and new political offen-

sives have to be waged to clear the road forward of obstacles, and set the stage for advancing the struggle. Questions that have to be resolved in the framework of mass struggles include for example, "What if the boss can't afford it?", "ready to strike", "injunctions"; "reliance on lawyers or government agencies" and lots more specific questions of strategy and tactics. The art of moving mass work forward includes advancing the proper political initiatives and proper slogans at the right time.

Contract Campaigns:

Our contract campaigns were an effort to apply the methods of mass work on an immense scale. In doing this, we recognize ourselves to be a tiny group with very limited resources or roots. We understood that we could succeed in this, only if we (and those willing to join with us in attempting to unleash a contract struggle) could make contact with a massive sentiment in the union, shape it, and give it direction,

Some of our early success in agitational work led us into the trap of believing that we ourselves, merely through our own initiatives, could create the necessary sentiment. The CGC has reminded us that we could not. It has been a hard and demoralizing lesson for the auto fraction. There is no need for others to learn the hard way.

But our general approach to contract campaigns has certainly been proven correct. There is no other way to actually test the sentiment of workers except through systematic efforts to give a lead. We will have no success in agitational work unless we are prepared to take advantage of every promising opportunity - even when we know in advance that success is far from guaranteed. We launched contract campaigns because we anticipated that the divisions between what, on the one hand, the membership needed, felt to be important, and felt to be obtainable - and on the other hand, what the union leadership was willing to actually fight for or that management was willing to deliver except under great pressure.

Our method was to begin by formulating a program that represented - not what we thought workers should want, in some abstract sense, but a program that we thought the mass of workers would recognize as an expression of their desires and needs and one workers would feel could be won in contract negotiations. Of course, no matter what the program, it would still require a campaign of agitation and education to convince large numbers of workers of its specifics and to convince them that it pays to organize and struggle. But for such a campaign to succeed, the program itself must be properly formulated.

This approach was most successful inside the IBT. IBT members in most jurisdiction have been taking a bad beating over the past few years - not just in wages, but in work rules and job security as well. The idea of organizing to fight for a better contract made sense to a substantial number of teamsters so that TDC literature and TDC petitions found a ready audience. Membership distrust for Fitz was deep and thorough, which made it much difficult for IBT officials to isolate and discredit us, and made the membership responsive to an organization looking after its interests inside the union.

As support for TDC program grew, and as contract date approached, we began agitating around the slogans "ready to strike" and "no contract, no work". In effect, we were preparing to take leadership of the IBT membership - if only in a few localities and jurisdictions and if only for a short time and on a single struggle. This is what it means when we are preparing strike action, independent of the union leadership against their instructions.

The more credible the threat, the more pressure we put on both union and company to come up with a settlement that undermines our appeal, and the better position we put ourselves in to carry the struggle forward if membership dissatisfaction with the settlement is high enough. There is no room for doubt that our intervention through the TDC altered both the course of IBT Master Freight bargaining, and the final outcome of the settlement.

Inside the UAW, our experience proved quite different. We put out literature on national contract bargaining of many different types and continually failed to get any substantial response from production workers. We tried modifications in our program and in the types of literature, but the response remained constant - little to no active interest. Where we would convince co-workers to join with us in the campaign, they soon became discouraged by the lack of response.

The CGC has been a failure. Indeed, the only successes we have had in the whole pre-contract period were around local, not national questions, and then only decisive in one local, Local 51, and without any IS recruitment. At no point could we project our initiatives as providing an alternate leadership for UAW members around national bargaining in any part of the union or for any length of time (see UAW fraction evaluation). While new events could change the situation and open up new contract possibilities, this is not very likely. But despite the failure of the CGC, this experience of our organization, no less than the experience of the TDC has helped us to establish the present IS collective understanding of mass work.

On the whole, we have proved dramatically correct in our prediction that we were entering a period in which small groups of revolutionaries - with a clear perspective - could lead mass agitational struggles on a large scale. A disciplined cadre in the mines or in rubber could have had an enormous impact. Tremendous opportunities seem to be opening up in steel, in which our impact will be severely limited because of the fact we are coming to the industry so late and with so few people. And there are still possibilities for significant interventions around both the CWA and postal contracts.

The experience in the contract campaigns outlined above is valuable, not only for what it teaches us about industrial mass work, but also for what it tells us about the role of politics in that work. The TDU Convention could not have been the resounding success it was unless a whole layer of non-party rank and file teamster leaders had accepted as their own politics, political ideas that we had been pushing for a year. That political work is also now producing some important recruits. But it remains the case that stronger and more conscious political work could have given us a stronger IS presence in the IBT earlier (though not as early as we first predicted) - and that would have meant a stronger TDU.

In a less obvious way, the same political lesson comes out of our UAW Local 51 work. This work, which in many ways has been a model, is now effectively stalled until we can recruit and thus increase our weight in the United Coalition.

It is neither wrong nor modest for us to state that what is good for the IS is good for the class. This is because (paraphrasing Marx from the Communist Manifesto) we have no separate interests apart from the interests of the class as a whole.

RANK AND FILE ORGANIZATION:

Our experiences with mass work help us reshape our ideas about rank and file organization in general. It is still our orientation to build and participate in local and national union rank and

file opposition caucuses. And in Local Unions or plants where we can be part of no dynamic rank and file group, we still try to have some kind of rank and file newsletter to participate in. We now view these rank and file organizations always as a bridge to mass work, mass agitation, and mass influence. And we must win other workers who cooperate with us in these rank and file organizations and newsletters to the same view. Otherwise, they can become a sectarian obstacle to the mass struggle.

In the past, we have sometimes had an overly ideological concept of the rank and file movement. We wanted to define rank and file groups as much as possible, on the basis of our full class struggle program for the union, and to recruit workers to them on that basis. That approach had us falling between two stools.

Workers who can be recruited to an organizational commitment on an ideological basis, and a rounded program should be recruited to the IS. Only the IS, not a caucus, will have a full enough political life and a broad enough view to sustain a worker who joins on that basis. We failed both to put enough emphasis on recruiting to the IS, and to build effective rank and file organizations.

None of this is to say that a rank and file group needs no program. Of course it does. In most cases, these groups represent an alternative to the present union leadership in embryo. The group needs enough of a program to define itself and to defend its existence as an organized opposition trying to become an alternate leadership within the union. It needs a program that will help it

draw the right people into its ranks and to repel the wrong ones. Most important, it needs a program that ~~will~~ correctly identifies the main issues facing the union membership, and concretely poses a road forward for the membership. Its program will almost always have to include many political ideas that are not immediately popular and that will have to be fought for in order for the group to represent an alternative that will actually advance the interests of the membership. This will generally mean in practice that to begin with, the rank and file group will only appeal to a militant activist minority.

But, after taking all the above restrictions into account, the program should be as broad, as inclusive, and as non-sectarian as possible. It must project itself, not as a divisive force in the union, but one that seeks the broadest possible unity, one even prepared to cooperate on some issues with the established leadership it seeks to replace, when such cooperation moves in the interests of the membership.

In reality, the program of a group is defined, not so much by any list of points written on paper, but by what it does in practice, and what it comes to represent to the workers. Through rank and file organizations we can initiate mass work, build mass agitation campaigns and in other ways give a lead to broad masses of workers. The mass actions, themselves, when successful, will tend to be broader and not limited to the rank and file organizations. But then, and this is equally important, mass action, in turn builds, strengthens, and gives reality to rank and file organizations. The experience of TDC - following a successful national effort to give a lead to IBT membership - makes the TDU an established and recognized opposition force (although small) inside the IBT. Similarly, successful agitation by the Local 51 United Coalition makes them now a contending force in their Local Union.

We want membership in rank and file groups to be as open and as inclusive as possible. We want

it to be as easy as possible for workers to join and to participate fully. In actual practice, this will usually mean that the boundary line between member and non-member will be fuzzy. It also means that the level of involvement and participation will ebb and flow. A rank and file group is a living thing, not a static political mold which workers can be forced into.

During the lean times, it is the most committed activists, and particularly the IS members and fellow travelers who will keep the group going. The long term strength and significance of a group cannot be measured by how many people it can turn up to a meeting or can involve in activities at any particular time. It is important to keep rank and file groups going, even during times when the workforce experiences moods of demoralization, conservatism, or just when things are quiet. This is hard, grudging work. To do this requires a committed cadre with a long term view. And it is this committed cadre who, in the long term, shape and lead the direction of the group.

We must understand that there are only two kinds of motivation that will sustain people as part of the steady, hard core cadre of a rank and file group: commitment to a long term political perspective and world view, and/or the desire for personal advancement. These need not be mutually exclusive. Personal ambition is often a good quality. The worker who is interested in her/his own personal advancement can often be won to view this in more than petty careerist ways. He/she can be won to view her/his own future and advancement in terms of a respected role in the growing rank and file movement and/or the revolutionary socialist movement.

But unless this is done, sooner or later, the worker will become worn out by the demands and pace of events and will either drop out or will go over to a more comfortable berth in the establishment. It is hard to be a rank and file activist. Rank and file organizations, committed to the class struggle are in conflict with the boss, the collaborationist union leadership and the state. These forces not only fight the movement head on, but they also strive to demoralize it and push it off course. To grow in strength, stay on course and maintain a central leadership cadre, a rank and file movement needs a politically conscious guiding center. The rank and file movement needs a revolutionary party (organization) as its backbone. For the party, in turn, a mass rank and file movement ~~is~~ is its best source of cadre, and its central link to the broader masses of the working class.

In this period and for the foreseeable future, the rank and file organizations of the working class will be erratic at best. The best ones will oscillate even month to month between being empty shells and powerful forces. The weaker ones will have short lives and have to be constantly re-built, sometimes with new names and/or new people. This is the nature of the beast, only a party, or a pre-party formation can maintain consistency and permanence in this period. The simple lesson of working class industrial life must be understood if we are to stop falling into the trap reflecting the up's and down's of the rank and file movement rather than bringing to the rank and file the stability needed to minimize the bad effects of its oscillations.

POLITICS IN INDUSTRIAL WORK:

In discussing mass work and rank and file organization, we have stressed the themes of breadth and unity. This is because these are the means revolutionaries use to move workers, not primarily on the basis of their politics, but on the basis of their class position. Once this is stated, it becomes clear that while mass work is a central aspect of our political tasks as revolutionaries, by itself, it is not enough.

As revolutionaries, we also have to fight for political ideas that are unpopular - fight to make them popular. Often we have to organize and mobilize a conscious radical minority political sentiment and direct it against backward and reactionary views that have a mass following among the union membership - for instance on questions of racism, sexism, patriotism, etc.

Say, for an example, we are active in a predominantly Catholic plant. We may not feel it is wise to force through a position on abortion in a rank and file organization in which we participate or lead. This is a question of tactics, not principle. But individual comrades who are identified as leaders of the group may also feel individual pressure to keep quiet about abortion at a time when this is an active and lively issue. They cannot do that.

When revolutionaries establish themselves as leaders in the working class, this gives them an opportunity to influence their fellow workers both with their revolutionary politics and with their minority political views on controversial subjects. But, the working class always strives to discipline its leaders (this is what makes it a revolutionary class). When revolutionaries exercise leadership over workers who are more backwards politically, these workers attempt to discipline their leadership in a backward way. More precisely, they try to force the revolutionaries to keep their mouths shut.

And very often, this attempt by politically more backward workers to discipline revolutionary or other politically more advanced leaders is more than just bluff. It often represents a threat to withdraw their support. Sometimes it creates opportunities for management, class collaborationists in the union, or other enemies to mobilize against us and hurt us.

Unless we systematically resist these pressures, we will ~~come to lose touch~~ cease to be revolutionaries and we may as well not be rank and file leaders. The chief occupational hazard of revolutionary socialists engaged in mass work are these pressures to capitulate. In the long run, if not countered, they will most certainly result in the political death of revolutionary socialists engaged in effective mass agitation. And for the organization as a whole, these pressures represent the material basis for political degeneration in the direction of economism.

At almost any moment in time, a comrade involved in mass work, or attempting to get involved can make the following arguments: "I have not yet established myself sufficiently as a leader," or "My position as a mass leader is still precarious." The argument then continues: "If I take this unpopular stand, I will become isolated. My agitational efforts as a mass leader will fail. If I keep quiet now, and if I establish myself better as a mass leader, later on I will have the credibility to take unpopular stands and actually carry people rather than just become isolated." The above line of argument contains a fatal flaw. The longer and the more a revolutionary keeps politically quiet, and the broader and stronger the following the revolutionary can build while keep quiet - the more she/he stands to lose by opening his/her mouth. It generates, therefore greater pressure to remain quiet.

Workers are most likely to continue supporting revolutionary leaders if they know what they are getting into in the first place. Workers who decide to follow the political lead of revolutionaries despite political differences, are most likely to stand firm when controversy over those differences break out. That is not just an abstract theory, we have learned in practice the truth of it over the past year.

Key to our tasks for the next period is learning how to raise politics and how to politicize the work we do. In our industrial work, there are four pretty distinct, different ways political questions come up:

1) In our agitational work we raise political ideas and fight for our views specifically in order to move the struggle of the rank and file organization forward. What counts here is our ability to relate the ideas we are raising to the actual needs of the struggle--or to show why the adoption of a particular idea, tactic, or strategy will strengthen a group and/or will further its ability to accomplish shared objectives. For example, when TDU began we did not raise the questions of a strike or an ongoing opposition. These ideas were raised when they addressed the real needs of the struggle.

Sometimes we will fight for a group to adopt views which, if passed, will effectively drive some members away from the group. The same can happen if we push for the rejection of some reactionary view. In either case, we will have to be able to defend this by demonstrating that despite losing people, the vote strengthens the ability of the group--in the long run--to advance its objectives.

In the TDU platform planks on minority rights and women's rights have been adopted. Even some TDU members who may personally feel objection to these stands based on racist or sexist attitudes, have still gone along--because they have been won to an understanding of why the TDU needs to take this stand. (For these individuals this is an important step forward.) As the scope and influence of a rank and file organization/movement expands, then the number and depth of questions it must define itself on also goes up. But in our rank and file work, we press for the adoption of our views to take the organization, struggle, or movement forward.

2) Transitional politics and transitional ideas are something different. In the course of political activity and struggle, individuals open up to new ideas and new ways of seeing things. Transitional politics are concepts that we raise as a bridge from the actual experiences of workers in struggle towards a broader socialist view of the world. These are ideas that we raise inside the movement--not usually to vote on or adopt--to help create a better understanding of what is going on. Examples include: the employers' offensive, class struggle, class collaboration and the police role of the bureaucracy; working class solidarity, etc.

We use Workers' Power and individual discussion to amplify the implications of these ideas and draw out their socialist and revolutionary content. In this way we start with concepts that become self-evident to workers in struggle and use them to ground basic revolutionary political views in concrete experiences. It should be noted that key to this method is that struggle is actually going on. This will not always mean direct involvement. People who follow and identify with a struggle even though they are not involved, can be affected and moved by transitional ideas.

3) Often there are specific political issues or stands we want to push: Free Gary Tyler; oppose Carter and Ford; support the liberation struggle in South Africa; free abortion on demand; smash the Klan; etc. Some of these will be subjects of IS campaigns--some will be positions we take on events going on in the world.

The question of whether or not it is appropriate to push these through any given rank and file group is purely a matter of tactics--to be decided on the basis of our perspective of the group and our evaluation of the impact of raising the issue. But we have to be able to increase our ability to campaign on issues, even if we do not press

for their adoption in a rank and file group.

Where we regularly sell WP, it makes it easier to raise these issues. That is a main reason for selling WP. Our members stand for the politics of the paper. They defend the paper and its views and argue for others to agree. It is necessary to develop a capacity to systematically raise political issues in the workplace, independent of the policies of rank and file groups. In fact, we need the capacity to campaign on political issues. We will start finding sometimes we win workers on politics and then push them into r&f activity and sometimes we meet them in r&f work and push them toward politics.

4) Socialist politics are the part of the process and a crucial one. These are all the questions of our revolutionary socialist world view--a class analysis of society, the historic role of the working class, workers' control, the revolutionary party, the nature of Stalinism, etc.

We do not raise these ideas within the rank and file movement itself, normally. It is important, however, that in general our members are known as socialists and what we mean by that. We do this through WP, individual discussion, public meetings, small group educationals, the political magazine, etc. We have also done it, with some success, in leaflets answering redbaiting attacks.

It is convincing individual militants of our revolutionary socialist ideas that is key to building the IS. It is the task we have ignored the most in the last period and the one which most sorely needs to be taken up.

The ability to raise politics in industrial work is partly a matter of experience and confidence. But it has also become clear, after almost two years of the "turn," that the center cannot lay out a "program" for each individual in each industrial situation. Each week each member deals with half a dozen different individual contacts in a dozen changing situations. The center cannot possibly keep up. At this stage we must look to the branches to provide the necessary political events to back up revolutionary work on the shop floor. This, combined with the growing experience and confidence of our membership in industry, is the way forward for the politicization of our work.

Our members are also aided by the general method of mass work. The effect of mass work, even of a limited kind and with limited successes, is to raise the consciousness of the people involved. The consistent use of key transitional ideas, particularly the ideas of the employers' offensive and the police role of the union bureaucracy, has already created a political climate in our mass work which we have yet to take advantage of in a consistent way.

In the places where we have consistently operated on the basis of transitional politics we have actually created the periphery that is the vital step to worker recruitment.

Where our members have been operating as revolutionaries as well as the best trade union militants, the newspaper is important and valued. For, although the paper has stagnated for the last six months, it is still highly respected among those contacts who have a political relationship with us. If selling the paper and talking about it to our fellow workers is done systematically, this small band of WP readers will be expanded quickly. It is from these WP readers that we will create IS supporters and eventually members. WP is the major tool we have in bringing politics to the shop floor. Like every other basic tool, it cannot do the job on its own, it needs a skilled operator.

Party Building:

The new perspective, of which this document is only one part, is essentially constructed around party building. That fact does not mean, however, that we are in any way retreating from the mass work strategy.

What it does mean is that the emphasis on mass work is not enough. The reason is simple. We are not recruiting. And an organization that leads successful mass work without growing is doomed to extinction. When the EC put forward the mass work strategy, we bent the stick. Clearly, we bent the stick too far. That was either necessary or a symptom of our lack of political maturity as an organization. Either way it is apparent that we have to correct the balance.

Certain changes in our methods of operating must now follow. The leadership, on every level--EC, NC, fraction steering cttcs, branch execs--has to shift from overseeing every dot and comma of our agitational work to providing the political leads that turn agitation into gains for the IS. Leadership will not develop at lower levels if higher bodies stifle that growth by directing every aspect of the work. Political development and direction will not return to the organization as long as leading cttcs are bogged down in administrative and organizational detail. For example, it would be better to have a pro-Sadlowski group in steel which misses some opportunities and makes some mistakes but politically understands the limits of trade union reformism than to have an immaculately organized activist machine which is suckered by Sadlowski. Unless the political leadership of the IS spends more time in developing politics and training the cadres the latter could be our fate. This will mean, for example in steel, the EC, the steel fraction steering ctte, and the branch execs must take up the political direction of the work with the same vigor they give to its organizational effectiveness.

In re-politicizing the organization there are certain pitfalls we must be careful not to fall into. If we are to be a workers' combat organization, repoliticizing the IS must not mean bringing back a quota of abstract political discussions. Instead, we must use the real work of the organization as our starting point. This will mean politically evaluating our external work. We politically analyze the developing crisis of capitalism, the strategies of the bosses, racists and bureaucrats. We must now do this in terms of our own work. This means besides understanding the minimal demands around which we organize our mass work we must also assess what the issue arises out of-- what the politics are.

For example, when we organized around Marquette Park, we mobilized people around a few minimal issues: fight racism, fight the Nazis, for open housing and equality for blacks. But we did something more. We attempted to come to grips with what the struggle meant politically, in terms of the Daley machine, Chicago's black leadership, the over all urban crisis and the potential for a revirth of the black movement. We carried that analysis in WP. That is the direction that much more of our work must go in.

Thus, the shift to party building must involve us in political discussion designed to train our people for specific activity and give

them the facility to critically evaluate that activity and thus make it more effective.

Because we have not had this political approach to our work in the last period, we have experienced demoralization in the midst of success in key areas of work. In the last few months work has progressed successfully in teamsters, UAW Local 51, Red Tide, women in steel, and Gary Tyler. This has not prevented the disorientation of the organization, however. The disorientation is the result of not recruiting. We believe the key to recruiting is the re-emphasis on party building.

Also, conditions have changed from a year ago; we must approach contacts on a broader level of politics than we did then. To keep them as members their political understanding needs to be deeper than was the case during the recession. In short the emphasis on party building isn't just a response to the internal needs of the organization. It corresponds to the external needs as well.

In summary, this document combined with the other NC documents-- The Employers' Offensive, The Bargaining Round and Their Effects on Our Industrial Perspectives, Periphery Campaign, WP Direction and Circulation--add up to an integrated perspective for our work over the next period. The major ideas of this perspective are mass work and party building. The specifics of these ideas are listed as follows:

1. Mass Work can refer to a relatively small number of people. What is key is the notion of attempting to win over widespread support if not action.
2. To win widespread support in industrial mass work, we must appeal to workers on a class rather than political basis. Demands must be carefully formulated to speak to real needs and seem obtainable.
3. We seek the broadest possible unity.
4. In seeking unity we do not tie our hands with useless strategies, such as class collaboration, legal maneuvers or compromise.
5. Every mass struggle has its own politics. Questions are raised by the struggle that can either move the struggle forward or stop it dead. We must understand this and not hesitate to raise these questions at the correct time.
6. Even the best application of the mass work approach can fail if the objective conditions negate motion.
7. Unless mass work is politicized, a leadership trained and recruited to the party or its immediate periphery, the successes of mass work will turn into the failures of economism and add up to zero.
8. The answer to economism is party building. And the key to party building is the political motion of militants in mass work.
9. Over the last 1½ years, the IS in many ways has proved the success of mass work as a method for revolutionaries in the working class. We have had certain failures, however--which have meant insufficient

recruitment. This must now be changed. Our failure has been to carry out explicit party building activities.

10. To correct this based on the bedrock of mass work, the IS will launch a new worker recruitment strategy based on first building a political periphery. We will then be able to recruit more fully to our political view of the world and to our long term goals.

11. We must raise the dialogue between our members and the workers around them, not just about trade union questions, but on political questions as well. We must put a higher premium on our comrades doing political work in the shops and not just mass work.

12. The internal political life of the IS must be rebuilt. This will be done not by returning to an intellectual discussion group atmosphere, but by the careful organization of IS internal political discussion on every level--fraction, branch and nationally. We have re-established an internal discussion bulletin and will organize its most effective use. We also plan to launch an IS political magazine. We have begun several new education series. We are planning new slide shows and are purchasing video tape equipment. We have already organized a cadre school on the struggle in southern Africa.

13. WP will be strengthened and changed. In particular, we will increase the extent to which comrades can use WP to help explain to our co-workers the nature of the world around us. While maintaining the agitational style and a policy of writing our articles for a working class audience, we will now put much greater emphasis on politics.

14. We must campaign to increase the political use of WP, particularly by comrades in industry and most particularly by comrades who are mass leaders. We want to raise the extent to which the co-workers of our industrial comrades understand that IS members not only sell WP, but also take responsibility for what it says. WP must become our main tool in opening up political dialogue with the workers around us.

15. We have to make sure that the periphery campaign is run politically and not just administratively. In general, we have to raise the political level of leadership from both the national center and also on a district and branch level. This means greater emphasis on the politics of the activity or the campaign and greater political guidance--but less emphasis on the specifics and the details of implementation. We have already begun this process by sending out suggested ideas on public meetings which include, in outline form, the political ideas to be covered in the meetings. This list has included the highly successful South Africa meeting.

16. With a shift toward greater emphasis on political work, our anti-racist work and black work in general will be given special emphasis. While the country as a whole is out of crisis for the moment, minorities and particularly minority youth are still in the midst of deep economic depression. This, coupled with a growing racist offensive, and with, as yet, no organized response, makes anti-racist work centrally important.

17. With the growth of the Red Tide, we give careful attention to making sure that the RT and the IS develop as two groups of the same political tendency; that members of the RT see their political future in the IS--that members of the IS see in the RT the political future of our movement.

18. We must pay close attention to the development of recruitment tools and methods. Political recruitment means more than just unstructured rapping. We must learn to use small meetings, political materials, etc.--and most important we must bring the experiences gained through efforts at political recruitment into the political life of the organization as a whole.

WORKERS' POWER

One of the most important ways a revolutionary socialist organization has of building a periphery and thus recruiting is through its public press. Over the last period both the use and quality of Workers' Power has fallen. The purpose of this document is to assess where we went off and re-chart the correct path.

A circulation campaign has already been passed and is already underway. The document already circulated goes into great detail as to how to organize WP circulation. The political motivation that lies behind it should be obvious to all the cadres of the IS, it is the notion that the revolutionary socialist paper is the public face of the organization and thus its best organizer.

The paper gives a fuller sense of the politics and activities of the organization than any other single thing or event. It is through the paper that the politics of an individual activist connect to a world view.

And, extremely important for us, especially at this time, the paper is the best tool with which to build a political periphery. Tony Coiff tells the story about how in 1917 the Bolshevik party went from 600 in Moscow to 20,000. In Petrograd they went from 2,200 to 36,000. This tremendous growth reflected exactly the sale of Pravda in the previous years. In a revolutionary situation, the tremendous growth of the Bolsheviks was achieved by recruiting a periphery already built up by the party's public press.

We are not about to enter a revolutionary period and thus have the chance for such phenomenal growth. But if we were, we would be swept away by the rush of history. Our readership of 2,000 would not stand us in good stead. The point is that the consistent use of our public press is crucial to building a periphery. These general points cannot be hammered home enough. The revolutionary socialist paper is the best tool we have of building the IS. There will be times when we are less clear as to where the paper should go or how to handle various questions. There will be times when sales fall off. But the above political idea must not be forgotten and must be part of the consciousness of every member.

Within that context, there are some specific problems that must be addressed. The membership has lost a clear sense as to what sort of paper we need and what its specific role should be at this point. Before we even attempt to identify the real problems and answer them, it is important to go through the recent history of WP, the questions we have taken up, how we solved them, and why.

In the six months following the split with the RSL, we made many decisions that fundamentally changed our conception of the role of a revolutionary socialist paper in this country, in this period, and the kind of paper we wanted. Most importantly, we decided that WP was to be addressed to a working class audience, not students, and not the left. Making WP attractive and useful to workers meant breaking with our past and the typical sectarian press of the Trotskyist left. Articles were edited to eliminate rhetoric. Shortness of length was important. We did not try to say everything in one article. Instead, we attempted to have the paper, in totality, present our full politics.

We also decided that we wanted a newspaper, a tool that would speak to people about their struggle while they were in struggle, as a partisan of that struggle. We did not want a publication that analyzed struggles from the outside, after the fact. We wanted our audience to see WP as their paper - something they could use. We ~~also~~ aimed for a weekly, and succeeded a year after the perspective we charted was set in motion.

We also understood that the layer of worker militants we were attempting to reach were not politically homogenous and had to be appealed to in different ways. We attempted to have varied coverage, humor, news, analysis, culture, socialist education, working class history, class hatred and outrage, and human interest. We also wanted the paper to have a working class feel to it and not seem wierd or foreign. We filled our pages with pictures of workers, interviews, quotes, letters, everything we could to show that WP was a workers' paper.

We also changed fundamentally the way we used the paper. Instead of our press being seen only as a tool to educate our new members and immediate periphery, we said that our paper could be used to attract workers to the IS and to build the organization. We pushed factory gate sales in an aggressive manner for the first time. And we began sending WP reporters to strikes to get stories. Our members in industry began to sell the paper inside the plants, to declare themselves revolutionaries and to attract their workmates to revolutionary socialist ideas.

In general, we produced an exciting, professional revolutionary socialist, working class paper and for some time WP was in advance of the organization. But the truth is that much of what we ~~ach~~ achieved, was done in isolation from the rest of the organization. The success of the paper was achieved through the creativity of the staff and with the aid of the very excellent Socialist Worker as a model.

The public press of a socialist organization is not simply a good or bad product to be rated by some standard of journalistic or artistic excellence. The paper of a socialist organization is a tool and must be judged by its effectiveness in accomplishing its task. WP brought pride in the IS and a new confidence that it could speak to and recruit workers. To that degree, it was highly successful. But as the work of the organization caught up to the paper, the development of the paper began to falter. Its role became more complicated and its direction less clear. In addition, WP did not make the next crucial step - to be integrated into the work of the organization. There was only so far the center could take the paper alone. WP could no longer lead the organization and in fact became peripheral to much of what was healthy and exciting in our work.

Turn to Agitation

At the 1975 convention, the IS made a major turn - to agitation. In part, our ability to do that reflected the fact that the IS had caught up with WP. But along with the turn came problems for the paper which we have only just begun to solve. With the turn we adopted a perspective that said revolutionaries can lead workers around minimal demands. Our first major campaign as part of the turn was the contract fight in the IBT. The trouble for WP was that although TDC proved that revolutionaries can lead, we did not do so as revolutionaries. Our members led because they were revolutionaries, and in fact were able to lead because of their revolutionary politics. But it was not as revolutionaries. It was not in the pages of WP that we actually called on rank and file teamsters to act. The lead given by the IS was done through ^{the} rank and

file movement. It was Convoy and UPSurge which put forward the strategy for rank and file teamsters. In fact, often coverage for WP came in conflict with both papers. WP could not scoop them. And this problem increased when Convoy went weekly. WP could report on TDC - but, could not give direction as WP. For to give direction before Convoy did, would have left our members open to redbaiting, and charges of misuse of their positions. Of course, there were numerous times when WP did give direction. But we did so by quoting a TDC or UPSurge leader. That meant that most of the strategy for teamsters presented in WP was written as supportive reporting. In turn, this lessened the political feel of the coverage.

The proper role for WP in the teamster campaign became to put the struggle in the IBT into a more political context, to discuss the employers' offensive, the role of the state, the nature of the tradeunion bureaucracy. In general, WP did these things and the coverage taken as a whole was fairly good. Much of this confusion and lack of clarity was worked out in practice. At the beginning we believed that WP would be able to play a more agitational role. We learned that that notion was far too simplistic. It did not foresee the difficulties our members would have in using a revolutionary socialist paper, when they are the main leaders of a movement, run its center, but the movement itself is not socialist.

In general, we worked out the relationship between the various publications fairly well. The problems are raised here however, not as a model, because no two situations will be precisely the same, but to give our membership a deeper understanding of the difficulties involved. In fact, we have been much more agitational in our auto coverage but that has as much to do with the absence of any real motion in auto than our advance in the ability of WP to give ahead. Our other problem was that, although our overall coverage eventually was quite good, it was not used sufficiently, and we have little to go on to judge its actual success. Much of the fraction leadership did not feel that WP had a real role to play in our teamster work. In part this was due to the general conservative nature of the trucking workforce - mainly white and male - and in part it was due to the difficulty of distribution. In part this was due to the already mentioned conflict and repetition between Convoy and WP.

There are a few things we have learned however, about Teamster sales. First, where the paper was sold, by and large, Teamsters bought it for Teamster news. This is extremely important to understand, because as we take the paper forward, we cannot forget that it is the news, in particular their news that attracts a worker audience first. The development of transitional politics in WP must use real struggles as the starting point. Also as the paper becomes more political it cannot drop news of specific struggles.

Another thing we learned about teamster sales, in particular from sales in LA is that although we can and have built a Teamster readership for WP, we have done so on Teamster coverage alone, and have had little success in making enough connections with the rest of our politics. This piece of concrete information backs up an understanding we first put forward at the convention - that the road forward to re-politicizing W is through the greater development of transitional politics.

The lack of clarity as to the role of WP that developed as we made the turn cannot be blamed on the teamster work alone. In our auto work, with a far more radical workforce, similar problems arose. In attempting to work out, in practice, the turn to agitation, we published a vast amount of literature directed at auto workers. WP was at one end of a continuum that also included local shop floor bulletins, an industry-wide journal of class struggle unionism and the

CGC paper. Because of the abundance of other publications, the auto fraction never really aimed WP auto coverage at auto workers. Therefore, WP was the last thing on the fractions's mind to think about or produce. Auto coverage for WP was essentially an after thought - if thought of at all.

The result of all of this is that WP was used most where we had the least presence. New branches used it very successfully. Often, new branches would send a WP reporter down to a local strike, to make contact with the workers involved, report on the struggle for WP and then bring the paper back to an appreciative audience.

This kind of work is extremely important and should in no way be belittled. It should be done a great deal more by established branches, as well as new branches. Through this kind of work we broaden the paper and can build the organization. However, in most cases, the struggles involved warrant little more than a short strike report.

But all this combined meant that the industrial coverage in WP became more and more off balance, and a-political. The major coverage spoke to very few people involved in the struggle and was rarely allowed to put forward ~~strategy~~ strategy because that would mean scooping or duplicating other publications. The coverage that was actually used was the reports of relatively insignificant struggles and thus did not warrant analysis. (This is an exaggeration - but it attempts to describe some very real problems.)

It is already generally agreed that the major failing of our turn to agitation was party building and the resultant depoliticalization of the IS. Obviously this would have an effect on WP. First, and easiest to assess, has been the overall decline in WP circulation. When we understand our political failing - ignoring party building - it is easy to understand why use of WP would decline.

But the problems resulting from a decrease in use of WP is not confined only to circulation. As real use of ~~the~~ WP fell off, the WP staff became more and more isolated. Overall ~~feedback~~ feedback dramatically declined, and the paper was put out in a vacuum. This meant the staff could no longer move the paper forward. Most questions were handled routinely, the paper became less creative and more boring.

Even more important, the staff never know what was successful. Carrying a political line means more than stating the ideas, it means convincing. The WP staff rarely know if that was the case. WP is still a fairly good paper, especially to new readers, but it is stagnant and thus increasingly boring to the membership. The paper has lost what was most alive about it, a dynamic motion forward. This in turn has affected the eagerness with which it is pushed.

By the convention, use of the paper had diminished to the extent that the section of the readership of WP from whom we could get feedback, was little more than the membership. Discussion of WP became centered around what ISers liked disconnected from a broader readership or from the tasks we had set ourselves. To design a paper to satisfy the tastes of the cadres of the organization is to go against most of the real advances WP has made throughout the last 3 years and must be rejected. What is necessary now is not to pole our membership as to what they like and don't like but to figure out what the tasks for WP are, at this time, and begin to set up ways of satisfying

those tasks. It should be pointed out that we will judge the political magazine by its success with our new membership. For its task is the political development of the IS and close periphery.

Where we go from Here

The tasks for WP are no longer to prove we can speak to a working class audience. We have now been doing this for some time. At the same time we must remember that the liveliness and non-sectarian nature of WP, which made it attractive to a working class audience in the first place must be maintained. As we stated at the beginning of this document, the key role for WP is to build the IS. WP must convince the militants around us that a revolutionary socialist analysis of society actually explains the world. In other words, WP must convince them to become socialists. This is the one crucial task that no other publication we are involved in will or can do.

Before we go any further, there are two proposals for the way forward for WP that have floated around the organization which should be mentioned.

First, which in fact was tried in a variety of ways, was more socialist educational material. Unfortunately we rarely ever got feedback on these articles except generally from our student membership, which was not who they were directed at. But even the injection of more explicitly socialist material did not really solve the problem. WP became a collection of strike reportage and socialist education, with apparently little connection between the two. Thus we were failing at both agitation and propaganda.

The second alternative posed to solve the problem of the depoliticization of WP was for it to carry much more on strategy. Although general strategy articles are necessary they do not really address the current tasks of the paper.

Strategy helps militants become better fighters--it does not convince them to become socialists. And in fact our strategy for a particular industry is the one thing our members generally do talk about with the contacts. How that strategy connects to our socialist politics is the unique role of our press.

The Way Forward

In the document on mass work, the question of raising politics is broken down into four categories. We will not repeat here the full explanation of these four categories, but instead how they must be taken up by WP.

1. We have already discussed the difficulties we have already had in giving a lead to existing struggles. We have worked out some formulas, others will have to be developed. What we have learned is that, in general, in this period, WP will not be our main vehicle for direct intervention in industrial struggles we lead.

2. It is the area of transitional politics that points the way forward for WP. It is through transitional ideas that we can discuss the immediate struggle, its politics, and put it in a broader context. It is here that we can find the openings to convince people of our socialist world view.

For example, during the McCleans strike, there was a supervisor who all the workers perceived, justifiably, as a bastard. Many, of course, had illusions that if some one else were supervisor things would be different. If we had been more on top of things and not just responding routinely to events, we would have been able to use the McCleans strike to say more than report on and support the struggle of McCleans workers.

We could have done a story about this guy showing that yes, he was a bastard, but he plays a specific social role and anyone in that role would be forced to do the same thing.

To do this means a familiarity with the issues and understanding of those involved. This cannot be done by the center alone. To do this regularly requires a much greater commitment of energy on the part of the organization--both to use WP and to spend the time figuring out what are the real questions being raised among those we are trying to reach.

We have not done a terrific job of putting forward transitional politics in WP thus far. We are still struggling. But there have been some examples.

The notion of the employers' offensive was the main transitional idea we pushed in WP around the Master Freight and UPS contract fights. What we were able to do with that idea was connect a class analysis of society with what individual teamsters saw and felt every day. Our class view rendered their experiences more understandable.

Another successful example has been the auto Talking About Socialism series. In that series we took the issues auto workers are struggling around and discussed them in Marxist terms--not trade union terms. One auto worker said the column on line speed showed him why he was a socialist.

3) WP does a relatively successful job in carrying the political issues of the day, elections, the social crisis, racism, international news, etc. In particular WP does well in carrying the campaigns of the IS, busing, GT, South Africa.

Of course there is room for improvement. Often the coverage gets repetitive and stale. Sometimes it becomes simplistic and poorly formulated. Improvements come in this area when the paper is used, criticized and thought about. When the members are excited and using the paper they are extremely important in helping us improve this kind of coverage.

4) The area of socialist education is something we have done well at times, poorly at others. Again, key to success in this area is a paper that is used. Explaining socialist ideas is done best when we know who our audience is.

Over the next immediate period, in addition to our regular coverage, WP will emphasize the following political topics: Southern Africa, Gary Tyler, Steel, the Elections, and Party Building.

The key to improving the paper is integration of the paper into the work.

In the last 4-5 weeks we have already begun to develop ways of attaining greater involvement of fraction leadership in developing WP coverage.

One WP staff member now goes to auto fraction steering committee meetings and WP is discussed each week. An industrial subfraction to help develop WP coverage of Kim, Jack, Fritz, Jim and Gay is being set up. The black commission is beginning to discuss black coverage weekly. The women's commission has taken responsibility

for developing women's coverage. The EC will begin playing a greater overall role. We will also be trying to upgrade the political level of the staff.

As the periphery campaign develops, and use of the paper increases, it is crucial that WP is discussed by all sections of the organization and related back to WP.

This means that organizers and branch execs, as well as fraction leaderships, have got to put WP on their agendas and report back to the center. These bodies must see themselves as the transmission between our growing readership and the center. It will be the responsibility of branch organizers to organize the various aspects of WP coverage, from getting letters, to local coverage, to use in specific work and feedback from our periphery on the paper. (It will also be their job to report to WP once a month.)

The key to moving WP forward is, once again, using WP as an organizer for the I.S. (periphery building), giving the center feedback as to what is successful with the periphery and the development of transitional politics. All of these demand the increased involvement of all members, more thought given to WP, and will take time to develop. But it is a process that it is crucial to begin.

THE EMPLOYERS' OFFENSIVE, THE BARGAINING ROUND AND THEIR EFFECTS ON OUR INDUSTRIAL PERSPECTIVES (SEPTEMBER 1976)

The two basic goals of our perspective for the period of 1975-78 were the construction of national rank and file opposition groups - based on at least some strong local organization - and the transformation of the IS into a revolutionary workers' organization. While this paper will not deal with the problems of worker recruitment and growth, it is obvious that success in the party building side of our perspective is dependant on success in the rank and file work.

In the context of the growing crisis of the system, we saw a situation in which a two and a half year bargaining round, taking place during an economic recovery, would open the possibility of an aggressive response by the workers in the most important industries. We said that the crisis had forced the employers to take the offensive against labor - in the contract fights, at the work place and in society at large. This offensive would tend to create confusion and cracks in the unity of the bureaucracy, which would help open things for rank and file initiatives. Rank and file action would even broaden cracks in the bureaucracy, which in turn would make the creation of rank and file opposition organizations easier. While we never expected anything to proceed neatly according to this exact pattern, those were the major elements that allowed us to believe that the time for significant rank and file motion and organization was here.

As the 1976 Convention Document on the subject pointed out, there was much evidence to point to the basic correctness of our perspective. The employers' offensive was certainly real. Splits in the leadership of some major unions were visible in the UMWA, USWA and NALC. The leadership of the IBT was on the defensive, with the centers control over key joint councils in question. Rank and file dissatisfaction was also apparent: in rubber, electrical, and the IBT.

It would be a mistake to simply say that the rank and file response was less than we expected or generally too weak to make a difference. In fact, the bargaining round, and the period in general got off to a good start with the TDC, UPSurge and now the TDU. The rubber strike and explosion of rank and file initiative in the coal mines were other indications that workers would fight the employers' offensive.

Nevertheless, a strong sense that our industrial perspective was not working has gone through the organization - problems in recruitment, periphery building, integration of new members, etc. It is also the case that part of the loss of certainty in our perspective comes from a post-strike lull in our IBT work and in the failure of the CGC to take off.

The feeling of a post-strike lull in the IBT is actually misleading. There is always a lull after a contract fight. Generally, much greater than what we have experienced in IBT. In fact, following the freight and UPS contracts a number of struggles broke out in which we were able to intervene and which have helped to build TDU (Car haulers, Schneider, McLeans). The TDU Convention was a great success and although TDU is still organizationally weak in most places, the convention reflected considerable potential strength particularly in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

The major snag in our perspective has come in the auto industry. While it was never projected that CGC would be a repeat of TDC or UPSurge, the fact is that the response to CGC in the plants has been all but non-existent. The major action during this auto contract fight has come from the skilled trades as it did in 1973. Already organized on their own, in the ISTC, the skilled tradesmen did not turn to CGC, not did we expect them

to. CGC was designed to attract production workers and our perspective depended on their response to the contract fight. That response has not been forthcoming.

The question is: is the CGC and the UAW a particular case or have our perspectives collapsed entirely, or in some way missed the reality of today. Before going into the CGC itself, it is necessary to examine the general course of the economy and the employers' offensive.

The Economy and the Employers' Offensive

The strength and length of the recovery are a matter of great importance to us- as well as to the employers. At our Convention we pointed out that the recovery was stronger than we had thought and could be expected to last longer. Furthermore, the strength of the recovery lessened inflationary pressures, which in turn meant less pressure on workers' incomes and less pressure on the bureaucrats to produce large wage settlements. This is not the place to repeat our overall economic analysis of the period, but what is said on the specifics of this recovery must be seen in the context of that correct analysis. There can be no return for world capitalism to the stability of the fifties and sixties. The ups and downs of today take place with a backdrop of increasing crisis for the capitalist system.

Most indications are that the recovery will last longer than we predicted. Furthermore, the settlements for the first half of 1976 indicate that as far as wages go, the unions can get away with increases well within guidelines acceptable to the employers and government economic experts. For all contracts, the average first year increase was 8.4% while the average for all three years was 6.8%. These are below the 1975 levels of 10.2% and 7.8% respectively. For manufacturing, wage increases were somewhat higher - 10.7% for the first year and 7.4% average for all three years. While the 10.7% is slightly above the first year settlements of 1975, the three year average of 7.4% is below the 8% average for 1975. In other words, the relatively low levels of inflation lessened the pressure for wage increases and headed off big fights on that question. These figures include cost of living figured at 6% per year.

Generally, COL demands were more popular where there was none, as in rubber, or where they were capped, as in trucking. But most COL formulas pay little more than half the actual rate. Settlements with COL tend to be lower in straight wage increases than those without: 6.3% over three years as compared to 7.2%. With no immediate inflationary outbreak in sight, the employers did not choose to draw the line on COL. In fact, if the economists of Citibank are right, many employers prefer COL because it heads off explosions over wages in future contracts - or at least they think it does. The attitude of most employers is probably summed up in the title of a lead article in Citibank's weekly economic newsletter, "Labor is not rocking the boat."

But the strength of the recovery is, in fact, mixed. Concern among the capitalists has arisen over the fact that the expected boom in capital investment (plant and equipment) has not materialized. While there has been slow, steady growth in capital investment, it is still 8-9% below the 1974 level. Bank loans to business have actually fallen off and are 15% below the 1974 peak. Prime rates have begun to drop.

This is not the sign of an imminent recession or bust, but rather the course of the recovery will be stretched out and the boom phase pushed farther in the future. Among other things, this probably means - given other factors as they are now - low rates of inflation for the next year.

One of the reasons for the relative slowness in capital investment has been the desire

Since the strikes, all of the major action and the biggest mover behind the union reform sentiment has come from the employers' offensive against traditional conditions.

Though not in the areas in which we have direct experience, it should also be noted at this stage that the employers offensive in some industries has produced actual wage cuts. This has been the case amongst public workers particularly and building workers and it has been achieved without any great rank and file response and in concert with other attacks on working conditions.

Related to the attack on working conditions is the question of jobs. Nation-wide speed-up in virtually every industry has meant continuing high unemployment; indeed, growing unemployment. They may also partly explain the lack of a fight over money - in spite of small drops in real wages. That is, with 7 million workers on the street and more people entering the work force every day, workers are reluctant to make a big fight over what would appear as enormous wage increases. Job security is a more important issue. (The UAW's demand for a few more days off is an attractive one because it seems to speak both to unemployment and to be a way to take off some of the pressure that comes from working harder - though it does nothing about those conditions themselves.)

Additionally, those who are employed remember the mass lay-offs of the past couple of years. For those who actually were laid off and are now back, there may be a sense of being fairly prosperous by comparison. For those with higher seniority there may be a feeling that it is better not to jeopardize what they do have. In any case, the continuation of large scale unemployment has at least a marginal dampening effect on potentially militancy.

Unwilling to make a big fight over wages and somewhat apprehensive over continued unemployment, many employed workers were nevertheless furious over the attack on working conditions. But in the context of a national contract fight, issues around working conditions are much harder to deal with or fight back around. After all, a wildcat or contract rejection around wages is pretty straight forward - go back and get more. But working conditions differ from place to place, job to job. Formulations to deal with these in national contracts are hard to come by. Most of the more obvious ones inevitably deal with the union and industries' political structure i.e. the grievance procedure, management rights, stewards rights and organizations, etc. Many of these are not even contract issues but issues of shop floor power and union politics.

If the issues that are really driving workers to anger and action are those that ultimately lead to the realm of union politics, then the workers must see some way to affect those politics. If the union leadership appears to be an unbeatable monolith, then the usual cynicism (You can't fight city hall) will dampen the possibilities of explosion.

FIGHTING THE BUREAUCRACY OF THE UNIONS

The question of unity in the bureaucracy as a dampener on rank and file action is, of course a complicated one. It would be a mistake to simply draw the conclusion that if the top bureaucracy of a union has its act together, then we must sit around until its unity crumbles automatically. The breaks in bureaucratic unity are the result of a combination of pressures from above (the employers) and below (the ranks). Furthermore, there is the question of to what degree even a unified bureaucracy at the international level actually controls local union politics.

In the CWA, for example, the top bureaucracy is entirely united - as far as anyone can

tell. But it is a relatively unsophisticated bureaucracy and does not have the political machinery to control the locals or even all the districts to an absolute degree. In the Teamsters we saw that Fitzsimmons rules by holding together many areas that actually have a fair degree of power on their own. Furthermore, Fitz and Co. were on the run because of the attacks on corruption, the death of Hoffa, and the aftermath of Watergate. Thus it has been difficult for Fitz to intervene directly to head of TDC, UPSurge, or TDU.

The one union we are involved in that has an experienced and sophisticated political machine that runs from top right down to the local is the UAW. Our original perspective for CGC saw a growing split in the UAW leadership and the possibility that this split would become open as the two sides scrambled to take Woodcock's place. But, this open split did not materialize. In spite of early indications of such a split, the unity and discipline of the UAW Executive Board has been maintained.

This unity at the top has tended to head off a dissident response at the secondary level- with a few well known exceptions. Without significant turmoil at the top, the traditional alienation and cynicism of production workers, particularly blacks, meant not only a failure to act, but even a lack of real interest in the national contract.

This lack of interest in the national contract may also have been reinforced by what we said earlier about wages versus working conditions. Aside from the grievance procedure, which is generally beyond the reach of an unorganized rank and file, most working conditions in auto come under the local agreement. And, at least in some plants, there has been more interest and activity over the local agreement. This made it easier for workers to write off the national agreement as a hopeless cause. In the Teamsters Union, where the various supplements are directly linked to the national master contract by the ratification vote, no such dichotomy could occur.

In summary, relatively low inflation and high unemployment have put somewhat of a damper on the response of the working class to a very real employers offensive. In the UAW, unity at the top had the added effect of heading off real interest in the national contract.

Having spelled out some of the reasons for the snags in our perspective, it would be a mistake to draw pessimistic conclusions or to conclude that we simply withdraw to local propagandistic work.

In steel, the bureaucracy faces serious challenges in Sadlowski, a fight which will open things up considerably. Although our fraction is relatively new to the industry, things have been moving quickly for us. First, the agitation around women's issues which we have already played a leading role in, and second, our perspective of playing an active role in the Sadlowski campaign itself. We hope to connect with the left wing of Sadlowski's support, and the most militant elements in the union.

In telephone we are attempting to convince known oppositionists nationally, to launch along with us as individuals, a campaign around the contract. At this point, the international bureaucracy seems to have a firm grip on the union and there does not appear to be any chinks in the facade. It is thus doubtful that the political basis or the objective conditions will exist for the formation of a national ongoing opposition group in the CWA, like the TDU.

However, the Watts machine did receive some flak at the recent convention over the conduct of bargaining in 1974. It is these local oppositionists plus blacks who are still severely discriminated against in the industry, who are the potential leadership for a coalition around the contract.

The telephone workforce is also highly volatile around the contract time. A campaign on the inside, combined with aggressive work from the outside can produce for us a national network of militants that has not existed in the telephone industry previously.

In postal, our work continues to grow on a modest scale. We did extremely well at the NALE convention, especially considering our small size in that industry. Work in postal rather than disproving our perspective, has shown that with a few more cadre in the industry, we could do extremely well. At this point, our work is hampered by our small numbers and the different unions involved. We are attempting to build in specific areas. What unifies the work nationally is the fight against the employers' offensive - which in postal is exceedingly severe. The employers' offensive and the fight back are the theme of the national paper Postal Worker. Work around building the paper continues.

In auto, as has been stated before, we have suffered our biggest disappointments. We have learned a great deal from the campaign, which is not yet over. The NC will be discussing Auto in full and an assessment document will be written for the organization when the campaign ends. A few positive notes should be brought up here, however. Auto workers have not proved to be wholly apathetic and defeated. When things appeared within reach and thus worth fighting for, people moved. The fights for the COLA checks at Local 51 and the wildcat at Fleetwood are two of the most recent examples.

At this point in our perspective, it is however, necessary to refocus and in some ways scale down our expectations in that we cannot now expect to establish national oppositions in the UAW, USW CWA and postal unions.

This fact is the major shift in our perspective. And although it marks a setback for the working class as a whole it is not a wholly negative fact. We were in a serious race for time. The protraction of the crisis expands our time and gives us additional and very badly needed space to train and build a new, revolutionary leadership in the trade unions.

Although we will not come out of this bargaining round with national oppositions in our priorities, we will come out much stronger. We will have an increased, seasoned cadre, a network of militants in our priorities, and a political periphery for the IS. We will also have accomplished a great deal in terms of method. By and large, the turn to agitation has been successful and has transformed the organization.

The mass agitational approach, including limited programs to attract maximum support will continue to be the heart of our labor perspectives, nationally as well as locally. National contracts will continue to be the best opportunity for mass agitation in most cases. This is true even if it means primarily establishing our reputation as an active force in union affairs. The major adjustment comes not so much in the different style or program of the future national campaigns, but in putting

greater emphasis on the political work done by the IS in connection with these campaigns. This change is in line with the changes proposed in the major NC documents and with the periphery building campaign. It does not mean that the various coalitions or groups we form carry heavy political programs. It does not mean that WP and political magazine coverage must be more political, analytical, and educational. It does mean that we must draw more activists from these campaigns around the IS and its activities.

It is important for us to understand that in the final analysis, the missing element in this bargaining round is less the nuances of economic conditions, but the absence in the American working class of a trained layer of rank and file leaders and activists. The launching of a successful campaign or the solidity of an opposition group, locally or nationally, is dependent on the available trained cadre. We will train much of that cadre in our ranks and periphery. Our national and local campaigns are ultimately directed at building a leadership for the class - through training and recruitment. If we succeed this time in expanding our periphery, we will have the cadre for future mass action.

NC ADDITION TO BE INSERTED AFTER PARA 5 PAGE 5

Another dimension of analysis must be brought into our discussion of the success of the employers' offensive. The defeat of the Black Liberation movement has crippled the ability of the most politically conscious section of the working class to defend itself. In fact, the 70's have seen relatively more struggle in those unions and industries with a predominantly white work force. The Freight and UPS workers in the IBT, the miners and the UAW skilled trades are 3 of the most obvious examples.

In terms of economic factors the Black working class has born a disproportionate share of the burden of the crisis. But the greater economic security of the white population has made it easier for it to engage in struggle.

The heart of the matter is political. Just as most of the leadership of the Black struggles of the sixties has become the backbone of the Black Democratic city machines, so much of the leadership of the industrial struggles by black workers has now become part of the trade union bureaucracy. A layer of leaders has been stripped away to become a reformist buffer. The sting of defeat lingers in the consciousness of those militants not bought off. Black people have learned the hard way that their daily oppression is part of a vicious system. The understanding exists that any rebellion against a part of this system is in danger of being repressed "by any means necessary".

Because white workers have not suffered a general defeat, and, paradoxically, because they have greater illusions about the inherent justice in the American way of life. They are today more inclined to fight for what they feel they are entitled to.

Until the black workers are again ready to battle their employers, the rank and file movement will remain on a sporadic and parochial level.