

SPECIAL BULLETIN NUMBER FOUR

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The "New Course" - Not So New And In The Wrong Direction!  
The Executive Committee Reply To The Minority Faction.

For I.S. Members Only

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THE "NEW COURSE" - NOT SO NEW AND IN THE WRONG DIRECTION  
THE E.C. REPLY TO THE MINORITY FACTION

## I. INTRODUCTION

The document of the minority faction, unlike most faction documents, does not focus on an alternative program for the I.S. Indeed, with the exception of its title, "New Course," and a vague section on Workers' Power, there is no positive direction in it at all. The focus of the minority document is on a host of problems that face the I.S. It is true that some of the problems they outline are real. And it is also true that although steps have been taken in the last few months to deal with these problems, we have not yet finally come to grips with all of them.

The rest of the problems the faction raises are an expression of the inevitable difficulties of establishing a revolutionary base in the USA or they are, in many cases, distortions required by the factional position of the minority's leadership.

However if the factional struggle we are now facing assists us in working out the solutions to the real problems instead of dealing with the bogus problems it will be a positive experience for the organization. We do not believe the solution to any of these problems lies in the lines faintly outlined by the minority. We believe they would only take the organization down the road to disaster.

### The Problems of Transition

Some of the genuine problems mentioned by the minority are best understood as problems that face an organization attempting the transition from a student propaganda group to a workers combat organization. In this, and the immediate preceding period, organizations all over the world have faced these problems. Some have been destroyed by them, but none have gone down this road without making serious mistakes. And none have gone down this road without facing an internal opposition which claimed that the transition was a failure and implied that it couldn't be done.

In our transition we have undoubtedly been guilty of seriously over-estimating the rate at which we could proceed. At the 1975 convention, targets were set which proved unrealistic, and we were too slow in adapting to that fact. We have thus sustained set-backs which we did not expect and faced more difficult conditions than we were ready for. But it has to be understood that progress has still been made and while we are not on our original timetable we are still on the right course. This is not the time to lose our nerve and give up on the historic task we have undertaken.

Did the British I.S., which now mistakenly offers support to our own minority, lose its nerve between 1974 and 1976 when it lost 30% of its membership and saw sales of 'Socialist Worker' decline by almost two-thirds? It did not. In that period it weathered several splits but continued on its course. This course has now seen the ISGB increase its membership by 25% in the last six months, almost double its paper sales again and announce the formation of a new workers party. We are a much smaller and weaker organization, so we should be thankful that we have not faced setbacks of this relative magnitude.

### The Real Problems

The faction informs us in their document that the Coalition for a Good Contract (CGC) failed and correctly understands that this was a serious set-back for our Detroit branch in particular. But we knew that already; almost three months ago the auto faction committee published a long evaluation which not only admitted the failure but analyzed

why we failed. The minority says not a word about that analysis, or about the new perspective focussing on building local bases that the fraction has now adopted. In fact they say nothing of substance about why we failed and what we should have done instead. They take potshots at the fraction steering committee, make the claims that we have illusions in Weissman, but are silent on both the existence and content of our analysis of the skilled trades movement and lack of movement amongst black production workers. This poor approach to what ~~it~~ is a real problem explains why they have not yet been able to find a single supporter in a fraction which now has twenty members in six cities.

Real problem number two is the lack of worker recruitment, a problem we have been grappling with for the last six months with only the most modest success. The minority asks us to believe that industrialization "may well be a factor in keeping workers away." We do not pretend it is that simple. That is why we are upset to find no serious critique of the tentative solutions posed by the October NC. ~~ix~~ Instead the minority falls back on a second, equally, unlikely proposition that more workers would join if we didn't ask them to lead their fellow workers.

They have to explain why the twenty teamsters who have joined and remained members of the IS since the 1975 "turn to agitation" took that step if it wasn't ~~ix~~ the result of the TDC/TDU. Do they seriously believe that by making propaganda from the outside rather than organizing agitation from within, we could have made such progress? Other organizations tried and got precisely nowhere.

When the minority faction attacks us for moving too slowly in the development of anti-racist work and general black perspectives, it is fair comment. When they offer no concrete alternative and deliberately down-play the work that has been ~~one~~, fair comment turns into calculated irresponsibility.

Over the last year we have taken a crucial and difficult first step in this area. From having virtually no black members, perspective or work, we have moved to the creation of a black caucus, the development of a majority black youth organization, serious Tyler defense work, Marquette Park and Southern African solidarity work. The organization is even now working on the development of more elaborate black perspectives as was agreed by the last NC.

The minority observes that we must be consistent in this work; they are right. And just as in other areas of work in our small and stretched organization, we have not ~~we~~ always been perfect in this regard. Though it should be said that Mrs. Tyler has a great deal more respect for the consistency of our Tyler defense effort than the minority does. But we also have the right to ask consistency from the ~~we~~ minority as well. They cannot at one and the same time ~~we~~ make a general pledge to do more and still hold out the promise that under their regime over-work will be a thing of the past.

On the real problems of the women's caucus and work in the class around women's liberation, the minority apply the same irresponsible method. The women's commissioner herself is a leader of the minority faction, surely the faction then has something concrete to say on this real problem? But no, again we get nothing but general abstractions on contract demands for women. A glance at the record will indicate why this is the case. This problem has been maturing for a year; it arises out of a situation where the women's movement had collapsed and it was no longer possible to work in CLUW. The E.C. and the women's commission have taken some modest steps (such as encouraging the re-establishment of the women's caucuses) but that problem is still not solved. But the truth is that at no time in this whole period, up to and including today, has there been any significant new proposal from the women's commissioner.

Finally it should be said that the political development of the membership of the organization gives the minority faction genuine cause for concern. This too is legitimate; in making the vitally necessary turn to agitation, there has sometimes been a turn away from politics. In this atmosphere, WP could not perform miracles. It unavoidably reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the whole organization. Since the October NC, we have improved the paper from this point of view; we have launched a political magazine as a further step in the right direction. We have made considerable efforts to get more input to the paper from the membership. On the whole, the response even from leading members (including these in the minority) has not been too encouraging. But it is clearly a difficult process which must continue. To paraphrase the minority, the "get-rich-quick" attitude they have to WP is nothing but an illusion. A long hard slog will be required to complete the solutions. Our experience with the periphery campaign, South Africa, Gary Tyler, etc. (all of which get virtually no mention by the minority, whose over-riding interest appears to be to down-grade the industrial work) has demonstrated that. It has also demonstrated that our perspective can be made to work. That it would be a grave mistake to give up and sink under the weight of the minority's defeatism.

#### The Unreal Problem

In attempting to give at least the illusion of an alternative to the present course of the I.S., the minority faction has been forced to create the impression that their basic politics represent a sophisticated defense of the real tradition of the I.S. In performing this contortion the minority focusses on a series of things that reflect their dis-orientation rather than the organization's problems. Let us now examine some of those.

Perhaps the most significant is the "drift to the right" problem which is supposed to be exemplified by our support for the Sadlowski presidential campaign in the USWA. We are told that this represents a new, and somewhat disgusting, political departure for the I.S., and that our support for Sadlowski is uncritical and will create illusions in him. Instead we are told that by artificially distancing ourselves from the Sadlowski movement, we could "expose" him and make greater gains than we will in our present course.

The minority is wrong on all counts. For many years, from the time we first understood the need to break with the methods of the sectarian left, we have understood the need to be involved in supporting non-revolutionary candidates for some union offices. This is why we supported Arnold Miller and "Miners for Democracy" in the Mine Workers. That is why we did not advocate "independent rank and file organization" outside the MFD, and that is why the Spartacist League still attacks us for "reformism." We were not reformist then and we are not "drifting to the right" now. For if the minority is correct now, mindless sectarians like the Sparts were correct then and we have been "reformist" or "right-wing" for some time now.

The Sadlowski campaign is one of the major "unreal" problems highlighted by the minority and it is an especially strange emphasis for them given the demand in other sections of the document that we must be with the workers in their struggles. The best elements of the steelworkers are with Sadlowski, and we are there too. Not with a list of sectarian criticisms but with a ~~positive~~ positive program for continued rank and file organization after the election on clear rank and file programs. By no stretch of the imagination can this be viewed as capitulating to the bureaucracy.

Unreal problem number two is the "nightmarish" internal life of the IS, the lack of democracy, the bureaucratic discipline. This is slightly hysterical nonsense. The facts prove otherwise. With the exception of the Socialist Caucus, who were expelled hours before they could carry through a split which we had writt<sup>er</sup> proof, there has not been a single expulsion or even suspension for political reasons since the 1973 split with the Revolutionary Socialist League. There is not a single case of secret surpression<sup>o</sup>f discussion that the minority can point<sup>o</sup> indeed we urged the leaders of the minority to openly discuss the differences for months before they declared a faction. They refused.

We have an annual convention which is open to all and a model of democracy. We have a democratically elected leadership and a system of national industrial committees which enjoys considerable flexibility in applying central policy to the particular arena.

Our central staff, while large in relation to the overall size of the organization, is actually too small to do all that has to be done to maintain a national structure for an agitational group in the United States. Consequently many of the charges of mistakes and oversights aimed at the center by not only the minority have some basis in truth. The fact is that we can be justifiably proud of our democratic structure. By comparison with the ISGB, for example, we are miles ahead. There, conventions are closed, the equivalent to the National Cttee is purely advisory and all power is vested in their equivalent of the EC; factions are banned except for a limited pre-convention period and internally disciplined factions which advocate a totally different course for the organisation, are totally outlawed.

Those who would hold up the ISGB as a democratic model in contrast with the ISUS should examine its actual internal structure before taking up an unbendable position. Before supporting a faction which accuses the ISUS of undemocratic practice, the ISGB should also examine our practice in relation to its own.

There are a host of other "unreal" mistakes in the faction document. We urge all members, including those who have already put their name to the minority faction, to examine them all critically. Is it really a mistake to organise around ensuring that revolutionary workers give a lead their co-workers? Is it really a mistake, in America today, to have a section of members who have totally devoted their life to overthrowing the capitalist system? Is it really a mistake to do consistant day-to-day work in the workplace? Is it really possible for an organization our size to relate seriously to every struggle of workers? Is it really better to have students standing outside the plants selling papers rather than working inside those same plants? Can this capitalist monster really be over-thrown without a disciplined fighting organization? The answer is NO. And even if every attack on the IS were true, even if the picture painted of the IS by the minority was correct. The answer would still be NO. But the truth is that the picture for the ISUS at the end of 1976 is much better than the minority would have us believe.

THE TRUE PICTURE CHECK IT OUT.

There is no sense in which the IS is an organization in perfect health but the patient is far from dead. Indeed it is already convalescing from an illness which never even threatened to be fatal. At the heart of the organization two of the four priorities are making steady progress. In teamsters we have firmly established the TDU as a national organization and have impressive chapters in several major cities. Our periphery is growing and the long awaited recruitment of TDU activists has begun.

The main leader of the 299 wildcat and the leader of the regional carhaulers wildcat are both now members of the Detroit Teamster Branch. That is the truth, and it's no wonder that the minority doesn't quite have enough consistency to say that our TDC initiative was a mistake. They only hint at it.

In steel we have established a fraction which is now seriously operating in three major steel cities. Until the late summer this fraction barely existed. It has been forged in the period of worst demoralization for the organization. That was possible because of hiring and the Sadlowski campaign. In Pittsburgh, our tabloid newspaper (rank and file paper) is already having an appeal beyond its original local base. We now have IS contacts who are selling Workers Power regularly.

In Cleveland and Gary we are not yet this advanced, but the group in Cleveland Republic steel (which we founded) played a major role in assuring Sadlowski the nomination. In Gary we are now part of the United Rank and File Club in the "basic" local and have begun to bring back around us some of the contacts who were lost when our women's group was killed by the sectarians of the RSL and the OL.

In the other two priority fractions, auto and telephone, the recent successful fraction meetings have demonstrated that these fractions are now over the worst effects of their respective, but different, defeats. Both fractions now have new, mainly local, perspectives and a fairly large number of comrades who have just gotten into the industry. This is not the place for full and detailed reports. But it is the place to urge everyone to seriously discuss the state and activity of these fractions with fraction members.

Some of our branches are not in the best shape. But that is no secret. The question is what is the dynamic going on now. Or at least, what was the dynamic until this unnecessary faction fight broke out in the organization. The answer to that is that we have made serious strides since the late summer when our demoralization and stagnation was at its height. We had been moving slowly on the South Africa work because of our understanding of how burned out sections of the organization had become after the hectic activity of the last year. But this work particularly is now expanding and beginning to take us forward in several key branches. This fact is not even mentioned by the minority.

We know that we tried to move too far, too fast. We understand that the price of this mistake has been paid in particular, by some of the less central and newer branches. We didn't have the resources to sustain the development and expansion we embarked upon. Correctives have to be made. But that is no excuse for totally reversing ourselves. All the evidence demonstrates that our basic perspectives are sound. It is certainly no excuse for a faction to come up with a distorted picture of where we are at and consciously or unconsciously peddle this fantasy as fact throughout the organization.

Their Politics and Ours.

The minority stands for a fundamental and basic retreat. It wants not just a turn from mass work, but a break with any attempt to do agitation, to lead workers in struggle. It wants not only to ditch our focus on key industrial and geographical priorities, but to put in its place a method of operating which will actually prevent consistent work. It not only consciously down-grades our industrial work by placing equal emphasis on students and white-collar workers as it does on blue-collar workers. It also demands that the industrial work which remains, be based on outmoded and sectarian formulas which have failed wherever they were applied. It not only makes a conscious break with the concept of a dedicated and disciplined organization, it compounds the error with a glib promise. that an IS following the "New Course" will make decreasing demands on its members.

The approach which we are defending is the exact opposite of this one. It is the approach which has historically proved to be the only one capable of establishing the basis for a revolutionary workers' party.

The majority approach starts with the understanding that agitation is the key. That only by struggle, defensive at first, can the working class gain the confidence and experience to eventually create a party and seize state power. That the organization which aspires to be the workers' party must prove itself in leading struggles, that it must focus its small resources at points where it can have greatest impact, for only if it proves its politics in practice can its theories become the theories of the working class. That the industrial working class is the key to revolution and that there is no way to pretend that the process of building the revolution will be easy.

The minority offers the easy road. Unfortunately for revolutionaries in America in 1976, the easy road is the road to destruction. We are now facing head-on the most difficult historic task that revolutionaries have to face: the task of bringing together low-level agitational struggle and revolutionary politics. Our transitional period will not be over until we have a complete method for fulfilling this task. In the last few years we can only claim to have the beginning of that method. The minority is urging the organization to withdraw into a twilight world where the difficult questions don't even exist, so real answers don't have to be found. We are urging the organization, the whole organization, to come together to face up to these questions. We are urging the membership to take part in a healthy, outward-looking debate which takes up from where the October NC left off and forges a united approach to our work over the next year.

It could yet be the opposite, but <sup>this</sup> faction fight can force the organization (including the E.C.) to develop further and with more accuracy its method for the creation of a workers' party. That would be positive and healthy. The acceptance of the "new course" as a solution will destroy the organization. We are ready to make many changes but we are unalterably opposed to a retreat down their road, which we will fight every inch, every centimeter of the way. In the rest of this document we will detail why we take such a firm and unyielding stand.

## 2. THE 'MILITANT MINORITY' - THE ROOTS OF AN ERROR

We have already stated that the minority opposition document goes beyond rejecting current IS policies toward industrialization, priorities, and mass work. Running through their document is a consistent political thread which rejects the basic political method around which the IS has been organized. (Those comrades who feel attracted to the views of the minority would think through what it would mean to be in an organization that was politically guided by the views of the opposition as set forth in their document. At root, the method of the minority ~~§~~ rejects what is fundamental to agitation. That is, taking both initiatives and responsibility for a developing movement. They do this in favor of a propagandistic orientation to movements or groups that already exist.)

The method of the opposition can be most easily understood when they argue that the IS should orient to a "militant minority" as opposed to its present "mass work" orientation. To back up this assertion, they point out that in the IBT, it was a small minority of militant workers who organized the wildcats and kept picket lines going. And this, of course is true. In every struggle of the working class that goes beyond the class collaborationist bureaucracy, ~~the working~~ there will always be a small minority of militant ~~xxx~~ or radical workers who give the lead.

### The Militant Minority and the Conservative Rest

What is key and central to the whole IS mass work approach is the relationship between the militant minority and their more conservative or ~~cautious~~ cautious brothers and sisters. So long as more conservative Teamsters accepted the lead of the militant minority, or at least stood neutral -- so long as they honored and respected the picket lines -- the strike held. When employer/union back-to-work agitation started getting favorable hearing among more conservative elements, they in turn started putting pressure on ~~the~~ the more militant minority. Pickets began leaving the lines; the strike began to ebb; and the wildcats had to be called off.

Throughout history, all important working class struggles and major breakthroughs occurred when a militant or radical minority assumed leadership -- for some period of time and around at least certain specific issues over large numbers of more politically backward workers. The Leninist concept of revolutionary party, comes out of an understanding of this fact. The revolutionary party seeks to become the centralized political organization of that minority of workers who are committed to given a clear class lead to their brothers and sisters, and who have been won to the understanding that the only successful and final outcome to the class struggle is socialist revolution. The revolution itself is led by a minority -- with more conservative and backward elements following the lead.

The ~~key~~ difference between the IS majority, and the minority opposition, is not over the need to orient toward a minority of workers. It is only a minority of rank and file workers today who will read socialist newspapers, who will work actively with us, or who are at all open to recruitment. The differences come from the fact that the minority opposition has a totally unreal view of the militant minority of workers to whom we orient --- and even more important, there is sharp and total disagreement over the political guidance and direction that the IS should try to give to that militant minority.

In truth the views of the opposition can make ~~some~~ sense only among people who are interested in commenting on the working class.

The minority opposition document defines the militant minority ~~x~~ that we should be orienting towards in a way that can make sense only to those who are outside the actual life and struggles of the class. As they put it? "Whether we like it or not, the masses of workers in the United States today are quite conservative, in particular, they are filled with chauvinism: ~~is~~ racism, sexism, patriotism. There is also, of course, a minority which is the opposite."

Spontaneous

The militant minority that the opposition says we should seek out and orient to are the anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-patriotic workers. They would have us check out workers attitudes on these kinds of issues to identify who does and who does not belong to the militant minority.

The Search for Perfect Workers

When this view of the minority was first raised by a section of the middle class student left, we called it "abstract moralism". We explained then, and we must now explain again, that worker attitudes change dramatically through the experience of organization and struggle. For example, let's look again at the militant minority of Teamsters who ran the Detroit freight wildcat. No one familiar with the facts could claim that what they held in common as a militant minority was their immunity from racism, sexism, patriotism -- or that they held any kind of "ism" in common. All that this militant minority of teamsters held in common was that at a particular point in time, they were prepared to stand up and give a lead in the fight against both Fitz and the employers.

Following the wildcat, a tiny part of this militant minority stayed together as members of the TDC/TDU. These were the workers prepared to continue organizing the fight they had started. As TDU members, these Teamsters had to take the heat of being in an organization with socialists. They became exposed to views on things like sexism and racism that they had never before encountered. Some quit. Others remain loyal to TDU and its programs of action. Through the experience, the racism, sexism, patriotism, etc. of this group on the whole diminishes. A couple of became socialists. And as the IS continues giving leadership to the TDU and continues our efforts to recruit from TDU, this process goes forward. But what holds the TDU together is common commitment to a common struggle.

But the "New Course" of the minority opposition outlines a different perspective for the Teamsters we recruit - and presumably, for the Teamsters we influence. Should they continue to organize themselves to lead struggle? Heavens no! The opposition tells us: "IS members cannot be the best fighters, the best leaders, etc. without reflecting the politics of the class. If the class is conservative, the leaders will quite naturally reflect that conservatism." Instead, they should organize a wildcat Teamster group that doesn't try to give leadership itself, but that "fights for a clear class struggle politics in the rank and file movement." In short, they want to form Teamster caucuses that are propagandistic and not agitational.

This basic approach to caucus building has been well pioneered by sectarian groups like the Spartacists and the RSL and has proven totally bankrupt. While the "left" faction does not have the politics of the SL and the RSL, its method in approaching rank and file work appears essentially the same. If our minority were given an opportunity to put this approach in practice - they would first have to drive out the IS, those workers who joined out of struggle and who believe in leading. If they then had enough people left to set up an IBT group, they will have to tell us how that group would differ from something the Sparts or the RSL would set up.

Taking Responsibility for the Rank and File Movement

The fact is, we cannot just hope that others will set up groups or build movements ~~and organizations~~ so that we can play a "left wing role." We have to play a part in building and taking responsibility for movements and organizations - and in that process move people to the left, as we did in TDC/TDU.

The central idea about the so-called "New Course" is to change the IS into an organization that analyzes the class struggle and that propagandizes about it, but that abstains from participating in it. Long ago, when the IS just emerged from the student movement, this is all we knew how to do. We had many hot, heavy, intellectually stimulating discussions. But, when we began getting actual experience with real

workers in real unions, we discovered that 95% of our debates missed the point. We rediscovered the old Marxist truth that you can only understand the world around you when you try to change it.

For example, in both the 1970 and the 1973 contract rounds we formulated national contract demands for both auto and for Master Freight. The precise list of demands were hotly debated by the whole national leadership and organization. But, by and large, they got very little positive response from the workers. We were always careful to include one or more anti-racist demands (for the blacks and minorities); and one or more anti-sexist demands (for the women). But this moral gesture meant nothing, for the programs were, in their entirety, propaganda programs that got little hearing and no response from workers.

By 1975 we had learned from the failures of the old approach. We learned that agitation necessarily meant having a program that relates to the actual views and desires of the workers and moves them forward. We learned that different events required different programmatic emphasis. We had learned to lead specific agitational struggles over instances of racism and sexism in various industries and unions. Now we learned how to wage contract fights that could actually move workers. That meant that the demands had to actually be contract demands - and not every good idea in our book, and that these demands had to seem attainable and worth fighting for. In the TDC, this was a big part of what led to success. Even in GGC, we had a credible program and our members gained respect. T

The opposition now disagrees with these conclusions. They say: "Already the IS has insisted that there can be no special demands for blacks and women in the 'broad, mass campaign' that it organizes"

We ask the opposition: can you be more concrete? What special demands should we have added to the list of TDC demands? You've had plenty long enough time to think of this. There's no reason to be so vague.

#### Broad Contract Demands

We ask: are you suggesting, for example, that the TDC should have had an added contract demand for superseniority and preferential hiring for blacks, latins and women? Is this what has been excluded because the "IS has insisted that there be no special demands." Or if not this demand, what demand? If you now have a proposal for an agitational demand that could have been an effective part of the TDC program, tell us. Give an argument demonstrating why this demand could have been effective.

Or, are you now saying that in hindsight, the TDC should only have had a propagandistic program - that it was a conservatising mistake for the IS to propose an agitational program for the purpose of giving a lead to large number of Teamsters. Do you believe we could have had a propagandistic program and still have been part of the leadership of the actual contract struggle? Do you believe that there would even be TDU today if we had taken your course? Tell us what special demands the "IS has insisted" be excluded so that we have a better idea what it is you are trying to say. We believe that the TDC struggle and the formation of the TDU, will in the long run, be much more significant in combatting racism and sexism in the IBT than would have been a thousand purely propagandistic programs.

#### Fighting Sexism and Racism

We believe that the approach taken by the IS in introducing racism and sexism as issues into TDC, UPSurge and TDU was far more effective either propaganda or phoney contract demands. This approach did not moralistically insist that a largely white, male work force adopt demands it was not prepared to really take up as a precondition for joining or supporting ~~TDC or UPSurge~~ TDC or UPSurge. Rather, we introduced the issues of racism and sexism in the context of the need for rank and file unity to beat Fitz and the employers. The result of this approach was that TDU does have a strong positions on racism and sexism in the industry and union, and that many TDuers have been moved on these issues.

A clear implication of the "left" faction's critique of IS mass work, is that we, through priorities and agitational methods, have left women out of the picture altogether. We believe that the record of the past three years does not show that. The IS has a number of industrialized women who have become leaders in their plants, at their jobs and in movements like TDU and UPSurge. In the IBT, it is not just a question of a few women leading many men. There are now women's groups in TDU. In fact, because of the important role of women in TDU and UPSurge, TDU membership is open to wives (and husbands) as well as ~~is~~ to working Teamsters. In steel our industrialized women lead both men and women and have fought over women's issues from the start. In auto, telephone, and the post office, women comrades are central to the rank and file movement, weak or strong, and provide real encouragement to women in those industries. The facts, show that the industrialization of women into priorities has proved extremely successful in training women leaders and in laying the basis of a working women's movement.

The minority document tries to work both sides of the street. On the one hand, they tell us that ~~is~~ of all our union work: "the most promising" is our Teamster work. On the other hand, they analyze and criticize the way the work was done, suggesting we oriented to the wrong Teamsters, with the wrong program, that we were mistaken to try to lead more conservative people, and that we worked too hard and tired the organization out.

In the real world, you can't have it both ways. But even in our internal debate, the opposition feels free to use the discussion norms of a commentary group where there is no particular need to put forward consistent ideas because no one plans to test them out in practice anyway. In a discussion group, it's all right to be all over the map - as long as you say it cleverly, it passes for good coin. In a discussion group disagreements can go on forever and do not have to be resolved by the next NC.

#### A Paper Organization

The true program of the minority is to reduce the IS to an organization that does little more than produce and distribute a newspaper. It makes sense. If you don't want to lead, but just make propaganda, you naturally reach the conclusion that "our members are tied down through industrialization." It's just as easy to do pure propaganda work from the outside - easier.

Industrialized members, or workers members, may try to "conservatize" the organization when they try to bring in feedback on how the paper and its program are received by their co-workers. But when working only from the outside, you don't need to get that much feedback. You come down and join a picket line. The workers smile at you and buy your paper. It's called intervention. Everybody's happy. And then you move on. If this is all the organization does, it has no reliable way of testing out its politics against reactions from workers.

This newspaper and propagandistic orientation also explains why the minority wants to ditch priorities. A commentary group need not do long term systematic follow-up work. It can rush from issue to issue, union to union, struggle to struggle. It need not concentrate and learn in depth about any particular industry or union because it doesn't even desire to learn enough to actually try and organize the struggle and give a lead. All it needs to know is that we live in a world with nasty corporations, rotten sell-out bureaucrats, conservative workers, and a small militant minority of non-sexist, non-racist, non-patriotic workers. Then, whenever a struggle breaks out, you can write an article telling the workers that their leaders are sell-outs, their demands are wrong, their bosses are profit hungry, and that the only way to win is class unity, fight racism, fight sexism, stay on strike forever.

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## Mass Work

The mass work perspective of the IS majority, begins from the viewpoint that one of the key tasks of revolutionary socialist workers is to give a lead in the class struggle - and to convince and teach other workers to give a lead as well. The term, mass work, can be misleading. It refers not only to efforts to lead thousands of workers in a contract struggle. It applies, also to efforts to organize a job action of 15 workers in a press line. What both have in common is the fact that you can't just write-off or ignore more conservative workers. To win, every effort must be made to bring them over, or at least, to neutralize them in the struggle. This is what industrial militants must do every day.

Some workers are attracted to the IS because of the agitational work we do. We patiently try to convince these workers that our day to day practice, is totally connected to our full socialist world view and our revolutionary ~~commitment~~ commitment. Other workers are attracted to us on the basis of our politics. They, we show that to hold these politics, one must become an activist in the day to day struggle. Revolutionary politics represent the unity of theory and practice.

The industrial struggle is not the totality of our perspective. But it is one central part of our strategy. When they reject ~~mass~~ mass work, the minority is, in fact, rejecting the industrial struggle itself. The "New Course" represents the beginning the road backward to the middle class world of discussion groups.

## I.S. INDUSTRIAL WORK, MYTH AND REALITY

Central to the IS strategy for building a revolutionary party has been our understanding that in a period of growing capitalist crisis, reformist labor bureaucracy can no longer provide an aggressive enough leadership to protect past gains of the working class, let alone, win new gains. This makes it possible for revolutionaries to provide leadership in the struggles for partial demands and reforms. providing this kind of leadership gives revolutionaries the chance to show workers how best to fight, and this in turn helps us get a hearing on our full socialist ideas. The struggle today, led by revolutionaries, open the door to socialist ideas inside the working class. Our policy of industrialization, and our industrial and trade union work, over time, position the IS to play this kind of role.

The "left" faction has now abandoned all of this. The notion that revolutionaries can lead reform struggles in a period of capitalist crisis has been turned on its head. Instead, we will again repeat the position of the minority, that IS members cannot be the "best fighters," the best leaders," etc. without reflecting the politics of the class. With all the power of an equal equation, the "left" factions says, "If the class is conservative the leaders quite naturally will reflect that conservatism." From the idea that revolutionaries leading workers struggles can help change the consciousness of workers - the most basic idea of Leninist strategy- the "left" faction has moved to the utterly static notion that if the workers are conservative their leaders will reflect that conservatism. It is but a short step from this pessimistic indeed hopeless, notion to the conclusion that the "turn to agitation must be abandoned."

To support this abandonment of our perspective, a picture of incredible gloom and failure is painted. With the inexplicable, but undeniable, exception of the Teamster work, everything is failure or opportunism, breed of failure. The auto is a string of "obituaries", the steel work an opportunistic orgy in which alleged "independent" rank and file groups are destroyed in favor of Saslowski smorgasbords, the CWA work hardly worth the price of a phone call.

The feast of failure that the "left" faction cooks up with such canabalistic ardor, is impressionistic in the extreme. It is a world viewed through the narrow prism of a few months period. It fails to see our present problems and strengths in a more long term way and with a wider perspective.

### A Longer View

Taking a long range view, we would have to ask, is the IS in industry today stronger and more experienced than we were at the time of the 1973 split, or are we weaker? Do we have deeper roots in the working class or not? Are our members in industry becoming recognized leaders in their workplaces, or not? On balance, what has our strategy gained us and what has it cost us? Any frank, but accurate assesment of our industrial work and its progress in the last three years will show that the IS has come a long way - not without costs, not without serious problems, but a long way none the less.

At the ~~xxxx~~ time of the last IS convention, we could have applied the method of impressionism and concluded that nothing lasting was gained from the intense and grueling IBT campaign. We were then in a period of post contract let down. There was not yet any momentum to IBT recruitment. There was still even a question mark over whether or not it would be possible to create ongoing IBT rank and file organizations. If a "New Course" faction

had been organized then, the first point in its platform would have been: dump the kind of IBT work we are doing: it takes up too much time and effort for too little results. And if that impressionistic advice had been followed all the work put into the IBT campaign would have gone down the drain.

Because the IBT work is picking up, the minority focuses its critique on the auto, steel and telephone work. We will show that its facts, anecdotes, and stories do not reflect the real state of the work, but are rather the product of a vivid, if demoralized imagination.

But before discussing these areas of work we will show that even their views on the IBT work seriously misunderstand what was going on.

### Teamster Work

Let us look at the Teamster work in Detroit - the work that even the "Left Faction" has not been able to pick apart. In the months before the expiration of the Master Freight Contract, TDC appeared to grow enormously. When the Detroit ~~wildcat~~ wildcat broke out, TDC buttons and placards were as thick as flies. TDC leader Pete Camarata became a national celebrity overnight. But was the TDC a stable, independent rank and file group free from nasty alliances with opportunist elements? No, it was a far cry from a "self-reliant rank and file movement, independent of the Teamster bureaucracy, based on strong local groups, and with a shop floor orientation." We worked with the group even though it fell far short of our ideal, and in doing so, we did not share the minorities present worry that this would "Politically ruin" workers who look to us.

In Detroit, TDC did represent the feelings of the mass of members of local 299. That was its strength. But organizationally TDC was extremely weak. In fact, TDC was in large part dependent for its "independent" existence on a group called Action Rank and File (ARF). ARF was and is a group that played with various elements of the leadership of 299 - mostly former Hoffa supporters and hacks. ARF's orientation to the leadership of 299, as bureaucratic a group of bureaucrats as any around, was less than independent and far less than militant in many respects. However, they were and are anti-Fitzsimmons. Therefore, they were more than willing to participate an and back the wildcat - although behind the scenes. While many in ARF were shop floor fighters, they did not quite qualify as independent, non-racist, non-sexist members of the "militant minority." In short they were less than pure. But, they helped TDC get a good reputation and helped make the wildcat real.

During the summer, TDC, not yet TDU, again joined with ARF to support the local and its leadership in a fight to prevent the International union from taking over Local 299 and putting it in Trusteeship. That is, for a ~~xx~~ brief period of time TDC "Blocked" with the leadership of the local to head off a trusteeship. No doubt, the "left" faction would view this as another example of the IS's orientation toward opportunists and bureaucrats. (by the way, the leaders of 299 cannot be considered "left" bureaucrats in any ~~x~~ sense.) These less than pure beginnings of Detroit TDC, were followed by a period of nearly total collapse that lasted from about June to September.

During that period, which the "Left Faction" would surely label one of failure, crisis and disaster, the IS began to recruit an important leader of TDC. Also during that period we made contact with the wildcating Car-haulers and helped link the remnants of TDC with them. It should be noted that during this same period all real work in local 243 in Detroit - based then on UPS - came to a virtual halt. TDC was "a shell", the carhaulers were defeated, and UPSurge collapsed. As of August one could easily have

said of Detroit TDU and UPSurge that it was "just another abituary for Detroit Teamster work."

Fortunately, neither the Detroit District leadership, the National Teamster Fraction Steering Committee, nor the EC..took this narrow view. They stuck with it, worked to support any initiative that was possible, and convinced new IS personnel to get involved, and new IS recruits to keep on truckin'. The result was a large and growing TDU in Detroit in 3 locals, 299, 243 and 337, and a healthy off-shoot in Flint, new recruits, and a bigger periphery. Mass work, that known formula for disaster, paid off. It paid off for rank and file Teamsters, for TDU in particular, and for the IS. And the truth is, that if TDU fell apart tomorrow as an organization, we would still be years ahead of where we were ~~xxx~~ one year ago.

And this is the point, comrades, we will not sink our roots in industry, build a political periphery, or recruit because everything goes well all the time or because we face no problems or failures. Rank and file organizations, alliances with a dozen different kinds of people, turns from one issue to another, and even maneuvers for this or that limited purpose will come and go. The questions are: are our ~~xxxxxxx~~ roots in the working class deeper, is our experience greater, are our comrades becoming respected militants, are their ideas listened to with respect, can we now do things that were impossible a couple of years ago.

While the "left" faction does not try to analyze or describe UPSurge, they clearly imply in their document that UPSurge is not a product of IS work, the turn to agitation, mass work, or anything they see as evil. Presumably, we stumbled on Upsurge in spite of industrialization - in particular the industrialization of women into priorities. This is all nonsense,

Years ago, when we began to industrialize members into the Teamsters we found it was possible to get jobs at UPS, even when freight jobs were not available. Comrades were encouraged to do this, in particular it was easier for women comrades to get into the industry and union through UPS. After we had had a few comrades in UPS for some time they were able to compare their experience and conclude without any difficulty that UPS was an exceptionally ruthless employer. We also ran across a group of UPS workers in Boston who put out a regional newsletter called the "Bundle Banger". The "Bundle Banger" had serious limitations, but it showed that there was a market for something in UPS that went beyond one workplace or city. We decided to try and convince the "Bundle Banger" people to go national and let us help them put it out and distribute it. They balked and we decided we would put something out ourselves if they wouldn't go along. They refused and after a months internal debate in our Teamster fraction, we decided to put out a paper based in Cleveland - soon to be called UPSurge. All of these initiatives were taken by ISers.

Upsurge~~xxx~~ grew rapidly both as a paper and soon as a movement. ISers were in the lead. But, of course, like TDC and TDU, UPSurge worked with many other workers in many other cities. One of the major leaders of UPSurge Vince Meredith, an effective steward from Louisville. Vince was also an opponent of busing and a supporter of Hubert Humphrey, and red-baited the IS in a large UPSurge meeting. We allied with Vince and UPSurge was more effective for it. Some of the key local UPSurge leaders in Detroit ran and hid when the UPS wildcat came - leaving the picket lines to be manned solely by part-timers at the major Hub. A member of the Central States Steering Committee began playing footsey with sections of the ~~xx~~ local 243 leadership soon after the strike. In fact, as it turns out, the "militant minority" in UPSurge was less than perfect, not quite free from racism, sexism, or other reactionary ideas. And, of course, it could not have been.

The truth is that UPSurge was built with the impure methods of mass work, industrialization, and priorities.

The TDU founding convention provided practical proof that the IS has been able to influence workers with our ideas. Our members represented a small minority of those present. Many of the political ideas we had been patiently raising during the year, emerged at the convention as the shared views of a large number of the Teamsters present. They understood red-baiting and why it must be fought. Women were fully accepted as leaders in the movement. Wives participated as full members of the TDU. Anti-racist and anti-sexist resolutions were adopted out of a conviction that class unity is necessary. The basic elements of the "Employers offensive" were accepted. And the rank and file strategy, as opposed to the PROD. legalistic strategy was overwhelmingly carried.

## WHERE WE ARE AT

Our Teamster work is now in a phase of the most visible kind of success, so no one can easily pick at it, denounce it, ridicule it. Our steel work is on the rise, so there is no mention of "obituaries," failures, disasters. Rather there is the prediction that working in the Sadlowski campaign will produce failure. In the auto work a recent failure with the CGC is presented as the end of all auto work, the final "obituary." In telephone, the very serious defeats we have faced, and the real doubting that exists among those who must carry on the work is thrown in as another proof that "mass work" will just land you in trouble. With an understanding that all industrial work, of any kind, in any industry, just face serious ups and downs, let's examine what the IS today does have as compared to what it previously had-- which is all that anyone can claim is valid.

Let us be frank. The IS of a few years ago had a hundred or so members almost none of whom had any direct relationship with the struggles of industrial workers. Today, that is not true. Today, the IS has over 300 members many of whom are in basic industry or important unions. We got this progress by rooting ourselves in industry and concentrating on the Midwest, by priorities and industrialization in other words.

Our membership is larger because of it, our paper better because of it, our roots in the working class are infinitely greater because of it. Of course, we have had defeats, disappointments, splits, and we have lost scores of people--though not as many as we have gained. Viewing the organization over the past few years, that is where we have come. Not as far as anyone would like, but certainly along the right road. And let's be clear, much of this growth has come about because we have had the reputation of being the most serious group when it comes to industrial work--that reputation counts with workers and middle class leftists as well.

### Auto Work

Well, then, what about the auto work? Wasn't the CGC perspective a total failure, and didn't it set us way back? To answer, we have to first re-examine the perspective itself.

The opposition document paints an utterly false picture of our CGC perspective and activities. They would have people think that all we did was "promote" various local union officials, that our perspective was to build a platform for Hank Oginski, Frank Runnels, and Bob Weissman.

Our CGC perspective was to build a broad united front for a good contract. We were pleased that Weissman joined the CGC and that he publicly spoke out for its program. During and after the UAW Bargaining Convention, through the CGC we entered into an even broader united front--though extremely loose--with Oginski and Runnels on a part of CGC program: COLA for retirees and short work week at full pay with no absence control gimmicks.

We agreed to cooperate with other forces in the UAW on specific issues, and on a limited and defined basis. We did not work out with them understandings on questions of city politics, or even Local Union administration. In fact, at the same time we were working with Runnels, we were also supporting, encouraging, and helping to build an opposition caucus to him in his own local, the Local 22 United National Caucus, and even a Local 22 CGC on the full CGC program that Runnels would not support.

Throughout the contract period, it remained the perspective of the IS auto fraction to build rank and file activity and support in favor of a good contract as defined by the CGC program. We were trying to do more than propaganda. We wanted to build a real contract movement.

In the Locals where we had members, we found that it wasn't very hard to get workers to agree that the CGC program represented, pretty much, what workers wanted. Our problem was to convince people that there was anything they could do to influence the outcome of negotiations. Workers in giant factories with thousands of people understand how hard it is to get the ranks moving enough to have an impact on their own local when you have to fight against a powerful corporation and America's strongest union machine. To influence the course of national bargaining seemed totally out of reach.

By entering into broad united fronts, we were able to show the rank and file workers around us that CGC contract demands were not merely the wishful thinking of a handful of socialists. These demands were such a logical expression of the needs of the union membership, that they have supporters throughout the union--that even a whole local, Local 122 (Weissman's) had joined the CGC and contributed money to it.

Our goal was to build the contract movement on a rank and file basis. But we understood that any motion on the contract that we could relate to, certainly even motion in the secondary leadership, would generate a more favorable climate in which rank and file contract activities could be organized.

We understood in advance that if a serious contract struggle were to develop in auto, by any means, it would in no way remain a crystal pure rank and file movement. Our perspective was to work to become the leadership of rank and file forces within that contract movement. By entering into various united fronts, and even by trying to influence sections of the secondary leadership, we were positioning ourselves for that role. We were attempting to create the conditions under which rank and file developments could take place.

We did have limited success in pushing sections of the secondary leadership to take more forceful stands on the short work week issue. We helped make this a central theme at the bargaining convention and participated in pushing a dozen or more local presidents to make a statement on this toward the end of bargaining. We also had relations with the developments in the skilled trades. But these accomplishments were never our main purpose and cannot be seen as independent successes. They were all done for the purpose of strengthening our ability to organize and move the ranks. And on this front, while our efforts may have had an impact on the final voting, we failed in our effort to establish a real contract movement. But the fraction feels, under similar circumstances they'd try the same thing again--only better because we now have more experience. The fraction is correct. The opposition is wrong.

All American labor history disproves the ideas of the opposition. Was William Z. Foster wrong to make an alliance with the Chicago Federation of Labor when he set out to organize the packinghouses, and then steel? Were the left socialists and communists wrong to ally with John L. Lewis in their drive to organize the CIO? Did this alliance with Lewis make it harder or easier to mobilize rank and file activism in the Flint auto sit-downs? Or were the massive defeats in the vast majority of industrial organizing efforts between 1934 and 1937 a good

reason, in that period, to ditch a mass work perspective? The political method of the opposition would produce wrong answers to each of those questions.

But the opposition can still make the argument that the effect of our CGC perspective was disastrous to the fraction. Here too, however, they don't have it quite right. Looking at the fraction in the period right after it became clear that there would be no serious contract movement--at a time when it was necessary for the comrades to continue slugging it out in a campaign that had been running for a year, and that was failing--it was not hard to notice a degree of demoralization and frustration in the fraction. It must be noted, however, that this experience seems to frustrate and demoralize the leading members of the minority opposition much more than it did the auto fraction. The auto comrades understand that despite the failure of this campaign, and all the hardships involved, IS auto work has come a long way.

A few years ago, the IS counted for nothing in the UAW or the auto industry. Over the past few years we have participated in the UNC, a couple of small contract interventions, several local caucuses which no longer exist, and so on. A few years ago no auto workers ever came to any IS meeting for any reason. Today, comrades in a number of plants are able to bring workers to some IS events. Some of these events have been on issues like South Africa, some have been IS forums on the contract fight, some have been socials. In one local a successful caucus does exist and was able to use the contract period to grow. In Detroit plants where we have members, we have maintained a consistent IS presence, our comrades have become known respected militants and leaders. They are able to bring people to certain kinds of political events because they are known and trusted...Granted, the issue and the event has to be the right one. But the fact remains that we can now do this sort of work around issues like South Africa in the plants because of the many, many other things, including CGC, that we have done with other workers - even very small numbers of workers.

The failure of CGC is not the end of our auto work perspective or any such nonsense. It was one of many steps we took to deepen our roots broaden our periphery, build the rank and file movement (itself no simple process as the Detroit Teamster work shows), and build the party. It is true we have not recruited auto workers to the IS recently, but that does not mean recruitment is forever finished. We did not begin Teamster recruitment until nearly five months after TDC peaked and then declined.

The fact is, there are a number of locals in which we have deep roots among workers. What is more, we have a perspective for local work following the contract and a periphery campaign that has already brought auto workers around the IS.

### Steel Work

The situation in Steel is basically different from auto. We have been active in steel for some time with a small number of comrades in Cleveland. But in the important steel centers of Pittsburgh and Gary, our comrades are very new to the industry and very inexperienced. In Cleveland, we have a small periphery and have been through a serious fight about trusteeship (in which we allied ourselves with the local leadership, i.e., bureaucracy, against the International). The

Cleveland comrades also have a couple years experience in which we worked with RAFT. While this didn't produce dramatic results, the comrades learned a great deal from the experience and was helpful in establishing themselves as respected militants and people who know what is going on.

Given ~~thx~~ how inexperienced and new most of our steel fraction is, the I.S. would do well to come out of the Sadlowski campaign with ~~ix~~ nothing more than an experienced fraction, that underestimates the dynamics of its union, that knows its way around the mills where it works. The illusion that we can expect dramatic results after only one year of industrial work is mistaken and romantic. In fact, however, we stand likely to come out of the Sadlowski campaign much better than we have any right to even hope.

~~Exx~~ For a while, our comrades in Gary thought it ~~ix~~ might be possible to build an "independent" rank and file group with no ties to any of the pre-existing factions in the Local--one that would be defined on a radical, activist, shop floor basis. The hope was to first build such a group, and then ~~in~~ it to a position of independent support for Sadlowski. This approach was abandoned. But not ~~suxxxx~~ merely because of the national steel perspective. It didn't ~~ix~~ work. We just got ourselves into a sectarian zoo with the ~~Rix~~ RSL and the OL; independent people who came around got tore up. The group represented no common commitment on the part of the people it brought together.

Before that in Gary, we participated in organizing a women's group that was built out of a ~~ix~~ struggle for women's wash houses. We tried to hold the women's group together, but failed.

Now we have joined the United Rank and File Club. This group was formed during the last Local union elections as a split out of one of the earlier Local factions. It united supporters of the CP in the Local with the most independent section of black local union officials--running a black candidate for Local president. The group is small and disorganized and includes bureaucratic types. It is not politically solid. But it supports Sadlowski for President and Balanoff for Director in a local where ~~ix~~ the machine is pro-abel.

Our perspective between now and the ~~ix~~ February 8 election is to work with anyone we can in the Local on the Sadlowski-Balanoff campaign--but to press to do this on a rank and file, issue oriented, activist basis. We hope to be able to get the ~~ix~~ United Rank and File Club to start putting out an issue-oriented local newsletter on a regular basis--and we will try to have input into it. We are also meeting women steelworkers from other mills, through our "fightback" connections, and are trying to get a women-for -Sادلowski district group together. We believe that this kind of work now, helps create a much more stable basis for ongoing ~~work~~ rank ~~ix~~ and file organizing after the election.

In other Gary locals, ~~ix~~ our members are so new, and have so few connections, that the work is preliminary. We try to get active in Fight Back to learn our way around and meet people..

In Pittsburgh, ~~wexx~~ started putting out a mill paper with the ~~pxx~~ perspective of supporting Sadlowski from an independent position. We offered to ~~sixxxxx~~ have dissolve our paper in return for a common group and paper with other forces in the mill bases on agreement to make the merged paper the voice of the Fight Back forces in the mill committed to building support for Sa~~del~~owski supporters in the mill. Through its reputation, we are making connections in other mills where activists respect us and our paper, and are considering doing the same thing themselves. Our ~~xxxxxx~~ comrades are viewed as among the key activists in getting the Fight Back

team the Local nomination by a big margin.

In Cleveland, our comrades in tow mills were recognized as leaders and activists in getting their locals to nominate the Fight Back team. They are also active in the regional Sadlowski organization.

We have put out a WP steel supplement for distribution in the mills for use in helping our members establish themselves as socialist Fight Back activists. We are upgrading ~~the~~ WP steel coverage, but are limited by our still thin knowledge of the union and industry.

This review of our steel work ~~is~~ is incomplete and even impressionistic because we are in the middle of a campaign. The reason for so much detail, however, is to provide a context in which the minority criticisms of the steel work can be put. We are severely rebuked for "dissolving the ~~xx~~ existing rank and file organizations into ~~a~~ Sadlowski's official campaign", giving the impression that we derailed some kind of substantial independent rank and file movement. The real problem was that our comrades were isolated.

The main issue facing steelworkers today is the ~~election~~ election. We have small forces. In the next tow months, the opposition thinks that besides giving support to ~~Sadlw~~ Sadlowski (in their way) we should also be starting from scratch to organize independent women's groups, and to organize independent rank and file ~~xx~~ organizations. They call upon the IS fraction to do all these things before February ~~xx~~ 8th, though it is evident that this is thoroughly unrealistic.

The political ~~basis~~ basis on which we support Sadlowski was spelled out in the WP supplement and needn't be repeated here. We ~~xx~~ want to see active rank and file organizing for Sadlowski--and we want to be part ~~of~~ of that organizing, not merely commentators. Opposition supporters tell us that critical support should mean that we support Sadlowski enough to get a hearing for our criticisms. Their idea would be that we put in the minimum amount of actual support activity in the campaign necessary to give us the right to ~~px~~ speak at meetings, and then we should use the meetings ~~tx~~ as a forum to raise our ~~criticisms~~ criticisms.

It doesn't work that way. People will ~~xx~~ repeat what we have to say if they see us as sincerely working and working hard to get the slate elected. Even our criticisms, when possible, are raised from the point of view of how to make Fight Back more effective. We even try to criticize as active supporters and builders of the campaign, not as disinterested outsiders with "a better idea."

#### TELEPHONE WORK

In telephone, our setbacks have been greater than ~~anywhere~~ elsewhere. There is no denying that United Action Caucuses are smaller, and that our comrades are on the defensive. Only a year ago, we ~~xx~~ saw enormous successes in our CWA work. UA slates in Seattle and Louisville drew big votes and even won some union positions. For a long time, our members have been stewards. Now our UA caucuses have collapsed, and we have lost some of the workers we recruited from that industry.

But there is also another side to the story. In two ~~local~~ locals we have members on the Executive Board of the Local. Our ~~comrades~~ comrades have great respect in three or four cities. In the workplaces where our ~~comrades~~ comrades are stewards they are among the most influential people--and and ~~xx~~ also known socialists. In fact, it was precisely our ability to win elections and gain ~~positions~~ positions that brought down a debilitating red-baiting and repressive response ~~xx~~ from the International and local bureaucrats of the CWA. No doubt the critics of the "left" faction

would say that we should never have run for positions in the union officialdom. But this is pure defeatism. We ran and some places we even won. Repression came and smashed and demoralized our UA groups. Does this mean nothing will ever happen again? Does this mean that the reputation that our members have won will not pay off - - ever?

The "left" faction makes much out of the fact that the few local leaders who were sent letters feeling them out about a contract campaign did not reply. To them this is just more "orientation" toward bureaucrats. They have no interest in what is really going on in the CWA. Are local officials in most CWA locals really "bureaucrats"? What kind of motion is really going on in CWA? No matter. If a few letters go unanswered history has drawn to a close for the beleaguered comrades in telephone.

As it happens, there is motion in telephone around the contract. True, it didn't come from the particular local officials that we sent letters to. It came from an unknown Exec. Board member in LA, from the Executive Board of the Louisville local - once we presented a resolution; from a rotten bureaucrat like Ed Dempsey of NY Local 1101. Contract demands are filtering their way into the political life of CWA. They are doing so through "opportunists" and bureaucrats. To the great embarrassment of certain "revolutionaries" serious demands are being espoused by certain people of the ~~character~~ character of Ed Dempsey and the officials of the Dayton CWA local -- people who are probably as rotten or worse than Bob Weisman.

If the CWA work is to move forward what should it do with this small, but real, motion? It could say, like the "left" faction, that this is just motion among bureaucrats, to be ignored. Or, you could understand that motion among local leaders in a union like CWA indicates something more. In fact every CWA contract is accompanied by upheaval and discontent by the ranks in one place or another. That is why the local officials want to position themselves now. You can ignore this, or you can try to take advantage of it as part of generating rank and file action.

#### Tactics and Strategy of Trade Union Work.

In the end, the problem of the "left" faction is that they cannot see tactics as related to real motion or process. They deal in intellectual categories -- bureaucrats, independent rank and file organizations, etc. and leave it at that. But no independent rank and file organization of consequence, or even any revolutionary workers party was ever built by the sterile counterposition of categories.

The opposition document is full of quotes from famous revolutionaries, but devoid of the sense of life, process and change that we must confront in reality. Karl Marx always understood the conservative nature of the trade union leadership of his day, but when he formed the First International he hastened to include as many of them as possible. When it came time to break with them or with the Anarchists he did so, but he never started with the sterile, lifeless notion that there is some simple struggle between "good guys" and "bad guys." Lenin, in his refinements of Marx's method and politics, was even more flexible (see Cliff's "Lenin", Vols. I and II).

Cliff, in Lenin Vol. I tells how when the priest, Father Gapon, organized a march on the Czar's palace to demand that the Czar make everything right - surely an illusionary and absurd demand - the rank and file worker Bolsheviks began immediately to organize for this march. Many of the leaders were shocked that Bolshevik workers would march behind a priest on such a ridiculous and cowardly program. The Bolshevik workers, who lived with the masses, knew they had to take the lead in this even while they tried to convince people that Gapon was a police agent, which he was, and that his demands were utopian, which they were. But in spite of it all, these Bolshevik workers organized for this demonstration. In the end this demonstration turned out to be one of the biggest events in Russian working class history. They did not insist that the Bolsheviks organize a different demonstration, around different demands. They said: "all out for the Gapon demonstration."  
They were right.

No social class in history moves in pure ways, in ways that are clearly labelled. The Democratic Party does not advertise itself as bourgeois. To go to the opposite extreme, the workers of Paris, who rose in 1848, did not advertise themselves as proletarians, but as "democratic", i.e., bourgeois. Motion in the American working class will not always begin as purified rank and file motion. It can move in that direction. But its direction depends on its leadership as well as upon the objective conditions. The difference between TURF and TDU is partly history, but it is also partly I.S. The dynamics of motion in the Teamsters Union are not the same as in the UAW, USW and CWA. We cannot be blinded by categories and abstractions. We cannot fall into the trap that says, if Sadlowski has a smorgasbord, we must have a picnic. If Ed Dempsey is for the "short work week", we are for the "shorter work week", or if Bob Weissman is for a "good contract", we are for a "better contract."

for the "shorter work

The "left" faction has also confused our 2½ year perspective with our basic strategy. In the industrial perspective we passed at the 1975 Convention, we saw the 1975-77 bargaining round as a key opportunity in which to intervene at the national level in our priority unions as their contracts expired. As we stated in the October NC documents, the economic pressures on the working class have not been as great as we expected. That, along with other factors, meant that the bargaining round was not as volatile as we hoped it would be. Whether or not the various contract fights help produce a rank and file movement is a matter of importance to us. But it is not our basic strategy. Contracts are one of many events in the life of an industry around which we can and should organize. Elections, convention, various local events are other opportunities that we should not pass up. But the way in which we approach any one event or series of events is tactics, not strategy.

We will be able to organize rank and file groups when workers are driven to motion because we have been at their side, fighting the bosses and union bureaucrats. We will be able to bring the first significant numbers of worker cadres to the revolutionary movement because we have been in the same struggle they have faced. We will have a newspaper that thousands of workers read and believe because it reflects real involvement in the class struggle, real knowledge of how workers view the big political questions of the day, real partisanship based on first hand knowledge. We will be able to build the revolutionary workers party because we have been part of the real struggles of the workers and have been able to show the militant "minority" how to lead the masses. Perhaps above all, we will be able to bring workers into the IS because we didn't abandon our jobs or politics every time things went bad or got tough. In auto plants,

Teamster locals, telephone buildings, steel plants, post offices, and other work places, workers will remember or already know that it was the revolutionaries who didn't collapse with every defeat or setback. As we are learning in scores of union locals and work palces already, the workers will look to our comrades in a thousand small ways, in good times and bad, because we didn't walk away when things got tough.

Comrades if you want to look at our industrail work, don't just ask what is going on now. Don't just rejoice in the TEamster work, only to abandon it tomorrow if it goes down hill under attack from the Mafia thugs of the Teamster bureaucracy. Be ready to stick by your comrades for the long, hard jix job of building a revolutionary workers party in America.

## CONCLUSION

We in the IS have set for ourselves the most difficult task facing a revolutionary organization - making the change from an interventionist middle class propaganda group towards becoming a workers combat organization. This is no overnight transformation - it takes years. And it produces unforeseen problems, struggles, and even setbacks. The period of transformation is characterized by extreme unevenness and the necessity of large doses of volunteerism. Forward motion occurs through sharp bends of the stick. And this, in turn, produces contradictions, errors, and more unevenness.

This period of transition is very hard on the comrades involved. Cadre's trained in earlier periods must thoroughly regear their political habits, methods, and lifestyles in the leap toward becoming the cadre of the organization we are trying to become. While we have a clear view of where we are going, it takes a lot of wanderings and missteps to get there. And often, in the day to day conflicts and tensions, we lose sight of our long term goals. But, however difficult, we have chosen this road because it is historically necessary. With the end of post-war economic expansion and the start of the long term economic crisis the objective conditions for the development of a revolutionary workers party are ripening. And we aim to be part of the process of building that party.

### Out of The Past

The last generation of America revolutionaries lived under conditions of capitalist prosperity. They were doomed to the irrelevance of propaganda sects. But there is no longer room today for organizations that are caretakers of ideas. When objective conditions make it possible to break loose from that isolated, intellectual prison it is reactionary not to make the effort. We have the opportunity today to merge, in practice, our revolutionary theories with the actual class struggle. And we must do it despite all problems of "adjustment," conservatism," you name it.

One of the greatest tragedies in American history is the fact that the Trotskyists in this country played little role in the CIO upsurge. In the period immediately prior, they turned away from a focus on the industrial work base won through their involvement in Minneapolis and Toledo, shifting their orientation to propaganda work within the largely middle class left-wing of the Socialist Party. We will not make this mistake.

The opposition presents no concrete solutions to the serious problems of turning from a middle class propaganda group toward becoming a workers agitational organization. Instead, they give in to subjective despair and want to turn away from agitational work - the only way a workers revolutionary organization will be built. Their "New Course" reminds us of the story of the Children of Israel, wandering in the desert, demanding that Moses lead them back to Egypt.

### The Minority Supporters

Many fine comrades have joined the "left" faction out of criticisms of specific parts of our work or out of frustration and demoralization where the work is not going well. They do not see solutions being presented to the problems they face. Therefore, they try to escape drawing out the logic of the minority's position. They try to deny the conclusions of the minority's document and of the direction and path it points to. They do not want to take responsibility for the solutions it proposes.

We believe that these comrades do not belong in the minority, for they do not share its full program. They are not really for disolving out turn to the working class and agitation because of the problems it produces. Since the minority is organized along tight factional lines, it makes open debate more difficult. We believe that many of these comrades still share the basic IS strategy for building a revolutionary workers party. Others will be won back to it. Together with the majority, they can help work out the real problems we face in becoming a workers' combat organization. But comrades who insist on seeing this faction as a pressure tactic are making a big mistake. They are gambling with the most basic health and unity of the organization by endorsing a political direction that could lead only to disaster.

Nevertheless, we realize that the frustrations of large sections of the organization are real. Even more importantly, we realize that these frustrations are based on real problems - problems for which no section of the organization has yet found total solutions and, yes, even problems that have gone neglected. We believe that it is important that the political fight now going on be an opportunity for seeking real solutions to real problems.

### Solving The Problems

Some steps toward solving today's problems - for new ones will arise tomorrow - have been initiated as a result of the Oct. N.C. meeting. In particular, the neglected job of building a political periphery has been started. Experiments in improving Workers' Power have been initiated. Our Southern Africa work has been strengthened and is now becoming a full scale campaign. Recruitment, though slow, has been on the rise. Another part of the solution to the IS's problems must be building the Red Tide and extending political ties between Red Tide members and the IS - not as ~~part~~ "a last fig leaf," but as serious part of the IS periphery and organization. The Red Tide has grown from a nucleus of 3 in March to 60 members. It is 90% working class, 2/3 black, and 1/3 white. Its successful convention marks a new stage in the development of its own leadership. Like all new organizations it has periods of fragile existence before it. But it draws its strength from the fact that it is a fighting youth group. As such, it could never exist as part of an intellectual propaganda group. It still has to be consolidated with the help of the IS, but it can be part of the vanguard in creating a workers organization.

Many serious problems remain to be dealt with, let alone resolved. This document, and the fight now going on, is an answer to a faction that proposes a basic new direction - backward - for the IS. The document is therefore concerned with defending that basic strategy. It is not the place to field unthought out ideas for the future. But we believe that this period of debate will also

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have to be used to deal with the problems and frustrations we face. In particular, we will have to emerge from this fight with an expanded leadership. The training and development of our cadres and organizers will be central to any solution. The inevitable unevenness of our branches and the consequent isolation of some of them will have to be overcome within a flexible approach to our priorities. Members from non-priorities must be more thoroughly integrated into important work. At the moment this is happening only in occasional situations and constitutes a serious waste of our valuable resources. Further improvements in the use and content of Workers' Power and the development of the Workers' Power Review will also be important. Indeed, the list of problems on which we must make early action goes much further.

#### Defend and Develop The IS

We know that faction fights can be destructive. But we believe that a combination of serious political debate on the issues and an earnest attempt to broaden the involvement of the leadership and membership of the IS in carving out the future can bring about a positive resolution of this fight. We believe that the January 29, N.C. meeting can not only resolve the political issues in dispute, but can also hammer out a positive program for moving the organization forward. The E.C., as well as others in the Majority Caucus, will be developing proposals for this meeting. We call on the membership to join in the defense and development of the IS and our basic strategy for building a revolutionary workers organization.

Executive Committee

December 17, 1976