

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 rootless 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 57-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 offer-

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 focus and direction.

Some of our early successes 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 successes 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 more 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 the TDC program grew, and as contract expiration 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 and 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 or immodest 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 ~~max~~ 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 ^{into} which workers can be forced.'

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, gringing 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 downs 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 the point~~ 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 TDC 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 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 for 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 ctees, 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 ctees 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 ctee, 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.

Amendments to Industrial Document

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 ~~quite~~ 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 blackworkers 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 sparatic and parochial level.

Add to Part 3, periphery document

3) "Party building" can no longer be something we discuss only inside the organization. While it would be a mistake to give only one reason for membership, we must learn to motivate recruitment on the basis of the need to build a Revolutionary Party. Ultimately, this is why we, as an organization exist. Yet it is rarely put forward as a basic aspect of our external politics. Workers' Power, for example, has tried to show how and why socialists are the best fighters. But we are going to have to do more than recruit on the basis of today's level of ~~struggle~~ struggle. Workers' Power and the political magazine will begin to carry educational articles on this subject as part of our periphery building and recruitment campaign.

Add to beginning of Page 20

We cannot leave the development of black work perspectives for every branch at the level of the "flexible approach". The recruitment to the Red Tide of scores of yount black people is a forecast of a rebirth of a black liberation movement. The Black Commission will prepare for the next NC a draft perspective for rebuilding the black liberation movement. This perspective must take up some of the general political questions we have ignored as we have worked out limited plans for specific issues and situations. We must begin to develop a sense of which issues and what social forces are going to foster and mold the new black movement.

Mark L.