

"WORKERS AND OPPRESSED PEOPLES OF THE WORLD, UNITE!!"

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BUILD COMMUNIST CORES!

The factory nucleus in large scale basic industry is the organizational foundation of a genuine communist party. In 1926, the Communist International stated: "The factory cell is the basic unit for all parties in capitalist countries." It is in industry such as auto, steel and mining that the most oppressed and exploited strata of the working class is found. The work of a revolutionary party must concentrate on winning over and mobilizing this decisive section of the proletariat. Factory nuclei are essential if the party is to carry through this task.

In this pre-party period, what are the transitional forms which communist organizations must establish within basic industry? What are the tasks of communists in the workplace during this period? What is the relationship between party-building and our work within industry?

The Marxist-Leninist Collective erred when we proposed joint work between communist organizations in the form of factory nuclei (see WP, V 2 #12). Factory nuclei are a form of party organization. All members are under the discipline of the party (or in the case of the US now, the same organization) and adhere to a common political line. What the MLC intended to propose was a call for joint work in the form of communist cores. A core is a communist form of organization required in this period when a party does not exist. A core is composed of members of one or more communist organizations, independent Marxist-Leninists, and advanced workers who have been won to communism. The core is under the leadership of a given organization or organizations. However, within a core, democratic-centralism functions on an internal basis. Unlike the factory nuclei, the core is not subject to the discipline of a party or organization. Similar to a factory nuclei, the core is clandestine and secret. Upholding the science of Marxism-Leninism is the basis of unity for a communist core. Joint work between communist organizations within a core would then exclude opportunist and revisionist groups such as the CPUSA, OL, RCP, PRRWO, CLP, and trotskyite organizations.

Organizations participating in communist cores would conduct regular meetings to take up ideological and political questions with the aim of uniting Marxist-Leninists, as well as discussing ongoing work of the core. Independent Marxist-Leninists and advanced workers who are recruited into a core would share this commitment to Marxism-Leninism in both theory and practice. However, they would not need to have unity with all the questions of political line of the organization(s) that initiate and lead the core. We agree with the formulation of the LPR on this point:

"Members of the core do not have to agree with every position of our organization. That would be equivalent (complete unity) to placing non-organization members under the democratic centralism (which in practice would turn out to be only centralism) of the organization. This would be in fact an error..." (Resistance, V8, #1, p2)

However, for a communist core to exist, there must be unity at least on the following fundamental questions of Marxism-Leninism: recognition of the need for proletarian revolution by armed struggle, the role of the party, the role of the state, the character of national oppression under capitalism.

Party-building is the central task of all Marxist-Leninists in the US today. Our work within communist cores must be seen in this context. As theory is the decisive

and principal aspect during this pre-party period, a core can serve as a vehicle for the testing and development of political line which will facilitate the formation of a party. Where differences exist between organizations or between an organization and non-organizational members of the core, principled struggle will occur within the core and a majority decision reached. The core will systematically sum up the application of political line, thereby consolidate the unity of Marxist-Leninists and help construct the theoretical foundations for the future party. We can concretely see the dialectical relationship between the primary aspect of theory and the secondary aspect of practice. While one is primary, neither aspect can exist independent of the other.

The practical tasks of a core are to conduct communist propaganda and agitation and give communist leadership to the spontaneous struggles and mass organizations. The core must win over the most advanced workers and train them in Marxist-Leninist theory through study circles. Moreover, within the core the discussion of tactical questions, the summation of practice, and criticism and self-criticism will enable the advanced to become practical leaders in the day to day struggles of the proletariat.

We have addressed ourselves to the question of a core within a particular factory or shop. A core is also an appropriate form of communist organization within a trade union or any other mass organization of the working class. The same principles would apply to a core in this context. In a trade union where a broad caucus exists based on the struggle for trade union democracy and opposition to the union bureaucrats, the core will seek to give leadership to the caucus. Careful attention must be paid to the constant exposure of the labor traitors as well as the revisionists and opportunists (who may participate in a caucus). The success of a rank and file caucus is generally dependent on the existence and leadership of a core. As a rule, the formation of a core should precede the organization of a caucus. Yet, where caucuses exist, but it is not possible at the time to form a core, communist organizations and independent Marxist-Leninists must join the caucus, strive to win over the advanced, and form a core as soon as possible.

We believe this question of the formation of communist cores to be most important. We urge all Marxist-Leninists to take up this issue, publish this article, and put forward criticisms of it.

"ROOTS"

Over 130,000,000 people, 85% of all TV-using homes, watched at least part of ROOTS in January. What's the reason for this overwhelming popularity of a story based on the activities of several generations of southern slaves? Why did the capitalist owners and controllers of the TV media sponsor ROOTS? And what's the significance of the show as far as the lives of workers and oppressed peoples in the US are concerned?

Obviously, there are hundreds of reasons why so many people watched ROOTS. But one thing is clear: objectively, it shows that the masses of working and oppressed people are demanding to know their history, their roots, whether they be Blacks from the Black Nation, whose ancestors suffered the brutality of slavery; Chicanos from the Southwest, whose land was stolen from their forefathers; Native Americans, almost wiped out by their 'civilized' colonizers; or Anglo immigrants, whose ancestors fled from oppression in Europe to find it in a different form in the 'new world'.

This thirst for the true history of workers and oppressed peoples is a good thing. Only with a firm grasp of the history and nature of their exploitation and oppression under capitalism will the masses be able to make revolution and put this system where it belongs -- on the scrap-heap of history.

But if knowledge of the history of the many peoples of the US is so important, and it is, why did the ruling class, who own and control the media, push ROOTS? Again, the answer has many aspects. For one thing, they knew it would attract a huge audience and gross profits. At the same time, they figured that whatever historical understanding was gained from watching ROOTS would be limited by the limitations of the story itself: the fact that it focused on generations of one family, who, under slavery, were the relatively more privileged house slaves and skilled slaves; the fact that after the Civil War, they were able to leave the plantation and buy land and 'be free'; the fact that the form of resistance was limited to occasional attempts of escape to the North, without accurately portraying the numerous slave rebellions and insurrections in the slave south.

What the bourgeoisie can't control, though, is the fact that ROOTS, for all its limitations, gave a spurt to the progressive, democratic aspirations of Black people and their allies in the Anglo-American working class and among the oppressed nationalities. It encouraged the masses of people to dig into the history of their people, their social class. With this in mind, we are briefly outlining some of the major historical questions ROOTS didn't deal with, and which are necessary to put the history of slavery in the US into perspective.

WHY DID SLAVERY HAPPEN?

The slavery that accompanied the dawn of capitalism was not because of some in-born racism on the part of European slave-traders, or because the 'civilized' nations of Europe wanted to bring Christianity and a 'better life' to the 'heathens' of Africa, or because of any other similar reasons usually given by bourgeois historians. In fact, slavery of the late 15-19th centuries began as a result of the discovery of 'new lands' by Europe, increased trade, the beginning of capitalist production, or commodity production based on the drive for profit. From the sweat and blood of the native peoples, African slaves, and wage-slaves in Europe, came the primitive accumulation of capital. As Karl Marx pointed out in Capital: "...capital comes (into the world) dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt;" (p 760) and "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement and entombment of mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalled the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production!" (p 751)

In the thirteen colonies, slavery provided the basis for the enormous wealth and power of the landed aristocracy. In 1793, the cotton gin was invented in England, and cotton production expanded tremendously. Again we quote Marx: "Whilst the cotton industry introduced child-slavery in England, it gave in the United States a stimulus to the transformation of the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery (i.e. production mainly for the plantation) into a system of commercial exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage-workers in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world." (pp 759-760) Features common to capitalist production, such as extreme overwork and speed-up, were grafted onto the already brutal slave system, as the plantation was tied into the international market.

WHY THE CIVIL WAR WAS FOUGHT

By the 1800s it was clear that slavery, to survive, had to expand. Erosion of the soil from intensive one crop cultivation year after year was only one of many economic reasons why slavery had to seek new, fresh territory. For over sixty years a primarily political battle took place, between the slave-owning class in the South and the rising industrial capitalist class in the North. The struggle involved the admittance of territories as either free or slave states (Missouri Compromise, 1820; Kansas-Nebraska Act, 1854), the question of catching and returning escaped slaves (Fug-

itive Slave Law), and the legal status of slavery in the territories (the infamous Dred Scott Decision, 1857, which declared that a slave was chattel property no matter where he or she might be taken). All these reflected the South's efforts to extend slavery, and the North's attempts to keep it in check. But not until the mid-nineteenth century did the Northern bourgeoisie develop the productive forces and accumulate adequate capital and a corresponding political position to challenge Southern domination of the government.

The Civil War was clearly 'the continuation of politics by other means.' It had been brewing for years, and erupted finally in 1861 when the Southern slavocracy realized it would have to act or submit to the growing strength of the industrial bourgeoisie

For the Northern capitalists, the war was not fought over a 'moral issue', that is, because it felt slavery was evil. For the most part, they were concerned only with stopping the expansion of slavery, and opening up new territory to capitalist exploitation. 'Emancipation' became a slogan only later, under pressure from the slaves and their allies both North and South (including Abolitionists, poor Anglo farmers, and workers), and out of fear of losing to the South. Even under the slogan of freedom, however, we should recognize that the Northern capitalists were bound by their own class interests: freed slaves would not only help them to win the war, but serve as a source of cheap labor afterwards, so necessary to the fast-expanding capitalist system. In essence, the Civil War was a phase of the bourgeois-democratic revolution which had begun with the fight for emancipation from England in 1776. As Marx said, "The present struggle between the South and North is, therefore, nothing but a struggle between two social systems, between the system of slavery and the system of free labor. The struggle has broken out because the two systems can no longer live peacefully side by side on the North American continent. It can only be ended by the victory of one system or the other." (The Civil War in the United States, p-81).

RECONSTRUCTION

The abolition of chattel slavery and the military defeat of the slave-owning class reopened the period known as Reconstruction. But all the popularized (bourgeois) versions of these approximately twelve years deliberately ignore or distort the fundamental significance of Reconstruction: it was a time when a revolutionary solution to the land question was entirely within the reach of the Northern bourgeoisie. The break-up of the old plantations and their redistribution among the freed slaves and poor Anglos would have allowed for the most complete transformation of Southern society that was possible under capitalism. Throughout this period, the ex-slaves raised the demand for the land they had earned through years of back-breaking toil. In some instances, as for example the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Florida, land was actually seized by Black and Anglo militias. The cry was raised for the right to vote and secure other bourgeois democratic rights as well, and for several years, the Reconstruction Acts did extend certain bourgeois freedoms to Blacks and poor Anglos in a number of Southern states. But as time went on, it became clear that 'freedom' meant two different things to the freedmen and their poor Anglo allies, and to the Northern bourgeoisie. As the North consolidated its political and economic power over the South, and as wealth and power continued to become centralized in fewer and fewer hands; as the demands of the ex-slaves and poor Anglos in the South and wage-slaves and farmers in the North grew more and more threatening; the most reactionary wing of the Northern bourgeoisie gained dominance, and gradually the gains of Reconstruction were substituted by outright reactionary terror. Chattel slavery was replaced by share-cropping, often on the same plantations, under the same masters, controlled by Wall Street. The Civil War did not free the slaves. The chains of slavery were replaced by the bondage and oppression of the share-cropping system.

What significance does this have for workers and oppressed people in the US today? Karl Marx once said: "Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the

Black it is branded." (Capital, Vol. 1 p 301) The fact that the land question was not resolved after the Civil War in favor of the ex-slaves and poor Anglos meant that the economic basis for genuine freedom was denied them, and this fact persists to this very day! When we say that a Black Nation exists in the deep South, we can trace its origins back to this failure of Reconstruction to divide the plantations up among the freedmen and poor Anglos.

Workers and oppressed peoples have the right to know their true history, but we won't get it from the bourgeoisie. As we've seen, ROOTS was not an exception to the bourgeoisie's control over the media, but it did give a forum for more widespread interest in and understanding of the real origins of the Black National Question. It is our duty to build on this desire of the masses to know their roots, to fight for a correct understanding of the national question in the South, and to struggle ever harder for the formation of a genuine communist party that will unite the many streams of protest throughout the country to overthrow the bourgeoisie, and establish a socialist society where true freedom exists for the masses of people.

Note: The MLC will soon be publishing a revised position on the Black National Question. We are presently reviewing our earlier position, 'Free the Black Nation'.

LOCAL 750:

WHO DOES THE UNION SERVE?

Freddie Sanchez is a representative of the so-called leadership of Teamsters Local 750. Sanchez and his cronies are the ones who negotiated the recent cannery contract. As we all know, when inflation is accounted for, the new contract is in fact a pay cut for most workers. Sanchez has been chief negotiator with the companies for the last six years. This settlement is just another example of the leadership's consistent refusal to fight for a living wage and benefits for all workers in Local 750. Sanchez and the other 'leaders' are the ones who have constantly rejected the demands of the rank and file for the election of shop stewards. Only recently under pressure from the majority of the membership did they consent to hold elections at a time when a majority of the workers would be present. In addition, the current leadership of our union has not educated the membership about the consent decree benefits and back pay that many workers are eligible for. If anything, these flunkys have attempted to confuse and mislead the rank and file. Why?

The first unions were organized for the purpose of gathering workers together to fight for better working conditions under capitalism. But in the last 30-40 years, the unions have come under the leadership of the labor traitors who operate in the interest of management, by holding back and selling out the struggles of working people to improve their lives. The capitalist class, always fearful of working class rebellions, has deliberately invested a portion of the profits obtained from the super-exploitation and plunder of workers in Asia, Africa and Latin America, in the bribery and corruption of the labor leaders. Meany, Fitzsimmons, and Sanchez are paid enormous salaries and enjoy a standard of living far higher than the average worker -- and in fact have more in common with the bourgeoisie than the proletariat. Our boy Freddie Sanchez, with his salary and fat expense account, makes more than \$30,000 a year. These 'labor lieutenants of the capitalist class' have a material interest in supporting capitalism, or the so-called 'free enterprise' system. This system is based on exploitation of the working class by a handful of capitalists who make huge profits from the wage-slavery of the workers.

Under these conditions of capitalist exploitation, unions are essential for the protection of the interests of the working class. However, the question is this: who will control the unions, the labor bureaucrats, bought and paid for by the capitalists, or the majority of workers whose daily sweat and toil brings little more than enough for survival? With the US in the worst economic crisis since the 1930s the working class needs strong, fighting organizations led by workers of the rank and file to defend the class from lay-offs, poor working conditions, wage cut-backs, and other attacks by the capitalists. Local 750 cannot be such an organization as long as power rests in the hands of Sanchez and the like. WE MUST KICK THEM OUT AND TAKE CONTROL OF OUR UNION!! Only then can the union serve the interests of the proletariat.

While we fight to win control of our union from these labor traitors, we must begin to understand that the only lasting solution to the many problems faced by the working class is socialism, where exploitation is abolished. Under socialism, the working class will own the mines, factories and mills. Production will benefit the masses of people. The standard of living will constantly rise, there will be no unemployment, and prices will remain stable. Socialism is the ultimate goal of our movement. To begin, the working class must regain control of its union, such as Local 750.

Note: Written by Rank and File for a Democratic 750

WHO WE ARE

Workers' Press is written and published by the Marxist-Leninist Collective. We are a communist organization based on Marxism-Leninism, the science of the revolutionary class struggle of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. We are part of the international struggle of the proletariat to end exploitation and oppression by overthrowing capitalism and establishing socialism. We aim to bring communist ideas and analyses to the working class. We strive to broaden the outlook of our fellow workers and to arm workers with proletarian class consciousness so that together we can lead the struggle against all forms of oppression and exploitation by imperialism. To do this we must organize ourselves into an independent political party to concentrate the resistance of the proletariat into a single fighting force. Please send all correspondence, criticisms, articles and suggestions to Workers' Press, PO Box 24116, Bayview Station, San Francisco, Cal.

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION and the SPLIT IN THE WORKING CLASS -- a new pamphlet analyzing the development of the labor aristocracy and the split in the US working class; the tasks of communists; appendix on the SF City Strike. Available at China Books, SF, and Yen-an Books, Berkeley, or by writing to Workers' Press.
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