

OUR WORK IN THE PEOPLE'S COALITION

Our formation of and work in this coalition was largely a pragmatic and opportunistic floundering of the worst kind. Pragmatic, because there was no serious analysis of the character of this formation, its potential or actual support in the county, who should be in leadership, how those in it should work to raise their consciousness, or who in SOC should function within the coalition. Opportunistic, because there was no real demand for this formation, but we still felt that by pushing it forward we would "find" new political people to work with.

Though we could have given more leadership than we did, we feel we were correct not to seize the leadership and make ourselves politically responsible for the organization, because we had no base of our own to bring to it. However, when the coalition manifestly failed to develop a following of its own, we should have re-analyzed much sooner that it had no reason for existence, and no possible future at that time. Ties with the people where you live and where you work are a prereq-

uisite for building any sort of organization--particularly in a period of general quiescence. These ties and the experience of common struggle are necessary before people will join with Marxist-Leninist cadre in an independent coalition for political action.

In addition, we learned that it is indispensable for a Marxist-Leninist organization to have an absolutely clear understanding of the concrete nature of a community group, the amount of support it can develop, and the forces that the organization can commit, before considering joining or forming such a group, and before deciding how much of the leadership its own cadre can assume. (A recurring problem in coalition and united front work is communist groups who insist on total dominance of the organizations they work in, driving away not only other communist groups but many sincere people who are willing to engage in struggle, but are not yet prepared to accept the total leadership of Marxist-Leninists.)

We were unprepared on all these questions and wasted a great deal of effort that might more profitably have been put into other activities.



WHAT WE MEAN BY

Opportunism

Opportunism is the sacrifice of the long-term interests of the whole working class for some temporary advantage or for some narrow interest of one section of the class. The temporary advantage might be avoiding necessary political struggle within a coalition, or trying to gain leadership of a coalition based on personal friendships rather than political following. Whether intentional or not, American opportunism has classically shown itself in an adaptation to conservative labor leaders and to a relatively better-off section of the working class that felt it had material reasons for not struggling against the capitalist system. This section of the class, and the labor leaders in particular, are inevitably under the

influence of capitalist ideology. Ultimately, opportunism sacrifices working class interests for capitalist interests.

Many forces contribute to opportunist practice: the heritage of pragmatism and a desire for quick "results," careerism, or the desire for safer and "easier" forms of struggle, and the straightforward personal ties and friendships within alliances and coalitions. Some examples of opportunism in the U.S.: the old Socialist Party yielded to the racism of the better-off white workers, and the Communist Party adapted itself to conservative labor leaders and to the Democratic Party, hoping for short-cuts to wide influence and "easy" methods of fighting for reforms.