

We discovered that the trade union question is one of the great neglected areas of Marxist-Leninist study, and preparing a study guide and materials took much longer than anticipated, and required going to original sources.

We began to initiate monthly public forums for films and discussions, to maintain contacts with people we had worked with and to establish a public presence in Orange County. This program followed a successful July 4 swimming party, Viet Nam film and discussion which drew about 50 people. The first of the new forums, in September, was a slide show on Cuba by a Venceremos Brigade returnee and it drew about 45 people, more than we had anticipated. Later forums featured films or slide shows on southern Africa, women

workers, the struggle in Argentina, and the liberation of Viet Nam. These forums not only drew local people but put us in contact with other political groups in Los Angeles.

The effort put into these forums and our other activity, however, was soon overwhelming our work on the political statement. At the end of 1976 we decided that it was time to make a sharp break from the pragmatic activism that had continually overwhelmed our efforts at theoretical development and political consolidation. We decided to retreat for a time from all but essential mass work--that on which we had long-term commitments--to stop recruiting, and to put all our efforts into summing up our past experiences and preparing a political statement.

WHAT WE MEAN BY

Pragmatism

*- a main ideology
dangers*

Pragmatism is the tendency to evaluate ideas and actions exclusively in terms of immediate practical results--"if it works, it must be correct"--rather than analyzing past experience in terms of political theory, and summing up to draw general lessons from the particular. No one is ever fully prepared for all the concrete peculiarities of a developing situation, but a Marxist organization has general guides based on sum-ups and analyses of similar situations. These general guides, plus the crucial experience of making their own concrete analyses, give a genuine Marxist organization a tremendous advantage over pragmatists in understanding and leading a new and changing situation. Pragmatists, on the other hand, tend to wallow deeper and deeper in a sea of uncomprehended reality.

Pragmatic practice can also result from a dogmatic worship of theory. Since dogmatists have never applied their abstract theory concretely to reality, they have little more ability

to comprehend a developing situation than pragmatists of the simpler variety. Dogmatic organizations tend to apply "theory" by rote, and when this fails, they flounder desperately in search of something that will "work."

Pragmatism, and the impatience and anti-intellectualism that feed it, permeate every corner of American society, including the labor movement, and historically have been one of the greatest dangers to American communism, contributing heavily to opportunist errors.

The appearance of pragmatism is not only understandable but almost inevitable in a young collective that rejects bookish dogmatism. It must take part in practice to obtain the initial experience that will serve as the basis for analyzing its situation. The tendency must, however, be identified and struggled against as soon as possible, using systematic study of the science of Marxism-Leninism, and making concrete analyses of its experience.