

"The first ones now will later
be last. For the times
they are a'changin'."

'Classes in America'

Read and discuss the ideas of revolution. If they are wrong, try to change them. If they are difficult, struggle to understand them. In revolution, the struggle will be to educate ourselves and each other--as well as to set up people's programs and fight the forces of the ruling class. This is an outline to aid in answering a fundamental problem in revolution: "Who are allies and who are enemies in revolution?" Remember that this question cannot be answered with words alone. The answer can only be arrived at through the actual process of revolution.

Today in America there is a myth that 80% of the people are 'middle class.' Supposedly on either side of them are the 'rich' and 'poor' classes. If you were to ask both the chairman of the board of A.O. Smith and a \$7,000 a year factory worker what class they are, both would probably say 'middle class.' This is a case of natural enemies claiming to be friends.

This mistake is made because the worker, in many ways, appears to be equal to the businessman. They can both buy a cadillac and a home. They both probably voted for the same candidates. They both hold the same values about religion, politics, sex, patriotism, race and money. However when the worker wakes up, he realizes he is strung out to the finance company, can only vote for one of two ruling class candidates, and is supporting values which are against his best interest.

Another reason why so many people tend to lump themselves into a huge 'middle class' is because of racism. There is an old saying, "If you're white, you're all right. If you're black, get back." A worker at a place like Allen Bradley, where few blacks get hired, tend to think of themselves as elevated in status. He tends to think of his boss as an ally against minority workers who are trying to get his job. When minority people are then forced to welfare, he again sees them as an enemy eating up his and his bosses taxes. In reality, the boss is economically exploiting him; those on unemployment and in lower level jobs are not.

In the past decade, black, latin and indian people have developed a better understanding of their own oppression. One of the results has been an increase in self pride and a rejection of the culture of the oppressor. White working people must follow this example by rejecting the idea that they are 'middle class.' When they see themselves as part of a working class along with Black, Latin and Indian workers--then a revolutionary, working class culture can develop in this country. Part of this new culture will be born from youth culture with its cooperatives, its internationalism, its new roles for men and women, and its rejection of extreme dependence on status symbols and possessions. Part of this new culture will come from the history of working people--their militance, their pride in their work, their discipline and their spirit of "one for all and all for one."

What are the major classes in America?

Ruling Class These are the 1% of the population who own 80% of the stock in corporations. These owners of the means of production of wealth have nothing in common with the majority of Americans--even though they try to appear to be average people. They control the important policy making bodies in both parties and in the executive branch of government. The president and the supreme court are in their back pocket. War, control of other countries, racism, exploitation of labor, oppression of women and poverty are all in their interest because these things either directly or indirectly bring in more money. (for them)

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Small Businessmen: These are people who own small businesses, real estate, farms, etc. They usually employ a small number of people. Very often they are very conservative politically. Because they often have to hustle to keep ahead, they feel threatened by crime, any form of change, higher taxes. To say nothing of revolution. They are usually reactionary because they want to go back to or re-inact the good old days when there were many small businesses and monopolies and centralized government along with social unrest were not so common as it is now.

Professionals: These are people who don't necessarily own anything except their own skills. They often belong to an exclusive professional group which sets its own prices, has pretty much control over conditions of work, and is not strictly answerable to a demanding boss. Lower level corporation executives, doctors, lawyers and government administrators fall into this category. So do architects, engineers, professors and scientists. They almost always support the status quo; however they can be won over on certain issues provided they are not too revolutionary sounding. They might support, for instance, the anti-war movement and the drive for civil rights. Students from eliteschools often wind up in this class.

White-Collar Workers: Teachers, social workers, draftsmen, nurses and others who occupy a position between the everyday worker and management are in this class. To keep a distinction between themselves and workers they tend to form professional associations-not unions. Their incomes, conditions of work, and their status are comfortable. However they are beginning to be treated more and more like workers as the institutions (often tax supported) get larger and larger. They are hurt by rising prices and have not been getting raises as cities and states are going broke. The rising number of teacher's and other white collar strikes and their reaction to white collar layoffs show a new militancy among this class. Many students are destined for this class. Many in this class can be won to the revolution, others would rather fight than switch.

Working Class: The working class is potentiall the most revolutionary class. However because of the blood money (or super-profits) coming to the ruling class because of the domination of other countries (imperialism), the ruling class has been able to buy off large sections of the working class. The high wages of parts of the working class have made them accostomed to a comfortable life and uninterested in revolution. However now that national liberation movements like China, Cuba and Vietnam are succeeding and new movements are growing up in Asia, Africa and Latin America, there won't be as much money coming in for the ruling class to bribe U.S. workers. There are four sub-sections of the working class: skilled workers, industrial workers, service workers and rural workers.

A) skilled workers: Upper level blue collar workers are those in the skilled trades who unionized first and built up a high level of income. Their unions tend to be very exclusive--especially to minorities. Plumbers, construction workers, printers, masons, tool and die makers and other tradesmen have this privileged position in the working class. Nixon's attack on the building trades, inflation, unemployment in construction and aerospace, and union busting are starting to change their position of privilege. They no longer have the power they once did. Also fitting into this category of the 'aristocracy of labor' are the union bureaucrats who say they are all for the common man, but in reality care only about themselves. Skilled workers are the right wing of the working class. Those of them who join the revolution will do so grudgingly. It must be remembered that many in this class are slipping down in status to the plain industrial working class as their standard of living slips and the average worker develops a higher level of skill and specialization.

- B) Industrial working class: These are the people who work in the basic industries of production. The wealth (in the form of products) is taken from them by the ruling class to use as it wants. The workers are given little more than enough to keep them going (food, rent, transportation). Because the workers produce the value for the nation, they should have a large say in how it is used. This class should control society and its wealth because 1. they make up a majority of the population role (in cooperation with sympathetic classes possibly) would be majority rule, 2. they have learned habits of discipline, sacrifice and cooperation because they work daily in a situation in which these traits are required, 3. they have the power to bring about the revolution because they are so concentrated and strategically located right where the value is produced. To ruin the capitalist rule they would have to strike, thus stopping the flow of profits to the capitalists. (Also there will have to be guerilla warfare and widespread insurrection), 4. being a majority which is exploited by the minority they have no interest in allying with their exploiters. (except in the short run when they can get crumbs from the feast of foreign imperialism). These four points apply to the other parts of the working class but especially to the industrial workers.
- C) Service workers: Service workers make up a large and growing part of the working class. They work as hospital workers, laundry workers, switchboard operators, dishwashers, taxi drivers, mechanics and janitors. They are the youngest, lowest paid, least unionized, and with the highest percentage of non-whites and women. They can be very militant and will easily be won to the revolution. Recent hospital and garage worker strikes show their militancy. They too are hurt by bankruptcy of city and state governments.
- D) rural workers: Migrant workers (laborers) and farm employees have a great stake in the revolution because of their low wages and horrible conditions of work. A high percentage are Black, Puerto Rican, and Chicano. Their national struggles at times take the form of labor struggles and the two struggles become one. A good example is the farm workers strike in California.

The Permanently Unemployed: These are people who do not and will not ever work. Thieves, junkies, prostitutes, dope pushers, gamblers, wino's etc. Their unemployment is not temporary; they make a living on the streets. They are a relatively small percentage of the people living in the inner cities and freak communities. They make excellent fighters for the revolution; however because of their instability they have a tendency to use more violence than necessary, rip-off from the movement, and at times even fight on the side of the enemy. They need political education to counteract the individualistic habits which they developed in order to survive on the streets.

The Colonies: The prosperity of America is based on the ability of the capitalists to get cheap raw materials, cheap labor, markets for their goods and opportunities for investment from all parts of the world. The nations affected by these types of exploitation are rising up in revolution to gain national self-determination. Now their dictators are often puppets financed by U.S. foreign aid and advised by the CIA. If these nations win their freedom, then the working class in this country will no longer be able to evade the issue of revolution. They will no longer have the privileges (in the form of a few extra bucks) which pacify them into letting the ruling class rip them off and rip everybody else off too. The anti-war movement is not just to bring our boys home, but also it will further the revolution in Vietnam and indirectly the revolution here.

The Key to Victory: In America there are Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Poor Whites and American Indians. All these people occupy a double position in the class structure. They are oppressed as an internal colony and the majority are also exploited, as workers. This double oppression accounts for the dynamism of their struggles. Like the Vietnamese they have begun a struggle for liberation as a people. Their liberation struggle includes fighting racism in employment, housing, schools ect. It includes the fight for community control of community institutions. It also includes the attempt to gain land upon which to base their nations. Examples are the island of Puerto Rico, the Republic of New Africa, Indian reservations, and the traditional land of the Mexican Americans in the Southwest. Because of the revolutionary importance of these anti-colonial struggles in all forms, white workers should support the demands of the minorities for self-determination. However, more than likely their struggles will not be successful unless the American working class as a whole makes a revolution and drives the ruling class from the face of the earth. Therefore the colonized workers--black, brown, and red--will bring revolutionary consciousness to their white brothers and sisters at the point of production and in other working class institutions like schools and jails.

Women: Women make up about half of each class in America. But in each class they are socially inferior to men. The unpaid work they do in the home is necessary to the ruling class because without food and relaxation, the worker would not be able to return to work each day. They also raise and care for a new generation of workers. And yet they receive no pay for this work. Because of their social inferiority they can be hired at low wages. Today, despite a large number of unemployed males, more and more women are being brought into the work force because of their low wages and dependability. In effect most of these women hold down two jobs--one at work and one at home. Women are denied equality in all aspects of life. They are regarded as mentally and physically inferior. They are viewed as sexual objects by men and forced to bear the brunt of an accidental or unwanted pregnancy. They are waging struggles for equality in wages and hiring, for community controlled day care centers, for control over their bodies (against forced sterilization and for opportunities for birth control and abortion if so desired), and for welfare with dignity. The most militant struggles are being waged by colonized and working class women on welfare. The movement for women's liberation is an important part of the revolution. They are one half of humanity.

Youth: Like women, youth come from all classes. And also like women, the ones from the lower social classes are the most oppressed. However there is a lot that youth have in common with each other. They are the ones used as common fodder in putting down wars of national liberation like Vietnam. They have the highest unemployment. Drugs, music, parties, traffic offenses, demonstrations, loitering and drinking are all opportunities for police harassment and busts. The police are trying to get young people to get used to the idea of a lifetime of oppression. Schools and juvenile homes also try to break the spirit of youth and their longing for freedom. But because they will have to put up with things for the rest of their lives, youth is not ready to accept a society which could be much better. They have more open minds and more time to read and think. They will not be oppressed. They will be the first ones to see the possibilities for change. And because they are not tied down by mortgages, seniority, and responsibilities they are more able to act on their beliefs. They will play a big role in bringing revolutionary ideas to the working class. Youth will make the revolution!

The United Front: The united front is an alliance of classes led by the working class. It tries to isolate the ruling class and defeat it. The united front will be guided by the principle of self-determination for oppressed colonies (both within and outside the U.S.A.) It will be led by a party based in the working class which will be able to insure the maximum amount of democracy within the party, the maximum amount of centralized coordination. It will use both legal and illegal means to smash the state power of the ruling class and set up a government of the working class. The minimum goals of the united front are reforms which will help different groups in their daily lives. Reforms like community control of the police, free breakfast programs, end to discrimination by race and sex, adequate welfare, release of all political prisoners and community health centers. The party will do education through these struggles to politically educate people about the principles of the united front and the need for socialism (the control of the state and all political and economic institutions by the working class.)

Questions for Discussion

1. Why is the myth that most people are middle class in America harmful to the development of revolution?
2. How do youth culture and Black culture relate to the development of working class consciousness?
3. Which classes can be won over to the united front? Which will be divided in their support for the united front?
4. What class interests does the student movement reflect?
5. Is it easy for a person to climb from one class to another? Up and Down?
6. Can someone belong to more than one class? Have characteristics of more than one class? For instance, what class are police? Fireman?
7. In what ways do Black, Latin, and Indian People influence white working people?
8. Is the anti-war movement revolutionary?
9. Why should all working people support self-determination of oppressed colonies?
10. Is the women's liberation movement revolutionary? The Gay liberation movement?
11. Is the youth movement revolutionary?
12. What are the importance of reforms within the system?
13. Why does the working class have to ally with other classes?
14. How does a revolutionary party function? How much centralism and how much democracy?
15. How should a revolutionary party be chosen?