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RACISM AND THE WORKERS' MOVEMENT

PHILADELPHIA WORKERS' ORGANIZING COMMITTEE



PHILADELPHIA WORKERS' ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Today in the U.S., as in the past, working people see their standard of living deteriorating before the onslaught of economic crisis. Inflation, speed up, unemployment, crime, and declining social services are the concrete expressions of this crisis for the masses of the American people. While slums multiply and masses of people go without the necessities of life, factories stand idle and inventories pile up on shelves. The oppression of Black, Latin, Asian and Native American peoples is intensifying both on the job and in the community. Women, especially women workers, see their modest gains of the last few years swept away in a tidal wave of layoff slips. The threat of war is accelerating as the U.S. government, in flagrant disregard of the desires of the people of the U.S., continues its world wide intervention on behalf of the big monopolies — in Chile, in Africa, in the Middle East and wherever else the U.S. corporations turn a buck. And finally, as the Watergate scandal dramatically reveals, those who run the U.S. government — which, according to our history books, represents all of us — are in fact nothing more than the hired help of the monopoly capitalists.

As a Communist organization the PWOC sees the root cause of the day-to-day problems of working people as the capitalist system itself. We are committed to building a revolutionary working class movement that will overthrow the profit system and replace it with socialism. We seek to replace the anarchy of capitalist production with a planned economy based on the needs of the working people. We want to end the oppression of national minorities and women and make equality a reality instead of the hypocritical slogan it has become in the mouths of the capitalist politicians. We work toward the replacement of the rule of the few, the handful of monopolists, by the rule of the many, the working people.

The masses of people in the U.S. have always fought back against their exploitation and today the movements in opposition to the monopolies are rapidly growing both in numbers and intensity. What is lacking is the kind of political leadership that can bring these movements together, deepen the consciousness of the masses and build today's struggles into a decisive and victorious revolutionary assault against Capital. To answer this need we must have a vanguard party of the working class, based on its most conscious and committed partisans, rooted in the mass movements of all sectors of the American people and equipped with the political understanding capable of solving the strategic and tactical problems that present themselves on the difficult road to revolution. The PWOC seeks, in conjunction with like minded organizations and individuals throughout the U.S., to build such a party — a genuine Communist Party. The formation of such a party will be an important step forward in the struggle of the working class and all oppressed people to build a new world on the ashes of the old.

For further information, write:
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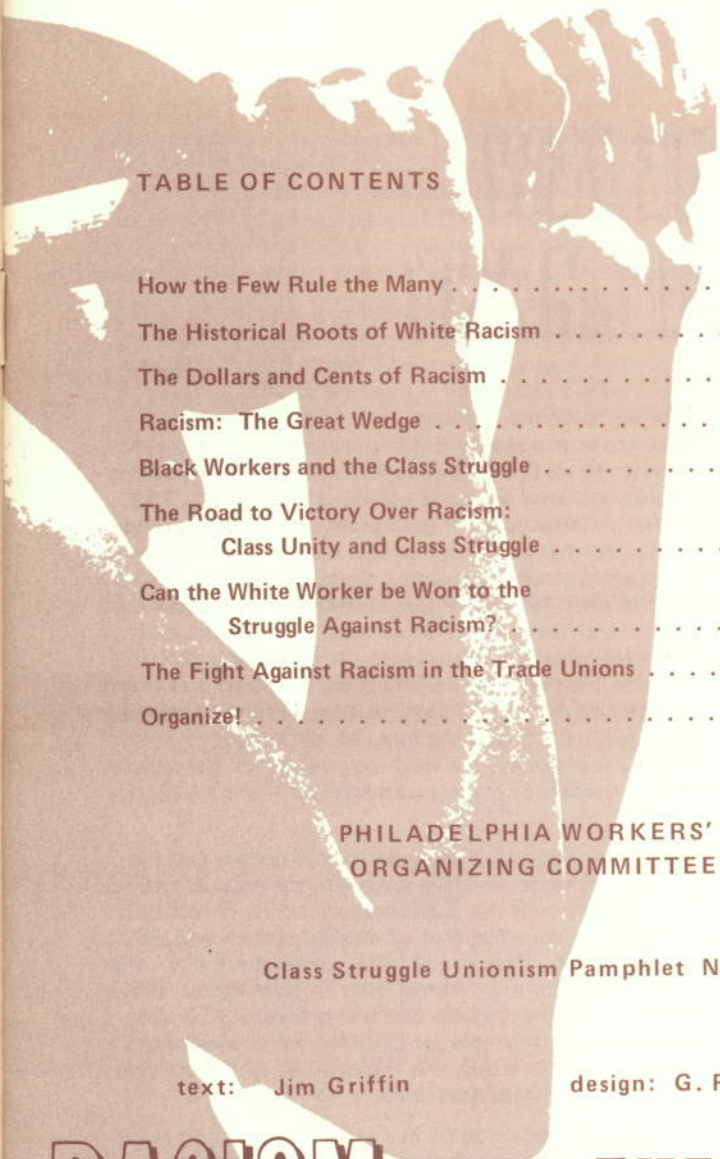


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**PHILADELPHIA WORKERS'
ORGANIZING COMMITTEE**

Class Struggle Unionism Pamphlet No. 1

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**RACISM AND THE
WORKERS' MOVEMENT**

of the world's workers' movement and the struggle for socialism

HOW THE FEW RULE THE MANY

Working people make up the vast majority of the population of this country. We, through our labor, create the wealth of this nation. Yet it is a small handful who exercise control over how that wealth is used and distributed. This handful, who own the mines, mills, and factories, possess vast wealth and power while those of us who created that wealth make just enough to scrape by and have little say in the important decisions that shape our everyday lives. We are the victims of inflation, layoffs and lousy, often dangerous working conditions. We endure a government that overtaxes and underserves us. We are sent off to fight wars to protect the investments of big business. We get empty gas tanks while the oil companies quadruple their profits. All these problems and many more that go together to make up our day to day life stem from the basic fact that this society is set up to serve the few at the expense of the many. It is based on the exploitation of the majority, the working people, for the enrichment of a small minority, the owners of the big corporations — the monopoly capitalists.

The monopolists, through their control of the educational system and the mass media, attempt to make this state of affairs seem like the natural order of things. By a trick of language they turn the profit system, which in reality is based on the exploitation of labor, into the 'free enterprise' system and seek to convince us it works for our benefit. They reduce wars, unemployment, inflation and crime to just so many 'kinks' to be ironed out. Or even worse, they try to tell us that we, ourselves, are the creators of these problems. This barrage of ideas, which we get in school and now get daily from the newspapers and television, is one important way in which this minority of exploiters seek to maintain their rule over the majority of exploited.

The employer class, realizing themselves to be in a small minority, do everything they can to keep us in the dark about the real roots of our problems. But in spite of these efforts working people know they're getting the short end and have no choice but to fight back to protect their basic interests.

Knowing this the monopolists long ago realized that their best line of defense of their profits and privileges was to keep the working class divided against itself. If the struggles of various workers can be isolated from each other or better yet pitted against each other than the power of the working class, its power in numbers and in its position at the heart of production, can be neutralized. What the employers fear most of all is a united, fighting working class. Whenever there has been this kind of unity in the history of our country the working people have made tremendous strides forward and the employers have had to

beat a retreat. The Nineteen Thirties is a good example. The workers, through a militant unity, built the CIO unions, won unemployment compensation, social security, and many other concessions from the reluctant, but frightened monopolies and their agents in Washington. Thus it has always been almost an article of faith with the employers that they must prevent the creation of such unity and do everything in their power to break it once it does develop.

The single most important weapon in the arsenal of the bosses for dividing the workers is white racism. The employers discriminate against the Black workers (and Puerto Rican, Chicano, Asian and American Indian workers as well) and reap greater profits as a result of this discrimination. But more importantly they seek to instill fear, prejudice and hostility in the white workers toward their black counterparts. They seek to turn the white workers against the black struggle for equality. They count on the resentment this breeds among the black workers to lead to their blaming the white workers for their situation. The biggest reward they hope to reap from the sowing of racist ideas is the divisions this will create among the workers' ranks. Without black-white unity the black workers will be unable to mount an effective challenge to discrimination. Without black-white unity all the workers will be unable to wage a successful fight for their interests. To the extent racial conflict can be created among the workers, class conflict, that is conflict with the employers, is averted.



THE HISTORICAL ROOTS OF WHITE RACISM



THE BASIS OF WHITE RACISM

White racism is not only the belief that black people are inferior to whites. It is a whole system of material inequality that is woven into every institution of American life. Racial inequality and the ideas that sustain it are not part of human nature. There have been societies in the past and there are societies today where racism is not a factor in social life. Racism came to exist in the U. S. for very specific historical reasons. To understand racism we must avoid sweeping generalizations about 'prejudice always having existed' and instead look at the actual historical development of white racism in this country.

When European settlers first began arriving in North America and sought to develop the land for large scale agriculture their first and foremost problem was the need for a labor force. Wage labor, that is hiring other Europeans, to work the land was impractical because of the widespread availability of free land. No one would work someone else's land when they could work their own land and keep the whole return for themselves. Thus the European free laborers who came to North America quickly became farmers themselves or took up commercial occupations in the towns. There was simply no supply of free white labor. The big landowners thus had to find a way to tie a labor force to the land. First they attempted to enslave the Indians. This project failed because the Indians, who were hunting and fishing peoples for the most part, did not adapt to agricultural production. Also they could and did escape and rejoin their tribes. A more successful policy was the practice of indentured servitude. Europeans, all of them poor, many of them debtors and criminals, signed a legal agreement to perform labor for the landowners for so many years in return for their free passage and perhaps a promise of land or a sum of money upon completion of the term of service. But this practice too had its drawbacks. The indentured servants could escape and their term of service was limited (seven years was usual). Also the coming of the Industrial Revolution in England altered the economic circumstances that forced people to become indentured servants. Whereas previously the English ruling classes had encouraged this practice to rid England of the unemployed, now the rulers sought to maintain a reserve labor force in England and thus the availability of indentured labor dried up.

SLAVERY INSTITUTED

The planters solved their labor problem by importing the Black peoples of West Africa. The Africans were at first given the status of indentured servants, but this was transformed by practice, custom and then by law into chattel slavery within a few generations. The slave's black skin meant he could not escape into the surrounding population without detection. A huge ocean separated them from their own people, language and culture, placing them in a position of dependency. Most of the Africans came from agricultural societies and thus were able to adapt to the plantation's labor. Those that did not, like the Indians, died in droves. Finally the institution of slavery meant that the planter had the labor of the African for life and that of his offspring as well. As simple property the slaves had no rights and were subjected to a brutal existence. The

slaves were treated as machines, as investments and got only enough care to insure the realization of that investment. The ideas of white supremacy and black inferiority developed gradually to give moral and political sanction to the slave system and the degradation of the Black people. White racism was the product of the institution of black chattel slavery which in turn grew up in the U. S. in response to the economic needs of the planter class in the U. S. and the commercial classes in England that depended on their produce.

The elimination of slavery did not put an end to the oppression of Black people. To understand why we again must look at the specific historical situation.



CLASS CONFLICTS CAUSE CIVIL WAR

In the years following the American Revolution the planters came into increasing conflict with the rising Northern capitalist class. The planter class, by virtue of the Constitution, had a powerful stranglehold over the federal government. They generally controlled the Senate and often the Presidency as well. They favored low tariffs so they could buy goods cheaply from abroad, low taxes and first and foremost the expansion of slavery into the western territories so as to maintain the political balance of power. The northern capitalists favored high tariffs to protect their developing industry, high taxes to pay for public works like canals and railroads which would stimulate commerce and finally the exclusion of slavery from the western territories in order to tip the political balance of power toward themselves. The mass of workers and farmers also opposed the spread of slavery which would curtail the availability of free land and the opportunities for free labor. Very briefly, these were the class conflicts that led to the Civil War.

WHAT WAS CIVIL ABOUT THE CIVIL WAR?



IT ALL STARTED WHEN THE GROWING NORTHERN CAPITALIST CLASS CAME INTO A CIVIL(?) GENTLEMANLY(?) CONFLICT WITH THE POLITICALLY POWERFUL SOUTHERN PLANTERS.

THE CAPITALISTS WANTED MORE POLITICAL POWER TO DEVELOP INDUSTRY AND TO EXPLOIT FREE LABOR.



I SAY WAGE SLAVERY!

THE PLANTERS WANTED TO EXPAND THEIR POWER TO THE WEST UNDER THE SLAVE-PLANTATION SYSTEM.



CHattel SLAVERY CONSRN IT!

The Union victory in the Civil War succeeded in breaking the power of the slave owners and laid the foundation for the rapid transformation of the U. S. from a mainly agricultural nation to an industrial country. The abolition of slavery was a blow struck at the power of the planters. Once emancipated, the Black people rapidly organized themselves to win full political rights and gain the land. The radical wing of the capitalist class in the North supported this effort as a means of breaking the back of the planter class. Congress passed amendments to the Constitution granting Black people formal political equality. Reconstruction governments were set up in the South with the participation of both black and white small farmers. Hostile to the interests of the old planter class, these governments pursued a popular, democratic policy introducing free public education, public works programs and eliminating the poll tax. The ex-slaveholders responded with the terror of the Ku Klux Klan.

The key to the success of the Reconstruction period and the Black movement for full democratic rights was the question of the land. The Black people raised the demand of forty acres and a mule. They demanded the division of the old plantations among the former slaves. They realized that without the land, without economic power, they could not achieve real equality and could again be subjugated by their former masters. This movement failed. The dominant Northern Capitalists refused to carry this democratic revolution in the South through to its logical conclusion. Once having established themselves they no longer needed the support of the former slaves. They feared the revolutionary implications of taking the land away from its 'owners' and giving it to those who worked it. Thus in 1877 they removed federal troops from the South, withdrew their support for the Reconstruction program and betrayed the democratic aspirations of the Black people.

The Northern capitalists in conjunction with the emerging commercial interests in the South now concentrated on the industrial development of the region. The ex-slaveholders reestablished their plantations on the basis of sharecropping and tenant farming.



The Black people were forced to work the land in conditions not much different from slavery. The vicious sharecropping system left the Black farmer completely dependent on the white planter. The planter allowed the cropper to work the land in return for a portion of the crop. He lent the money to the cropper to buy seeds and implements at high interest rates. He sold the seeds, implements and household necessities to the cropper at inflated prices. Besides taking his share of the crop, he purchased the cropper's share at a price beneath the market value. At every turn the cropper was gouged by the planter. By the end of the season the cropper more often than not lacked the money to buy seed for his next crop and had to borrow again from the planter, thus sinking ever deeper into debt.

With the end of Reconstruction, the planters reestablished their control over local government. The sheriffs and the courts thus worked to enforce the peonage of the cropper. And if the black farmer was still not ready to submit, there was always the white-sheeted terror of the Klan waiting in the wings. The new forms of black oppression, like the old, developed in response to the political and economic needs of the ruling classes.

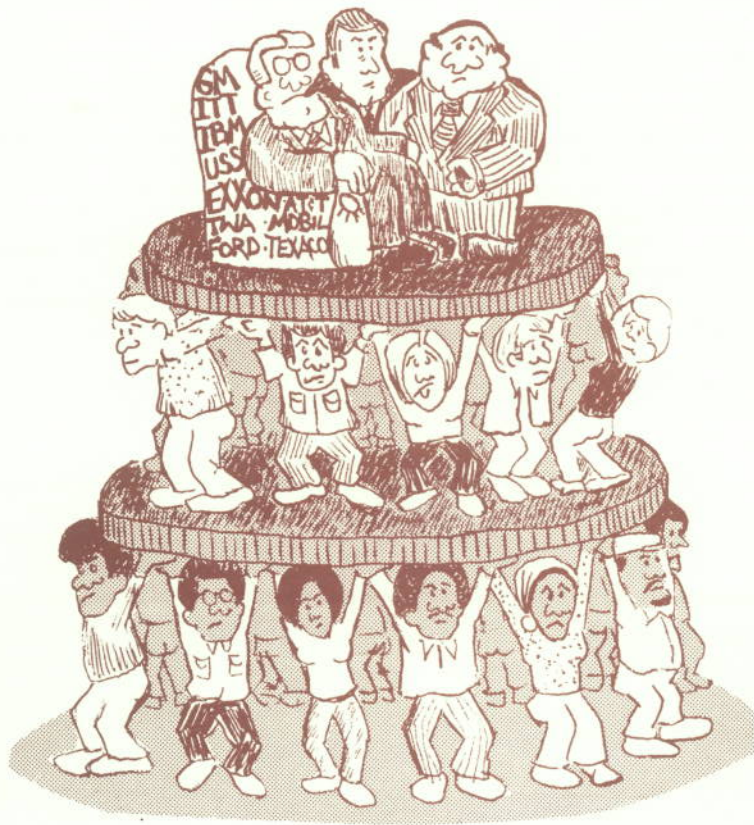
The decline of Southern agriculture and the rise of Northern Industry worked together to once again radically transform the situation of the Afro-American people while leaving the yoke of oppression firmly in place. The period following the Civil War saw an evergrowing concentration of American industry. By the turn of the century U. S. Capitalism had reached the monopoly stage. Huge trusts dominated the economic landscape. Domestic markets could no longer satisfy the appetite of the huge monopolies for ever greater profits. U. S. Capital began to penetrate Asia, Africa, and Latin America seeking cheap labor, raw materials and new markets. A big Navy and military machine arose to further this economic conquest and protect these new sources of riches for the monopolies. Whole peoples were brought under the domination of the U. S. imperialists. To justify the conquest and exploitation of these peoples new racist and chauvinist ideologies were generated. The imperialists spoke of the 'white man's burden,' of their responsibility to bring 'civilization' to the 'backward' peoples of the world.

RACISM PROVIDES SUPERPROFITS

Within the U. S. this intensification of oppression of peoples abroad was paralleled by the stepped up oppression of the Afro-American people. Just as the cheap labor of the peoples of Latin America and Asia brought the monopolies super profits, so did the labor of Black workers here in the U. S. be employed for the same end. The drying up of large scale European immigration underlined the need for new sources of cheap labor. The expanded production brought about by the First World War accelerated the demand for black labor. Thus from the early years of the twentieth century down to our own time, the U. S. has witnessed a great internal migration — the movement of Black people from the agricultural Southlands to the industrial cities of the North, Mid-west and Far West. This movement of Blacks from a farming people to an urban wage earning people was accompanied by continuation of racism. The inequalities of the plantation were transferred to the Northern ghettos and factories. The features of this inequality must now be examined.



THE DOLLARS



AND GENTS OF RACISM

Discrimination against Black people today takes three main forms. First of all black people are discriminated against as consumers. As purchasers of basic goods and services blacks generally pay the most for the least. In renting or buying housing blacks pay inflated prices, produced by a segregated market, for the worst real estate. Food prices and the cost of consumer goods are generally higher in ghetto neighborhoods and the quality is shoddy. Health services in the black community are inferior. This is reflected in the lower life span of black people (65.2 years as opposed to the national average of 71.9 years), the higher infant mortality rate (30.2 deaths per thousand as opposed to the national average of 16.8/thousand), and the greater incidence of malnutrition, lead poisoning and the various diseases associated with extreme poverty. Education in ghetto schools is also unequal. Less money is expended per student in these schools and the number of experienced, qualified teachers is lower. As a consequence blacks have only 10.3 years of education on the average compared to 12.2 years for the population as a whole. Black people are also the victims of discriminatory law enforcement. On the one hand police protection is poorer in black neighborhoods. On the other hand blacks are dealt with harshly by police, the courts and the penal system. Police brutality, high bails and stiff sentences are the reality for the black defendant in spite of all the law and order demagoguery about 'permissiveness.'

Secondly black people are channeled into the lowest paying jobs and denied access to the higher paying occupations. Discrimination in education of course contributes to this process by denying blacks the skills required for better paying jobs. But it is also a direct product of discrimination in hiring. The following table documents the inequality between blacks and whites in terms of occupation:

(Note: All the statistics quoted above and in the following tables are taken from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, prepared by the Bureau of the Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, issued September, 1973, current to September, 1974. 94th edition.)

Occupation	Average Weekly Wage	Pct. of Whites employed	Pct of Blacks employed
Managerial positions	\$214.00	10.6%	3.7%
Professional and technical	\$192.00	14.6%	9.5%
blue collar workers	\$126.00	34.4%	39.9%
service workers	\$104.00	11.8%	27.2%
farm labor	\$80.00	1.6%	2.4%
domestics	\$40.00	1.2%	6.8%

Unemployment is another side of this same inequality. In 1972 10.0% of the black labor force was unemployed compared to 5.6% of the white labor force. Ever since the end of World War Two black unemployment has been roughly twice that of whites, a reflection of the truth that blacks are last hired and first fired.

Finally within the same occupation blacks suffer discrimination. The following table of occupations, selected as a representative crosssection, documents the inequality of incomes within a given occupation.

Occupation	Average Annual Income for all Males	Average Annual Income for Black Males
factory	\$14,379	\$9,049
civil engineer	12,675	9,262
accountant	10,627	8,447
plumber	8,997	5,546
auto worker	8,162	7,631
elementary teacher	8,013	7,521
assemblers	6,730	5,582
miners	7,281	5,655
apparel workers	4,718	4,194

The concrete forms this discrimination takes vary a great deal. Generally the inequality in income within a particular occupation reflects the fact that blacks are channeled into the lower paying job classifications. In the Auto industry, for example, the better paying skilled trades are lily white. One way they're kept that way is through discriminatory procedures for entrance into the trades. Some companies use the Otis Aptitude Test to determine eligibility for these jobs. The Supreme Court found this test to be racially biased and designed so that blacks would find it difficult to score well. Unnecessary educational requirements contribute to erecting a racial barrier to the skilled trades. Another way better paying jobs are denied blacks is through the use of double seniority trials. For purposes of upgrading seniority only counts within each department. Minority workers are restricted to the lower paying departments and job classifications. In the huge Sparrows Point Steel complex in Baltimore black workers recently successfully challenged such a double seniority trial scheme before the Supreme Court.

The income inequality is also a product of the failure of the trade unions to organize black workers or in some cases their unwillingness to admit them at all. This is the case in the building trades where blacks have been kept out of apprenticeship programs and thus make lower wages as unorganized craftsmen. The concentration of large numbers of black workers in the unorganized south is also a factor. The same can be said of Chicano workers in the southwest and west coast.

What this pattern of inequality adds up to is that blacks and other oppressed minorities are at a severe economic and social disadvantage. The average income of whites is \$149.00/week while the figure for minorities is \$115.00/week or roughly three-quarters of the figure for whites. So racism is not just an attitude but a matter of hard dollars and cents.



Who does this benefit? Obviously not the Black people. But not the mass of white working people either. The fact that a white worker has a better-paying job than a Black worker or gets higher wages for the same job a Black worker performs for less makes it appear that discrimination works on behalf of the white workers. But this is not the case.

Who pockets the rent from ghetto real estate? Who gets the extra dollars that are made from overpricing shoddy merchandise in ghetto supermarkets? And most importantly who benefits when black labor can be hired at a cheaper wage than white labor? The landlord, the merchant and most of all the big employers get the dollars and cents that racism creates. And it is no little sum either. As has already been shown the wage gap between black and white workers is sizeable. The difference represents saved labor costs to the capitalists and thus greater profits. But the dollar and cents advantages of racism don't end there. By creating a reserve army of black unemployed and black labor force that is forced to work at lower wages, the employers drive down the wages of the mass of workers. The white worker's wage and his job security are threatened by racism. The white worker is told not to ask for too much because the boss will bring in a Black, Puerto Rican or immigrant worker to do his job for less. Or the boss can threaten to move the plant to the South or a low-wage area overseas. Racism continues a mighty attack on the wages, working conditions and job security of the whole working class.



RACISM: THE GREAT WEDGE



WORKERS PITTED AGAINST EACH OTHER

Great as these benefits of racism to the capitalists are, the single greatest service it renders him is its power to divide the mass of white workers from the black workers and mislead them into the employer's camp. The white worker, as we have seen, is not profiting from racism. On the contrary, he too is threatened very directly by its effects. The white worker's real interest lies in uniting with the black worker to put an end to the inequality between them. . . an inequality that enables the employer to oppress black labor, threaten the white worker, and pit the one against the other. But the white worker so often does not grasp this and instead views the black worker, rather than the employer, as the cause of his problems. This blindspot is the product of years of conditioning and of centuries of history. The idea of white supremacy has been cultivated in the white worker by a capitalist controlled culture, a culture that has developed to justify and smooth the way for the exploitation of labor and its division into two antagonistic racial camps.

To the extent the white worker leans toward racial conflict with the black workers as opposed to class struggle against the employers, he benefits not himself, but his boss. A good general example of this is the situation in the South where racism has served to lead many white workers into defending Jim Crow discrimination and to oppose the black struggle for equality. The result — disunity between black and white — has enormously aided the efforts of Big Business and their flunkey politicians to maintain the South as a capitalist paradise and a worker's nightmare. No unions, low wages and the worst social services in the nation — these are some of the fruits of racism for the white as well as the black workers. In that stronghold of white supremacy, Mississippi, the average hourly wage of production workers is \$2.77/hour, the lowest such average in the country. Compare this with Michigan, a state with a strong labor movement, where the average is \$4.94/hour and the point is made even clearer.

WHO ARE OUR FRIENDS? WHO ARE OUR ENEMIES?

Racism not only divides white from black but actually drives a section of the white workers into the awaiting arms of their exploiters. The whole Nixon campaign for law and order is a case in point. Nixon, as a front for the big monopoly corporations, played on the white worker's racial fears and animosities and ran as the barely disguised 'white man's candidate.' But which white people profited from his election — the white workers who, along with the rest of working people, have gotten higher prices, frozen wages and layoff slips or the oil barons, the ITT chieftains and the rest of the corporate big shots who have reaped record profits from Nixon's wage freezes, fuel crises and other corporate giveaway programs? Nixon also used the law and order issue to justify the expansion of the government's police powers and unconstitutional activity. To protect 'national security' and keep 'domestic order,' Nixon turned the Executive branch of the government into a crew of burglars, blackmailers and perjurers. These attacks on the democratic rights of the American people mark a step toward fascism. And one of the major ways fascism is promoted in the U. S. is through an appeal to racism. The arch racist George Wallace is another example. Wallace comes on real folksy with his attacks on 'the pencil headed bureaucrats in Washington' and

with his talk about being the friend of the little guy. But when we look beyond Wallace's smooth talk we find his main financial backers are big Texas oil kings like H. L. Hunt, hardly one of the little guys. As Governor of Alabama Wallace has given the 'little guys' an average income of \$3,300 per year, 49th in the nation, a school system that spends less money on education than any other state except Mississippi, and an administration whose outstanding achievements are its rampant corruption and its hostility to unionism. With friends like these the little guy hardly needs enemies. And that's the ultimate effect of racism — it leads the white worker to spurn his real friends and embrace his enemies.



Of course many and perhaps even most white workers do not oppose the Black people's demand for equality and recognize its essential rightness. But what most white workers do not see is that this struggle against racism is basic to *their* interests as well as those of black workers.

AN ATTACK AGAINST ONE IS AN ATTACK AGAINST ALL

As long as one section of the working class can be stripped of basic rights, the rights of the whole working class are insecure. Besides the more general examples of this we have cited, it is easy enough to see operating on any shop floor. Let's say there is this machine shop. A militant black worker has been raising some hell about bad working conditions. The foreman singles him out and begins to harass him. He checks his work constantly and always finds fault. He stops the worker from taking breaks. He gives him a warning slip for being five minutes late. If the foreman succeeds in firing or intimidating this worker into silence, he has weakened the strength of all the workers. He will be better able to harass other workers for bad work and tardiness. He will have a foot in the door for undermining working conditions in the whole shop. It is clear to most workers that this kind of harassment of a militant worker can affect all of them. The fact that these tactics are employed especially against minority workers is part and parcel of the whole attempt of the bosses to maintain racism. It's clear



the white workers must join the black workers in fighting this kind of harassment today or tomorrow they will find themselves more vulnerable to the same kind of attacks. If, on the contrary, the white workers say to themselves: 'Well, the guy was a troublemaker — he was five minutes late — his work was pretty bad' (all things they would be less likely to say if the worker was white), then they are playing right into the boss's hands and selling out their own real interests.

To win any struggle takes unity. What unity really amounts to is that all the workers have confidence that their interests are being represented and fought for. It means that the black workers trust that the demand for an end to racism will be taken up and fought for by the white workers. To the extent that this occurs unity between black and white develops and the struggle is strengthened. To the extent it does not there will be a reluctance on the part of the black workers to unite with the white workers on the grounds that they cannot be assured that their urgent need for an end to discrimination will be fought for. The workers will be divided, their full weight will not be felt in struggle, and thus they will be weakened. Workers cannot afford this disunity in the face of the employer's constant drive for ever greater profits at the expense of labor.

What this means is that the white workers cannot afford to see the fight for equality as simply Black people's thing. On the contrary the white workers must take up this fight as their own . . . as the concrete expression of the fight for black-white unity and as the defense of their own class interests. In fact white workers must take the lead in waging a resolute struggle against racism on all fronts. This does not mean white workers dictating to blacks on how they should wage their struggle. It means a recognition of the steps necessary to unite black and white — an understanding that unity and an end to racism is essential to white as well as black workers and that the main cause of disunity has been the indifference or hostility to the black struggle for equality on the part of white workers. To forge a fighting unity, the white workers must take up the struggle for equality in all its aspects.

BLACK WORKERS AND THE CLASS STRUGGLE



RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT GROWS

The importance of black-white unity is underlined when we look at the role black workers are playing in the trade unions and the struggles of working people generally.

In the unions in the last few years we have seen the development of a broad rank & file movement that takes a stand for a democratic, militant brand of unionism in opposition to the bureaucratic, sell out policies of the AFL-CIO leadership. Rank & file caucuses in auto, steel, transport and other basic industries have formed around the elementary need of workers for a union that genuinely represents them and fights for their interests. These caucuses have grown up in response to a union leadership that has collaborated with management to speed up production and improve 'efficiency' at the expense of the workers . . . a union leadership that has by and large caved in before the joint demand of big business and government for wage controls in a period of escalating prices . . . a union leadership that has sat on its thumbs while our jobs are exported to unorganized low wage areas and a union leadership that has failed to challenge and even cooperated in the employer's practice of racial and sexual discrimination. These misleaders have been able to carry out their disastrous policies in large part because they seek by fair means or foul to keep the rank & file out of the arena of decision making. Thus the caucuses have called for a return to rank & file worker's basic interests. Another side to the upsurge of rank & file activity is the development of new unions like the Hospital Workers and Farm workers unions and new organizing drives by old Unions like the Amalgamated Clothing Workers which are bringing thousands of previously unorganized workers into the ranks of organized labor and setting an example for the rest of the unions through their militant struggle.

ROLE OF BLACK WORKERS

At the heart of this rank & file upsurge stands the black worker. In basic industry much of the leadership and initiative for the rank & file movement has come from the black workers. This leadership has taken many forms — black caucuses, revolutionary black workers' organizations, and multi-racial rank & file groupings. While the black workers have naturally and quite correctly made the demand for equality and an end to racism a central concern of this movement, they have also been in the forefront in waging a fight for better wages and working conditions, union democracy and the full range of worker's concerns. The situation in the United Steel Workers is a good example. USW president I. W. Abel and the bureaucracy he represents have a long history of collaboration with management in maintaining racial discrimination in the plants, consigning Black workers to the dirtiest, most dangerous and lowest-paying jobs. At the same time the USW is one of the most top down, undemocratic of unions. Recently Abel has taken his collaboration with the employers another step by going along with company inspired productivity schemes and by signing away the right to strike in the interests of profits and labor peace for the steel monopolies. A massive rank & file movement has developed in Steel in response to these sell out policies and it has been the Black workers who have been most militant in fighting not only the racist discrimination policies, but the productivity plan and the no-strike pact as well.

Black workers have also been a key force in pushing the unions to take a broader view of their tasks — to see themselves not as narrow pressure groups, but as the fighting arm of the whole working class, battling on the political as well as the economic front. This phenomena too has taken many forms. Black longshoremen in the east, west and gulf coast ports have taken direct action against the pro-business, racist foreign policy of the U. S. government by refusing to unload goods from the white supremacist states of South Africa and Rhodesia. Predominantly Black unions like the Hospital Workers actively mobilized their memberships in mass demonstrations against U. S. aggression in Southeast Asia.

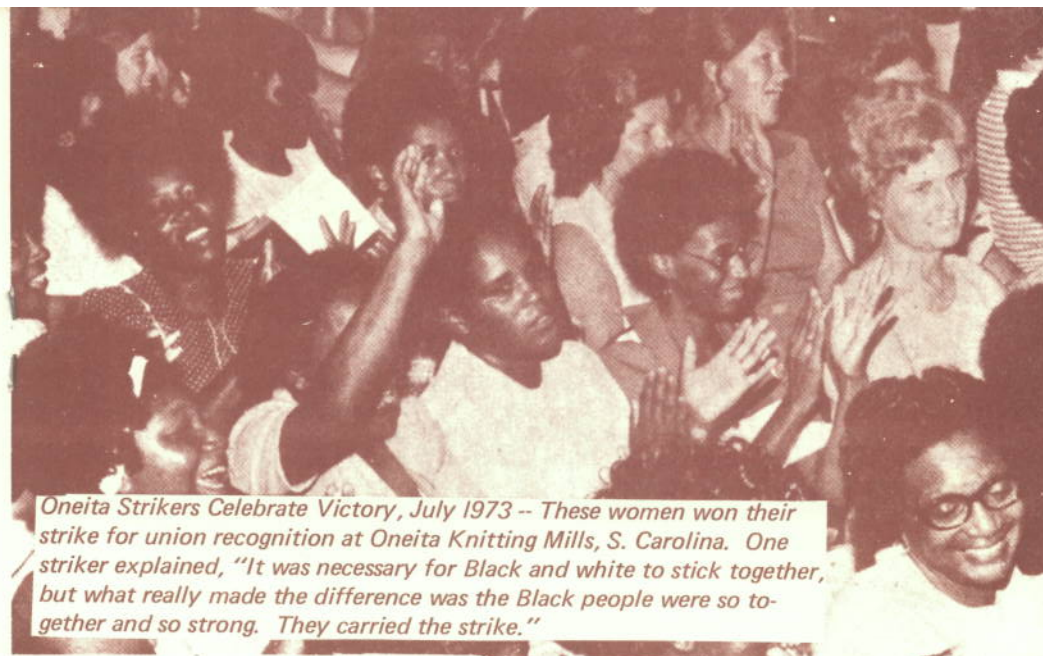
In taking these actions Black workers demonstrated an understanding of the common interests of workers throughout the world as well as grasping the cost to U. S. workers of the government's militaristic and aggressive policies. Solidarity with the struggles of other workers here in the U. S. is another side of the same spirit as when west coast Black longshoremen recently refused to load scab produce in support of the striking farmworkers. Black led rank & file struggle has also been characterized by an understanding of the need to link struggles of workers on the shop floor with struggles in the community. In Detroit, for example, the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, a group based in the auto plants, joined forces with working people in the community in the fight for better education, health care, law enforcement and other concerns. This in turn made it possible to mobilize community support for struggles in the plant.

WHY BLACK MILITANCY?

The militancy of the Black worker certainly has much to do with the nature of the conditions he or she faces. Since Black workers generally have the most oppressive jobs they have been hit the hardest by the speed up drive and the general attack on working conditions that the bosses have launched. Lower wages and the greater likelihood of a layoff slip, harassment by racist foremen, barriers to upgrading and a hundred other factors combine to make up the extra burden of oppression the Black worker carries. But oppression doesn't automatically translate into resistance. The Black worker, concentrated in areas of heavy industry where labor is highly social and cooperative, learns the capacity for collective action from the job itself. Also the Black worker has been moved and educated by the growing intensity of the Black Freedom struggle over the last two decades. The Civil Rights Movement, the urban rebellions, and the various struggles of Black students, welfare recipients, tenants, and prisoners have all contributed to the political consciousness of the Black worker. These struggles generated a spirit of resistance in all Black people. For the Black worker this spirit has increasingly taken the shape of an across the board struggle against the forms of class exploitation. As has already been made clear the demand for equality and an end to racism is itself a demand that serves the whole working class, white and Black. But what is also important is that the Black workers have been in the front lines of almost every struggle to better the way of life of all workers.

LABOR AND BLACK LIBERATION

The Labor Movement in its effort to protect the living standards of workers and push forward toward a decent society for working people needs allies. It needs staunch friends outside the trade unions. Black people generally, that is Black people outside the labor movement in civil rights organizations, welfare



Oneita Strikers Celebrate Victory, July 1973 -- These women won their strike for union recognition at Oneita Knitting Mills, S. Carolina. One striker explained, "It was necessary for Black and white to stick together, but what really made the difference was the Black people were so together and so strong. They carried the strike."

rights groups, Black political organizations and community groups have been the most consistent ally of the trade unions and have in fact often been far ahead of the AFL-CIO in fighting for the interests of the working class. This has taken many concrete forms — the fight for a minimum wage and a guaranteed annual income, for more jobs through expanding socially useful production of housing, schools, hospitals and the like, for improved social services, consumer protection and many other reforms all of which serve the needs of working people. Black organizations were far in advance of the AFL-CIO in opposing the Vietnam War and spiralling military spending. The Black Liberation Movement has, besides being a struggle for full equality, been a movement that necessarily embraces the full range of concerns of the working people, a reflection of the fact that the overwhelming majority of Blacks are workers (94%) with interests that unite them with the whole working class.

Thus in two fundamental respects the Black people's interests and struggle coincide with the interests of the working class. First the struggle for equality is a struggle that serves all workers in that it aims at eliminating a powerful weapon of the exploiters — a means for greater economic exploitation and a wedge for dividing the workers against each other. Secondly this struggle, given the class character of the Black People, not only concerns itself with ending discrimination, but demands across the board improvements in many other areas that concern working people as well.

All this throws into sharp relief the importance of Black-White unity. It makes clear why the bosses value their old friend JIM Crow above all others. Racism does not simply divide Black from white — it divides the white workers from the workers who have generally been the most militant and most conscious of the whole class's interests, that is the Black workers. And it divides the workers movement from its most important ally, the broader Black movement that consists of Black people outside the work places as well as the Black workers and trade unionists.

THE ROAD TO VICTORY OVER RACISM- CLASS UNITY AND CLASS STRUGGLE



UNITY

Given that racism is very profitable to the bosses, both economically and politically, it should be clear that they will not give up their practice of racial oppression easily. Black People have waged a stubborn and heroic struggle against their oppression from the time the first slave ship docked in the New World to the present. In our time we have witnessed this struggle at a high point of intensity. Through mass organization and action Black People have succeeded in eliminating the most blatant legal forms of Jim Crow. They have scored some gains in the areas of employment, housing and education. In the course of waging these struggles Black people have come to a greater understanding of their history and culture and attained a new degree of national pride and self-respect, qualities that the racist rulers have always sought to deny them. But still after almost two decades of intense struggle the situation of the mass of Black people is not greatly altered. The brutal every day realities of ghetto life remain intact and the overall pattern of racial discrimination survives.

The frustrations that this failure to uproot racism have created has led some Black people down politically self defeating paths. Religious cults, separatist or Back to Africa movements; and isolated terrorist groups are some of the forms that have flourished in the wake of these frustrations. The basic reason for the failure to lick racism is again the successful splitting tactics of the employers who have been able to largely isolate the Black movement for equality and pit a substantial section of white labor against it. The plain fact of the matter is that it takes Black-white unity, the unity of the working class, to really beat racism back. Only a united, fighting working class has the numbers and social power, a power inherent in the worker's role as the producer of all social wealth, to force the struggle against racism beyond its present stalemate.

CLASS STRUGGLE

The road to defeating racism is the broad highway of class struggle. This means the demand for an end to racism has to be taken up as part of the overall demands of the whole working class. It has to be put forward as a demand that is vital to the interests of all the workers. To successfully defeat racism means relying on the working class as the main force. And this means projecting the struggle against racism from a working class viewpoint.

The struggles of the Black workers demonstrate an advanced grasp of this viewpoint. In spite of the indifference and hostility of many white workers, the Black workers' movement has generally placed the demand for an end to discrimination in the context of a broad program that speaks to the interests of the mass of workers and has promoted Black-white unity. This understanding grows out of the actual experience of the Black worker on the job. It is obvious to most Black workers, at least in plants that are multi-racial, that the support of the white workers cannot be mobilized on the basis of abstract moral appeals against racism or still less by calling them 'hunkies' or 'devils.' They can only be won through demonstrating that racism hurts all workers. They can only be drawn into struggle on the basis of a clear program that puts forward demands that speak to the grievances of the mass of workers. These are the lessons that the actual struggle of Black workers against racism and exploitation teach. And these lessons are of vital importance for the larger Black Liberation Movement.



WORKERS MUST LEAD BLACK MOVEMENT

The Black People's Movement is not of one mind on how Black People are to achieve freedom in America. These differences grow out of the reality that Black People, like white people, are in different social classes. While the vast majority of Black people are part of the working class, there is also a small but influential Black middle class. This middle class, composed mainly of small businessmen and professionals, is the social base for the ideas of separatism and so-called Black capitalism. This class tends to think of expanded business opportunities for themselves as the road forward for Black people. Separatist thinking is strong among this group because it seeks to develop and control a Black market in opposition to White owned business. Among the professions separatist thinking takes the form of promoting various poverty programs or 'community control' projects that will enhance the opportunities and power of this strata.

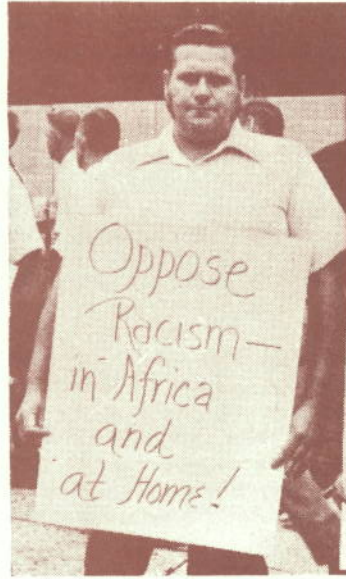
It is important to recognize that the Black middle class is victimized by discrimination and racism. There can be no question that Black businessmen and professionals should have equal rights with their white counterparts. The Black middle class is a legitimate part of the larger Black Liberation movement. But this class cannot be counted on to lead the Black movement. It cannot provide leadership for the mass of working class Black people for the basic reason that the working class viewpoint so necessary to the successful development of the struggle is alien to this class of small capitalists and independent professionals.

Their whole program of expanding Black business is no solution to the problems of Black workers. Black owned businesses are generally small retail and service operations that employ a handful of workers and have little economic importance. In an era of monopoly when it takes millions to start a major enterprise, these small businessmen can never hope to become owners of large scale industry. Even if they could this would leave the Black worker in a position where he was now exploited by a Black capitalist instead of a white one. The Black middle class cannot be counted on to consistently put forward a program that genuinely serves the Black masses. Nor can the Black middle class be expected to champion the cause of Black-white class unity when it so often perceives its interests in terms of narrow nationalism and separatism.

The Black middle class has provided much of the leadership of the Black movement in the past. For this reason its influence and the strength of its ideas are very great even among the masses of Black workers. But to move the struggle against racism beyond its present stalemate it is the Black workers who must take the leadership of the Black Liberation movement. This is essential to building the unity between Black and white workers, the whole working class and the whole Black People. This does not mean that all Blacks from the middle class must be thrust out of leadership and only workers can occupy these positions. It means that the working class viewpoint must prevail over the ideas of separatism, narrow nationalism and Black capitalism. It is for the most part the Black workers who will carry forth this struggle for the working class stand. For it is the Black workers who have the clearest, most direct and most urgent stake in building a united working class movement against racism and the whole system of capitalist exploitation.



CAN THE WHITE WORKER BE WON TO THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM?



But, of course, the main block to going forward in the fight against racism is on the white and not the Black side of the fence. No matter how well organized, no matter how well led, no matter how politically conscious the Black Movement is, it can only go to a certain point without the full force of the whole working class being brought solidly onto the side of Black Liberation. The main problem and the primary task is to win the white workers to an understanding of the effects of racism on the workers' movement and to gain the white worker's active participation in the struggle for full equality. It is the special responsibility and obligation of the class conscious white workers to see that this urgent task is carried out.

In many rank & file movements there is a tendency to want to play down demands against racism on the grounds that 'they divide people.' What this really means is that these demands will alienate sections of the white workers and thus weaken the struggle. What it also means, by way of implication, is that it is less important to alienate the Black workers by ignoring their oppression. Many white workers who make this argument may be sincerely interested in unity and unconscious of the racist bias it reflects. Some Black workers will even subordinate their own special concerns in order to make it easier to mobilize white workers because of the need for unity on what are seen as common concerns. In both cases this argument is fatally wrong. The source of disunity among the workers is not the struggle against racism but racism itself. The struggle only brings racism out into the open. There is no way around it. The white workers must be won to this struggle. They must be convinced that it is vital to their interests. And they can be! The view, common to many Black workers as well as

many progressive white workers, that the mass of white workers cannot come to take up this struggle is a denial of the possibility of class struggle — a denial that workers can understand their own collective interests and act on this understanding. It is also a view that is contradicted by both history and current events in the labor movement.

Historically racism has indeed been a powerful and destructive force within the labor movement. But there are also numerous examples of Black-white unity in opposition to racism. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) was a militant revolutionary industrial union in the early years of this century. The 'Wobblies,' as they were called, were unique among the trade unions of the time in that they actively fought racism. In their organizing drive among Black and white lumber workers in the South the IWW created racially mixed locals, which were unheard of at the time and condemned by the craft minded, racist American Federation of Labor (AFL). In spite of a vicious propaganda campaign waged by the employers to split the white workers away from the Blacks, the ranks remained united. The appeals to the white workers to uphold 'white supremacy' by refusing to strike with Black workers fell upon deaf ears. Efforts to break strikes by getting other Blacks as well as Mexican laborers to scab also failed. The southern timber workers were finally crushed only through the organized violence of the state. The employers could not allow this example of fighting class unity to succeed because it threatened the whole foundation of white supremacy on which the capitalist house of cards rested.

During World War I revolutionary elements in the AFL succeeded in launching a successful organizing drive among the Chicago Packinghouse workers. This campaign, which breached the employer's open shop dike in basic industry, brought thousands of Black workers into the AFL. The Packing trusts sought to wreck this campaign by splitting the workers racially. When the union sought to hold a march and rally, the city government acting for the Packers, refused to give the union a permit unless they would agree to separate Black and white marches and rallies. The union compromised by agreeing to separate marches but holding a single rally. The white march went through the black community where the black people cheered the marchers. The white workers carried placards making their opposition to the segregation of the marches clear. One white worker carried a sign that read: 'The bosses think that because we are of different color and different nationalities we should fight each other. We're going to fool them and fight for a common cause — A Square Deal for All.' Later the bosses fomented a violent race riot. The police and National Guard acted more to intimidate and brutalize the Black people than to restrain white racist mobs which were encouraged in their pillage by the Packers. The Union played an important role in ending the riot and defending the Black community from racist outrages. At one point the union struck the Packers to bring the riot to an end.

In the late nineteen twenties the Trade Union UNity League, a Communist led group of industrial unions, made the demand for Black equality a central part of its program. The TUUL not only opposed racism on the job but agitated for social equality for Black people in all aspects of American life. The best known campaign in which the TUUL played an active role was the fight to free the Scottsboro Boys, nine Black youths who had been framed on a rape charge in Scottsboro, Alabama. The TUUL sought to educate the workers



WIDE WORLD

A communist-backed rally in support of the Scottsboro boys, Union Square, December, 1933.

through this campaign and succeeded in mobilizing white as well as Black workers to oppose this legal lynching.

The Unemployment struggles of the thirties are another important example of Black-white unity. The Unemployed Councils, which led and organized the struggle for jobs and relief, fought against discrimination in the administration of relief as well as in employment practices. The Councils also fought evictions and in numerous instances mobilized white unemployed to join with Blacks in opposing evictions of Black unemployed by ghetto slumlords. Black workers made up approximately half the membership of the Councils and were prominent in their leadership.

Nor is this kind of Black-white unity just ancient history. In the fifties the American Federation of Teachers, responding to the civil rights movement, expelled all its segregated locals in the South and supported integration of schools in that area. In 1965 District 65 of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Workers Union conducted a successful strike involving over two thousand employees in New York's textile converting industry for the specific purpose of opening up more jobs for Black and Puerto Rican workers. At the last conference of the United Steel Workers, which focused on upcoming contract demands, a substantial number of white workers joined with their Black fellows in calling for the elimination of racist practices in upgrading. In Fremont, California last year the Brotherhood Caucus swept the elections and won control of a UAW local. The Brotherhood Caucus, which successfully united Black, white and Chicano workers, included in its program a demand for a discrimination committee for each shift with a full time union representative and the pow-

er to redress grievances for discrimination. Even in the deepest South there are examples. A long strike against the Masonite Corporation in Laurel, Mississippi saw Ku Klux Klan members join with Black workers in common struggle. In the course of the strike the white workers dropped the Klan and spoke out against segregation at the Masonite plant.

This is not to underestimate the depth of the problem. The dominant reality is that the mass of white workers, both historically and currently, have not taken up the struggle against racism. But what these examples illustrate (and countless others could be cited) is that the white workers *can* be won to this struggle. The ruling employer class has sought to create the impression that the white workers are implacably hostile to Black people. They have suppressed the true history of working peoples, including the instances of class unity, in order to further this impression. They have tried to place the responsibility for racism in the U. S. on the white workers and not on themselves. The famous Koerner Commission Report, issued after the series of rebellions that swept the Black communities in the late sixties, is a good example of this. The report fully acknowledges and documents the existence of white racism, but it places the responsibility for this situation on 'White America' — in other words on the mass of white working people. The report implies that it is their racist attitudes that hold Black people down. This, of course, lets the big monopolies and the politicians who serve them neatly off the hook. The institutions of government and business only reflect the attitudes of the white majority according to the Koerner view. The practical implications of this analysis are to focus on 'education' of the majority rather than change of the institutions.

The mass media constantly reinforces the ruling class's version of who creates and sustains racism. The 'All in the Family Show' is a good example. Archie Bunker is a stereotyped version of the white worker — an ignorant bigot. It is the Archie Bunkers, we are led to believe, who are the problem — their ignorance lies behind the racial oppression of Black people. There can be no denying that ignorance and bigotry exist among white working people (although Archie Bunker is by no means the 'typical case' as the producers of this show suggest), but is this really the source of Black people's oppression? Why are there no T. V. shows about David Rockefeller, whose Chase Manhattan bank makes millions from investments in the Apartheid industries of South Africa? What about the owners of General Motors who daily crush the life out of Black workers on their sped up assembly lines? Where, indeed, are all the big employers who daily wring millions of extra dollars out of the toil of black labor? They are faceless and invisible. The owners of public communications like TV are in solidarity with owners everywhere. What corporation will sponsor a TV show that exposes the real enemy — the monopoly corporations themselves?

This brainwash that the problem of racism is the creation of the white masses as opposed to the white ruling class must be countered. It is similar to that which is employed to explain all other social problems. (Pollution is not caused by the profit hungry monopolies but by the people who litter our highways and drive pollution making cars — war is the product not of the drive for more markets by the big corporations but by the 'aggressiveness' of the people, etc.) This lie can best be exposed by the active involvement of masses of white workers in the struggle against racism. History shows this can be done. The interests of all working people demand that it be done.

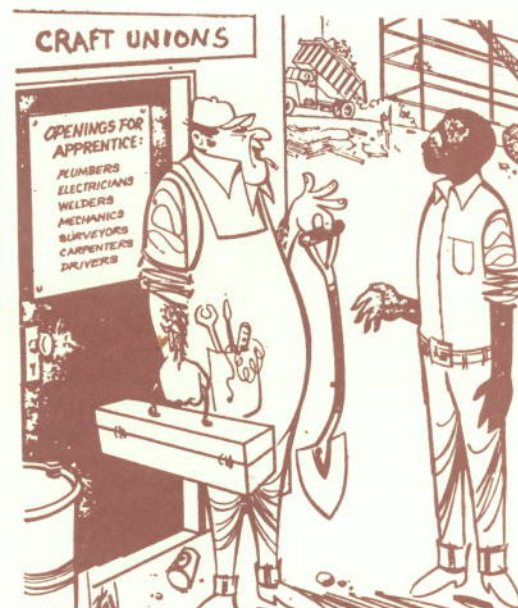
THE FIGHT AGAINST RACISM IN THE TRADE UNIONS



UNIONS: STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

The trade unions are the largest and most powerful mass organizations of the working class. Over twenty million workers are organized into unions, including most of the workers in basic, heavy industry. The union's ability to make improvements in the wages and working conditions of its members is a matter of proven fact. The unionized worker makes an average of 2,000 dollars more a year than his unorganized counterpart. Pensions, health insurance and other fringe benefits are the ordinary fruits of trade unionism.

At the same time the trade unions as they exist today reveal serious weaknesses. They are dominated by a high paid, privileged bureaucracy that seeks to conciliate the employers at the expense of the rank & file. This leadership has traded away at the bargaining table many of the hard fought gains workers have won over the years — gains that include protection from speed up and the right to strike. Moreover this leadership has either gone along with or offered only token resistance to the various anti-labor policies of the Nixon administration. The unions have by and large failed to organize the unorganized and stem the flow of jobs to cheap labor, non union areas. Finally the unions have, again in general, failed to seriously challenge racial and sexual discrimination or even worse have practiced it directly themselves.



"First, take 20 years and learn this intricate tool."

This is a sharp indictment of the present union leadership and the policies they represent. Unions do not have to be this way. And they can be changed. In spite of their bureaucratic character, unions are generally sufficiently democratic so that a strong and well organized rank & file movement can oust union misleaders and change union policy. The recent housecleaning in the United Mine Workers where the corrupt Boyle machine was sent packing by the rank & file is a good case in point. The new Miller leadership has taken important steps forward by restoring union democracy and adopting a more militant stance toward the coal operators.



Class collaborationists like the UAW's Woodcock advocate "labor peace."

Because of the immense real and potential power unions possess to wrest gains for the workers from the employers they are a central arena for any movement aimed at general improvements in the conditions of working people. For all rank & file workers the struggle to make the union a more democratic, fighting instrument is of vital importance. And for all workers the transformation of the unions from their present racist stagnation into genuinely anti-racist organizations is a must.

The racist practices of the trade unions grow out of the existence of a labor bureaucracy that is tied to the employer class in a number of ways. The bureaucracy receives large salaries and privileges that tend to separate them from the rank & file and tie their outlook to that of the employers. By and large they are saturated with a class collaborationist philosophy of trade unionism — the idea that conciliation of and cooperation with the employers is the best path for the labor movement. Since racism serves the interests of the employers, since it is vital to maintain the stability of their system of their high level of profits, racism inevitably becomes part of the outlook of these agents of the employers within the ranks of the worker's movement. It is important to understand that the labor bureaucracy is racist not by way of misunderstanding their interests, but rather because their interests are so closely tied with those of the employers.

THE CASE OF THE ILGWU

The case of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) is a good concrete illustration of the interrelationship between bureaucratic class collaborationism and racism. The ILGWU has a reputation as a progressive union (unlike the racist building trades unions which everyone knows are politically backward). This reputation is the product of its dim, distant past when it was truly a fighting union and of the clever public relations campaigns of its leadership. In terms of its actual trade union practice the ILGWU is rotten to the core.

The ILGWU consciously works to keep wages down and cool out worker militancy. For example in 1967 the union's politically powerful leadership opposed a minimum wage bill for the city of New York, where the garment industry is centered, and used its muscle to defeat the bill. Wages of the mass of garment workers have fallen sharply over the years relative to that of other workers and at least for some years they have even fallen absolutely. The development of this policy coincides with the period in which the garment industry in New York became predominantly Black and Puerto Rican in terms of the workforce. The Union argues that wages cannot be improved because this would cause employers to fold or move with the consequent loss of jobs. In other words the union has become a force for holding down wages for the benefit of the employers.

SCUTTLES DEMOCRACY AND PROMOTES RACISM

In order to succeed in carrying out such a blatantly class collaborationist policy the union necessarily cannot allow rank & file democracy for if it did the mass of workers would clearly reject such a program. Thus the ILGWU in its constitution bans any form of rank & file organization. There can be no caucuses except for a short period prior to national conventions. Furthermore through an involved series of undemocratic eligibility requirements the ILGWU restricts the right of the rank & file to run for and hold union office. In 1967 only one fifth of one percent of the ILGWU's 442,318 members were eligible to run for the General Executive Board (GEB), the union's governing body, and only one twentieth of one percent were eligible to run for President or Secretary-Treasurer. Out of the union's 145,000 Black and Puerto Rican members only four or five of them were eligible to run for the GEB and not a single Black was eligible to run for President. Furthermore under former President David Dubinsky all union officers had to submit a signed but undated letter of resignation to him as soon as they took office. Thus the ILGWU leadership is grossly unrepresentative of the workers and is completely subservient to the top. There is not a single Black on the GEB and virtually no Blacks and Puerto Ricans in leadership positions at the local level.

The Garment manufacturers have sought to exploit the cheap labor market of New York City which is predominantly Black and Puerto Rican. The ILGWU is their accomplice in this undertaking. There are some well paying job classifications in the industry but these are restricted to whites. The union has maintained that upgrading Blacks and Puerto Ricans into better paying job classifications is not its concern. Until very recently the ILGWU maintained segregated locals. In short the policy of putting the employer's interests first has inevitably led the ILGWU leadership to scuttle union democracy and defend and promote racism.

In order for the rank & file movement to develop its full potential — for it to become a force that really can transform the trade unions, these weaknesses must be corrected. The struggle against racism must become a conscious thrust of the *whole* movement, not simply the activity of Black caucuses. All rank & file groups must make the involvement of Black and other minority workers in leadership as well as in all other phases of activity an absolute priority. Rhetoric about wanting to involve Black workers is not the road to achieving this priority. Instead a program that raises the demand against discrimination must be developed and implemented. This is the key to building Black-white unity in the rank & file movement and transforming what are now predominantly white groupings into genuinely multi-racial organizations.

The exact content of an anti-racist program can't be spelled out in advance. It depends on the concrete circumstances in each industry, shop and union. What may make good sense in one situation may be disastrous in another. But certain general concerns and demands are basic to virtually all job situations in at least some form. The following, then, outlines the general elements of a rank & file trade union program to challenge racism on the job.

The implications of this for the broader trade union movement are clear. The case of the ILGWU, while somewhat extreme, describes a problem that is common to most unions in one form or another. The fight against racism must be part and parcel of the fight to unseat the labor bureaucracy and defeat its policy of class collaborationism.

The rank & file movement as it presently exists within the trade unions has included the fight against racism as one of its major thrusts. But the movement is also very uneven in terms of this struggle. Black caucuses or rank & file formations with strong black leadership have been the most consistent fighters against discrimination. Here there has sometimes been a failure to place the struggle against racism in the context of black-white unity and the overall class struggle. The class interests of the white workers in defeating racism have not always been understood. In general, though, the Black workers have promoted a class struggle outlook in the fight against racism. In caucuses where Black participation is weak, the fight against racism has been correspondingly weak or even non-existent. This points to the failure of the bulk of militant white workers to grasp the import of this struggle. The reason there is little participation on the part of Black workers in these caucuses is precisely because of the failure of the white workers and caucus leadership to develop an active program that speaks to the racial oppression of the Black workers. This is one of the key areas of weakness in the rank & file movement.

1) End Discrimination in Hiring *The forms of discrimination in hiring are many and varied, ranging from companies that simply do not hire blacks at all to firms that hire substantial numbers but only in the lower job categories. The union should expect that Blacks be represented in all job classifications proportionate to their numbers in the labor market in the area. In other words if Blacks make up 50% of the work force in the community then the company's hiring policy should reflect this in that roughly half the workers hired for all job categories should be Black. The union should demand that discriminatory educational requirements, unrelated to ability to do the job be eliminated. When there are legitimate qualifications that Blacks, because of discrimination in education, may be at a disadvantage in meeting, the company should be responsible for providing training. The union should create a watchdog committee to monitor company hiring practices. Many companies constantly violate existing civil rights laws in*

practicing discrimination. The union, besides taking action on its own, could make sure these violations are caught and get the Human Relations Commission or the appropriate government body to act to correct these abuses.

2) End Discrimination in Upgrading *Black and minority workers (as well as women) are kept in low paying, often dirty or dangerous job classifications through discrimination in upgrading or promotion policies. The forms of this discrimination also vary widely. In some industries (Men's Clothing and Ladies Garment for example) there is no established procedure for upgrading and the bosses promote whomever they wish. In other industries, like Steel, the device of the double seniority trial has been used. Seniority is the basis for upgrading but only within a particular department — thus minority workers can be restricted to certain departments, generally the dirtiest, dangerous and lowest paying ones. Finally the device of apprenticeship or training programs is used. These programs often are discriminatory in the kind of qualifications they demand for entrance. To correct these abuses the union must insist on the principle of plant wide seniority as the basis for upgrading. All job openings should be posted and all workers should be able to bid with the job being awarded to the worker with the most time in. In cases where special skills or training is demanded, entrance to apprenticeship programs must not be discriminatory. Educational qualifications, testing and other requirements must be evaluated with this in mind. Unless the knowledge required is job related it should be dropped from the requirements. (You don't need to understand European history to set dies or lay bricks.) Here too the union must oversee the whole upgrading program and make sure that equal opportunity is really being offered. The only real test of the program is that over a reasonable period of time the inequality in the distribution of jobs disappears. As long as there are job classifications that are disproportionately white the problem still exists.*

3) Stop Racist Harassment *Racist foremen or supervisory personnel can and do harass Black and minority workers. Insulting racist language, discriminatory job assignments and a racial double standard in evaluating quality of work and job performance are common forms of harassment. The demand of the Brotherhood Caucus of UAW local No. 1364 in Fremont, California is a good example of the kind of measure unions need to take to deal with this problem. Point nine of their program calls for a Discrimination Committee for each shift with power to deal with discrimination on the shop floor. The UAW in many locals have Fair Employment Practices Committees. At one time many of these committees really functioned to fight racism but in recent years they have been eliminated in many locals or have become nothing more than window dressing to hide the do nothing policy of the UAW leadership. The Brotherhood caucus is demanding a revival of this committee by making its chairman a full time union official.*

4) Equality in Union Leadership *A union's leadership at all levels should reflect the composition of the union's membership. If it does not, something is obviously wrong. While in the last few years substantial numbers of Black workers have been elected to union office, the situation remains grossly unequal. Here too the problem varies from union to union. The previously cited example of the ILGWU, a union with huge minority membership with a lily white leadership is one kind of situation and not a unique one. In some other unions like the UAW there is much more minori-*

ty representation, although the top echelons remain disproportionately white. A Rank & File movement must push for more minority participation at all leadership levels of the union. Obviously more Black leadership is not, in and of itself, a total solution to the problems of Black workers. But representative union leadership is an elementary part of union democracy and white support for Black union candidates is an important step in the process of forging Black-white unity. Since a number of unions have tried to cool out rank & file insurgency on the part of Black workers by adding a few more Blacks to their slates without altering their racist policies, it is always going to be important to stress that leadership, both actual and potential, be judged by the content of their program.

Not all anti-racist demands deal directly with discrimination. Many demands around wages and working conditions are blows against racism to the extent they aim at improving the conditions of minority workers and narrow the inequality between Black and white. For example the rank & file movement in steel, by pushing for improvements in working conditions in the coke ovens, which are predominantly manned by Black workers, is taking up the fight against racism while at the same time taking steps that will improve and protect conditions of all the workers. The anti-racist content of any rank & file program will undoubtedly consist in some large part of demands of this sort that speak concretely to the problems of the workers victimized directly by racism.

The rank & file movement must not only adopt anti-racist demands as part of its program. It must actively struggle for them within the union. These demands must be seen as educational tools to deepen the broader rank & file's consciousness of the importance of the struggle against racism. This aspect is particularly important with the white workers who must be convinced of the need to struggle for these kinds of demands. A program is only as good as its author's willingness to fight for it.

While the bedrock of any rank & file organization is a program that deals with questions of immediate concern to the workers on the job, there is also a need to take up broader political concerns. We as workers cannot solve all our problems within the framework of collective bargaining. Our experience with Nixon's new economics of frozen wages, spiralling prices and mounting shortages is an illustration of this. The war in Vietnam, which gravely affected working people in the U. S., is another. The rank & file movement must take up these political questions as part of an effort to broaden the political horizons of the union — to make the union a fighter for the working class in all its battles as well as its defender on the shop floor. The unions must break out of the trap of relying solely on the two capitalist parties and take political action on their own. Nor should political action be limited to electoral activity and lobbying. The unions should take direct action — demonstrations, marches and political strikes.



Similarly the struggle against racism cannot be limited to the fight between the union and the company over wages, working conditions and other immediate concerns. The labor movement must take up the agenda of the Black liberation movement and adopt it as its own. This must occur if an alliance between these two forces is to be forged. And it is exactly such an alliance that is the cornerstone of the strategy to end the system of class exploitation and racism. The trade unions should join the fight for equality in education, housing and law enforcement. The drive of the Welfare Rights Organization for a guaranteed annual income should get the full support of labor. The unions must actively oppose the racist foreign policy of the U. S. which supports the white supremacist settler states of South Africa, funds the attempt to maintain Portuguese colonialism in Africa and lends support to Zionist aggression in the Middle East. Again the activity of the trade unions on these vital issues cannot be limited to resolutions at conventions. The trade unions must mobilize their ranks for mass action towards these goals. The key to moving the trade unions in this direction is the organized pressure of the rank & file. It is the task of the rank & file movement to take up these issues as part of the overall program for transforming the trade unions.

ORGANIZE!

Throughout this section we have talked about the tasks of the rank & file movement in relation to the trade unions. Finally we want to discuss the forms of that movement — the way it needs to organize itself. Rank & file organizations of all sorts exist. Many of them have no real program. They consist of those disgruntled with the union leadership who want to see some kind of change. These caucuses which lack any political and programmatic definition are likely to fall victim to careerist elements who will play on the real grievances of the ranks to get themselves elected to union office and once in power will continue business as usual. A rank & file group that is really going to make a difference can't be built around simple opposition to the current leadership or around the personalities of a few of its leaders. It has to be built on the basis of a program that reflects the interests of the mass of workers and can draw them into struggle. It has to be a mass, democratic organization open to all rank & filers. It has to hold its own leadership accountable for upholding its principles and program.

CLASS STRUGGLE PROGRAM

What should such a program be? It must be a *class struggle* program. In other words a program that proceeds from the assumption that the mass of workers have interests that are distinct and antagonistic to that of the employers and that the workers have to struggle *against* the bosses to get what they need. This kind of class struggle unionism is in opposition to the dominant business unionism in the country today which preaches cooperation with and conciliation of the employer as the road forward for workers. The broad content of the class struggle program has already been touched on in various places in this article. The union must fight for job security, better wages and improved working conditions instead of helping the company to justify speed up, low wages or the elimination of jobs. The union must be a genuinely democratic organization accountable to its membership. The union must take a stand of solidarity with workers everywhere — in other unions, in other cities and in other countries. The union must militantly represent the interests of the working people in the political arena as well as in the shop. And as we have stressed throughout — the union must resolutely oppose racism and champion the cause of freedom for all oppressed minorities. This is the kind of unionism that flows from an understanding that there is a struggle going on between the employer class and the working class. It is a unionism that expects the union, a worker's organization, to choose the worker's side. It is this kind of program that the rank & file must organize itself around in order to win back and transform their unions.

REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS

Besides having a solid program the rank & file caucus must be broad. It can't speak for the mass of workers if it only consists of a handful of people. It must not only draw in large numbers but it must be truly representative of the union's composition in terms of race, sex, occupation and job classification. This need underlines the importance of developing the kind of concrete program that can appeal and activate the broad ranks.

BLACK CAUCUSES?

In many cases, as we have already mentioned, Black workers have organized their own organizations — all Black caucuses. Some may wonder is this not in contradiction to the need for broad all inclusive organization? The answer is that the very existence of a separate Black caucus indicates that there is not an immediate base for a broad, multi-racial or multi-national group. It indicates that the struggle against racism on the part of the white workers is at such a low ebb that the Black workers feel no confidence or trust in the white workers. In such a situation Black-white organizational unity would be at the expense of the Black workers. It would be a unity without principle. In these circumstances a Black caucus is not only justifiable, but correct and healthy given that the alternatives would be no organization or an unprincipled or unworkable alliance. While Black caucuses thus are a legitimate and necessary form within the rank & file movement, there can be no justification for a white caucus. Whites have no separate interests to unite around as whites. When whites do form a white organization it is always to protect their imagined racial interests and racial privilege. A white caucus is by definition going to be a racist form.

BLACK-WHITE UNITY

While recognizing the legitimacy of Black caucuses, our goal must be to build united Black-white caucuses. In a situation where a Black caucus already exists and there is no other form, the task is to raise the level of struggle against racism on the part of the white workers to a point where the Black workers in the separate organization feel confident that they can participate in a multi-racial form without compromising the fight against their racial oppression. The responsibility for advancing this struggle and laying the groundwork for Black-white unity is firmly on the shoulders of the class conscious white worker. At the same time the class conscious Black workers have a special responsibility to fight against separatism — the idea that even principled unity with the white workers is wrong.

The achievement of a united caucus on any principled, lasting basis is possible only on the firm ground of a serious, programmatic struggle against racism. Within the caucus as well the struggle against racism will and must go on. White workers, even the more class conscious, will not automatically shed all their blindspots overnight nor can they be expected to. Black workers will not overcome a distrust based on centuries of racial oppression in a minute either and they certainly cannot be expected to. Unity and progress will take large measures of both struggle and patience — the patience born of the understanding of our common interests as a class and our common need for a better life and a new world.

