

WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES. UNITE!

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What path forward for the abortion rights movement in Chicago?

From the October 10 issue of Chicago Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Chicago:

Attacks continue on women's right to an abortion. In the last year, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Idaho and the territory of Guam all passed very restrictive abortion laws. Fortunately these laws did not go into effect. However the stage is set for more and more restrictions on abortions. The Supreme Court upheld parental consent laws. Michigan just passed one. Illinois will also probably pass a parental consent law in the near future. David Souter is now on the Supreme Court, which undoubtedly means that the Supreme Court will uphold more restrictions on abortion rights, including the possible overturning of Roe v. Wade.

Attacks on abortion rights are only part of the story. The conditions of women, especially working class, poor and minority women, are getting worse. A recent study shows that women still only make on average 68% of the wages of men. Other studies show that, because of low wages, more and more women have to take two jobs just to make ends meet. The U.S. has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the industrialized world. Nevertheless health care cuts mean that family clinics, maternity wards and other health services are shutting down. With the worsening economic and social conditions domestic violence against women is on the rise.

Clearly, there is a broad offensive against women being waged by the rich and their government. What's needed more than ever is a vigorous, militant movement in defense of abortion rights and women's rights. We need a mass fight to better the conditions of working and poor women.

Militants defend clinics in Chicago

In Chicago anti-abortion fanatics tried to shut down clinics several times. On many occasions the major women's organizations did nothing. But militant activists came forward to defend the clinics. These activists have been loosely grouped around the Emergency Clinic Defense coalition (ECDC).

It is this more militant wing of the pro-choice movement

that has organized the defense of abortion clinics against attempts to blockade and shut them down. They also organize weekly clinic defense at the American Women's Medical Center at Diversey and Western. Here they fight the harassment of women by anti-abortion fanatics.

These activists have also organized protests outside conventions and meetings of the anti-abortion fanatics. For example, there was a demonstration against Henry Hyde and a protest at Holy Name Cathedral against the policies of the Catholic Church.

These actions were marked by militancy, by a willingness to confront and fight the anti-women reactionaries, by a desire to organize mass actions of women and men to carry on this fight, rather than to rely on the police and judges. Discussions, speeches and slogans at ECDC events reflected suspicion of the bourgeois politicians. There is also a general sentiment to defend not only abortion rights but also to get government funding of abortions and to improve the overall health care for working and poor women. These features drew militant activists to these actions.

When activists take up a serious defense of clinics, when we fight the right wing, we are bound to run into opposing political trends. Not everyone who says they're for abortion rights wants to defend clinics. Far from it. Some actively

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Smash the racist skinheads with militant action!

3,000 anti-racists demonstrated on October 7 on the occasion of the trial of neo-nazi white supremacist Tom Metzger, leader of WAR (White Aryan Resistance). Among the demonstrators were dozens of SHARPs (Skinheads Against Racial Prejudice), who regard themselves as the true skinheads, call the racist skinheads "boneheads," and have taken part in a number of militant confrontations on the streets.

The MLP-Seattle took part in the demonstration and distributed 800 leaflets with the following article and a notice about the Oct. 20th demonstration in Seattle, with the slogans "U.S. imperialism, get out of the Persian Gulf! No war for Exxon and Texaco!":

On October 8, a trial of Tom Metzger and his neo-nazi followers opens in Portland. They are charged with instigating the murder of Mulugeta Seraw by racist skinheads in November 1988. Whatever the trial's outcome [Metzger was ordered to pay \$5 million to Seraw's family, and another \$7.5 million was assessed on other racists and WAR—*Supplement*] activists must continue to build the mass struggle against racist attacks.

Since 1988, the racist groups have been confronted by

many protest actions on the West Coast. Mass rallies and marches have been held in Seattle, Portland, Tacoma, Coeur D'Alene, Spokane and elsewhere. Racist skinheads have been confronted and punished on the streets of Portland and Seattle by black and white youth. The attempt to hold a "mass" rally of nazi skinheads near Napa, California on March 4, 1989 was smashed. 1,000 anti-racist protesters trounced the 40 racists who showed up, despite attempts to protect them by 700 police. Mass action is the real power to smash racism.

* * *

The term "skinheads" refers to a particular youth culture that is not necessarily racist. In fact, many skinheads are active fighters against racism.

The racist skinheads claim they stand for some sort of "rebellion against the government and establishment." But this is a complete fraud. In fact, they have been spawned by the racist climate of the 1980's orchestrated by this very same Reagan/Bush government.

The Reagan/Bush climate for racism

Reaganism sought to deal with the growing problems of U.S. capitalism by an all-round assault on the living standards of the working class. Black workers have been hit particularly hard. Reaganomics has meant such things as wage cuts, factory closures, public school decay, cutbacks in job training, college tuition hikes, reduction of low income housing, near elimination of affirmative action legal processes, etc. Black poverty has grown, and so have police terror in black communities, including the massive jailing of black youth.

To back this up, the politicians and media promote the mentality of scapegoating and divisiveness among the public. From Bush and Congress, to the press and movie establishment, the theme of emotional, unreasoning "anti-crime" and "anti-drug" hysteria is repeated over and over. This hysteria aims to blame all problems of the masses on petty crime and portray this crime as primarily black.

From Bush on down, hatred of the foreign "threat", Arab, Latin or Asian, has been a constant theme. Hollywood's hero for the 80's was the white American bully, armed to the teeth, itching for quick "justice", e.g. Dirty Harry, Rambo, etc.

Far from being "rebels", the racist skinheads are a current induced by millionaire politicians and Hollywood special effects.

Police and courts protect the racists

In November 1979, a group of Klan and nazis gunned

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down 5 anti-racist protesters with weapons supplied by a federal agent and a Greensboro police informant. Despite the massacre being videotaped, all were acquitted.

Between '70 and '81, 30 black children were murdered in Atlanta. An infiltrator from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation discovered strong evidence that a Klan faction was carrying these out. The GBI destroyed this evidence and a black man was railroaded to jail. (See the Sept. and Oct. 1986 *Spin* magazine.)

The government has a consistent policy to protect and encourage the racists. This is not contradicted by certain FBI activity against them, such as the recent arrest of Aryan Nations pipebombers in Seattle. These actions only aim at keeping the racists within certain bounds, not eliminating them. Or else why, when ten or twenty Klan or nazis attempt to hold a public rally, do hundreds of police always show up to protect them from protesters?

Despite rhetoric about "freedom and equality", the bourgeoisie wants to have the option, if a political crisis develops in the future, of letting such fascists run wild against any threatening mass movements.

Capitalism uses racism

Capitalism thrives on discrimination. Cheaper labor means higher profits. The segregation of blacks, Asians and women in the most menial, dangerous and lowest paying jobs is a "sound business practice" from the standpoint of the bottom line.

Capitalism also needs racism to divide the working class and undermine its ability to resist economic exploitation.

For these reasons, the most consistent anti-racism includes the perspective of socialist revolution. Socialism is not the bureaucratic state capitalist system that is now disintegrating in the former Soviet bloc. Quite the opposite. Socialism is the next stage of history when society is run by and for the working people. It has nothing in common with state capitalism run by privileged executives and bureaucratic elites. Only by eliminating the profit system can the source of racism be destroyed.

Legalism or mass struggle?

Racist skinheads are being militantly confronted on the

streets of Portland. Some police are not happy about this. Portland officer Loren Christensen was quoted in *The Seattle Times* to say that the anti-racists are "just stirring things up" and are "equally as dangerous as the racists."

The establishment-liberal organizations are also unnerved by anti-racist militancy. They want to deflect activists into passively relying on courtroom battles and on electoral campaigns for Democratic party types. But this would only undermine the mass, anti-racist struggle and give the racists room to operate.

Attorney Morris Dees of the Portland trial, who enjoys funding from some big corporations, has won some court decisions against the Klan. These corporations apparently want to shorten the government leash on the racist sects.

But rarely do the courts strike a blow against the racists. The courts routinely exonerate police who shoot down black youth. In the recent murder trials of racist gangs in Howard Beach and Bensonhurst, New York, most of the attackers went scot free. The U.S. court system will not wipe out the racists. And even in the legal field, mass struggles often have more impact on decisions than legal briefs.

Organize working class youth for struggle

Hooking up with lawyers and liberal do-gooders is easy. But what activists really need is to build stable, fighting organization, independent of the pro-capitalist crowd. Who else will organize protest actions that aren't afraid to shake up the establishment? Who else is bold enough to write and distribute revolutionary political literature? This is how to win victories today, and to prepare for the big mass battles of the future.

Working class youth are under attack from many sides. Wages are poverty level, while rent and tuition soar. Abortion rights and access to birth control are under attack. The dismal labor market has forced many youth into the military. Now Bush has dispatched tens of thousands to the Arabian desert and is preparing to slaughter them over oil profits.

Militant action is the way to fight!

Organize working class youth for revolutionary struggle! □

Notice

The October issue of the *Workers' Advocate Supplement* and the November issue of the *Workers' Advocate* were cancelled due to work related to holding of the Fourth

National Conference of the Marxist-Leninist Party. The Fourth National Conference will be reported on in the December issue of the *Workers' Advocate*. □

Racist terror and police cover-up in the East Bay Build mass actions to fight racism!

From the October 13 issue of Bay Area Workers Voice, paper of the MLP-San Francisco Bay Area, which also contained the article "Highland [hospital] workers getting squeezed/Fight for health care and the rights of health care workers!":

In the last few months there has been a wave of racist attacks against blacks and other minority people in the East Bay. Working people and youth of all nationalities have widely condemned these racist crimes for what they are. But the police, the Sheriff's Department and the District Attorney's Office have worked to cover-up these acts of racist aggression and protect the thugs who carried them out.

What is the truth about these attacks?

Racist scum crawl out of their holes

Since the spring of this year, the racist gang White Aryan Resistance (WAR) has spread fliers in Concord, Pleasanton, Pleasant Hill, Walnut Creek, Castro Valley, Hayward, Fremont, Union City and San Jose. They have been slinking around trying to recruit young people into their Hitler-worshipping sect. Their cause is racist hatred and violence against blacks, Asians, Mexicans, Jews, gays and anyone else that doesn't fit their nazi ideas.

And along with this recruiting drive, there has been a string of racist attacks. Some of these attacks stink of the WAR racists. Some may be "independent" racists egged on by the nazis. Either way, it adds up to the filthy racist violence.

Racist terror

In June, after months of harassment by racist youth, a Chinese family closed down their Castro Valley meat market. This followed the brutal beating of the father and son by racists in Castro Valley last November.

On August 3 and 4, WAR leafleted in Castro Valley. On the night of the 4th, a 14-year-old black youth was severely beaten in a racist attack nearby.

On September 1, WAR again distributed fliers in Castro Valley. The same day a pipe bomb was left in a downtown Hayward restaurant employing mainly East Indian workers. It was manufactured and planted by a racist thug who hangs out with a group of white supremists from Castro Valley. The same night the home of a black family in Castro Valley was defaced with a swastika.

Since then, a Jewish cemetery in Oakland was desecrated. A cross was burned in the front yard of a black family in Union City. Swastikas were painted on the Union

City homes of an East Indian and an Afghani family. Three integrated working class schools in Hayward were spray-painted with racist graffiti. And in San Jose, the home of a black family was vandalized seven times with racist signs left behind.

Anti-racist protests

People throughout the area have denounced these racist crimes. In Castro Valley hundreds of people came out to several meetings to express their outrage at the attacks and to organize themselves to fight against them.

In Union City, a meeting of 75 people protested the attacks and in particular denounced the Union City police for their racist harassment and attacks against minority people.

Cops and racists go hand-in-hand

While working people, high school students and others have been outraged by these racist crimes, the police, the Sheriff's Department and the Alameda County District Attorney's Office have been over backwards to cover up the racist character of the attacks. They've claimed they are "isolated" incidents of uncertain motivation with no connection to the organizing efforts of WAR. And they've maneuvered every which way to protect the racist criminals from exposure and prosecution.

For starters, the District Attorney has declared that the beating in Castro Valley of the 14-year-old black youth was just an over-reaction to vandalism. (Allegedly the boy and his friends had damaged a fence.) But when three white men beat up on a black kid, wielding a metal bar and a knife and shouting racist threats and insults, that is racism — no matter what happened to some fence.

The Sheriff's Department is also trying to prevent investigation of any connection between WAR and the painting of the swastika on the home of the black family in Castro Valley. They've declared this an "isolated incident" (i.e. not a racist attack) and claim they have "nothing to investigate," despite admitting that they have identified all eight of the racists who leafleted Castro Valley with WAR fliers the same day the swastika was painted. Sheriff Plummer claims that the fact that only one minority family was attacked is somehow proof that WAR or some other racists weren't involved. According to Plummer's Alice in Wonderland logic, if it had been racists they would have attacked more people: "There are enough minorities out there that (the racists) could have had a field day if they wanted to."

Racist bomber gets slap on the wrist

The Hayward police and the DAD are also covering up the racist character of the bomb incident in Hayward. First of all, because the bomb fuse was lit and apparently went out, they say it's not clear that the bomb was intended to go off! In addition, even though the white youth who has pleaded guilty to planting the bomb in the Hayward restaurant admits to associating with white supremacists and racist skinheads, reading white supremacy literature and making phone calls to such groups to learn more about their activities, the Hayward police and the DA's office, out of thin air, claim that this racism is unrelated to the pipe bombing!

But wait, that's still not all. On top of this, the DA has dropped charges of possession of a bomb and possession of a bomb in a public place and the racist is being sentenced only for possession of a substance with the intent to make a destructive device.

This kid-glove treatment amounts to naked protection for racist terrorists. It is a signal from the police and the DA encouraging the racists to commit more acts of racist terror. The message is loud and clear. If they're caught—no big deal—it will go easy for them, so go right on!

Cross burning points to Union City police

In the case of the cross burning in Union City there is already evidence the police were directly involved and they are covering their own tracks. The Gilbert family, on whose lawn the cross was burned, had several times been the target of racist harassment by Union City police. Just prior to the cross burning a Union City cop made racist threats about getting rid of all blacks. Within the 48 hours preceding the cross burning the family received the exact same threat in the exact same words over the phone 4 times. This led family and other to the conclusion that the cross burning was a further attack by the Union City cops.

Fight back against the racist gangs and their government protectors!

This is not the first time the racists have reared their ugly head in the Bay Area. We have seen it before. A small band of racist scum spread their filth and try to terrorize the people. Workers, students, young people of all nationalities take a stand against this racism and find themselves smack in the face of the police and government that are always the racists' first line of protection. The government gives the KKK/Nazis a permit to march and then sends out the police to shield them and beat the crap out of the anti-racists who come out to protest.

This is no big surprise. After all, this is the same government carrying out the racist "war on drugs" whose police regularly murder blacks and receive no more than a tap on the wrist.

Racist offensive of the ruling class

The capitalist government has been on an offensive against the rights of all working people. A leading edge of this attack has been the onslaught against blacks and other minorities, aimed at turning back the clock and stealing away the gains of the great mass struggles of the 60's. It has meant growing poverty, segregation and discrimination and escalating racist police terror.

Accompanying this ruling class attack, there has been a series of attempts to groom racist and fascist gangs. They aim to use these gangs to enforce further attacks against minorities and all workers through terror and to divide the workers ranks with racism to prevent a united struggle against the rich.

Build mass actions to fight racism

We cannot depend on the government or the politicians or the establishment leaders to fight against the racist attacks. What is needed are mass actions to build up the anti-racist struggle of the working and poor of all nationalities. Wherever these fascists show their faces they must be met with militant demonstrations and protests and beaten back. □

Thought control squad attacks militant New York transit workers

The following articles are from the November 4 issue of *New York Workers' Voice*, which also carried articles on safety conditions and the productivity drive among the track workers. See the July 15 issue of the Supplement for the statement of the suspended Bronx trackworkers, while the September 20 issue reports on the August 27 demonstration of trackworkers.

Trial of Bronx 4 will set the tone for Track

The arbitration trial of the four suspended Bronx trackworkers comes to a head on Nov. 14-15, following a recent postponement. At the last scheduled date, over 20 witnesses and supporters turned out to encourage these fighters who are also victims of an unjust TA [Transit Authority] railroading. This excellent turnout repudiated the loud boycott by the Track union officials, who want to use the TA's disciplinary machinery to rid themselves of these activists.

Remember, the TA called out the police on the Bronx 4. They were also subjected to racist abuse, threatened with violence, and suspended because of their efforts to organize a fight among the rank and file over safety, work in the rain, and defense of the provisionals. The union officials have lent their support to the TA's racism and repression, and they won't bend a finger to help these workers.

This trial is therefore vital to the fight to beat back the intimidation, thuggery, and racism of Track supervision. □

Flyers attacking "Workers' Voice" appear in Track

Recently, several unsigned flyers appeared in some sections of Track. So far we have seen one cartoon strip signed by an anonymous "Truth Squad" and two unsigned flyers "exposing" and "revealing" the *New York Workers' Voice*.

The *Workers' Voice* is not afraid of discussion on issues facing transit workers and the working class generally. In fact, we welcome it. The more this discussion takes place in full view of the workers, the better.

However, the "Truth Squad" doesn't even speak the truth about who is behind it, and the other flyers don't either; they prefer to operate in the dark.

But our information indicates that the "Truth Squad"

cartoon was circulated out of the CD-1 office of Superintendent A. Wojcik. And Bronx trackworkers report that the flyers "exposing" the *Workers' Voice* first appeared in the wake of a visit from TWU [Transit Workers Union] Safety Committee Chairman Jim Foley. We therefore feel justified in attributing them to the TWU's "Thought Control Squad."

Despite their shady origins, we want everyone to pay attention to what is being said by all sides. Behind their efforts at facelessness and gutter tactics, these flyers reveal certain common themes that betray their real stand against transit workers.

First, on the "Truth Squad" cartoon. It wallows in slanders, hurling absurd accusations about sex, booze and deals against the four Bronx trackworkers whom the TA is trying to terminate and the union leadership is boycotting. In this sense, it wears two hats: it defends both the Track bosses (including their racism) and the union bosses and appears to have been produced and circulated as a joint effort.

While the tone is different, these same themes underlie the unsigned flyers against the *Workers' Voice*. Where the "Truth Squad" left off, the "Thought Control Squad" takes over.

They devote half of a flyer to denouncing the militant August 27 demonstration held outside Jay St. to defend pick rights and the fired provisional trackworkers. This was the first action outside Jay St. in recent memory. Work for this demonstration was carried out by rank-and-file trackworkers and by the *Workers' Voice*/Marxist-Leninist Party. Most of those demonstrating were fired provisionals themselves.

Why did this demonstration upset the union hacks so much? Because the campaign surrounding this action took place independently of the union bureaucracy. It enlivened the atmosphere in Track and kindled a spirit to speak out against TA abuses.

In the field and inside union meetings, many trackworkers demanded actions against the TA. This frightened and enraged the comfy TWU bigshots, so much so that they cursed the Bronx "activists" for disturbing the peace. To escape total condemnation, the TWU leadership lent their name to two demonstrations in the following weeks. But they have still not forgiven the activists for the crime of stirring things up!

Meanwhile, the "Thought Control Squad" dares not mention the TWU bureaucrats' betrayal of the provisionals: how they turned a deaf ear to calls for action, while placing all hopes in a "heroic" letter-writing campaign; how the union hacks walked out of union meetings when they were called to account; how they defended TA management

as "on our side," even after they fired the provisionals and conducted mass transfers to night work. (Supposedly, the TA was "forced" to follow civil service procedures!)

Yes, the "Thought Control Squad" is very understanding when it comes to explaining away the attacks of the TA and the TWU leadership's complicity in this. But let the *Workers' Voice* cry foul, let trackworkers speak up for action—and then the TWU honchos wrap themselves in the flag, god, motherhood and apple pie and come down with all the filth and venom at their command!

Notice how proud they are to "expose" the *Workers' Voice* as communist. To this we plead guilty. We have always made this clear, proclaiming it from our masthead

and with our revolutionary stands on issues facing transit workers and all workers. This is enough for an hysterical red-baiting tirade by the "Thought Control Squad."

But anti-communism is a last refuge of the worst enemies of the workers' movement. When all else fails—denounce the communists. It is one of the oldest tricks in the book of the rich capitalists and the union bureaucrats. It is used to divide us and intimidate workers from speaking out.

We are confident, however, that transit workers who really want the truth will not be intimidated or silenced by this joint red-baiting campaign of the TA and TWU bureaucrats. □

Postal workers, what do we need in the new contract? Get ready to resist a sellout deal!

The following two articles are from the November 5 issue of Detroit Workers' Voice, paper of the MLP-Detroit:

What's happening in the contract talks? Call the USPS [U.S. Postal Service] 800 Hotline and you'll get all the hot air you expected.

But it's been just as difficult to get hard facts from the national union leaders. Prior to the '87 negotiations, union publications had many articles on contract issues. This year the silence is deafening.

Postal workers: Watch out! Big changes are taking place in the Postal Service, centered around the massive automation program and productivity drive. The curtain of silence around these contract talks suggests a big sellout in the making. To defend what has been won in the past and to make any substantial gains today will require a strong fight by all postal workers.

But don't expect the union bureaucrats to organize such a struggle. The rank-and-file workers need to organize independent of the sellout union leaders.

In these negotiations, three major areas of concern to the workers are 1/Automation, 2/Work rules, and 3/Wages.

How will automation be implemented?

Postal management's 5-year automation program is underway. A major effect of it is the loss of jobs—both through wiping out existing jobs and through contracting out. In fact, Anthony Frank has said he wants to "slash 80,000 to 120,000 jobs through attrition by 1995." (*Business Week*, 8/27)

As well, the way that automation is being implemented is resulting in extreme speedup and overwork. One particular example is the Fort St. GMF's OCR Dept., where mail is automatically sorted extremely quickly by huge machines that read barcodes. To keep up with the machines, OCR workers are driven hard. Many have suffered injuries, especially repetitive motion injuries like carpal tunnel. Then management treats the injured workers like garbage—something to be gotten rid of as fast as possible.

At Fort St. the APWU [American Postal Workers' Union] has put up virtually no resistance to either the overwork or to management's treatment of the injured. While the union *talks* about fighting the effects of automation, it takes the most callous attitude towards automation's victims. But talk is cheap, while what the workers need is action.

Automation implemented in this way spells nothing but misery for the workers. The rank and file have no alternative but to pull together and fight back against the speedup and overwork. And we must demand that the contract provide real protection from automation being carried out in this brutal fashion.

We must defend working conditions and work rules

PMG Anthony Frank has said he wants to "increase employee commitment" to their jobs by allowing management more "flexibility."

What does "flexibility" mean? It means imposing different contract rules for PTF's [part-time flexible hour

employees]. It means increased use of PTF's and casuals, plus a whole new category of long-term temporary employee. It means allowing supervisors and managers to perform bargaining unit work. It means making it easier for management to reassign workers to different tasks, shifts and facilities.

Many part-time flexes already know how rotten "flexibility" really is. They've been forced into split shifts and often worked 6 hours with no break. Some have massive overtime while others don't get enough hours. PTF clerks at some smaller stations even report having no definite schedule while being on call 24 hours a day! All this causes havoc in their personal lives.

For the workers, more "flexibility" will mean the breakdown of job classifications, speedup, loss of job security, and even more stress. We must oppose a contract that imposes such "flexibility" schemes on the workers.

Workers need a pay increase

Much has already been lost through the imposition of a 2-tier wage system, begun in 1985, where new career workers hire in at lower starting pay and take longer to catch up. And the wage increase negotiated in the '87 contract was insufficient.

But now USPS is talking about "lump sum" payments instead of regular raises that become part of the base hourly rate. Lump sums never get rolled in.

Postal management is spending billions on automation, while Congress is saddling the post office with billions from the federal budget deficit. They are looking to take this out of the hides of postal workers.

We must demand that the contract provide decent regular wage hikes and continued COLA increases. No lump sums. No takebacks. No concessions.

Postal workers: during this period of shifting to automation, we need to oppose job elimination and defend our rights and working conditions. We need to be assured of reasonable workloads, safe jobs, and acceptable reassignments. Injured workers must be guaranteed rights to a job or income. We must fight for full rights, pay and benefits for all workers. □

Lessons for today from the 1970 postal workers' strike

Today, unrest is brewing among postal workers. We are being sped up, overworked, and nagged by the constant harassment. What can we do to change the situation? Valuable lessons for today can be learned from the strike of 1970, which was the largest struggle so far of postal workers.

Terrible conditions

In 1970 the conditions faced by postal workers were extremely oppressive. Pay was so low that many postal workers were forced to take second and third jobs just to get by. In New York City, in fact, 7% of the full-time employees qualified for welfare.

In those days any change in pay or working conditions had to be approved by Congress. But Congress refused to give its okay to a pay hike. And the postal union leaders told workers they could do nothing, because federal workers did not have the right to strike.

Rank-and-file employees decided to take matters into their own hands. On March 17, 1970, some 2,500 workers in Branch 26 of the NALC (carriers and routers [in the National Association of Letter Carriers]) in New York City held a mass meeting to demand a strike vote. The national president of the NALC had threatened to suspend any local that struck. And the NALC local president urged workers to stay on the job but the workers booed him and voted to strike. At this meeting the workers also booed Moe Biller, then president of the Manhattan and Bronx Postal Union of Clerks (and today president of the APWU), because Biller refused to call a strike vote for his union.

Workers defy the authorities

The strike began that same day, when routers and carriers from Branch 36 set up picket lines. They were soon joined by workers from Branch 41 in Brooklyn. Right away clerks honored the picket lines and demanded a meeting from Moe Biller. At this meeting, March 18, some 3,000 clerks showed up to demand a strike. Biller tried to stall them by saying he would have to schedule a balloting procedure sometime in the future. But the workers, shouting "Strike! Strike!" swarmed over the speaker's platform and forced Biller to flee. Within a day 36,000 of New York's 40,000 postal workers were on strike.

The strike sent the government into a panic. President Nixon declared a state of emergency and sent in the National Guard to sort mail. He threatened to fire all strikers. At the same time, Nixon tried to cut a deal with the national union leaders: he would agree to negotiate, but only if workers returned to their jobs immediately. Workers denounced the proposal and stayed out. Then AFL-CIO President George Meany demanded that postal workers return to their jobs, but they still refused.

The strike spread. Within days 250,000 workers were out, and mail service was cut off to half the country. Federal judges were issuing injunctions and threatening fines and jail terms, but none of these threats worked. The workers continued to defy federal law, President Nixon, the Congress, the judges, post office management and the trade union leaders.

Finally, after eight days, after the government agreed to major improvements for workers, they finally returned to work.

Results of the upheaval

The immediate economic gains of the strike were impressive. Postal workers were granted a substantial pay raise and improvements in health care benefits. Workers also won top pay after eight years on the job (previously it was 21 years). Improvements in wages were also made in the next couple of contracts, at a time when the government remained frightened of further mass action.

One important result of the strike settlement was that striking workers were granted complete amnesty. President Nixon's threats proved hollow, and those who said "You can't strike against the federal government" were proved wrong.

Lessons for today

What are the major lessons of this strike for today's postal workers?

First of all, the strike showed the power of mass action. The workers' picket lines broke through the no-strike pledge which had kept federal government workers in chains. The action of thousands of postal workers cut through all the red tape, all the excuses, all the millions of reasons postal workers were told why they could not be granted a pay raise, could not collectively bargain, could not strike, etc.

Second, the strike showed that the power of mass action can only be unleashed through rank-and-file organization. The bureaucrats who headed up the postal unions did nothing to organize the strike. Not only that, they actively

tried to sabotage it.

Beware of the bureaucrats!

Since the 1970 strike, the postal unions have been reorganized, and a new generation of leaders has come into office. Moe Biller and Vince Sombrotto (today's president of the NALC) were active in the New York City locals that launched the 1970 strike. They used these credentials to get themselves elected to national office, supposedly as "militants." But Biller, though he showed up at picket lines, refused to lead the strike and tried to delay and sabotage the original strike vote. And Sombrotto, though he postured in favor the workers' demands, also worked to keep the movement within bounds.

Since achieving national office, Biller and Sombrotto have presided over regressive contracts. The postal service has been allowed to expand the pool of postal employees with less than full rights and pay (casuals, subs, part-timers). And a two-tier wage system has been implemented. This year, we can expect nothing but another sellout contract from these bureaucrats.

To change things around, the power of the rank and file must be brought into play. As in 1970, we need a mass struggle. We need to prepare for powerful mass actions that can stop management in its tracks. Build networks among the rank and file. Distribute newsletters like the *Detroit Workers' Voice*. Circulate flyers, leaflets, buttons, etc. Prepare to take action, to defeat the brutal productivity drive of postal management. □

Background material on the Trotskyist IS and ISO: On the history of the "International Socialists tendency" in the U.S.

The following letter is being printed here because it provides a brief picture of the origin and stands of the IS and ISO organizations in the U.S. (CLN refers to the Communist League of Norrköping, which published Röd Gryning (Red Dawn) and later became the Marxist-Leninist League of Sweden.)

November 15, 1989

Dear comrades of the CLN,

From your recent publications, as well as your last letter,

we see that you comrades have become strongly attracted to the International Socialist tendency. You seem to think that the IS current is a trend breaking away from Trotskyism towards revolutionary Marxist-Leninist positions.

We do not share this view. In one of your letters, you pointed out that IS does not have a Swedish branch, which means that you comrades have not had any direct experience with how this trend approaches revolutionary theory and the actual class struggle. However, the IS trend is a well-established trend here in the U.S. Our Party has a pretty good idea about the U.S. group, both how it has evolved historically and what it is at the present. We don't see anything which would suggest that this current is about

to turn into something which it is not.

I have personally followed the IS trend for some time and ever since I learned of your attraction towards it, I have been meaning to put together a letter about what I know about this trend. It took a while to get to because of the press of other work, but it is finally done.

In our reply to your articles on the Soviet Union, we have made some strongly critical remarks about the IS tendency. These remarks were not based on some knee-jerk prejudice on our part which would dismiss looking into forces emerging from a different tradition than ours. No. The IS tendency has been in existence here in the U.S. since the 1960's and we have some knowledge and experience with it.

We have also looked at IS theoretical literature, including the materials you have translated, and that has only verified our skepticism about the prospects of such a trend *developing* towards revolutionary Marxism-Leninism. Another comrade will write on that [see the "letter to the Swedish comrades about Cliff's pamphlet" in the *Supplement* of September 20]; here I just wanted to raise some facts about what we know about the historical evolution of this trend in the U.S.

* * * * *

In the early 60's, groups called the Independent Socialist Clubs existed in Berkeley, California and a few other cities. These were formed by people out of the Socialist Party, the U.S. branch of the Socialist International.

The SP then was a very right-wing social-democratic organization, dominated by "Cold Warrior" elements who supported the U.S. imperialist war against Viet Nam. Throughout the early 60's, many younger people in and around the SP, who could not stomach such right-wing stands, moved to the left. They embraced what is commonly referred to as "New Left" ideology. While New Left activists represented a serious leftward motion among the activists, the ideology of New Leftism was a "left" social-democratic set of views which tried to cast itself as a third pole between social-democracy and Marxism-Leninism, but remained essentially social-democratic and laced with syndicalist and anarchist features. The largest New Left organization in the U.S. was the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which had originated as an SP student group but broke away from its parenthood.

The Independent Socialist Clubs adapted to the general *New Left* ideology and milieu, although they were not a New Left formation as such. Their roots were in Max Schactman's trend from the 1940's.

Schactman, who you may be familiar with, was an American Trotskyist who broke with Trotsky in 1939-40 over the issue of the Soviet Union. He denounced the Soviet Union as a class society which he described as "bureaucratic collectivism." This wasn't a break to the left, but even further to the right—Schactman developed the view that Soviet "bureaucratic collectivism" was worse than

Western capitalism and this took him and his followers further and further into collaboration with the American bourgeoisie. He soon embraced extreme Cold War positions. He liquidated the groups he had launched (first the Workers' Party and then the Independent Socialist League) and he joined the Socialist Party where he became a major leader, an enthusiastic champion of the AFL-CIO leaders and the U.S. aggression in Viet Nam.

The Independent Socialist Clubs were formed by Schactmanites who didn't want to follow Schactman on that road. They considered themselves a social-democratic current, preferring to describe themselves as left socialists and sometimes as Marxist socialists (as opposed to Leninists).

This trend, like other trends of the time, went through an evolution in the 1960's. They were active in the student movement of the 1960's and were shook up by the leftward motion of the time. New Left activists added to their ranks. They ended up as a marriage of Schactmanism and New Leftism.

In 1969 this trend declared itself as a national organization called the International Socialists, U.S. It appears that it is around this time that the IS, U.S. established very close relations with the IS trend in Britain, although there had been long-standing connections between the U.S. and British groups. Both Schactman and Tony Cliff had separated from official Trotskyism in the 1940's and the two currents had many features in common. Despite somewhat separate evolutions, it appears to us that the two groups had parallel development.

IS was formed at a time when New Leftism was in deep crisis. SDS collapsed and revolutionary-minded activists were leaning towards Marxism-Leninism. A big impulse was given to the idea of building an anti-revisionist communist party. But a number of the New Leftist leaders kept up the struggle to preserve New Leftism against the attraction of Leninism. What stand did IS take in this? While it suggested that it was semi-Leninist, it put its actual weight into the efforts to continue New Leftism into the 1970's.

Let me give an example. After the collapse of SDS, there were various attempts to preserve national New Left organizations. One such effort was the launching by many ex-SDSers of the New American Movement in 1971. NAM claimed that it wanted to build an organization half-way between social-democracy and Leninism, it wanted to revive and build on the "American radical" tradition, etc. NAM openly scorned the attraction that Leninism held out to many activists of the time. It was a grouping based in the universities which wanted to preserve New Leftism in the face of hundreds and hundreds of activists who were moving to the left. The revolutionary-minded activists of the time did not think much of NAM, but IS found something positive in it. They were active in building up NAM and tried to give it a "revolutionary" coloring. However, nothing came of this effort to "revolutionize" NAM. NAM eventually ended up dissolving itself and merging with Michael Harrington's SP-remnant to form the

Democratic Socialists of America, the main U.S. grouping supporting the Socialist International.

With the launching of IS in the U.S., this trend took a turn towards the working class. This was at a time when many other groups and activists also were turning towards the working class.

The turn of the 60's activists towards the working class was a good thing, as it marked a rejection of the most pronounced petty-bourgeois New Left and third-worldist views of the time which scorned the working class in favor of other classes and strata to base the revolutionary movement upon. But that is only one part of the question. Turning towards the working class did not settle the question of what approach to work in the working class: reformist or revolutionary.

The IS, however, did not approach a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist policy in its work in the proletariat. In fact, its approach was closer to some of the more right-opportunist forces within the anti-revisionist movement. IS's main activity in the working class revolved around the rank-and-file caucuses of the early 70's. What was this phenomenon and what approach did IS take?

In the ferment among the workers of the late 1960's and early 70's, many rank-and-file groups had come up. This was not just a single phenomenon, but encompassed a broad range of groups. Generally they had a common feature of being a manifestation of rebellion against the top union leaders, but they differed widely in character and policy. Some were outfits set up by careerist lower-level bureaucrats who wanted to climb upwards. Others had hopes of reforming the unions by replacing the top bureaucrats in union elections. Many had an orientation towards struggle. And some of the rank-and-file groups even took up revolutionary politics, of one or another type. As well, many of the groups combined various of these features.

Revolutionary communists welcome the emergence of these stirrings. However, they have to work to orient the militant workers in such groups towards a consistent break with the labor bureaucracy and to draw the advanced workers into communist organization. They cannot merge with the phenomenon as IS did. IS tailed the rank-and-file caucuses and adapted to various backward features which are inevitable in any struggle. IS developed a whole theory of "rank-and-file-ism" which was essentially a theory to adapt to the narrowness within the rank-and-file groups. In the end this inevitably led to conciliation with dissident union bureaucrats and those aspiring to join them.

IS adopted a lowest common denominator style of work. It focused on narrow shop floor issues, rejecting political and revolutionary work. It did not work to separate the militant workers from the dissident union bureaucrats. It glorified rank-and-file-ism and negated completely the tasks of building proletarian party organization.

The end result of this approach? Many of IS's "rank-and-file" leaders became reformist low-level bureaucrats themselves and most separated themselves from IS. And IS as an organization adapted itself to upper-level dissident

union bureaucrats. They even gave up the idea of any type of separate presence in the campaigns and efforts of the dissident union bureaucrats. Thus IS, in its working class work, had completed an evolution from association with shop stewards and some militant workers to trailing behind the more well-established dissident union bureaucrats.

The natural result of this craven tailism was the virtual collapse of IS as an organization by the late 70's. Although IS was a national organization, its anti-party prejudices had been the basis for very loose organization. They did have a national paper for a time, called *Workers' Power*, but in one split *Workers' Power* detached itself from IS, and disappeared. Neither IS nor those who split off saw the reason to build up national working class press.

There were two other splits within IS.

In 1972-73 a split to the left took place from people who did not like IS's rightward drift. The Revolutionary Socialist League came out of it. But this split tried to restore orthodox Trotskyism (however still claiming the Soviet Union etc. was state capitalist). It also carried over many of the anarcho-syndicalist and anti-party ideas widespread in IS. Eventually it denounced both Trotskyism and Leninism and has fallen into outright anarchism. It has decided to dissolve itself and merge with the anarchists. An early split from the RSL in 1976 resulted in the League for the Revolutionary Party which barely hangs on in New York. It is a group which champions dogmatic Trotskyism, however with its own distinct ideas about state capitalism in the Soviet Union. The LRP, despite clinging to some of the most absurd Trotskyist dogmas, however, has some interesting critiques of Cliffism—both on the question of the analysis of Soviet state-capitalism and on the proletarian party. (I'm enclosing a few articles from them. [Not included in this issue of the *Supplement*.])

In 1977, there was another fight inside IS and a group was expelled which constituted itself as the International Socialist Organization. This is the group which maintained ties with the IS international tendency.

There were many issues in this split, and I am not familiar with the truth behind all the charges and counter-charges. However, one of the issues in this split is very illuminating about ISO.

One of the factors precipitating this split was unhappiness with the rightward drift in IS toward upper-level union bureaucrats. Those who formed ISO sought to preserve the early IS tradition of "rank-and-file-ism." However, they were trying to do this at a time when there were very few rank-and-file groups left anymore. The real end result of ISO's disappointment with what had become of IS was that it turned away from the working class—ISO blames implantation in the industrial working class as the source of adaptation by IS cadre to "conservative influences."

I attach a portion of the IS minority document (i.e. the document from the people who would form ISO) from the time of the split. This shows that ISO summed up IS's rightward turn by advocating abandoning the industrial workers. This viewpoint remains very much an essential

cornerstone of the ISO's politics—which shows that such a trend is not interested at all in building a communist current in the working class.

What ISO has done is to fall back on office worker and petty-bourgeois arenas, especially campus work. Today, ISO exists detached from the working class.

As far as attitude towards the mass movements, ISO vacillates between sideline-ism and submerging themselves in various non-working class milieu. For example, the last time I can remember ISO active here in the U.S. was in the anti-nuclear energy movements in 1979-81. But there they buried themselves deeply within the various petty-bourgeois anarchist/ecologist groups like the Clamshell Alliance. They were not a force fighting for a revolutionary orientation against Democratic Party liberalism and the champions of anarchist ecological trends who adapted to the Democrats.

For most of the 80's they simply haven't been active. I have occasionally seen them holding up a banner in a few demonstrations or selling their paper at a few political events. But in the main they have simply been sideline. They did not fight within the Central America solidarity movement. Needless to say, they did not carry out work in the anti-concessions struggle.

One of the few occasions they showed up in protests was around the time Jaruzelski imposed martial law in Poland. But these protests were of the U.S. State Department variety—virulently anti-communist and connected to the AFL-CIO leaders and ultra-right Polish nationalists. Their uncritical cheering of Solidarity placed them in the orbit of mainstream U.S. bourgeois politics, especially of the labor bureaucracy.

Over the last year, ISO has had a presence in the anti-skinhead and pro-choice movements. They talk left, but their activity is marked by refusal to work for an independent perspective from the liberals. They really do not have any conception of revolutionary work in the mass movements. This isn't due to inexperience or immaturity, but because of a strong tendency in its tradition to conciliate with broader reformist layers.

Of course, ISO speaks of independent socialist work, but that "independent work" basically consists of "socialist soapboxing" in the old, Second International style. They expound about socialism detached from the work to actually break the masses away from liberalism and reformism towards socialist revolutionary positions. Through things as university-based forums, literature tables at occasional public events, speaking tours by British SWP leaders, and selling their paper *Socialist Worker*.

Thus, ISO claims to have abandoned dogmatic Trotskyism, but apart from breaking on certain political questions, they have not embraced a Marxist-Leninist alternative. Ideologically, they are a mixed bag of Trotskyism, anarcho-syndicalism, and "left" social-democracy. Essentially, they function as a "left" social-democratic brake to activists moving to the left. ISO is not oriented towards building a communist trend among the workers and it is not oriented

towards a revolutionary working class orientation in the mass movements.

Meanwhile, the old IS still hangs on. It has recently merged back with those who took off with *Workers' Power* and a small offshoot of the U.S. Socialist Action group (Trotskyists associated with Ernest Mandel's United Secretariat) to form a group called Solidarity. This however remains a loose network with very little activity of its own. Their main work remains submerged in the dissident trade union bureaucrat milieu that crop up from time to time, like Locals Opposed to Concessions, National Rank-and-File Against Concessions, and the New Directions Movement in the UAW. These groups you may be familiar with from our press. Despite some of their names, these outfits are not rank-and-file groups but dissident bureaucrat networks.

That is all I wanted to say about the IS tendency here in the U.S.

We do not know about the SWP of Britain in any detail. We know it is larger. But what we do know suggests that it is essentially similar to the ISO, although the ISO may be somewhat more sideline.

The interview you published with them does not go into issues in detail, but it gives enough hints and suggestions showing that the SWP follows a similar policy as the ISO towards the working class struggle and the mass movements. They seem to use the excuse of the present being a slow period to justify a passive and sideline attitude which waits for the upsurge. We get such an impression from what they describe as their shift of emphasis from agitation to propaganda; from the little they have to say about work in the mass movements; and from their discussion about basic organization which, under the pretext of having geographical organization, ignores the possibility of focusing on workplace work at this time. As well, during a tour by Chris Harman of the SWP to the U.S. last year, one of our friends (then in the ISO) was told quite explicitly by the SWP leader that they do not consider the present a time for activity focused in the working class but instead stressed work among students.

All in all therefore, we can see nothing to suggest that the SWP stands for a communist trend in the working class or revolutionary proletarian intervention in the mass movements. Thus, what we know about the IS tendency would suggest that this is not some group in ideological development, but one with fairly strongly established stands and ideology. It is not a trend that is about to become or give birth to revolutionary Leninism.

Communist greetings,

[...]

Member of the CC,
MLP, USA □

with the possible exception of the Teamster work. On the contrary, it may well be a factor in keeping workers away.

Whatever the advantages of industrialization in the past, industrialization today is clearly a disadvantage. No, we do not propose dragging comrades from their jobs, and there may still be many contributions to be made by the industrialized members. But industrialization as a strategy must be abandoned. It is a pessimistic, conservative and sub-

stitutionist strategy.

Finally, industrialization as practiced today by the IS, or by the Maoists for that matter, has nothing in common with Trotsky's "going to school in the working class." It has become a road not to a genuine workers' organization, but instead to a petty bourgeois workerist organization.

[Boldfacing has been added by the *Supplement*.] □

Correspondence:

Voices from the past on "the future of socialism"

The following comments are excerpted from a letter by a comrade in Denver. The conference **The Future of Socialism** was held on September 6, where representatives of the reformist, anarchist, revisionist and academic currents spoke.

September 15, 1990

I wanted you to see these few flyers from the meeting I attended last weekend.

I hate to say it but going to this meeting was like falling into a time warp, a bad *deja-vu*, a twisted acid flashback. Get it?

Now that's my own biased opinion so I'll try to objectively describe what took place. There were about 60-75 people. It looked like a fair turnout. The whole session was recorded by this person from the KUYO radio. I don't know why, but they had mikes to stick in your face if you had something to say.

Most of the people seemed to be connected to the groups sponsoring the forum. They all knew each other. I recognized many faces, mostly from those old groups like the SWP, CP, Workers World.

The setup was three panels of experts on whatever with each having a set time to speak on "the future of socialism." Then questions from the audience.

Needless to say, the majority of the panelists did anything but address the future of socialism. They were pretty negative and there was lots of talk about understanding current economic trends, *blah, blah, blah*.

After the first session I was able to make some comments and raise some questions. People looked at me very strangely, but were real enthusiastic about my remarks. I must have had ten or more people approach me who wanted to make further contact or to ask me who I was. One man introduced himself then asked me where my "base of operations" was. I say, what?

I am always surprised at how these people are so befuddled at what to do. I guess it's their rotten politics that makes them so stagnant.

This is mainly what I raised.

1. That it's good that revisionism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union has been exposed so that we can go forward to genuine socialism based on Marxism-Leninism (the CP guy's head turned red which is as close as he'll ever get to being a communist).

2. That it's essential for concerned activists to take up issues, and base themselves in their workplaces and communities.

3. That I hadn't planned on attending a wake, that of all the people present [some] must be there because they believe in the future of socialism and want to participate in making it a reality.

4. The general topic was the "Future of Socialism", but not one person had addressed the Persian Gulf invasion, no one condemned the U.S. role in this, no one said anything about what people should do, and I asked them why they weren't saying anything about these things. They responded that there were many issues to address but that this wasn't the appropriate time to do so, and we should all network with one another at a later time.

I didn't stay till the end—I couldn't take it any more. I groaned out loud when Carol Andreas said we should rethink Mao Zedung Thought and go back to doing criticism-self-criticism "because there was a lot of value in these methods that we've all but forgotten". She really said this.

Anyway it was good in the sense that there was a lot of people who seemed genuinely interested in organizing here in Denver (I'm 100% sure the so-called leaders and experts aren't). In particular, there were some women who had been organizing around the issue of homelessness.

Ernesto Vigil [who had been second in command to Corky Gonzalez in the Crusade for Justice] made the comment that "I want to thank the lady in the back whose name I don't know who has injected life and vitality into this conference; it's interesting to note that the most noteworthy comments today have been made by women and people of color." Can you believe that! I'm going to continue to take the paper to RIP [Radical Information Project Bookstore] and pass it around so maybe that will "inject life and vitality" and spark some thought.

Take care!
[Name omitted]
Denver, CO □

**From the IS minority document
at the time of the split
(i.e. the document from the
people who would form ISO)**

INDUSTRIALIZATION

“No matter how talented and devoted to socialism an emigrant from the bourgeois milieu may be, before becoming a teacher, he must first go to school in the working class. Young intellectuals must not be placed at the head of intellectual youth but sent out into the provinces for a few years, into purely proletarian centers, for hard practical work.” (Trotsky, “Letter to Burnham,” In Defense of Marxism)

In 1969, the IS began the policy of industrialization, that is, of sending students and former students into industry. In the beginning, only a few actually took industrial jobs, but eventually the organization moved toward wholesale industrialization and “industrializing the organization.”

The policy, at least at first, was simple enough. A whole generation of revolutionaries had developed in the United States, without any connection to the working class. The IS therefore revived Trotsky’s advice to Burnham, first so that IS members could gain some experience in the working class, and second so that socialist ideas could be taken back into the working class. Also hopefully so that workers could be recruited and the actual social composition of the IS changed.

The fact was that often the best and most committed students chose to take industrial jobs, sometimes because of the frustrations of student politics, but usually because of their commitment to the working class and to transforming the IS. In many cases, this is still true today.

Reasons to Industrialize

The IS was not the only organization to industrialize—the Maoist groups did the same, as did dozens of new-left collectives. The arguments for industrialization in the IS, however, were particularly strong. In the sixties, the IS (actually the ISC) resided in Berkeley, not exactly a working class stronghold. Its ties to the past were few, if any. The active leadership of the IS had no experience in the working class at all. There were virtually no workers in the organization. Finally, the IS did not have a useful newspaper, and neither did it have any idea of how to develop a workers’ paper.

Therefore it can be said that industrialization offered certain advantages, and that it was at least symbolic of the organization’s commitment to the working class.

Problems of Industrialization

Unfortunately, industrialization brought many problems

as well, problems not discussed in Trotsky’s letter. The middle class students who went into industry nearly always immediately faced severe problems, in adjusting to the work, to the workers, and so on. Problems which could be chalked up to experience for Trotsky’s youth, came to dominate the IS, for in the IS not just a few “went off to school.” The IS was organized to revolve around the industrialized members.

The industrialized students also faced political problems at work. They found themselves aliens in the working class world, facing a difficult struggle just to fit in, to be accepted. Fitting in usually involved politically accommodating to the conservative politics of the majority of the workers—and, that meant putting revolutionary politics on the shelf, at least for a considerable period.

The results, for most of the students involved, were profoundly conservatizing. Above all, they needed to break out of their isolation, yet their politics seemed only to make them stand out even more. Mass work, of course, helped in that it made accommodation somewhat simpler, at least politically.

Worse, instead of what Trotsky had advised as a three year course, industrialization often became a whole personal strategy for those comrades involved. The industrialized comrades found themselves with a role and place assured in the organization. Increasingly, they came to think of themselves not as a human link to workers, but as actual workers. And industrialization became a substitute for recruiting real workers.

The “Failures”

The very worst came when middle class members of the IS were told not only that they had to industrialize, but that they were to become mass workers’ leaders as well—and overnight. There are exceptions to every rule of course, but in general, the “you can lead” syndrome guaranteed “mass” casualties. Those comrades who attempted to do the impossible—to stand out and fight, and lead the masses, were often victimized. The others more than likely “failed.” No wonder. The idea that middle class students, with little or no experience, with little or no seniority can expect to be mass leaders is simply ludicrous, and of course the IS leaves behind it a long trail of “failures.”

Industrialization was also justified in the beginning by American exceptionalism, yet now it is becoming a principle of revolutionary organization. The IS EC wants to convince not only the Canadians and the Australians of its necessity, but also the Germans and the Irish. It even hints that the British IS should industrialize. The British comrades can hardly be blamed, therefore, if they believe the leadership here does in fact “live in a fantasy world.”

Industrialization conservatizes the individual members, and leads to conservatism in the entire organization. It focuses the attention of the organization not on the working class, but on its own middle class members. And, in the last analysis, it has not even helped us to recruit,

Pro-choice movement in Chicago

Continued from the front page

oppose this.

NOW opposes militant clinic defense

The leadership of NOW [National Organization for Women] and other bourgeois women's organizations such as NARAL [National Abortion Rights Action League] and Planned Parenthood have publicly condemned militant clinic defense actions. They have issued statements denouncing those involved in them.

The 1990 Mother's Day clinic defense actions were a telling example. Leaders of the Pro-Choice Alliance let the anti's [anti-abortion thugs] post themselves at the clinic doors without opposition. They opposed slogan shouting or denouncing the anti's. They even set the police on the clinic defenders at Clark and Division, demanding that the militants, not the anti's, be forced away from the doors of the Planned Parenthood clinic!

Another example was the June 16 Father's Day clinic defense. At Diversey and Western, when ECDC activists started confronting the anti's, 2 NOW leaders jumped out to try to cool things off. The rank-and-file NOW activists, however, joined the ECDC picket right away and opposed the anti's. So the NOW leader goes to the security cop and says the pro-choice activists are blocking the sidewalk! The clinic security guard refused to do anything about it so the NOW honcho fumes and tells the ECDC activist in charge that the pro-choice picket is supposed to move. (The militants of course, held their ground.)

Meanwhile at the Concord Clinic at Grand and Sate, the NOW clinic marshal and a policeman confronted the militants and demanded that they stop harassing the anti's and disperse. Clearly, NOW hates the militant activists more than the anti-abortionists!

NOW isn't serious even about escorting patients!

Just last Saturday, October 6, escorts from the Pro-Choice Alliance sat on a bench across the street from the clinic at Diversey and Western doing nothing while the anti's picketed and harassed women going in for tests! One woman, in fact, was turned away by the anti's while the "escorts" did nothing. Their excuse was that no doctor was there and thus no abortions were performed. It fell to the militant activists to keep up the pro-choice picket and confront the anti's for harassing women. The militants made placards on the spot, lined the driveway, appealed to people driving by, and effectively countered the anti's.

Meanwhile, the Pro-Choice Alliance escorts sat and stared off into space.

All this is not an accident. These groups, despite the

sincerity of many in their rank-and-file, represent the interests of bourgeois women.

There are different classes in society with opposing class interests. The upper classes, as well as the lower classes, are active in social and political movements, but they have different aims as well as different methods and organizations. If the bourgeois forces in the mass movements are not opposed, they will eventually succeed in killing the mass actions and draining out all the militancy.

What path for the movement?

At present there is discussion going on in ECDC circles about where ECDC should go and what it should do. There has even been discussion of whether it should continue to exist as an organization.

We would like to raise some points which we hope will contribute to this discussion. We think that discussion among the activists should not be limited to the future of ECDC as an organization. We need a broad discussion of the issues facing militant pro-choice activists. We want to help activists move forward and build a powerful pro-choice movement.

Issues facing militant pro-choice activists

1) Continuing clinic defense.

The right-wing anti-abortion fanatics have not [at present in Chicago] been trying to blockade clinics so much as picketing them and harassing women who go in. It is one of the strong points of the militants that they continue to mount "defenses" in this situation. There was opposition to this in ECDC circles, particularly by the ISO. They couldn't see that this was anything more than NOW-type escorting. They see no role for actions in building up a militant pro-choice movement.

Every week in front of Diversey and Western the anti's are confronted. There are pro-choice picket signs and banners. There is work to get support from people passing by on the street and in cars. There are slogans to drown out the anti's. We think this should continue. Unfortunately there remains some hesitancy even about this. For instance, there have been a couple of occasions where it was known abortions would not be performed on a particular day. This was the case last weekend at Diversey and Western. Some activists couldn't see the point in staying and mounting a protest to the anti's. We think the anti's should not be left there unopposed. The significance of these protests goes far beyond getting the patients into the clinic. They play a role in demoralizing and demobilizing the anti-abortion fanatics and clinic defenses are good for mobilizing new people and training them in mass actions. They have an important role in building a mass movement against these right-wing fanatics.

2) *Combat the anti-abortion movement in an all-round way.*

The reactionary anti-abortion groups seek to draw ordinary people into their movement. They make lying appeals to unreasoned passions about "life" and religion. Their aim is not only to create foot soldiers against abortion rights. They want to use the anti-abortion movement as a bridge to drag people into other right-wing causes—such as a general crusade against the rights and conditions of working women, support for imperialist wars, racism, and attacks on the workers and poor. Since there's more at stake than just abortion rights the pro-life hypocrites must be opposed not just at clinics but wherever they rear their ugly heads. Fascists must never be allowed to organize in peace.

There have been several actions that targeted the right-wing anti-abortion forces. They followed the general idea of going after the anti's wherever they are and not just waiting for them to attack clinics. We think this is important. We need to confront the right-wing anti-abortion movement through mass protests at "pro-life" fake clinics, against major capitalist backers like Tom Monaghan (Domino's Pizza), against major "pro-life" politicians and leaders and at the headquarters and meeting places of these hypocrites. Furthermore, there needs to be vigorous leafleting, meetings, discussions and other agitation to expose the right-to-life demagogy and the reactionary aims of the anti-abortion movement. We also need to target and expose its basis in sections of the capitalist class, Moral Majority and Catholic Church leaders, and the Bush government.

3) *Mobilize working class, poor and minority women as the main force of the pro-choice movement.*

Working class, poor and minority women suffer the most from the anti-abortion attacks. They suffer the most from stopping Medicaid-funded abortions. They suffer the most from the restrictions put on abortion which greatly [increase] its cost. They provide an essential basis and backbone for the pro-choice movement.

Many of the militant activists have sentiments to organize working, poor and minority women. Nevertheless discussion around ECDC usually tend to equate this with linking up with various left-leaning reformist or trade union groups.

We think it is important to find ways to organize working and poor women directly. The Marxist-Leninist Party has, for example, distributed literature on why the working class should defend abortion rights at factories. We have distributed at large public events such as the Bud Billiken parade. We have held small marches and demonstrations in defense of abortion rights in communities like [the Latino working class community of] Pilsen. There are many ways to take up this work: leafleting, postering and stickering campaigns in working class and minority communities. We can distribute literature that explains how restricting abortion rights affects poor and minority women.

We can hold pro-choice demonstrations in these neighborhoods. We can work to mobilize people in the neighborhoods around clinics to support clinic defense.

4) *Work to build the movement independent from the Republican and Democratic Parties.*

In the meetings and actions held by ECDC the predominant sentiment has been suspicion of the bourgeois politicians. We think this needs to be turned into a strong stand against the parties of the rich.

The Republican Party is one of the key founders and staunchest defenders of the right-wing anti-abortion movement. It has denounced abortion rights as part of its official program. However, it was under the Democratic President Jimmy Carter that the Hyde amendment was passed. And it was under Democratic Party control that abortions were stopped at Cook County Hospital. The activists need to build up the pro-choice movement independently from the capitalist politicians and the reformist bigwigs. The activists need to condemn all attacks on the movement from the Republicans and Democrats. We need to speak openly to the masses of supporters of women's rights about the real role of the capitalist parties.

5) *Oppose the sabotaging role of the leadership of NOW.*

The militant activists grouped around ECDC view themselves as different from NOW. There are frequent stories told about how NOW and other such organizations obstruct the movement. However, many activists do not see the need to develop a trend directly in opposition to the pro-establishment women's organizations. They regard it as enough to do some things, including some very important things, that the pro-establishment women's organizations will not do. For instance, they directly confront the anti's at clinics and hold demonstrations and actions in front of right-wing events.

ECDC has never issued any statements on what it thinks of NOW. It doesn't say openly why ECDC does not merge into the clinic activities of the Pro-Choice Alliance. It has not responded to attacks on it such as the incident at Mother's Day. But NOW is certainly active in opposing militancy, not only at the clinics but through constant propaganda as well. If we fail to oppose them, their views will only gain greater weight.

We think it is important to condemn the political orientation and reformist tactics of the bourgeois leadership of NOW. It is not a matter that the NOW leaders are fighting in their way and we in ours. Rather, the path advocated by NOW is playing a harmful, undermining role in the entire pro-choice movement.

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The attacks on abortion rights, the attacks on the rights and conditions of working class, poor and minority women call out for a militant pro-choice movement. We hope that these points will contribute to the discussion of how to build such a movement. □