

# Open Letter to the Ranks of the Black Panther Party on the Oakland Elections

Comrades:

In the wake of the Nixon landslide and the ceasefire in Indochina, the bourgeoisie is attempting to stabilize finance capital at the expense of the working masses in this country and internationally. The welfare lines grow; already painfully inadequate childcare, educational and medical facilities are cut back even further; food prices soar; and the extreme fragility of the economic boom is underlined by the further devaluation of the dollar. 1973 will see contract battles in five major industries in the U.S. at a time when the union ranks have grown increasingly fed up with the sellout policies of the labor bureaucracy. Because of the pervasive racism of capitalist society, all of this comes down hardest on the black proletariat and other specially oppressed minorities.

The working people here and abroad are well aware of their deteriorating conditions. But what is lacking is a tested revolutionary leadership, a program and party that can lead the working class and oppressed masses toward the expropriation of the capitalist class—the perpetrators of exploitation—and the establishment of a socialist society.

At this time the Black Panther Party is running Bobby Seale for Mayor and Elaine Brown for Councilwoman in the city of Oakland. We have followed your press and public statements as well as attended several campaign rallies for Bobby Seale in order to determine our stand on this campaign. As Marxists, we must ask the question: who will benefit should Seale win this election? We look at the program that Seale and Brown are running on, and consider the composition and policy in practice of your party. A minimum condition for any support is that the party must represent independent working-class political action, not some variation of bourgeois politics that may have support from sectors of the workers.

Looking directly at your program—the Ten Point Program—nowhere do you come out clearly against support for bourgeois candidates. Nowhere do you come out with a strong statement against the Democrats, who have cynically manipulated blacks in this country for decades, coming into the ghettos just before elections to promise a few reforms, just enough to pacify the workers, the unemployed, the welfare clients. The liberal legislation of the 1960's was powerless to make a dent in the problems which daily grow more intolerable: jobs, housing, medical care, childcare, drugs, schools. The reforms of Johnson's "Great Society"—the "Model Cities" program, "Headstart" and OEO grants—where mil-

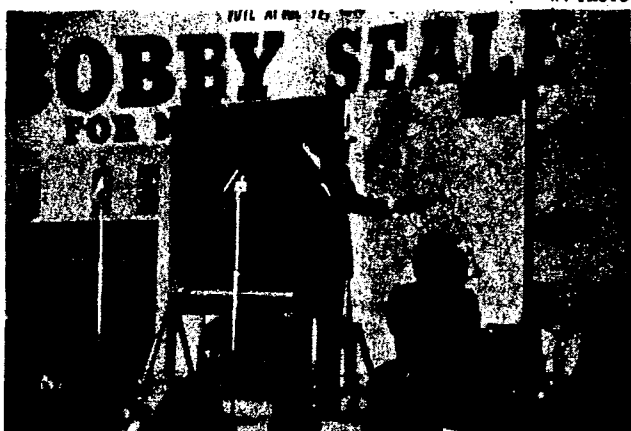
lions of dollars disappeared into projects which did little to help poor blacks—have now proven to be as reversible as are all reforms under capitalism.

## BPP Leaders Repudiate Your Party's Past

From its inception, the Black Panther Party was based upon a contradiction: on the one hand, a subjective identification with the most oppressed blacks (working people, the unemployed, welfare recipients, youth, etc.) whose fundamental oppression under capitalism clearly could not be solved or even substantially lessened by a few small and reversible liberal reforms; on the other hand, the ideology of black nationalism, which denied the class basis of society and social struggle and opened the door to the BPP becoming merely another pressure group seeking to play the ethnic politics game of competing for a bigger "slice of the pie" within the status quo.

The Spartacist League was often sharply critical of the BPP in this period, pointing out that black nationalism and Stalinism-Maoism are ideologies of defeat for black working people, struggling against the BPP when it lent itself to the bourgeoisie's attempt to mobilize the indignation of ghetto residents against the unions in the 1968 New York teachers' strike, exposing the "community control" myth as a reactionary fraud, cautioning against substitutionist adventurist terrorism, denouncing the reformism of some of the Panthers' "community" projects. At the same time we recognized that the BPP was the only one among the various black nationalist formations which was seeking to be more than simply "porkchop nationalists." We respected the courage of the Panther militants who embraced a mistaken adventurist policy because of their desire to fight against oppression. And we gave credit to the BPP for its opposition to the hustlers who sought nothing but their own lucrative careers through meaningless "anti-poverty" programs and to the black Democrats and Republicans who keep the ghetto masses tied to the parties of exploitation, racism and imperialism.

In the early years of your party you called for opposition to the Republicans and Democrats. It was largely because of this position that the Spartacist League gave critical support to your 1968 Congressional ticket in which Huey Newton, Bobby Seale and Kathleen Cleaver ran for seats in the California legislature. At the same time we were extremely critical of the



Bobby Seale speaking at Oakland campaign rally.

middle-class, Eugene McCarthy-like politics of the Peace and Freedom Party whose ticket you used to gain ballot status. We pointed out that the PFP was attempting to use the militant image of the Panthers to gain radical petty-bourgeois and working-class support for its own reformist program.

In 1968 you opposed the election of black Democrat Willie Brown, pointing out that he did not represent the interests of oppressed blacks, and ran your own candidate, Kathleen Cleaver, for his seat in the California State Assembly. But only four years later, in the recent 1972 elections, your party urged the Oakland "black community" to vote for the "People's Candidates": Shirley Chisholm and Ron Dellums. And now in the current campaign your ads on KDIA start with, "Hi, I'm Bobby Seale, a Democrat..." and end with "vote for Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown, two Democrats, people's candidates." How is it that your party, which once claimed to seek a revolutionary transformation of society, can now support candidates who are members of the Democratic Party—the party of war, racism and repression—and run as Democrats yourselves? The theme song of Chisholm's whole campaign was to give everyone a "fair share" so that we can "make the system work." In your campaign material you use the slogan, "It's not a race problem, it's a job problem." No, comrades, it is a class problem. Chisholm and Dellums are traitors to the oppressed blacks in this country, because they represent conciliationism with capitalism, i.e., the maintenance of the status quo. These black Democrats are truly enemies of the working class. By joining this bosses' party of war, racism and exploitation, Seale and Brown are placing themselves in the same camp with Chisholm and Dellums... and with Daley, Wallace and the rest of their ilk.

## Where is the Program for the Working Class?

But, you object, the Ten Point Program is in the interest of black and white working people in the city of Oakland. You call for full employment, decent housing, education, free health care, an end to the murder of black people. Certainly, no Marxist could oppose such reforms; we fight for any measure that will relieve, even if only in a small way, the problems of the oppressed and exploited.

But to call for full employment without such demands as Organize the Unorganized, Jobs for All, 30 Hours Work for 40 Hours Pay, Expropriation of Industry under Workers Control, For a Workers Party Based on the Trade Unions, Forward to a Workers Government, leads to union busting. You seek to eliminate unemployment by demanding that 50% of the people hired by businesses who have contracts with the city of Oakland be unemployed Oakland residents. Such a demand will simply lead to deals with big business and government at the expense of organized

labor. Taking jobs away from the unions destroys their bargaining power and weakens the position of the whole working class, including the unemployed. No matter how reactionary their leaderships, the trade unions represent the first step of the working class in overcoming atomization and impotence at the hands of their employers.

In an expression of the fundamental nationalism of the BPP you call for the preferential hiring of blacks. This will only serve to intensify racial antagonisms, antagonisms which must be overcome in order for the working class to make a strong, unified struggle against the capitalists. Intensification of racial antagonisms within the working class not only prolongs capitalism by trapping the class in disunity and reactionary ideology, but also differentially endangers those who have the least social power with which to defend themselves. Demands like "30 for 40" cut across racial divisions by creating more jobs, instead of gaining employment for blacks at the expense of other workers.

In a recent campaign speech at Laney College Seale advocated the creation of a black police force in the city of Oakland. Changing the color of the police force does not change its function—the armed guardian of bourgeois "law and order." Black cops are just as effective at strikebreaking and repressing black ghetto residents as white cops.

## Black Version of the "April Coalition"?

Your program for this election bears a striking similarity to the "radical" program of the April Coalition—the bloc of movement activists and Democrats who elected three members to the Berkeley City Council in April 1971. Since then the miserable record of these "radicals" and their impotence in effecting even the most minimal reforms have been so unmistakable that even the *Militant*, newspaper of the crassly reformist Socialist Workers Party, carried a four-part exposé of their performance in office. While embroiled in conflicts among themselves between proposals addressed to the needs of women and proposals addressed to blacks as though the two were contradictory, all three have concentrated almost exclusively on trying to achieve their aims by maneuvers within the city council. In the words of Iona Hancock, one of the Coalition council members: "Radicals are here to stay in Berkeley and so are conservatives. The question is how are we going to live together" (*Militant*, 9 June 1972).

The Black Panther Party supported the election of the April Coalition. Granted, your paper also criticized these "people's" candidates after the election. Too little too late. Revolutionaries must always, as James P. Cannon wrote, know "what to do next." Using the criteria of program, practice and

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## Spartacist Local Directory

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|--|--|
| <b>ATLANTA</b><br>Box 7686, Atlanta, GA 30309  | <b>DETROIT</b><br>Box 663A, General P.O.<br>Detroit, MI 48232                              |
| <b>BERKELEY-OAKLAND</b> ..... (415) 848-3029<br>Box 852, Main P.O.<br>Berkeley, CA 94701           | <b>LOS ANGELES</b> ..... (213) 467-8855<br>Box 38053, Wilcox Sta.<br>Los Angeles, CA 90038 |
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# Open Letter...

composition, the Spartacist League was able to predict *before* the election exactly what would happen. It is with the same scientific method that we look at your campaign.

In the imperialist epoch there are two classes struggling for power—the bourgeoisie seeking to maintain its power and the proletariat striving to rid itself of its oppressors. There are only two sides to the class line. If a party's program does not base itself on the independent mobilization of the workers in their own class interests, it is in fact, regardless of intentions, a bourgeois program. Seale's plan is to channel all the funds from the Model Cities program, OEO, etc., into the Panther survival programs. One obvious problem is that Nixon has just cut out the majority of these funds. It is not a question of corruption or inefficiency in government, although both exist chronically under capitalism. The capitalist system depends for its survival on a large "reserve army of labor"—the unemployed—to meet the demands of its built-in "booms" and "crises" and to hold the wages of all workers down. The needs of the working class can be met only by eliminating the need for profit through working-class ownership and control of the means of production, i.e., socialism.

By raising your demands within the confines of capitalism, you are helping to maintain the illusion that capitalism can be systematically reformed! In fact, comrades, Bobby Seale himself is now campaigning openly as a member of the bosses' Democratic Party. In a recent speech at Laney College in Oakland, Seale ridiculed the "white radicals" who seek revolutionary solutions. In effect Seale is repudiating the BPP's past—the struggles that grew out of the revolutionary class hatred of ghetto youth against the agents of their oppression.

## Social Work or Revolution

While still giving up service to the need for revolutionary action, your leadership has made a right-wing turn into the politics of social work, not social revolution. In his book, *To Die for the People*, Huey Newton writes that the survival programs:

"...are not solutions to our problems. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution. We say that the survival program of the Black Panther Party is like the survival kit of a sailor stranded on a raft. It helps him to sustain himself until he can get completely out of that situation. So the survival programs do not answer our solutions, but they will help us to organize the community around a true analysis and understanding of their situation. When consciousness and understanding is raised to a high level then the community will seize the time and deliver themselves from the boot of their oppressors."

Actually your survival program dooms that sailor to wander on the high seas until he dies, because he has thrown overboard the "only tool—a class analysis and the Marxist method—which can guide his journey. Without the Trotskyist Transitional Program, which propels the working class toward revolutionary consciousness through demands which stem from the immediate felt needs of the class, but which lead unalterably to the need for socialist revolution, the sailor (the working class) will never make it to the shore.

## Black Capitalism?

The rudiments of a class analysis were expressed by Newton in an inter-

view in 1968, republished by SDS in August 1968 in a pamphlet called "Huey Newton Talks to the Movement." When asked about the Panthers' practice of running candidates against other black candidates, Newton repeated Malcolm X's analogy:

"...The Black Panther Party are the field blacks, we're hoping the master dies if he gets sick. The black bourgeoisie seem to be acting in the role of the house Negro. They are pro-administration. They would like a few concessions made, but as far as the overall setup, they have a little more material goods, a little more advantage, a few more privileges than the black have-nots; the lower class. And so they identify with the power structure and they see their interests as the power structure's interest. In fact, it's against their interest.

"The Black Panther Party was forced to draw a line of demarcation. We are for all of those who are for the promotion of the interests of the black have-nots which represents about 98% of blacks here in America...."

In "Black Capitalism Re-Analyzed," Newton now calls this position counter-revolutionary and tries to prove that black capitalists are also victims of the "white power structure"! He says, "We now see the Black capitalist as having a similar relationship to the Black community as the national (native) bourgeoisie have to the people in national wars of decolonization...." He covers himself by stating that the contributions of the black capitalists to the BPP simply aid in their destruction. But in order to get the support of these black capitalists to begin with, the BPP had to water down its program.

It is clear that Newton has learned more than the cult of personality from Mao (who got it from Stalin). Panther support to black Democrats like Chisholm and Dellums is the same disastrous strategy of class-collaboration that resulted in the death of thousands of Chinese communists and class-conscious workers in 1926 and 1927. Applying that theory—that is, that alliances can be made with the national (progressive) bourgeoisie—under Stalin's orders the Chinese Communist Party entered the party of the national bourgeoisie (the Kuomintang) under the leadership of Chiang Kai-shek. As soon as the Communists disarmed, Chiang turned on them and massacred them, strangling the possibility of revolution for a generation. Mao repeatedly called for an alliance with Chiang in the late 1930's and 1940's, thus continuing Stalin's policies. The Chinese national bourgeoisie saw its interests as inextricably tied to those of imperialism, just as the black bourgeoisie in this country is today tailing after its white mentors.

Rather than educating the black masses as to the fundamentally reactionary nature of religion, Newton now says that the church as the institution of the black community can be either progressive or reactionary. But in reality, both the black capitalists and the church represent class interests absolutely opposed to those of the black masses, because they are both fundamentally premised on the maintenance of private property, of the capitalist system itself. The function of the church, in the ghetto as everywhere else, has always been to promise rewards in "heaven" for the passive acceptance of injustice and oppression.

## Minimum Basis of Support

We call on the Black Panther Party to decisively break with both parties of capital, Republican and Democrat, and with its own current policies of class-collaboration. Campaign independently, against the bourgeois parties! In this election and in your actions generally, fight for the independence of the working class and oppressed masses from their capitalist masters!

Should your party make this fundamental shift, then despite our many disagreements we could call for critical support for Seale and Brown in the

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# ...NMU

posed can labor hammer out a program and course of action in our interests...."

—attached to Herson's Affidavit Form; reprinted in *Beacon* Supplement, 5 March 1973

Nonetheless Herson refused to admit the bureaucracy's right to thereby stop him from fighting for the interests of his fellow seamen:

"...I consider this 'affidavit' form to be illegitimate. At the same time I will not allow your bureaucratic regulations to bar me from my right to run for office; therefore I submit this form while attacking such witchhunting, red-baiting devices and seek to mobilize the NMU membership to destroy these dictatorial, undemocratic gag rules...."

## The NMU Bureaucracy's "Neutrality" in the Current Elections

Faced with a restive rank and file, and with the threat of government intervention as well, the NMU National Office proclaimed a bogus "neutrality" for the period of the elections. This consisted in eliminating all reference to electioneering, comment on the candidates and signed national or branch reports during January and February from the pages of the *Pilot*, publication of which was then to be suspended for the months of March, April and May! A special election supplement would appear in March to which all candidates—from president to patrolman—would be able to submit a 100-word statement, which the National Office would naturally edit for possible "libel." The Curran bureaucracy has, of course, held tight control over

coming election. But the present Panther program, and the Seale/Brown campaign in particular, is based on a strategy of class-collaboration. Such policies can only lead to the strangulation of the black masses (as well as the white), not to their liberation. The Panther campaign is not a working-class campaign. While the BPP has the support of some black and white workers, it does not depend on the existence of an independent workers' movement, and does not seek to base itself on and express the interests of the working class, but rather wishes to represent the "black community." The "black community" is not a working-class entity, but contains elements from all classes—the proletariat, lumpen-proletariat, petty bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie.

Therefore, because we in the Spartacist League and Revolutionary Communist Youth stand unalterably for the overthrow of the bourgeois state, against class-collaboration, against any faith in capitalists of any color, we must state that we cannot, as a question of principle, at this time support the election campaign of Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown. We hope that you comrades will recognize the disastrous right turn of the Black Panther Party and will struggle to replace the present BPP line of support for black Democrats, black churches, black cops and black capitalists with a revolutionary working-class perspective.

Finally, we would like to draw your attention to an article in *Workers Vanguard* No. 4 which contains a much fuller analysis of your party:

"...The oppression of the black people cannot be ended by black activists alone, but only by the working class as a whole.... That revolution will be made, not in the name of black power, but of working-class power—communism...."

Fraternally,  
Bay Area Spartacist League

the *Pilot* for 25 years and Curran's own multi-paged editorial viewpoint has appeared in every issue. Suspension of the *Pilot* is thus designed to stifle information and debate about union affairs at the very time in which members are most interested in hearing the views of others.

Denied the pages of the *Pilot* in which to present their views, oppositionists have also been harrassed in their efforts to distribute campaign materials in person. MSC candidate Herson was warned by union officials in New York that distribution of his campaign literature in the union hall was a violation of election rules. The MSC, however, refused to be intimidated by bureaucratic harassment; the Caucus continued to distribute its literature, collect signatures and discuss its program with interested union members. The only real safeguard of the rights of militant oppositionists is a conscious membership aware of the need for union solidarity. The "impartial" ally of the union bureaucrats, the Honest Ballot Association, was since then forced to permit distribution of campaign literature within the hall during the month of March. Despite the seeming insignificance of this retreat, the event constitutes a real victory for the rank and file; it marks the first time in 20 years that the membership will not be relegated to discussing union politics and distributing literature on the street. Now views can be exchanged inside the hall, where trade-union business belongs.

All these events demonstrate that the stress placed on the principle of workers democracy in the program of the MSC, and the emphasis on the class independence and solidarity of the working class, correspond to the immediate, felt needs of seamen smarting under 25 years of repression. Not only does the program oppose witchhunting anti-communism but all forms of discrimination against sections of workers in the union and society as a whole. Thus the caucus has fought for abolition of the "group system" within the union. This open shop system, which takes control over admittance of new members from the hands of the membership, was one result of the anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act and is used by bureaucrats and companies alike to divide the seamen, by keeping the lower seniority "Group 2's" in competition for jobs with the "Group 1's." Hence the caucus' demand for full shipping and membership rights for all after thirty days' seetime.

Recognizing that the rights of the working class are essentially "one and indivisible," the MSC program also includes defense of political prisoners and opposition to all forms of racial and sexual oppression. Morrissey, whose reputation as an opportunist rests on firm foundations, has, to the contrary, consistently refused to take a stand on such issues because, as he himself has explicitly stated, it might cost him some votes!

## A Bankrupt Union vs. "I've Got Mine"

Curran's years of betrayal in the NMU have brought the union to the brink of disaster. While collaborating with the companies and government to eliminate jobs and erode the seamen's standard of living, Curran headed off action by the seamen in their own interest through a combination of tight dictatorial control and lying promises of fake remedies in the form of government action. But the protectionist 50-50 oil import bill, which was to have created jobs by requiring that half of all petroleum imported would be shipped in American bottoms, was recently defeated in the Senate. Nor have the Soviet grain deals provided new jobs: U.S. passenger ships have been sold to "foreign" companies owned by American capital. The excitement generated by Curran's election-eve hoax—the rumor now proven to be false that the passenger ship *Independence* was to be restored to service—is an indication of the state of des-



peration to which seamen have been reduced.

Ever sensitive to his own self-interest, Curran, faced with a decline in NMU membership from the job losses he has helped engineer and has accepted as permanent, began to diversify the union, herding in shore-side workers in unrelated industries to serve as voting cattle and to maintain his dues base; much the same cynicism is revealed in the leadership's recent proposal, rammed through the New York port meeting, to sell the \$15 million union headquarters in New York City on the pretext of a need for union funds and for cutbacks in expenses necessitated by the decline of American shipping, an act which constitutes implicit acceptance of a permanent loss of jobs in the industry. Most significantly, the proceeds from the sale of the building are to go into the general fund, over which the union officers have unrestricted control, not back into the *strike fund*, which was liqui-

what a "democratic" NMU with Morrissey at the helm would look like.

Morrissey's entire strategy for securing Curran's plush office for himself boils down to bypassing the union ranks to instead ingratiate himself with the bourgeoisie, securing the services of its liberal lawyers and journalists in exchange for opening the door of the union to the capitalist enemies of labor. Government intervention in union affairs is aimed at destroying the unions, not democratizing them—an elementary fact well documented in labor history. But what does this matter to an aspiring labor-faker?

The true character of government "impartiality" in union elections is in fact demonstrated by the 1969 NMU rerun itself. In that farce virtually every Labor Department procedural decision was biased in favor of the incumbents. The present three-month suspension of the *Pilot* against which Morrissey is fighting is based on a Labor Department ruling made then—that the *Pilot* must contain the views

headlined "Maverick Leads Grass-Roots Revolt in National Maritime Union," make much of the similarity of Morrissey's campaign to that of Arnold Miller in the UMW. What the two share is a trend toward the emergence—amidst much fanfare from the liberal bourgeoisie—of a new brand of government-controlled labor-fakers.

In a period of sharpening capitalist attacks upon working-class rights and living standards, the old bureaucratic union regimes, discredited by their corruption and incapacitated by their inflexibility, have become increasingly incapable of containing the rising militancy of the workers. Aiming to utilize this massive upsurge of working-class discontent solely to come into office, the "oppositionalists," for the most part simply out-bureaucrats like Morrissey, serve to head off working-class revolt through creating the illusion that meaningful reforms are possible "within the system." What renders Morrissey so attractive to the liberals is precisely this non-struggle perspective. He refuses to mobilize the ranks of seamen to struggle in their interests, and he limits his own efforts to running in elections—with his watery, liberal, class-collaborationist program. That he has called the government into the union to do a job only the membership can undertake—ridging itself of the bureaucratic parasites holding back its struggle—is for the liberal bourgeoisie only one more point in his favor.

The complete bankruptcy of such reformism is apparent in Morrissey's own program made up entirely of vague reform promises and mildly militant bread-and-butter demands (in reality, crumbs). He has none of the fake idealism that gave Miller's campaign a grass-roots facade. His program speaks to none of the crucial problems with which seamen are confronted and which amount to a matter of survival. Thus his solution to the job crisis is to spread the limited work available more equitably, not to provide new jobs; he would resolve the problem of runaway foreign-flag shipping simply with the social-patriotic appeal for a government program to expand American shipping, that is, with more of Curran's ineffective and totally discredited grovelling before Congress. (He calls for the taxing of American-owned foreign flag vessels and for the joining together of all labor to defeat the use of "cheap foreign labor" eroding American workers' conditions.) His demand for wage-and-hour parity with seamen in West Coast maritime unions, who face the same loss of jobs and erosion of living standards as do NMU members, is absurdly inadequate.

**MSC's Principled Program**

In contrast, the program of the Militant-Solidarity Caucus is based on the recognition that the fight for the jobs and living standards of seamen and of the working class as a whole can be waged only as a part of the broader struggle of the working class for political power, and only with the awareness that the interests of the workers and their capitalist employers are irreconcilably opposed. Morrissey's apparently "down-to-earth" demands, on the other hand, in accepting as given the "realities" of the companies' need to make profits and the right of the capitalist government to intervene in union affairs, are inherently a sellout: does anyone seriously believe that a Morrissey-led union would advance (let alone fight for) demands for a wage increase which would keep pace with consumer prices (presently advancing at a rate of over 20% per annum)? Should seamen be taken in by Morrissey's "realism," they will all too shortly and to their sorrow discover that it was Morrissey who was promising them "pie in the sky."

This is why MSC candidate Herison, far from simply seeking the "protest vote," is running for office on the basis of the *full program* of the MSC, which alone is adequate to conduct a militant struggle for seamen's needs. The MSC program incorporates demands which

are vital to the immediate needs of seamen but which in order to be realized ultimately require the overthrow of a society based on exploitation of the working class in the interest of profit. Only such a class-struggle program can further recognition by seamen of the fact that their interests as workers are necessarily counterposed to those of the capitalists, their government and their agents within the working class.

Basic to the program is the concept of the *independence of the working class*. The demands advanced in the program are based not on what might perhaps be acceptable to the employers and their government but rather are designed as a vehicle for realizing the vital needs of seamen, and in the only way that this can be done: by a militant struggle of the rank and file which will not shy away from direct conflict with the capitalist myths. Thus the demand for a four-watch system and alternating crews on each ship receiving continuous pay would increase jobs at the expense of employers and eliminate the virtual imprisonment of seamen aboard ship. For those who would say that realization of this demand would result in the total flight of shipping to foreign flags, the caucus puts forth the demand for *international working-class solidarity*, not jingoist protectionism (such as the ILGWU "Buy American" campaign): create an international seamen's union to fight runaway shipping by raising wages of foreign seamen to U.S. standards!

Similarly, the demand for wages and pensions tied to the cost of living corresponds to a vital need of all workers, but will be fought tooth-and-nail by the capitalist class; a key means of increasing profits is to reduce real wages through continuous inflation. The demand "Nationalization of Shipping Without Compensation under Seamen's Control" recognizes the twin realities that the shipping companies have existed only thanks to government subsidies (a typical instance of the American system of "socialism for the rich, free enterprise for the poor"), so that even by bourgeois standards their capitalist owners have no right to compensation; and that mere nationalization under capitalism will lead to increased regimentation of the labor force. Thus all these partial demands necessarily lead to the call for the building of an independent workers party based on the trade unions, and for a workers government. Economic struggle by itself is doomed to failure: what the capitalists give with one hand they take back with the other. Thus, for instance, wage increases are eliminated by speed-up and inflation. Only by politically uniting the class in resolute struggle against the bourgeoisie in every sphere will seamen—and all workers—be able to escape from the prison not just of the fo'c'sle but of capitalist exploitation. ■

**Fake-Lefts Back Morrissey**

Predictably, the existence of a candidate (Gene Heron of the MSC) running for the presidency of a national union on a full program of working-class struggle has revealed the appetites for betrayal and the unprincipled sectarianism of self-styled "socialist" groups who form a Holy Alliance supporting the aspiring bureaucrat, Morrissey.

- The SWP, in the *MILITANT* for 30 March, while criticizing Curran and the CP for their histories of notorious class-collaborationism, nonetheless concludes that Morrissey, through his various court suits (i.e., government intervention) "has done more than anyone else to guard the union treasury and deserves support on that account alone."
- The International Socialists, in the 16-29 March *WORKERS' POWER*, true to their policy of supporting would-be future bureaucrats (in the UAW, Art Fox; in the UMW, Arnold Miller), listed Morrissey's program uncritically, not even mentioning the MSC.
- In a typical display of sectarianism, the Workers League formally claims to support a number of demands in the program of the MSC, but then turns around and calls on Morrissey to implement them. Criticizing Morrissey as one of the men the government would like to see in office, "to hold back the struggle," the 12 March *BULLETIN* nevertheless urges the ranks to "demand an accounting from Morrissey, a break from these policies and a program to defeat the shippers and Nixon..."
- Not to be outdone, the CP in the 3 March *DAILY WORLD*, published Morrissey's program, while red-baiting Heron as did the *NEWS* of Port Arthur, Texas, an oil port dominated by Gulf and Texaco interests.

dated to pay for this frivolous monument to Curran's ego. As Curran said at a convention several years ago, "I've got mine."

The pension plan which the bureaucrats touted as exemplifying the gains achieved under their leadership, and which seamen viewed as the only thing they had left, also seems likely to go by the boards. It was eroded in the 1972 contract by introduction of a minimum retirement age of 55 in addition to the requirement of 280 days seetime per year for 20 years; reports are now being circulated that the "Curran team" will succeed in raising the age minimum to 62 upon expiration of the current contract in June 1975.

of all candidates or none. For the bureaucrats, who have controlled the pages of the *Pilot* for decades, the answer was clearly "none."

Moreover, experienced bureaucrats such as Curran and W.T. Boyle of the United Mine Workers (UMW) are skillful at using the question of government interference in union affairs as a handle against oppositionists relying on such intervention to come to power. In the recent UMW election Boyle, despite his gross corruption, was able to mobilize substantial support around the correct charge that Miller and the Miners for Democracy were being run by government "outsiders"—liberal Democratic Party politicians and lawyers. Likewise, the NMU bureaucrats presented a motion at the January New York port meeting condemning the utilization of the Landrum-Griffin Act to bring the government into union affairs. Despite the blatant hypocrisy of this action on the part of a regime that has regularly preached reliance on the government to provide jobs and has even called the police into NMU halls to break up union meetings, Morrissey, who made no effort to defend his use of the courts, was thereby discredited once again before the membership.

The MSC has consistently opposed any and every interference of the capitalist government into union affairs. In its newspaper, the *Beacon*, and in countless leaflets, the MSC has pointed out that the purpose of its fight against Curran is to enable the NMU to undertake real struggles to defend the workers' interests against the companies and the companies' government. To seek, as Morrissey does, to come to power by way of government intervention is to vitiate in advance the purpose of principled opposition to the Curran regime, by chaining the union in advance to its irreconcilable enemy—the capitalist state!

The various articles which have recently appeared in the bourgeois press praising Morrissey, such as that in the 26 February *Philadelphia Inquirer*

**The Question of Government Intervention**

The only reason the Curran bureaucracy is making a phony pretense to "fairness" in the elections is their fear of government intervention, an ever-present possibility with the likes of James Morrissey contesting the presidency. Morrissey's chief claim to fame is the federal court suit whereby he forced a rerun of the 1966 NMU elections, the first national election ever to be supervised by the Labor Department (the UMW's was the second). Hoping to use the Labor Department to bolster his own sagging campaign, Morrissey has again asked the courts, i.e., the government, to intervene in the NMU election procedures. This present suit is revealing in several respects, particularly the fact that he failed to tell the membership—his supposed constituents—about it. Most significant, however, is his demand that the *Pilot* be published throughout the pre-election period with James Morrissey to be granted half the space in each monthly issue! This is the true nature of Morrissey's altruistic concern for union democracy—half the pie for himself and to hell with the rest of the membership! It is an ominous warning as to

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