

CHICANO DRAFT RESOLUTION

for PC discussion

Before the 1960s Chicanos were generally viewed as the "silent" or "invisible" minority. This myth exploded when the nation's second largest oppressed nationality entered into struggle around a whole range of issues which gave rise to a movement against the oppression they face as a people. These struggles ranged from the fight for bilingual and bicultural education to the historic drive of Chicano farm workers to organize the huge agribusiness monopolies in the Southwest; from the movement to regain stolen lands to the fight for more political rights and control over institutions in the Chicano community. This upsurge of nationalist struggles marked the entry into the class struggle of a significant political movement against the super oppression Chicanos face in American society, and the beginning of a deep radicalization of a potentially powerful ally of the working class.

The purpose of this resolution is to look at the Chicano people today, examine trends effecting them; discuss the impact of the present economic crisis on Chicanos and the prospects for future advances for the Chicano people; to assess where the Chicano movement and its leadership stands today, focusing on those developments in the Chicano struggle that indicate the weaknesses and strengths of its leadership in the period of

capitalist crisis. Among these developments, we will take a closer look at the United Farm Workers movement, the Raza Unida parties, the Chicano student movement and Chicanos in labor.

The economic crisis and Chicanos

Despite gains registered over the last decade and a half of struggle, the social, political and economic status of Chicanos remains relatively unchanged and the nation's over six million Chicanos remain pariahs in American society.



High unemployment, low incomes, dilapidated and substandard housing, racist education that has resulted in illiteracy rates higher than for the population as a whole, and the virtual absence of Chicano representation on all governmental levels is the normal state of affairs for Chicanos.

Chicanos suffer a dual oppression in American society. That is, they are oppressed because of race, culture and language, and are exploited as part of the working class.

The special oppression of Chicanos means that a large number of them live in poverty during the best of economic times. But in the context of the economic crisis, more and more Chicanos are being driven into wretched poverty. A 1974 report on "low-income" Americans and poverty in the United States showed that 12 percent of the total population had incomes below the poverty level. Approximately 23 percent of these were persons of Spanish origin. The capitalist government tries to hide the

the real extent of poverty among Chicanos by lumping them into an amorphous category which includes Cubans, who are a relatively more privileged layer of the population than Chicanos or Puerto Ricans--the bulk of the Spanish-origin people in the country. This is also true for the unemployment statistics on this sector of the population.

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Unemployment, a chronic problem for Chicanos, has been on a steady rise as Chicanos are hit with layoffs due to their "last hired, first fired" status on the job market. Joblessness among the Spanish-speaking work force rose from 8.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 1974 to 11.8 percent in the same quarter of 1975. These statistics do not include the tens of thousands of Chicanos who are simply not counted because they have never been in the work force before and don't qualify for unemployment benefits, or the large numbers of Chicanos who are underemployed in part-time or seasonal jobs for subsistence wages.

On top of the burden of unemployment, sharp attacks on Chicano rights to an equal education have been launched by racist forces with the support of Democratic and Republican politicians. Segregation of Chicanos into the worst schools, racist teachers and administrators, and suppression of the Spanish language has already given Chicanos one of the highest dropout and pushout rates of any section of the American population. But the mounting racist offensive against school de-

segregation and bilingual-bicultural education, as well as cutbacks in funds to education, are wiping out even the few gains Chicanos have won through their struggles.

The ruling capitalist class tries to escape blame for the deteriorating living standards of American workers by whipping up a racist and xenophobic hysteria designed to roll back the advances of Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities on the social, political, and economic fronts.

The fact that the terrible living conditions of Chicanos persist in spite of significant struggles carried out against their oppression only emphasizes the depth of racism in American society and points to the kind of powerful movement it will take to eradicate it.

The Chicano movement today

The late 1960s and early 1970s saw an upsurge in Chicano nationalism. This new militancy was rooted in significant changes in the Chicano population that occurred at the time of World War II. These were the massive migration of Chicanos from the rural areas into the urban centers, their entry into the industrial proletariat, and a significant growth of the Chicano population with the large influx of Mexican workers into the United States to provide a cheap source of labor for rapidly expanding agribusiness in the Southwest.

The struggles of Chicanos exploded in the context of profound national and international events that shaped the worldwide youth radicalization of the 1960s. Chicanos ~~like youth,~~ were deeply inspired and affected by the advances of the colonial revolution in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. At the same time, the successes of the civil rights movement and the rise of Black nationalist consciousness had a major impact on Chicanos, some of whom had participated in the civil rights movement and followed developments in the Black liberation struggle.

Chicanos benefited directly from the struggles of Blacks during this period. The gains won by the civil rights struggle and concessions made by the capitalists following the massive ghetto uprisings in 1968-1969 were extended to one degree or another to the Chicano population without them having to mobilize on the massive scale that the Black population did to force these concessions. These gains helped to spur Chicanos into a struggle against their own specific oppression and exploitation. For while Chicanos gained inspiration in part from the Black struggle, several important differences should be noted:

First is the language question. While statistics vary, it is estimated that as much as one-half of the Chicano population views Spanish as their primary language. The suppression of their language, and the related cultural oppression are central to the maintenance of Chicano oppression. This issue has been

one that has precipitated militant struggles in the Chicano community beginning with the high school blowouts in 1968-1969 in the Southwest.

A second major difference is that as much as 85 percent of the Chicano population lives in a well-defined geographical area of the country--the southwestern states of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, California and Texas--which is bound by history, culture and language to both Mexico and the United States.

A third distinction is that they are the victims of racist immigration policies of the U.S. government. These have resulted in harassment and deportations of not only mexicanos working in the country without immigration visas, but also of Chicanos who are often caught up in the dragnet raids of the immigration department.

These and other aspects of their oppression helped to determine the character of the Chicano struggle as unique and distinct from that of any other oppressed national minority, and indicated the axes of struggles that gave rise to a new generation of militant Chicano fighters.

An important struggle that arose was the fight against the war in Vietnam. Opposition to Washington's imperialist war and disproportionately high casualty rates for Chicano GIs in that war helped to fuel the militancy and combativity of the Chicano people. Chicano leaders, less affected by the adven-

turism and ultraleftism that a section of the Black leadership fell prey to at that time, mobilized tens of thousands of Chicanos in actions against the war. The most significant of these was the National Chicano Moratorium in August, 1970, when 30,000 Chicanos demonstrated in East Los Angeles in opposition to U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia, and the racist oppression they suffer at home. The demonstration successfully linked the fight against U.S. imperialism with the national oppression of Chicanos in the United States. It was the first such massive mobilization in the Chicano community and had a deep impact on Chicanos and the ruling class's attitude toward them.

In addition to the struggle against the war, Chicano students engaged in fights for equal education through actions demanding bilingual-bicultural programs in the schools, for open admissions in the universities, the establishment of Chicano studies programs, and the hiring of more Chicano faculty.

A focal point of the movement throughout the 1960s and early 1970s was the drive by farm workers, led by César Chávez, to organize agricultural laborers. From its inception, the farm workers saw their movement as a social movement embodying the fight for social justice for the campesinos with a drive to win collective bargaining rights and union benefits. It was la causa--the Cause--as the farm workers movement is called by

Chicanos, together with the land-grant movement led by Reies López Tijerina, that forced into the public eye the plight of Chicanos and marked their social and political awakening as a people. These two efforts influenced and provided the initial impulses of the Chicano movement.

The land-grant movement declined in the early 1970s under the impact of a fierce government repression and the arrests of its central leaders, including Tijerina. On his release from prison in 1972, Tijerina organized a national Chicano conference in Albuquerque where he tried to woo Chicanos who had begun to organize independent Chicano political parties--the Raza Unida parties--back into the Democratic party. His inability to come to grips with the growing sentiment among Chicanos for independent Chicano political action helped to isolate him from a layer of the most active supporters of the land-grant movement.

Issues confronting Chicanos

The Chicano movement and its leaders face many new challenges with the attacks on democratic rights and gains they made in their past struggles. A counteroffensive around the major issues affecting Chicanos is necessary to beat back the ruling class assault. Chief among these issues are education, jobs, and deportations.

1. Education

Through the suppression of the Spanish language and the promotion of North American culture as superior to that of Chicanos, the capitalists aim to strip Chicanos of their heritage and cultural identity in order to facilitate keeping Chicanos in their place as a cheap source of labor that also serves as a detachment of the reserve industrial army. The main way in which the capitalists have maintained inferior education for Chicanos is through cultivating a linguistic handicap among Chicanos that guarantees that a large section of the Chicano population cannot speak, read or write well in either English or Spanish. The inability to communicate adequately in English is then used as racist justification for denying Chicanos better-paying jobs and keeping them in the lowest-skilled, poorest-paying, dangerous and seasonal work. It is also used to foster chauvinistic sentiment among Anglo workers by painting the picture of Chicanos as "un-American" or bad Americans because they can't speak English well.

Thus, the fight for adequate bilingual-bicultural programs in the public schools, and the fight for Chicano community control over these programs is at the heart of the Chicano struggle for equality. An independent study estimated that more than eight million students--mostly Chicano and Puerto Rican--are in need of bilingual-bicultural education. Less than 5 percent of those students who need it receive any kind of bilingual

education. This situation has helped to push Chicano children into classes for the "mentally retarded" ^{at a rate} /two and three times their proportion in the school population as a whole.

When Chicano high school students walked out of their classes in 1968 and 1969 they raised the demand "Education, not Eradication!" and demanded that the educational system be responsive to their needs. Central to their struggle was a call for the institution of bilingual-bicultural education in the schools, as well as demands that the schools be open to the Chicano community, and that there be increased hiring of Chicano teachers, counselors, and administrators. These and subsequent struggles won the establishment of bilingual programs in some areas.

These gains are under attack by racist forces today. At the same time, bilingual-bicultural programs are among the first to be axed with the budget cutbacks. The attacks on bilingual-bicultural education are an important aspect of the general racist offensive against equal education, and are linked to attacks on busing to desegregate the schools.

In Denver, for example, racist forces lined up against court-ordered desegregation and the court's provision stipulating the immediate implementation of bilingual-bicultural education in Denver schools. The racists, organized into the Citizens Association for Neighborhood Schools, are supported and abetted

by the Denver school board, as well as other Democrats and Republicans in the state. They raise the specter of little Anglo Children being "forced" to learn a "foreign language" in their "own country" to win support for their racist drive.

A similar struggle is taking place in Tucson, Arizona, where Chicano parents and students in the majority-Chicano School District One are fighting for the right to control the schools in the district because of the failure of the school board to provide bilingual-bicultural education and insure an equal education for Chicano students. At the same time, a suit was filed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) to desegregate Tucson's schools.

Unfortunately, in Tucson, as in Denver, and elsewhere, there is confusion among Chicanos on the question of support to busing, and the racists have used statements by Chicano leaders opposed to busing to bolster their drive against Black and Chicano rights to an equal education.

Some Chicano militants incorrectly counterpose the fight for bilingual-bicultural education and the need for Chicano control over the schools in their communities to the fight for busing. They understand that education in the United States is racist to the core, and view busing as the rulers' way of trying to "integrate" Chicanos into schools and a society that are out

to destroy their culture, heritage, and language. A problem that exacerbates the confusion on busing is that in some places court-ordered busing has been used consciously designed to destroy existing bilingual-bicultural programs.

Chicanos, like Blacks, are the victims of de facto segregation in American society. There is a long history of Chicano struggles against segregation, not only in education, but in housing and public facilities that go back to the early 1940s. Chicanos in California, Arizona, and Texas were successful in striking down local laws segregating Chicanos even before the Supreme Court decision in 1954 outlawing "seperate but equal schools." But Chicanos remain segregated into the worst schools, and the fight today is to implement the law of the land and beat back attempts to deny Chicanos the right to attend any school of their choice, including the relatively better-equipped, better-staffed Anglo schools. In addition, it is necessary to organize to win support for Chicano struggles to maintain and extend existing bilingual-bicultural programs. Where busing of Chicanos takes place, the demand must be raised that bilingual-bicultural programs go with Chicano students to the schools they are being bused to, regardless of the number of Chicano students being bused.

What is involved in both of these struggles is the right of the communities of the oppressed nationalities to decide for

themselves how and through what means they will achieve equality in education. The struggle for desegregation of the schools and the fight to maintain and extend bilingual-bicultural education are parts of the same struggle and against the same enemy --the racist capitalist system, which systematically denies equal education to Chicanos, Blacks, and Puerto Ricans in order to keep them in their superexploited situations.

In addition to these challenges Chicanos are faced with rapidly dwindling opportunities to get a college education. Budget cutbacks and tuition hikes affect Chicano and other minority students most because they are forced to rely more on financial aid and scholarship programs, as well as special education programs to help make up for the inferior education they receive in the public schools, in order to attend college. Gains that Chicano students won in the early 1970s, such as increased admissions into the colleges and universities, the establishment of Chicano studies departments, and the hiring of more Chicano professors and administrators are being wiped out.

Antiracist forces have begun to take up the fight against attacks on bilingual-bicultural education, desegregation and budget cuts. Actions like those in support of the rights of Blacks in Boston to equal education on May 17, 1975, and April 24, 1976, provide important examples of the kind of struggles Chicanos can organize in order to respond to the racist offensive.

It is becoming clear in the face of the racist assault on Chicano and Black rights that gains won in the past are not permanent. They were wrung out of the capitalists largely as a result of powerful mass actions by Chicanos, Blacks and Puerto Ricans demanding their rights. Similar action is necessary in order to defend these gains if Chicanos are to win further advances.

2. Jobs

The issue of jobs ^{which} is a burning one for Chicanos at all times, ^{is even more urgent} ~~but~~ because of the economic crisis, ^T the racist hiring and firing policies of the employers ~~and the reactionary policies of the trade union bureaucrats~~ are resulting in ^{discriminatory layoffs of Chicanos and} unemployment rates nearly twice that of the Anglo work force.

The ^{racist} trade union bureaucracy ^{is unwilling to wage the struggle} ~~is committed to defending its own narrow self-interests, and refuses to come to the defense~~ necessary to combat unemployment of Chicanos and other doubly oppressed sectors of the working class who bear a major burden of the unemployment. Some of the racist bureaucrats have used defense of the seniority system ^{discriminatory} to justify the big layoffs of Chicanos, other oppressed nationalities and women, who may have little seniority because of the racist hiring policies of employers, and were hired through affirmative action programs.

^{bosses}
The ruling class strategy is the age old
strategy of divide and rule. While attacking
the jobs of all workers they try to divide the
working people into ^{two categories: those who are} privileged and ^{those who are} oppressed,
like the chicanos.

The seniority system itself was won through struggles by working people to prevent the bosses from arbitrarily firing whomever they please. However, this should not be perverted by the capitalists or the trade union bureaucrats to help strengthen their racist hiring practices.

To combat unemployment, ~~of Chicanos and all workers~~, emergency public works programs are needed to create millions of socially useful jobs. Among these ^{must} could be programs for the construction of decent, low-cost housing in the Chicano community; hospitals and health care centers in the urban barrios and rural colonias; schools in the Chicano community; parks and recreation centers and other things the Chicano people need. In addition, a cut in the work week with no cut in pay to spread around the available work is a measure that should be instituted to help combat unemployment. These are demands that speak to the need for the labor movement to refuse to allow the capitalists to force the burden of the economic crisis onto the backs of the working class.

Because discriminatory employment practices are used to deny Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities jobs, special steps are necessary in order to protect these workers. Layoffs threaten to liquidate whatever advances Chicanos have made against discrimination in hiring and promotion on the job.

Chicano unionists in the American Federation of Government Employees, Local 1617, have threatened a class action suit against the U.S. Air Force challenging discriminatory layoffs at Kelly Air Force base in San Antonio, where 70 percent of the Chicano work force face layoffs.

Chicanos should join with Black and other workers, women and the Socialist Workers party in demanding that the seniority system not be used as a club against Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities by their bosses and racist trade union officials to bolster their already racist hiring practices. One demand which is being put forward is that where layoffs take place, the same percentage of Chicanos, Blacks, and other victims of racism on the job, as well as women, remain the same after the layoffs as were working before.

To make the workers believe that there is an individual solution to the current economic crisis, the employing class uses racism to divide the working class and pit white male workers against all others. Fighting for the position that the percentage of Chicano and other doubly oppressed workers be kept the same in spite of layoffs is important in helping to foster elementary class solidarity within the labor movement with the most oppressed and exploited layers of the working class. It also poses the question of the need to transform

the unions into a class-struggle social movement that can champion the demands of all the oppressed--both on and off the job.

The end of discrimination on the job and the upgrading of Chicano workers into higher-paying positions is a demand that must be linked to any program to expand jobs. Because Chicanos are used as part of the reserve army of industrial labor, and are pushed into the most unskilled job categories, demands for preferential hiring promotion and job training to upgrade Chicano workers are needed.

Affirmative action in hiring and demands against discriminatory layoffs are the target of big attacks by the capitalists because such demands cut across the capitalists' desire to maintain control of hiring and firing, and keep Chicanos and other oppressed nationalities in the position where they are forced to accept the worst jobs for the worst pay.

3. Immigration and deportation

A third important issue facing Chicanos that is closely linked to the fight for jobs and against discriminatory layoffs is the racist immigration policies that have resulted in the deportations of hundreds of thousands of mexicano, Central American, and Caribbean workers without immigration visas.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service of the Justice Department (INS) estimates that between six to eight million

workers are in the United States without papers. One to four million of these "illegal aliens" cross the U.S. border yearly in search of better jobs. Of these, 85 to 90 percent come from Mexico.

Mexican immigration has always been an important factor in the Chicano work force, and in the Chicano population as a whole. It has helped to swell the ranks of the Chicano population, and constantly reinforces the cultural and historical ties of the Chicano people to their Mexican ancestors.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Mexican immigration was encouraged by the American capitalists to provide a cheap source of labor in their fields and textile mills. Bad conditions in Mexico facilitated this immigration.

At the start of the Second World War, expanded war production drew many of the nation's farmers and farm workers into the cities and into basic industry. At the same time, agriculture was undergoing a rapid expansion, and growers feared that elimination of the large surplus labor pool would drive up wages and create conditions more favorable to unionization of the fields. This led to a negotiated contract between the Mexican government and the United States under which the Roosevelt administration/for the importation of mexicano workers to fill the needs of American agribusiness. The Bracero Program, as the

contract was named, brought nearly half a million Mexicans into the U.S. legally to work on the farms at slave wages, plus a special "consignment" to work on the section gangs and maintenance crews of the railroads. The U.S. government shelled out a total of \$20,000,000 to the Mexican government in payment for the mexicano labor. This amounted to a direct government subsidy to American agribusiness. This program continued into the 1960s.

Mexican immigration, unlike that of Europeans to the United States, has historically been viewed by the capitalists as a transient work force. INS figures ~~would~~ place undocumented workers at close to 8 percent of the total U.S. work force. The majority of these workers are concentrated in the garment and textile industries, rubber and plastics, stone and clay, cosmetics, furniture, food processing and footwear. Others are involved in the manufacture of some metals, laundry services, railroad transportation and construction in the lowest-paying, unskilled categories of these industries.

Agribusiness remains a major employer of mexicano immigrants, both with and without visas.

The capitalists have reinstated massive deportations in an effort to shift the blame for the economic crisis to these workers without papers, and give the impression to American

workers that the government has their best interests at heart and is trying to alleviate their economic difficulties.

Racist immigration practices are not new. They have characterized every period of social and economic crisis in the United States. Today, the capitalists are attempting to paint a picture of hordes of Mexicans swooping down on Americans to steal their jobs. The bourgeois media publishes article after article claiming these undocumented workers are on welfare, receive unemployment benefits, and other social services, thus burdening American workers with heavier taxes. The lie of this racist campaign is exposed by the real facts. A study by the INS revealed that of nearly 200,000 mexicanos working without visas who were apprehended in 1975, 132,000 made less than \$2.50 an hour, and most were working in the fields. These facts clearly demonstrate that the illegal is the victim of economic injustice, not the cause. ?

The deportations have escalated to monstrous proportions, with almost daily raids by immigration into the Chicano barrios. In addition to the deportations, the U.S. Congress is considering a variety of bills designed to further infringe on the rights of these workers as well as those of Chicanos. One measure which would fine employers who "knowingly hire" workers without papers, would also empower the U.S. attorney general to issue citizen-

ship identification papers for employers' use, a step toward the introduction of internal passports which Chicanos and others of Latin American descent would have to produce in order to get a job. These legislative proposals simply provide one more excuse for the racist employers to deny employment to Chicanos.

Among the most frenzied supporters of the government's racist anti-immigrant workers campaign are the trade union bureaucrats. The demands of the labor misleaders to deport workers without papers are a coverup for their refusal to lead a fight in defense of the living standards of working people in this country. As it becomes clearer to the ranks of the trade unions that the class collaborationist policies of their misleaders do not protect even existing jobs and living standards, the voices of the labor bureaucrats get shriller and louder in support of deportations.

The importance of reversing the reactionary position of the labor leaders on this issue was emphasized in the 1975 Socialist Workers party political resolution, which stated:

"International labor solidarity is fundamental to unifying and defending the working class, its gains, and its organizations. The right to move freely back and forth across the border, the right to work in the United States when and where one chooses, without fear of harassment because of lack of work

papers or immigration documents is one of the demands at the very heart of the Chicano struggle. This claim puts the labor movement to a severe test, on that the AFL-CIO officialdom has flunked miserably up to now."

Chicano workers will play a key role in helping to reverse the racist position of the labor movement, as well as be a key force in a mass movement of the Chicano people and its allies to halt the deportations.

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Lack of leadership in the Chicano struggle that can mobilize Chicanos to fight around all of these issues facilitates the government attacks on Chicano rights. The crisis of leadership in the Chicano movement was aggravated by the general downturn in radical activity that occurred with the end of direct U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia in 1972.

Much of the promising youth leadership that emerged out of the Chicano struggles in the 1960s and early 1970s were sucked into community organizing programs sponsored and funded by capitalist government agencies, or drawn into dead-end ultraleft and sectarian politics.

Organizations like CASA (Centro de Acción Social Autónoma-- Center for Autonomous Social Action) first established in Los Angeles to fight deportations, and which was successful in

organizing important demonstrations involving hundreds of undocumented mexicano workers in defense of their rights, as well as their supporters, have since degenerated into a workerist, sectarian group and taken a step back from organizing support for undocumented workers. Instead, Los Angeles CASA has oriented its work to a small layer of politicized Chicanos, and ultraleft-sectarians rather than to the masses of Chicano and mexicano people.

Chicano political action

Displaced from the land they once owned with the expansion and consolidation of North American capitalism in the Southwest, the native Mexican inhabitants were driven by force and violence into the position of an oppressed nationality. Part of this process was to reduce Chicanos to the status of second-class citizens by systematically denying them their political rights through the use of terror. Even with formal political guarantees, the use of English ballots served to successfully exclude Chicanos from direct participation in the political life of the country.

This situation has resulted in many struggles by Chicanos to gain some voice in American politics. One of the first ways Chicanos have tried to win political rights was through participation in the Democratic party. Organizations like the Mexican-American Political Association (MAPA) in California and the Political Association of Spanish-Speaking Organizations (PASO) in

Texas were established with the aim of pressuring the Democratic party into addressing the needs of Chicanos. MAPA and PASO register Chicanos to vote, organize the Chicano vote for the Democrats, and seek to get Chicano Democrats elected to public office. Since 1956, Chicanos have voted in their overwhelming majority for the Democratic party. The only exception to this was in 1966 when Chicano Democrats in Texas, Arizona and New Mexico organized to throw Chicano support to one major Republican candidate with the hope that this would force the Democratic party to be more responsive to Chicano demands.

While there has been a slight increase in the number of Chicanos elected to office, Chicanos are still miserably under-represented on all governmental levels. An example of this is in Los Angeles County, where well over one million Chicanos reside. The first Chicano congressperson ever elected from this area was elected 114 years after California gained statehood. There is still no Chicano representation on the 15-member Los Angeles city council, and no Chicano has ever been elected to the 5-member L.A. County Board of Supervisors. This latter body administers East Los Angeles, the largest Chicano barrio in the country. The Democratic party machine in Los Angeles County has successfully stymied efforts by the Chicano-majority in East Los Angeles to incorporate the area into a separate city in three special elections.

Under the impact of rising Chicano militancy over the last decade, the Democratic party has stepped up its efforts to hold on to the Chicano vote. One reflection of this was the election for the first time in history of two Chicano governors in 1974. The fact that there has been an increase, however slight, of Chicano elected officials in the last decade is a reflection of the deepening nationalist consciousness among Chicanos and an expression of their desires to be represented in the political arena by their own people.

However, gains for the Chicano people have not resulted from getting Chicano Democrats into office. The Democratic party is the representative of the capitalist oppressor of Chicanos in the political arena, and as such, cannot represent the interest of this or any other oppressed or exploited sector of the population.

Deepening disillusionment in the Democratic party led a layer of Chicano militants to break from this party and organize their own independent political formations. The perspective of independent Chicano political action was first discussed and debated by Chicanos on a national scale at the National Chicano Youth Liberation conferences held in 1969 and 1970 in Denver, Colorado. The conferences were called by the Denver Crusade for Justice, an urban civil rights and Chicano cultural organization

that emerged in the mid-1960s. Its leader, Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales, had been a minor Democratic party functionary in Denver but broke from the Democrats because of their lack of response to the aspirations of Chicanos.

The development of the Raza Unida parties, with all their strengths, and weaknesses, represents the most sustained initiatives to date in the direction of independent Chicano and working class political action.

The establishment of these parties arose directly from the needs of the Chicano people and their present level of consciousness. In order to have a real voice in American politics, the Chicano people need a mass party, organizationally and politically independent from the twin parties of capitalist rule. A mass, independent Chicano political party would confront the capitalist class in the electoral arena to pose a real alternative for Chicanos at the polls on the one hand, and, on the other, it would mobilize the Chicano masses in actions in the streets around their immediate day-to-day needs.

Such a party would open the way for new alignments and alliances with other oppressed and exploited groups and would prove the most effective means of promoting and protecting the interests of Chicanos. The development of a mass Chicano political party would have a profound impact on American politics, particularly on the Democratic party. This capitalist

party relies on support from a combination of labor and the oppressed nationalities for its strength in the electoral arena. If Chicanos were to leave the Democratic party on a massive scale, it would significantly weaken the Democrats, particularly in the Southwest, where the Chicano vote is important for Democratic party victories--a factor which helps to keep Blacks and labor tied to this party. A mass, independent, Chicano political party would be an inspiration to Blacks and other working people, and would encourage the development of independent political action on their part.

Unfortunately, a political party of this type does not yet exist. The various Raza Unida Party formations and the successes they have chalked up in their six years of existence helps to deepen the understanding among Chicanos and others of the need to break from the Democratic party. These parties are the most advanced forms of organization yet to emerge in the Chicano struggle, but it must be pointed out that since 1972, their development has been uneven and somewhat limited, despite the demonstrated potential for the construction of a powerful Raza Unida party movement. To understand some of the problems these parties face, it is useful to look at the development of the Raza Unida parties in California, Colorado, and Texas.

The most glaring example of the unevenness in the development

of the Raza Unida parties is the slow growth of the California parties, particularly the Raza Unida groupings in Los Angeles. For the most part, parties in Fresno, San Diego, San Jose and Oakland exist only as paper organizations or as very small groupings around an individual. In general, the parties in these areas have not utilized the openings of elections to build a base among Chicanos nor have they participated as parties in struggles pressing the demands of Chicanos. An example of the problems of the parties in California is the Raza Unida grouping in Oakland, which had a promising start in 1971-1972, elaborated a program of militant demands which provided an example for other Raza Unida parties to emulate, and won important support among Chicanos in Oakland, Berkeley and San Francisco. Its leaders, who were basically a core of radical Chicano students at Merritt College in Oakland, moved in a sectarian direction and abandoned the perspective of building the Raza Unida Party.

In Los Angeles, the large size of the Chicano population indicates the great opportunities open for the construction of a powerful and effective Chicano political party, which would have a profound impact on politics in Los Angeles and in the nation as a whole. Such a party in Los Angeles could win significant support from Blacks and unionists--particularly Chicano unionists, who are active in the Chicano movement.

However, the various Raza Unida party groupings in Los Angeles are very small and disunited. A major reason for this is the pressure exerted on these tiny parties by both opportunists and sectarians within the Chicano movement, and the strength of the Chicano Democrats.

The potential for building a viable Chicano party in Los Angeles has been demonstrated in several local election campaigns run by the RUPs, where significant support was registered, particularly in the Chicano barrio of East Los Angeles. The campaigns of Raul Ruiz, a leader of the City Terrace chapter of the Raza Unida party, for state assembly against a Chicano Democrat in 1972, and for city Council in the special election for incorporation of East Los Angeles in 1974, indicated the deep sentiment among Chicanos for a party truly representing their interests in the political arena. If East Los Angeles had been incorporated into a separate city in 1974, Raul Ruiz, who outpolled Democrats in the city council election, would have been one of the first city council members in what would have been the largest Chicano city in the country. Unfortunately, a leadership capable of organizing and consolidating even the support already registered for the Raza Unida party at the polls into a viable Chicano party has not yet come forward in Los Angeles.

In Colorado, the Raza Unida Party was initiated and is led by the Denver Crusade for Justice. The militant leaders of the Crusade, especially Corky Gonzales, had the clearest understanding of the need for independent political action of Chicanos from the Democratic party, and were the most active proponents of building a party that was absolutely independent from the capitalist parties. In the initial stages of its formation, the Colorado party showed the greatest promise of developing into an important component of a future mass independent Chicano political party. Gonzales saw the need for this question to be debated and discussed broadly within the Chicano movement, and sponsored national Chicano youth conferences in 1969, 1970, and 1971 that were arenas for a rich discussion on the strategy of independent Chicano political action.

The Colorado Raza Unida party has its main base in Denver, where the Crusade for Justice is located and has deep roots in the Chicano community. Through participating in statewide and county elections in 1972 and 1974, the party was able to extend its influence into major Chicano centers in southern Colorado, particularly Weld County and Pueblo, where the Chicano population are very large.

A major weakness of the Colorado party is that it has always been projected by its leaders as nothing more than the

electoral arm of the Crusade for Justice. This cuts across the potential for winning many Chicanos in Colorado to the Raza Unida party's banner because many may not be ready to make the kind of commitment that the activists of the Crusade have made. The other side of this weakness is that the Colorado party is not seen as an activist party, participating in the daily struggles of Chicanos because this aspect of the party is carried out by the Crusade.

These problems have been exacerbated over the last three years, as the Crusade is under a severe repression by the capitalists. This began with the 1973 police assault on the Crusade's school, Escuela Tlatelolco, where one Chicano youth was killed by the cops, and scores of others were arrested on frame-up charges designed to make the victims into the criminals in the eyes of the public. Since then, a systematic campaign of harassment and intimidation has been carried out, and the Crusade and Raza Unida party leaders have had to expend valuable time and resources fighting legal frame-ups ranging from traffic tickets to bombing charges. The killings of six Raza Unida party student activists in two 1974 bombing incidents in Boulder dramatized the seriousness of the government's harassment campaign. The latest outrage was the arrest last fall of a key leader of the Raza Unida party and cofounder of the Crusade

for Justice on charges of allegedly conspiring to bomb a police substation in Denver. The chief witness for the prosecution in this case was a Chicano informer and provocateur hired by the Alcohol, Firearms and Tobacco Division of the Justice Department to infiltrate the Crusade. This points to direct complicity on the part of the federal government in the campaign to discredit, isolate, and, if possible, destroy the Crusade and the Raza Unida party.

The response to these attacks has been a turning inward of the Crusade. Instead of mobilizing the Chicano community as its defense, and appealing to all supporters of civil liberties to defend the Crusade, the organization's leaders tend to have a sectarian defense policy that excludes those who don't agree with the Crusade's aims.

This sectarian approach to defense has also led the Crusade and the Raza Unida party to abstain from a major struggle in Denver against attacks on bilingual-bicultural education. Instead of leading a real fight that could mobilize Chicano students and parents alike to secure bilingual-bicultural programs, the Crusade leaders have counterposed utopian counterinstitutional solutions. This has aided the further isolation of this organization from important allies in the Chicano community who are looking for leadership in their struggle against the racist attacks on their right to equal education.

The Raza Unida party has also lost some of its most promising youth leadership. Difference over perspectives for building the Raza Unida party and how decisions are made, led to the disbanding of the Greeley Raza Unida grouping, which was the backbone of the Weld County RUP. Some of its key leaders have since become Maoists.

The survival of the Texas party, its broad support throughout the state, and its accomplishments testify to the viability of the concept of an independent Chicano political party.

The Texas party emerged out of a militant Chicano student struggle led by the Mexican-American Youth Organization (MAYO) in the small Texas town of Crystal City. Crystal City is overwhelmingly Chicano, and the 1969 struggle by Chicano high school students protesting racist practices in their schools led to a massive mobilization of the Chicano community, which sparked a struggle by Chicanos to gain control over the schools in the city. The community organization set up to support the MAYO-led blowouts, Ciudadanos Unidos, formed the basic core of the Raza Unida party, along with MAYO, and fielded independent Chicano candidates for school board in 1970. The impact of electoral victories in Crystal City inspired the growth of Raza Unida parties all over South Texas, where Chicanos comprise a majority of the population.

Since then, the Raza Unida parties have won elections for school board, city council, justice of the peace, sheriff, and other city offices in a number of small South Texas towns. Programmatically, these parties aspire to Chicano control of the institutions in the Chicano community. In Crystal City where the Raza Unida party holds a majority of seats on the school board and city council, bilingual-bicultural programs, free lunch, and the hiring of Chicanos to replace racist teachers have been instituted in the Crystal City schools. The Raza Unida-run city administration in Crystal City has also banned the hated Texas Rangers from the city, has fought the major utility company servicing Crystal City in the courts to prevent the company from instituting a hike in utility rates. The city administration has also fought the employers of the Del Monte cannery, the major business in Crystal City, and has supported and helped to organize Chicano workers in the plant to win a union that represents them. In 1974, the founder of the Crystal City Raza Unida Party, José Angel Gutiérrez, was elected to a judgeship in Zavala County.

While important gains have been scored through these electoral victories, it must be pointed out that such control is very tenuous. Severe limitations are posed to controlling city administrations and schools in one or two cities, especially

small towns like Crystal City. Only so much can be changed through Chicano control of city governments, especially those lacking in the financial resources necessary to institute meaningful changes for Chicanos. The basic power and wealth in Crystal City remains in the hands of a tiny Anglo minority which owns approximately 95 percent of the businesses. To be able to have any effect at all on the depressed conditions of Chicanos, Raza Unida party city administrations must rely on state and federal funds. To insure that these programs do not involve compromising the demands and needs of Chicanos, it is necessary to mobilize the Chicano community to demand that the government finance schools, housing, jobs, health care and other social programs necessary to improve the lot of Chicanos. Such a struggle needs to be conducted on a scale beyond the local area and involve Chicanos across the Southwest in a fight to secure these gains.

The Texas party has been somewhat weak on this question. The key leaders of the Texas party tend to view as the main task of the Raza Unity party the building of viable chapters in the Southern counties of Texas where the Chicano population is large enough to insure electoral victories. RUP statewide electoral campaigns run in 1972 and 1974 were important steps forward in building the influence of the party on a statewide

basis and extending the Raza Unida party into major urban centers where Chicanos represent a significant minority. These campaigns of the Raza Unida party resulted in the establishment of RUP chapters in Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, San Antonio and Corpus Christi, and won support from some Black and labor organizations.

They helped to popularize the concept of independent Chicano political action on a broad scale and made an impact on Texas politics. However, the Texas party leadership generally looks at these statewide efforts as a way of meeting the rigid, undemocratic Texas requirements for a political party to maintain its ballot status and receive the funds Democrats and Republicans do to carry out primaries. After the elections, little time is spent trying to consolidate support registered for the Raza Unida party in these elections, and activity for those interested in building support for the party and linking it to the immediate struggles of Chicanos is generally not thought out.

This is a problem that confronts the Raza Unida parties as a whole. They are grappling with the question of how to win the majority of Chicanos to the Raza Unida party and also win allies among broader layers of the population. This is a political problem that cannot be solved organizationally.

In their search for allies, the Raza Unida parties have shown a lack of clarity on the central question of no support to the Democratic party or its politicians. This was most clearly expressed in the months preceding the 1972 National Raza Unida Parties Conference held in El Paso, Texas. Before the conference, José Angel Gutiérrez, and other RUP leaders from Texas, put forward a strategy that would have transformed the RUPs into nothing more than a pressure group begging for concessions from the Democratic and Republican parties. This "balance of power" strategy, as Gutiérrez tagged it, maintained that because Chicanos had enough votes to throw the national elections to either the Democratic or Republican candidate, the Raza Unida parties were in a unique bargaining position. Those who favored this perspective argued that the RUP should deliver the Chicano vote to the capitalist party that promised the most concessions to Chicanos. To many Raza Unida activists, this strategy was indistinguishable from what Chicano Democrats put forward as the way Chicanos will win more voice in American politics.

The differences on this strategy for the 1972 elections were never debated openly on the floor of the El Paso conference, and remain unclarified, even though the overwhelming majority of delegates at the RUP conference reaffirmed the independence of the Raza Unida parties from the Democrats and Republicans and

refused to endorse either George McGovern or Richard Nixon in their presidential bids. Ambiguity on this question remains a central danger for these small Chicano parties, who are coming under increasing pressure from the capitalist parties.

What is involved is not so much a significant or conscious pro-Democratic party wing in the Raza Unida party. Confusion on this question of independence from the capitalist parties is the result primarily of Raza Unida leaders understanding the reality that Chicanos are a minority in American society and that they must win allies to advance their struggle. This is what was involved in the 1974 Raza Unida gubernatorial campaign of Ramsey Muñiz in Texas. Muñiz, and other Texas leaders, felt pressured to win enough votes to insure a permanent place on the ballot for the RUP. They looked to Blacks, labor and others as allies in their campaign--a healthy sentiment. However, the way in which they attempted to win these allies was to evade the question of the Chicano composition of the Raza Unida party and water down the nationalist demands they had put forward in the past in response to the needs of Chicanos. Muñiz defined the Raza Unida party as the "United People's Party" to Anglo audiences he spoke to. This did not result in winning any significant Anglo support for the Raza Unida party, but served to alienate and confuse many of the Chicano activists who look to the Raza Unida party as their party.

It is important for the Raza Unida parties to appeal to the population as a whole for support. Any Chicano party that addresses itself to the real issues affecting Chicanos will have to elaborate a program of economic and social demands to win gains for Chicanos. Such a program will be attractive to and win support from other working people and exploited layers of the population. The errors made by the Raza Unida parties is not that they tried to appeal to other forces outside of Chicanos, but how they did this.

The question of how to win allies for the Chicano struggle is inseparable from the question of how to win the majority of Chicanos away from their capitalist exploiters in the political arena, and to a party that represents their interests. The heart of this problem is that the Raza Unida parties have yet to develop a program of democratic and transitional demands around which the Chicano masses can be brought into struggle for their immediate needs and aspirations. There is no shortcut to the process of winning the Chicano masses to the Raza Unida's banner. Sectarian and opportunist errors by leaders of the Raza Unida party are the result of their looking for a way around the task of winning the Chicano people from the Democratic party. To do this, it is important that these parties combine electoral activity with a program of mass action. They also

have to establish democratic decision-making structures that involve their supporters in determining the direction of the party. While organizations such as Ciudadanos Unidos and Familias Unidas in Texas, and the Crusade for Justice in Colorado are valuable in winning support for the Raza Unida party, these small core of activists cannot substitute for real organs of democratic decision-making in the Raza Unida party.

Leaders like Corky Gonzales and José Angel Gutiérrez see a contradiction between putting forward a program of militant demands around the social, political, and economic oppression of Chicanos and the winning of the Chicano masses to the Raza Unida parties.

For revolutionary socialists, there is no contradiction. The only way to build a powerful Chicano movement and a mass independent Chicano party is precisely through presenting an uncompromising program of demands that moves Chicanos in the direction of mass anticapitalist mobilization, advancing them toward the goal of their liberation. It is in the process of fighting around such a program and winning victories that the Chicano masses will gain confidence in their own power, will inspire other sectors of the population who are also victims of capitalist oppression and win them over as allies.

These questions are posed more sharply as the crisis of

capitalism deepens. The leaders of the Raza Unida parties are relatively inexperienced and untested. They will be put through further challenges and pressures in the period ahead.

The farm workers

Another major component in the Chicano struggle is the farm workers movement. Like the Raza Unida parties, the rise of the farm workers struggle occurred in the midst of a deep going radical ferment in the United States, and emerged in response to the terrible conditions faced by the majority-Chicano and mexicano farm labor force.

To appreciate the significance of this movement for the Chicano struggle, as well as for the class struggle as a whole, it is necessary to look at the development of this historic effort in the context of the difficulties faced in organizing this sector of the work force today.

There are three million farm workers in the United States. Past attempts to bring this sector of labor into the trade unions were brutally crushed. The automation and industrialization of American agriculture at the start of World War II transformed the farm into the most advanced monopoly agribusiness in the world. Organizing these new factories in the fields poses far more challenges than organizing a factory within four walls. These problems are aggravated by the increasingly migratory and

seasonal character of the agricultural work force.

The drive by the United Farm Workers of America, AFL-CIO, under the leadership of César Chávez that began in the mid-1960s is the most successful organizing effort to date. What differentiates the UFW's efforts from those in the past is its appeal to the nationalist consciousness of the Chicano and mexicano farm workers, and the character of its drive as a social movement, taking up the many different aspects of oppression affecting the farm workers. Because of this, the UFW's struggle in the fields has inspired Chicanos and has fed their nationalist aspirations. La causa became the watch-word for Chicanos fighting for their rights both in the fields and in the urban barrios. In turn, the resurgence of Chicano nationalism strengthens and reinforces the fight of the farm workers.

When the California grape growers were forced to sign contracts with the UFW in 1970, it was not only a landmark victory for the 60,000 campesinos who were finally granted benefits most industrial workers already enjoyed, but it was an important gain for the Chicano people as a whole. This victory was the result of the massive support organized by the UFW through its international grape boycott, which brought tens of thousands of Chicanos, unionists, students, and other forces in American society into motion to force the growers to come to terms with

the UFW. Through such actions as the boycott, the UFW transcended the narrow "business union" methods of the AFL-CIO officialdom. In its battle against the wealthy growers, the UFW had to take up the social and political oppression of the farm workers, in addition to their economic exploitation in the fields. It had to look beyond the fields and mobilize its allies among Chicanos and other oppressed and exploited sectors of the population.

If this effort hopes to meet with success, the UFW must deepen these activities. They are faced with major obstacles in organizing farm workers, including many of the same ones that spelled defeat for past organizing efforts. They are up against some of the most powerful monopolies in the world--monopolies which are supported actively by the capitalist government.

At the same time, the UFW is confronted with the shameless strike-breaking activity of the corrupt Teamster bureaucracy, and the unwillingness of the AFL-CIO tops to back their verbal support for the UFW with the necessary aid to insure a victory for the campesinos.

Material support from the powerful trade union federation has been measured with an eye dropper. Meany and the other misleaders in the AFL-CIO have no desire to see a union of the type that the UFW is organizing because such a union poses a direct challenge to these bureaucrats by providing an example to the

ranks of the AFL-CIO of the kind of trade unionism necessary to defend and advance the interests of the working class today-- unions that confront political and social issues affecting workers. Thus, the AFL-CIO officialdom has spent more time trying to pressure the UFW to shed its nationalist approach to organizing farm workers in favor of the more "businesslike" ways of the AFL-CIO than it has in aiding the embattled UFW. They have especially tried to get the UFW to adopt the AFL-CIO's scandalous stance in support of deportations.

Unfortunately, the Chávez leadership, which has social democratic roots, has capitulated to this pressure in the past. In the midst of the violent attacks on the UFW by growers and their Teamster collaborators in 1973, Chávez called for the deportation of mexicano farm workers who were being used as scabs to break the UFW's strike. Chávez went on a campaign demanding that immigration officials deport these workers, which had the effect of focusing attention on a section of the campesinos as the main obstacle in the way of a UFW victory, instead of the growers, the government which supports them, and the Teamster thugs. This grave error on the UFW's part cost the union valuable and necessary support among Chicanos and others. It also cut into support for the union in the fields themselves, where mexicanos with and without immigration visas look to the UFW as their

voice. The prodeportation position of Chávez and other UFW leaders eventually proved to be at odds with their efforts, especially in the 1975 union representation elections provided by the California Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ARLA). The growers and the Teamsters used immigration laws to deport hundreds of UFW supporters in an attempt to halt UFW victories in the elections.

This disastrous position was reversed at the UFW's 1975 convention when the UFW announced that as long as the growers brought these mexicano workers into the fields to exploit them the UFW would organize them.

The passage of the Agricultural Labor Relations Act (ARLA) in the summer of 1975 opened up a new stage in the UFW's efforts to organize farm labor. Despite enormous odds in the elections, ranging from terror and intimidation tactics to outright fraud in the elections, the UFW out-pollled the Teamsters two-to-one. These successes demonstrate the viability of la causa and indicate the deep roots that the UFW has among the campesinos. The elections prove without a doubt that the UFW is the authentic voice of California's superexploited agricultural laborers.

The inspiration that the campesinos throughout the United States have gained from the victories of the UFW in California have led to similar organizing efforts in Texas, Ohio, and parts

of the East Coast. Although the UFW has given little support to these efforts, and tends to counterpose them to its current drive in California, the UFW's continued existence in the face of powerful opposition and the character of the union as a social movement has provided the basic impulses to all of these organizing efforts. What the agricultural proletariat needs is one, massive union that encompasses all campesinos on a national scale. However, the objective need for such a union and the desire to see this development should not be a precondition for unconditional support to the struggles of all farm workers, within and without the UFW. Support to the UFW boycott and other organizing efforts of farm workers can be a step to building such a united union representing all agricultural workers.

The struggle in California's fields is not over. The growers, the politicians and parties which serve them, and the Teamster officialdom are out to crush the UFW. They are not likely to concede to a UFW victory without a fight. California Democrats and Republicans have moved on the growers' behalf to nullify the hard-fought UFW gains by cutting off funds for the Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB), the body set up to monitor the elections and insure that the results are respected.

These maneuvers by the growers and their supporters in the

Democratic and Republican parties point to a central contradiction in the current UFW leadership. While the UFW's strength rests on its roots in the Chicano community and its appeal to the broad masses of American people as a social movement, the leadership's continued support to the Democratic party and its reliance on Democratic politicians like California governor Edmund G. Brown remains the key obstacle in the way of advancing the campesinos' interests and most glaring weakness of the UFW leaders. The Democratic party is tied hand and foot to agribusiness. Support to this capitalist party is a chief danger to maintaining the gains the UFW has scored over its decade and a half of struggle and further progress in the drive to organize the nation's three million agricultural workers.

The tendency of the Chávez leadership to subordinate the mass action side of the UFW's struggle--particularly the boycott--to politicians like Brown and maneuvers with the Democratic party undercuts the success the UFW can win in the fields and the effectiveness of the boycott on the growers.

While Chávez has stated his intention to step up the boycott of scab grapes, lettuce, Gallo wines, Sunmaid and Sunsweet products until strong contracts are signed, the UFW has not taken the necessary steps to do this and continues to place its main emphasis on pressuring the Browns. The union must move to

mobilize in action that huge reservoir of sympathy it has in the Chicano community, on the campuses, within the trade unions, and other movements for social change. A break from the policy of reliance on and support to the Democratic party and its politicians is a prerequisite for the success of the UFW's organizing efforts. Such a development would have a profound impact on the advance to independent Chicano political action, and would shake the labor movement to its foundations.

The inspiration the UFW has already provided to the struggling masses would greatly increase with the end of the class collaborationist policies of the Chávez leadership, as would the chances of survival of the United Farm Workers Union itself.

Chicanos and labor

The struggle of the farm workers has inspired other Chicano workers to fight for their rights on the job. Chicanos, like Blacks, are confined to the lowest-skilled, poorest-paying jobs. The move from the rural towns into the big industrial cities in the 1940s forced Chicanos into the urban squalor of decaying barrios and superexploitation in dead-end jobs.

The bulk of the Chicano work force is in such basic industries as steel, auto, mining, railroads, packing, electrical, transportation, garment and construction. Chicanos in these industries are among the most underpaid and exploited workers, and

many are in shops and plants that aren't organized. The basic force in the garment industry in the Southwest are Chicanas and mexicanas, who receive wages often below the minimum wage. The terrible working conditions faced by these workers led to a major struggle in 1972 to win collective bargaining rights in the sweatshops of Willie Farah in El Paso. The Chicanas and mexicanas who led the organizing effort took their cue from the farm workers and appealed to the Chicano people, and launched a boycott which brought Farah to terms with the striking workers in 1974.

The deepening economic crisis has led to increased attacks by the capitalist rulers and its institutions on the democratic rights of Chicanos as well as the living standards of all working people. An important product of this is the beginnings of a response by working people---Chicano, Black and white alike---to the capitalist offensive. Many of the actions of Chicanos today against racist attacks are more intimately linked to the struggles of the working class as a whole, and help reinforce both the Chicano and labor movements.

The economic crisis is demonstrating with crystal clarity that the fate of the Chicano struggle is tied to that of the labor movement. The drive spearheaded by Chicanos to organize the agricultural proletariat together with the growing numbers

of Chicanos in industrial unions, and the concentration of the vast majority of Chicanos in major urban centers, poses the question more sharply of labor's responsibility to confront the problems facing Chicanos both on and off the job.

Over 30 percent of the steel workers in eleven Western states are Chicano, for example, and it is estimated that Chicanos comprise as much as one-third of the UAW district encompassing California, Arizona and Utah.

Many of these Chicano workers are organized into caucuses to fight the discrimination they face on the job, as well as the racist policies of the trade union bureaucrats who lead these unions. Organizations such as the Mexican American Union Council (MAUC) in Los Angeles, which is comprised primarily of Chicano steel workers, and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), which is made up of lower-level Chicano union functionaries, address themselves to the specific concerns of Chicano unionists.

LCLAA, which was set up by the AFL-CIO officialdom, is basically out to corral the Chicano vote for the Democratic party in 1976. It has, however, been forced to pressure the bureaucracy of the AFL-CIO to fight for more jobs for Chicanos and opposes the prodeportation stance of the AFL-CIO.

The Chicano caucus of the National Education Association

(NEA) has joined with other antiracist forces in some areas, like Denver, in supporting school desegregation and bilingual-bicultural programs.

Developments of this kind within the trade union movement will be important factors in the construction of a class-struggle left wing in the unions.

The present leadership of the trade unions is a narrow-minded, conservative, racist and procapitalist bureaucracy. It is fundamentally opposed to fighting against the discrimination that Chicanos and other doubly oppressed sectors of the working class suffer, and tries to convince workers--especially white workers--to oppose preferential hiring, busing, bilingual-bicultural education, Chicano, Puerto Rican and Black control of schools and other institutions in their communities, and other demands being pressed to achieve equality for these oppressed groups and minorities. The current trade union leadership functions in the labor movement to subordinate the interests of the entire working class to their capitalist exploiters and oppressors and hamstring the labor movement to the Democratic and Republican parties. A new leadership is needed to reverse the class-collaborationist policies of the current union bureaucracy and replace them with a policy of militant struggle by the working class on all social, political, and economic fronts.

Chicano workers will play a key role in this process, along with other superexploited layers of the working class. The disproportionately high layoffs of Chicanos and their concentration in the lowest-paying jobs, combined with the impact of Chicano nationalism on Chicano workers, has deepened their political consciousness. The struggle of the farm workers, the fight for equal education, actions against deportations, and struggles for Chicano community control have all brought Chicano workers into motion against their oppression. Radical ideas, mass action in the streets, and an understanding of the need for political answers to the problems confronting the working class are far more acceptable to Chicano workers than Anglo workers.

Initiatives in the direction of independent Chicano political action by the Raza Unida parties has won some Chicano workers away from the Democratic party and helps educate a broader layer of Chicano workers on the need for political independence of the working class as a whole from the capitalist parties. The accomplishments of the Raza Unida parties have inspired Chicano workers and provided a concrete example of what can be achieved through political independence.

Chicanos will play a key role in the building of a class-struggle left wing in the labor movement and in the elaboration

of a program which must include class independence, and thus a role in the building of an independent labor party based on the trade unions.

Chicano students

Because of their role in the struggles of Chicanos in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and because they remain the most politicized layer of the Chicano population, it is necessary to assess where Chicano students and the Chicano student movement stands today. The first thing to note is that Chicano students are less organized today than they were five years ago. Many of the Chicano student organizations that played a major role in winning gains for Chicano students, and provided the key cadre for struggles of the farm workers, the rights of undocumented workers, in popularizing the concept of the Raza Unida parties, and other Chicano community struggles have reverted to social organizations.

However, growing attacks on the rights of Chicano students, particularly drastic cutbacks in funds to Chicano studies, scholarship and financial aids programs, have resulted in an increase of activity of Chicano student organizations like MECHA, MAYO, the United Mexicano-American Students (UMAS) and others. There have been a number of Chicano student conferences designed to draw Chicano students into a discussion of the way

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forward in the face of these attacks on their gains, the need to unite around a struggle against the racist offensive despite differences on other questions. Part of this step-up in activity is the participation of Chicano students in the farm workers and Coors beer boycotts, and activity against police brutality, especially racist cop killings in the Chicano community. Chicano students played a major role in helping organize massive Chicano community actions in response to such racist police terror in San José around the killing of Danny Treveña, and in National City, California, around the cop murder of a young Puerto Rican youth.

As the crisis deepens, Chicano students are being put to new tests. It is in the course of these struggles, as well as those of Chicano workers, and Chicanas that new leaders for the Chicano struggle will come forward.

Chicanos and other social movements

All of the issues confronting Chicanos today are part of the overall capitalist offensive against the working class. Thus a struggle for Chicano liberation is very intimately tied to the struggles of all other victims of capitalist oppression.

An important boost to the Chicano movement was the rise of Black nationalism, and the gains Blacks won through the civil rights movement. The Chicano movement was able to avoid many of the errors of the Black movement and apply its lessons to

their own struggle. Chicanos, in turn, provided many valuable examples for Blacks, particularly the development of the Raza Unida parties. Chicano antiwar actions in the early 1970s helped to end the myth that the fight against the Vietnam war was a fight for "white middle class" students, and spurred the development of Black antiwar actions.

Another development in the 1960s was to have a profound impact on the struggle for Chicano liberation. That was the rise of the women's liberation movement. Chicanas, who face triple oppression in American society, were inspired by the struggles of women, and began to organize their own feminist organizations. The current upsurge of activity in the feminist movement has brought Chicanas into action against the racist practice of forced sterilization, and into united front demonstrations around ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, child care, cutbacks in women's studies programs, affirmative action, and other issues affecting Chicanas. Heightened feminist consciousness among Chicanas has had a profound impact on the Chicano struggle itself. Four or five years ago, Chicanas had to fight against an open policy of excluding them from the leadership bodies of Chicano movement organizations and argue with Chicano male leaders who opposed feminism as a "white women's thing" which had nothing to do with Chicanas. In the

last few years a visible change has taken place. Many of the Raza Unida parties, for example, have included demands for women's rights in their platforms, and have Chicana commissions or caucuses within them. Several Chicana conferences to discuss issues facing them as women have been held over the last years.

The Chicano struggle has been marked from the beginning by its internationalism. The Chicano antiwar actions in 1969, 1970, and 1971 helped to build consciousness among Chicanos on the need to oppose U.S. imperialist aggression in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Chicano students and activists in the Raza Unida parties were among the key forces behind the Chicano antiwar activities. Interest in political developments in Latin America has increased among Chicanos in the last several years. Chicano activists and organizations participated in activities in defense of Latin American political prisoners, exchanged ideas with the Mexican workers and student movements, and have established deeper ties with the movement in solidarity with the struggle for Puerto Rican independence. This growing interest in Mexican and Puerto Rican politics provides an opportunity for the Socialist Workers Party to help circulate the press of our Mexican and Puerto Rican cothinkers.

The interrelationship between the Chicano struggle and those of other doubly oppressed groups and minorities is reflected as well in the broad support the UFW has won in the Black and Puerto Rican communities, and from feminist organizations. These forces are valuable allies in the campesinos' struggle for justice, as well as the fight of the Chicano people as a whole for equality and liberation. Such solidarity helps to demonstrate to all that the enemy is the same and reinforces the struggle to replace capitalism with socialism.

Opponents

The most serious opponent that revolutionary socialists face in the Chicano movement is the Communist Party. The CP, and the Stalinist supporters of the Peking bureaucracy, oppose Chicano nationalism completely because they fear its independent thrust.

The Communist Party maintains as its goal the creation of a popular front "people's party," and counterposes this to independent Chicano political parties like the Raza Unida parties. They seek to subordinate the struggles of Chicanos, and the struggles of the oppressed around the world to the narrow needs of the Moscow bureaucrats. In the context of detente, this means attempting to keep Chicanos tied to the parties of their oppression.

The various Maoist groupings in the United States, including Chicano Maoist organizations, are also fundamentally opposed to Chicano nationalism. Some Chicano youth who are beginning to grapple with the relationship between the Chicano struggle and socialism have been drawn into the Maoist periphery. These activists are inspired by the gains of the Chinese revolution, but make the mistake of equating the victories of the Chinese masses to the bureaucrats in Peking. These Chicano youth are not hardened Stalinists and can be convinced of a program that combines demands for their fight against national oppression with the struggle for socialism. The Socialist Workers Party wants to reach these people with its ideas.

There is growing interest among Chicanos in socialist ideas. Chicano activists and movement organizations are debating and discussing socialism and trying to determine the merits of the various tendencies on the left. The SWP is part of this important discussion and has a unique role to play in educating Chicano activists who are interested in socialism on our position.

Tasks of the Socialist Workers Party

The only organization on the left that supports unconditionally the struggle of Chicanos for self-determination, and supports the development of Chicano nationalism as an important

step forward in the struggle for Chicano liberation is the Socialist Workers Party. The SWP recognizes that the struggle of Chicanos against their oppression is on two fronts--a fight against the oppression they face as a people, and a struggle against their superexploitation as part of the working class. Only the coming American socialist revolution--a proletarian revolution that combines the task of completing the bourgeois revolution by granting equality and self-determination to the oppressed nationalities with the socialist revolution--can bring about the total liberation of Chicanos.

It is its understanding of the combined character of the coming American revolution that differentiates the SWP from every other tendency in the workers movement. The Socialist Workers Party understands the need to construct a mass, revolutionary Leninist party to achieve both of these aims. In order to be victorious over the centralized power of the American capitalist class, there must be one single combat party, overwhelmingly proletarian and multiracial in its composition, that can coordinate and lead the working masses, Chicanos and all of their allies in the conquest of power.

Unlike the Stalinist and the sectarian leftists, the SWP views the fight of Chicanos against their national oppression as progressive and part and parcel of the struggle for a socialist America.

As the nucleus of the future mass revolutionary socialist party, the SWP has elaborated a program that links the immediate and day-to-day needs of Chicanos and all working people. A number of important tasks flow from this.

First, the SWP must root itself more deeply in the Chicano masses and their struggles. It must take its program to the Chicano people and challenge its opponents on the left in the Chicano struggle.

The SWP has more openings to do this than it has had at any time in the past through participation in united front coalitions with Chicanos and others in response to the racist ruling class offensive--from the struggle for bilingual-bicultural education, to affirmative action fights; from support to the struggles of the farm workers to solidarity with the undocumented Raza workers against the racist deportations.

While the SWP's Chicano membership is still small, it is growing. The big task of the SWP in the Chicano struggle is to win Chicanos to the revolutionary socialist party, and train these new recruits as revolutionary cadres capable of taking the party's program for Chicano liberation into the Chicano struggle to help lead and advance it. The party's steps to move into the Chicano community with the establishment of new party units in San Jose, San Antonio, East Los Angeles, and other Chicano areas

helps facilitate the party's work in organizing itself to meet new openings confronting it and carrying through the task of winning and training Chicano cadres--a task central to the success of the American socialist revolution.