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BOBBY SEALE

THE MOVEMENT: Recently the Black Panther Party announced plans to hold nationwide birthday parties for Huey P. Newton. Would you tell us when they are going to take place and some of the thinking behind this program?

BOBBY SEALE: Huey's birthday is on the 17th of February and we plan to hold the rallies on that date or on that weekend. We want people around the country to celebrate Huey P. Newton's birthday and the Party is going to do its best, through its forty odd chapters around the country, to get out as much information as possible to people concerning the status of Huey's case.

Just recently the California Supreme Court turned down a Habeas Corpus bail motion and that is now going to be sent to the U.S. Supreme Court. In addition there is a motion for mistrial also going to the Supreme Court. The basis for this mistrial motion is the fact that Greer's (star prosecution witness) testimony was changed by the District Attorney. The original statement that he gave to the police department stated that he "DID NOT" GET A CLEAR LOOK at who it was, but later Jensen, the assistant D.A. changed the statement saying that he did. The judge had to admit, while the jury was out deliberating, that Greer's statement was changed and that this information should be given to the jury, but it never really was. Later after the jury convicted Huey of THIRD degree murder, and not FIRST degree, the members of the jury stated that they didn't know anything about the fact that Greer's testimony had been changed by Jensen. (For complete details on the Greer testimony and other aspects of Huey's trial see the MOVEMENT, October, 1968). We feel that these are the key grounds for mistrial and that a mistrial will automatically warrant bail for Huey on this particular charge because the only thing they can charge him with is third degree murder (manslaughter)

and not first.

I'd like to say too that we respect the fact that a lot of people came forth and stood for the position that Huey P. Newton should be set free. We've found out, now that all this is over, that the jury did have a lot of political pressure from the masses of the people out there, black, white and Mexican-American who stood for the fact that Huey P. Newton should be set free.

We want now to remobilize the people around the fact that Huey P. Newton must receive a mistrial--that the battle is really not over just because some slick politicians did some lying and pulled some tricks in the courtroom. We should not stop and give up and say this is the end of it because with the forty some odd chapters of the Black Panther Party across the country and other organizations such as SDS, Peace and Freedom parties and other organizations who understand the tricks that the pigs and the power structure are going to pull we can once again put pressure from the masses of people on the courts. If we don't they will just sit there and pull their same old lying tricks again and try and keep Huey P. Newton as a political prisoner for the next fifteen years.

DEFENSE COMMITTEES

What we want to do is set up defense committees across the nation--Newton/Cleaver defense committees. The International Committee to Defend Eldridge Cleaver is the same as Huey's defense fund drive. These groups are working and functioning to raise funds for the legal defense primarily. At the same time they are trying to educate the masses of people about political prisoners as a whole, all of them. We understand that Huey P. Newton is the key political prisoner in this country at

the present time. Eldridge Cleaver, who has been forced into exile, is also highly significant. We have a lot of brothers here in the party who have been charged with crimes and who are also political prisoners as long as they are within the confines of those jails that the pig power structure puts up. We want people to be educated on a massive level and the key issue is to get them to relate to the fact that we want Huey P. Newton set free. We want amnesty for Eldridge Cleaver and we want all black political prisoners, all political prisoners regardless of their color, to be set free. These people who are political prisoners are only trying to educate us to the true nature of this racist, decadent, exploitative, capitalistic system.

We want these Newton/Cleaver defense committees to be ongoing. Their first objective should be to raise some funds and that is one of the purposes of the Free Huey birthday benefit celebrations. After that we want the Newton/Cleaver defense committees to hang together and build their committees so that they can go forward with the program to educate the masses of people until we get Huey P. Newton set free. Ongoing until we get amnesty for Eldridge Cleaver. Ongoing until we free all political prisoners and begin to change this racist, decadent system.

CULTURAL NATIONALISM

MOVEMENT: What do you think there is about cultural nationalism, aside from the agents within their groups, that makes them the enemy of revolutionaries?

BOBBY: Well, I understand cultural nationalism this way. They come primarily from the middle class bourgeoisie. They have a tendency to practice a form of black racism, initially through rhetoric. Franz Fanon, who wrote the book, *WRETCHED OF THE EARTH*, states that many times our black brothers who are in these colleges and who relate to the bourgeois class have their intellectual possessions still in pawn to the Man's system so much that they begin to hate a white person simply because of the color of their skin. That's really practicing the same racism that exists in the system that we are trying to destroy. This is trying to fight fire with fire. This is not a functional thing

to do because every practical person in the black community knows that if a fire starts in their house they don't go running to get some fire to put it out, they get some water to put the fire out because everybody knows that you put fire out with water.

The Black Panther Party gets this analysis and this understanding from having a broader perspective of what the class system is about. We think the cultural nationalist's ideology is very limited. The first thing they start talking about is their culture. They're trying to identify, they're the ones who've been lost, that have been most disconnected with the culture of Africa or what have you or whatever they think they might need to sustain themselves. They are more easily used by the pig power structure than the masses--the field niggers. A field nigger is literally robbed by the pig power structure and he figures out a way to go forth and take back some of that stuff that was robbed from him --as an individual without being able to articulate it himself.

Now this cultural nationalist is suppose to be able to articulate and he does, but he does so in such a fashion that projects this same racist capitalist system. That's very important because the capitalist system is a class system. The Black Panther Party is dealing more with killing and getting rid of the class system. We're talking about socialism. The cultural nationalists say that socialism won't do anything for us. There's the contradiction between the old and the new. Black people have no time to practice black racism and the masses of black people do not hate white people just because of the color of their skin. What the masses of black people actually hate (and this is something I have said time and time again; Huey has said it time and time again) is what is being done to us and the system that creates what is being done to us.

The masses of black people understand there's a few John Browns around somewhere who are going to be helping to get rid of those racist, capitalistic exploiters in this country. So we're not going to go out foolishly and say there is no possibility of aligning with some righteous white revolutionaries, or Mexican-American revolutionaries, or other poor and oppressed peoples

In this country who might come to see the light about the fact that it's the capitalist system that they must get rid of.

A cultural nationalist is a fool. The white racist power structure will holler "black capitalism" and just because the word black is on the front of capitalism he relates to it. But the Black Panther Party is smarter than that because we ask the question what about Jewish capitalism? What about Irish capitalism? What about Anglo-Saxon capitalism? The only thing they've ever done for us, if you look back in history, especially Anglo-Saxon and Irish capitalism, was to perpetuate the exploitation. The Anglo-Saxon capitalist kept black people in slavery, stole the land away from the Indians, oppressed Mexican-Americans, oppressed Chinese-Americans. So capitalism can't be any good for us and this is what these cultural nationalists don't understand. They don't know how to deal with that. So they come up and

tell us things like, "I'm tricking the man out of some of this money". Well the man is the biggest trickster in the damn world. He has tricked people out of whole countries, out of whole continents and here is this fool, this ignorant ass coming down telling us he's tricking the man out of something. So we say that once we understand what class is all about we are going to have to show these fools that they're going to have to get some broader ideology.

POINT OF STRAIN

MOVEMENT: If we could delve into this a little further. As long as 6 or 9 months ago Eldridge predicted that there would be these kinds of assassinations by cultural nationalist groups working with the Man. We have always felt that one of the key points of strain between cultural nationalists and the revolutionary nationalists, led by the Black Panther Party, was over some of the ideological questions you have just raised. Specifically the Panther ideology, mainly expressed by Huey as the need for revolutionary nationalism coupled with the need for revolution in the white mother country. (See Huey Newton talks to the MOVEMENT, August, 1968. Also available as a pamphlet from the MOVEMENT PRESS, 330 Grove St., S.F.

California 94102 or SDS, 1608 West Madison St., Chicago, Ill. 60612 - 15¢) Would you like to comment on this aspect.

BOBBY: The cultural nationalists have accused the Black Panther Party of being, I have to laugh at this, a "front for white radicals" and of course we are not a front for white radicals. We are an organization that represent black people and many white radicals relate to this and understand that the Black Panther Party is a righteous revolutionary front against this racist, decadent, capitalistic system. Our organization doesn't have any white people as members. If a white man in a radical group wants to give me some guns, I'll take them. I'm not going to refuse them because he's white.

Eldridge talked about the necessity for liberation in the colony and revolution in the mother country. I'd like to explain it more on a practical level. What's happening here is that it's impossible, as Huey says, for us to have control of the institutions in our community when a capitalistic system exists on the outside of it. When in fact the capitalistic system was the very system that enslaved us and is responsible for our continued oppression. So if we want to develop a socialistic system within the black community we're saying it's also going to have to exist in the white community. We're saying that the white community, the mother country, is the father of racist, exploitative capitalism and it exploits black people in the black community. When Nixon begins to spread the idea of black capitalism all he's doing is strengthening the capitalistic system which is the very system that put us in slavery.

BLACK CAPITALISM

The cultural nationalists have a large tendency to relate to black capitalism. We say that's wrong. We're talking about socialism as a whole and not just black socialism. It would be absurd to go to Cuba and start talking about black socialism. The cultural nationalists talk about the third world. We talk about the colored peoples of the world but at the same time there are still going to be many many white people who are going to want to change the system because they are

part and parcel of the development of mankind. If the third world and the majority of the poor oppressed people happen to be colored and they make a profound impact upon large numbers of white people about a new and better system where mankind doesn't exploit mankind then in fact this is positive, not negative.

The cultural nationalists don't understand that when the Black Panther Party has alliances or coalitions with white people it is with those white people who are basically opposed to the racist, capitalistic system. The cultural nationalists don't have enough sense to see this. These same cultural nationalists want to work downtown with the capitalists. They want jobs there in the poverty programs. They claim they are tricking the Man. They are working with the REAL AVARICIOUS PIGS who have been oppressing them for 400 years. We are trying to make a profound impact on a lot of white people in this country and especially those liberals, leftists and radicals in the white community to understand what we're really saying.

The whites will have to go back and shoot their mothers and fathers who are across this country and around the world. That's exactly what's going to have

to happen and we don't pull any bones on our end. If we see a black cop riding down the street murdering a black man or brutalizing him, it's not the color of his skin it's the actions and the things he's doing that we're opposed to, so we're going to have to kill him too. It doesn't make any difference what color the person's skin is, it's what the person is doing to the people.

Basically cultural nationalists turn into Papa Docs. Papa Doc rules Haiti and oppresses the people. We can't have no cultural nationalists in this country who are going to run around and murder and brutalize and intimidate people just for some chickenshit chump change. And if they think they're bad, well they ain't seen nothing yet.

MOVEMENT: Have you had a problem with cultural nationalists coming into the Black Panther Party?

BOBBY: If any black man comes into the party and he's a black racist we say he's got a right to be a black

racist, but he has no right to hinder the revolutionary program. And the revolutionary program does not at all cater to a philosophy of black racism. It caters to a philosophy of revolutionary change.

PURGE

MOVEMENT: We raised this question because recent issues of the Black Panther Newspaper have talked about internal purges in the party. Would you like to comment on this?

BOBBY: The internal purges in the Party are primarily to get rid of people who are trying to practice schism--a form of factionalism. The basis of this factionalism is opportunism. These people have been engaging in subjective analysis. This subjective analysis does not allow for proven scientific thought about revolutionary struggle, about class struggle. They are basically opportunists. An opportunist is one who will try to cause factions in the party. This may work on many levels: overt spontaneity is an example. We have an organization, a revolutionary organization and this organization has rules, it has revolutionary principles and it adopts revolutionary tactics. The organization makes analysis objectively and NOT SUBJECTIVELY. We make analysis from political theory as to how things are going and as to how things are moving and what we should do to destroy the capitalistic system. To maintain this we have a form of criticism and self-criticism within internal party operations. This is very important for each individual in this Party. Some of those haven't accepted self-criticism are basically opportunists and they will do things that are negative to the Party. CULTURAL NATIONALISTS AS A WHOLE CANNOT STAND SELF-CRITICISM, but it is vital for our party in order to keep us honest. To really be dedicated to revolutionary changes for poor black and oppressed peoples in this country.

MOVEMENT: Have there been other aspects of the purges, such as an intensification of political education?

BOBBY: We have had an intensification of political education at this time. Many of the brothers who come off the block are not hip to reading sometimes, but we found that brothers begin to relate a lot more when they read the Red Book,

or when they begin to read the Essays of the Minister of Defense. Then they begin to relate to what the Party really is. They get an understanding of the Party functioning for the people.

This intensive political education is very necessary for them to learn, for them to know the theories, the revolutionary theory. They must have the theory down and the theory tells them how to place it into practice and by placing it into practice they learn many, many things. This is very necessary for us to do.

Presently the Party isn't taking in any more new members. For the next three to six months we will be concentrating on raising the political understanding within the Party to a very high level. At the same time we will be going forth with our community programs.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

MOVEMENT: Which community programs are you concentrating on now?

BOBBY: The four key programs we are trying to implement are: the breakfast for children which is going on now; the petition campaign for the community control of the police; free health clinics in the black community; and black liberation schools in the black community. Some people are going to call these programs reformist but we're revolutionaries and what they call a reformist program is one thing when the capitalists put it up and it's another thing when the revolutionary camp puts it up.

Revolutionaries must always go forth to answer the momentary desires and needs of the people, the poor and oppressed people, while waging the revolutionary struggle. It's very important because it strengthens the people's revolutionary camp while it weakens the camp of the capitalist power structure. The struggle is long and hard and we have found that the pigs will attack up and try to shoot us and try to kill us. They will use cultural nationalists to help them do it. They will try to stop these programs because the pig power structure has more sense than the cultural nationalists. It knows that the revolutionary programs we are putting forth are weakening his camp. So he tries to strengthen his camp by using "Negroes", by using niggers.

MOVEMENT: Will you talk concretely about how a breakfast for children program weakens the pig power structure?

BOBBY: Yes. First let me explain what the program is. We have Black Panther Party members who get up at 6:30 in the morning to be down at the churches in the black community by 7 o'clock to prepare food to serve to the school kids by 7:30.

This weakens the power structure because the business men in the black community are the ones who have to donate to this program. We hope to get this going around the country--that of every dollar that a racist capitalist (or any kind of businessman, be he black or white) a penny of it is going to have to come back to the community. The very businessman who exploits the community must begin to give at least a penny back. And it's organized in such a way that those pennies accumulate a hell of a lot of food for every dollar and that food goes into the stomachs of the children in the black community.

SOCIALISM

This is a socialistic program. We take it away from the big businessman. The politicians, if they were really honest, would have instituted this a long time ago as a means of strengthening his camp and he might still try to co-opt this program and he will probably use some cultural nationalists to help him. But we're going to leave it in the camp of the people.

We are making use of the churches in the black community that are not used in the early mornings. This program also helps more people in the community to relate to the party. They see that the party is not a bunch of avaricious fools. We have kicked out the people who robbed those banks and robbed taverns and liquor stores for 200 and 300 and 80 dollars. We are concerned with the desires of the people and naturally the people are going to relate to what the Party is trying to put together for them. They will relate to the fact that the Party is really trying to serve them. We go down there to work, to put this program together. They become involved because they are community people, and there's not even a preacher in any church (preachers have always brainwashed the black people)

who can deny a breakfast for children program. There's not a businessman nor a demagogic politician around who can deny a breakfast for children program and get away with it.

The first businessman who says he ain't gonna donate, we're gonna tell the people in the black community "Don't buy from him". Why? Because he won't donate one penny of every dollar for some breakfast from some children before they go to school in the morning. It's a socialistic program. We're educating the people through a practical functioning operation of a socialistic program. Once the people see a socialistic program is valuable to them, they won't throw it away. By practicing socialism they learn it better.

SERVE THE PEOPLE

A revolutionary organization has to maintain and righteously serve the people and not just give them. And when the people see that we're not giving they're going to relate to that. Because it's their program. We're giving every penny we get to them. It's theirs--we say it's the people's money.

as Huey has said, "We are only like oxen to be ridden by the people. A strong detachment that the people can always use to serve them or when crisis comes forth. The Party tries to help solve their problems, to aid and assist the people and see that their basic political desires are answered."

These are the programs that we are working on. Free health clinics in the black community when we get those going. We are going to institute free health clinics. FREE health clinics. The word "free". They talk about freedom in very abstract, superficial rhetoric. FREE breakfast for children. Now we got some freedom working. Free health clinic, see what I mean--that's freedom. There's something materially valuable there, something for the survival of our people. Free to live. Like Huey P. Newton says, "every man on the face

of this earth has a right to live, therefore he has a right to work". That's basic.

That's why free health clinics, community control of the police, free breakfast for the children. This is what freedom really is--and much, much

more in the future. It's got to be materially valuable; it's got to be constructed and organized and its got to relate to the political needs and desires of the people.

LIBERATION SCHOOLS

MOVEMENT: Tell us some of your thinking about the liberation schools and how they are going to operate. BOBBY: We plan to start teaching school children from high school all the way down to grammar school. We're trying to get some of the college brothers to work on this and some have responded. We felt that the first thing to be implemented had to be the breakfast for children program. But at the same time we know that the kids in the schools have got to be taught about themselves, their black history, the class system and who cheats who--not the same bullshit they get now. So the black liberation classes will begin soon using the same churches in the afternoon after the kids get out of school.

We plan to have different programs for the different levels. At the high school level we will probably teach more about revolutionary principles. On the grammar school level we will probably teach more about black history, about the avaricious pigs. We are going to teach little black kids how to identify not only a white pig, but also a black pig. We want to get rid of the Uncle Toms and the pork chop nationalists. That's very important. We're going to be talking about downing the class system, cultural nationalists and capitalists, both black and white, who are the same: exploitative.

The pigs used the black bourgeoisie class and a lot of jive white liberals to perpetuate and strengthen their racist, capitalist camp. They say that the government is "all right", that they have "a war on poverty" and "We're not really robbers and thieves. Now the new president is coming in and he's hollaring "black capitalism". He's thinking the more niggers I can get to be black capitalists the more I can trick the rest of them niggers in the field out there. But there is a Black Panther Party out there and we're strengthening the revolutionary camp of the people. Every capitalist that's in the black community, and we don't give a

damn what color he is, is going to donate something to the black people. Mexican-Americans can do the same thing. The poor whites too, if they'd just open their minds, can do the same thing. So it's not limited to black people only, these kinds of programs.

Everybody's wondering about how come we don't get federal funds. No. We're not going for that. That businessman, that capitalist in the community that's been robbing us, we can get more from him. And that's where it's gonna come from.

MOVEMENT: How do you intend to force the capitalists in the black community to pay for these programs?

BOBBY: Through the use of the power of the people. The power of the black community manifested in the Party. The businessman in our community is subjected to the black community and we can run him out of business overnight if he don't want to go for it.

EXHAUSTING

ALL POLITICAL MEANS

MOVEMENT: You have a petition campaign for a program of community control of the police. Tell us how this campaign fits into the strategy of exhausting all political means in the course of the struggle.

BOBBY: We go forth into the black community and people's consciousness is raised by the attacks that the pig power structure has made upon the Black Panther Party and upon the black community at large even before the Black Panther Party got started. It has been raised to the level where they say "down with the pigs". How? That's very important.

How do we continue to raise their consciousness to another level? Exhaust all political means. We will use the apparatus of voting in this country. The community control of police is nothing but an operation by which we put on the ballot for the people at large, the masses, to vote. To say that the present police department should be abolished and a new one established that comes directly from, is run by, and set up by the community.

If the voting operation does not win or if they gerrymander the votes the pig power structure will be exposed. It will be saying, "We're not going to be removed. We don't give a damn about the people's right to vote". The

people will have their consciousness raised. They will say, "We voted you out and now you're saying we don't have a right to vote you out". The people will say, "You're not a policeman anymore, if you shoot anyone in this community you're committing murder as far as we're concerned."

If we don't win, if we get less than 50% of the vote then we have a working force. That's a revolutionary force. That's a strengthening of the revolutionary camp. If we get only a quarter of the votes that's the foundation that the revolutionary camp is relying on in terms of moving around. We can still go forth and get more signatures and go for another ballot and continue to try and educate the people more.

Meanwhile what's going to be happening? The pig power structure is going to be making attacks on those who are trying to initiate the struggle. That's very important. Once they make an attack the people are going to get more pissed off and they are going to clearly see how just because we went through what they call a "legal process", that's supposed to be for the people, we get attacked and shot and murdered. That raises the consciousness of the people.

By using all means to exhaustion the people become very clear as to what they have to do. The people themselves, at large, will run and off the pig power structure and change the system; change the system for a better one.

ORGANIZATION'S GROWTH

MOVEMENT: Would you comment on the growth of the organization nationally and some of the problems this has caused.

BOBBY: The attacks that have come down against us have had some positive results, so to speak. We gave the whole year of 1968 to the pigs and thank them for organizing our organization. Of course these attacks have also caused losses and considerable problems. In Seattle, three brothers have been killed, but there have been two pigs killed and nine wounded. In Denver they raided our office and in Newark they bombed the office. In New York there has been a lot of trouble, with the pigs jumping on the brothers.

They have tried to intimidate us. Each chapter has had the same problems that the central headquarters has had. But we've stood up against them and the

organization is still growing. One of the key problems has been keeping the chapters supplied with our organ, THE BLACK PANTHER, the Black Community News Service. This is key because we know from studying revolutionary principles that the organ is a real organizing tool in terms of directly contacting the masses and relating to building their consciousness.

To some extent also we have had problems with a few new members who are very opportunistic, at first. Every time we are attacked we get hundreds of new members just flushing in. The people don't like us being attacked. Once in a while we get cultural nationalists as new members. We try to teach them that the only culture is a revolutionary culture. To get them to understand this in a very broad sense. We want brothers who are black nationalists and at the same time internationalists. They have to understand that they must be internationalists because this is a people's struggle as a whole. And black people just happen to be a moving vanguard force within the confines of racist America, putting forth this revolutionary struggle and aiding and contributing to the world wide struggle.

Since the attacks by the pigs all through 1968 did so much to build our organization the power structure is using another technique and that is to try to use cultural nationalists to try to destroy our organization so they can make it look like they aren't the ones. But the Party knows and we understand that it's really the puppeteer, the pig power structure itself, from the FBI and Nixon all the way down to the local major and the local pigs who are using the cultural nationalists. So we're going to get rid of the cultural nationalists and that's all part and parcel of changing the system as a whole.

By Noel Ignatin



Many white radicals have begun to talk about the need to organize working class whites. As one active movement figure put it, "We now see that the people we used to refer to as 'working class fascists' are the very ones we have to reach."

As we all know a large share of the credit for this new attention on the part of white radicals belongs to SNCC. Of course, even before SNCC took its stand on black power, there were some people, such as SCEF and JOIN, who felt that the main task for white radicals was organizing other whites. But SNCC, by telling its white supporters that their role should be organizing whites for the black people to form coalitions with, pushed thousands of people into a new awareness.

In my opinion, this new awareness is healthy.

However, along with this new and correct realization has come the baggage of old, unchallenged and incorrect concepts which, if allowed to prevail, will certainly undo any positive work in this field.

LEARN THE LESSONS OF U.S. HISTORY

Among many radicals who have begun to tackle seriously the task of organizing working class whites there is an approach which shows that we - the movement as a whole - have failed to learn the lessons of U.S. history, and specifically the lessons of past experiences in large movements of downtrodden whites.

The approach I am criticizing I would summarize as follows: find the issues which immediately affect the people we are trying to reach, and which they feel most keenly. Organize around these issues and, as the people are drawn more into struggle in their own interest, they will come to see, with our help, who are their friends and enemies. Specifically, coalitions between poor white and black will develop from each fighting for his own "self-interest" and coming to see that there is a common enemy, the rich white man.

I think there is no need to cite documents for the above, as everyone involved will recognize it as a fair summary of a very popular approach.

I don't think it can succeed.

What is the greatest barrier to the development of working class conscious-

ness and solidarity in the U.S.? White supremacist thinking, both now and in the past.

White supremacist thinking, while it is part of a mind-set, is not a pure question of ideology. It has real roots in the practice of white supremacy, the general oppression of blacks by whites.

The Al Capones who run this country have made a deal with the labor officials and, through them, with the totality of white working people. The terms of the deal, which was a long time in the working out, are simply these: you white workers support us in our enslavement of the non-white majority of the earth's population, and we will reward you with a monopoly of skilled jobs, education and health facilities superior to those of the non-whites, the opportunity to occasionally promote one of your number out of the laboring class, social privileges and a whole series of privileges befitting your white skin.

Exploited But Privileged (9)

Thus, while the ordinary white workers are severely exploited, they are also privileged. White supremacy is a deal between the exploiters and a part of the exploited, at the expense of the rest of the exploited - in fact, the original sweet-heart agreement!

Some may argue that it can't be called a deal, since most of those participating on either side are not conscious of where they fit in, that it is more accurate to consider white supremacy as the simple and determined result of the operation of certain blind laws, as something institutionalized, beyond the control, right now, of any sector of the people involved in its workings.

Those who argue thus should consider the following question: if the bosses are always screaming about high labor costs, why don't they simply hire the cheapest labor there is, namely black and brown labor? The reason is that, for the bosses, the few cents an hour they would save in wages would be far outweighed by the growth in working class solidarity that would follow if all workers were on exactly the same footing. (For information on how the color line was erected in a single industry, in this case the cotton

mill industry in the South, for the purpose of buying off the poor whites, see W. J. Cash's classic "The Mind of the South" or Broadus Mitchell's "The Rise of Cotton Mills in the South".)

Certainly, national oppression goes hand-in-hand with imperialism, but that is not to say that it is an institution, or that it should in any sense be considered too deeply entrenched to be challenged. White supremacy exists simply because sufficient numbers of white people, including white workers, have not been rallied to fight it - black people have never stopped fighting it. And the reason why white workers have not fought white supremacy, have in fact acquiesced in and cooperated with it, is that they enjoy their privileged status.

No Self-Interest Coalitions

Now, my point of disagreement with the approach I summarized earlier is this: I don't believe it is possible to build coalitions of black and white on the basis of the self-interest of each, if the self-interest of the whites means the maintenance of white supremacy and the white-skin privilege.

I would state, from my own experience as a worker and my travels among workers, that there are very few white workers who would object to having the Negroes "brought up to our level." Most white workers would be pleased if all the black people had a decent job and a place to live, as good as the whites' anyhow.

But if there are not enough jobs to go around, then the great majority of white workers are quite willing to invoke their privilege and say "me first", thus making them active partners in the exclusion and oppression of the black people.

Under the system of private profit, all workers compete in the sale of their labor power; yet their general tendency is to unite. However, because the competition between black and white workers is not an equal one, but is weighted by the white-skin privilege, white workers have generally preferred to unite with the boss to maintain their privileges rather than unite with the black people to destroy all privilege.

And this is the rub for our movement. History shows that, whenever masses of

white poor have been radicalized and brought into struggle, the power structure has been able to hold out the crumb of the white-skin privilege, breaking any developing coalition and struggle.

Why Others Failed

The defeat of the great struggles of the labor movement, which began after the depression of 1873 and reached their

climax in the railroad strike of 1877, can be traced to the failure of American labor, as a whole, to join with black labor in the South to preserve the democratic advances of the Reconstruction Era. In his great work, "Black Reconstruction", Du Bois put forward ideas which should make us all think long and hard. On page 353 he wrote, "The South, after the war, presented the greatest opportunity for a real national labor movement which the nation ever saw or is likely to see for many decades. Yet the labor movement, with but few exceptions, never realized the situation. It never had the intelligence or knowledge, as a whole, to see in black slavery and Reconstruction the kernel and meaning of the labor movement in the United States."

The defeat of Populism was due to its tendency to compromise with, and ultimately capitulate to white supremacist pressure to "abandon the Negro" (See Woodward biography of Tom Watson on this subject.)

The halting of the labor movement's advances at the end of the 1930's, and its reversal and defeat in the years after World War II, was due to the same failure to challenge white supremacy. If anyone doubts this, let him consider why the CIO, after having organized U.S. Steel, GM and GE by 1940, paused on the brink of the South and turned back, permitting itself to be co-opted by the Roosevelt Administration.

In the three great eras of struggle I have cited, probably the three greatest in post-Civil War history, in the final analysis the matter came down to this: the power structure was able to solve its problems with the white workers "within the family", by offering them privileges. By accepting these privileges, the white workers turned their back not merely on

their black brothers, but on the class struggle, and renounced their right to a say in their destiny.

Of course the acceptance of privilege and the maintainance of white supremacy was not in the interest of either white or black workers! The result of the overturning of Reconstruction and the defeat of Populism is the impoverished South of today. The result of the CIO's wrong turn in 1940 is the deteriorating conditions of labor and the oleomargarine unions which dominate in every industry.

The ending of white supremacy does not pose the slightest peril to the real interests of the white workers, but to their fancied interests, their counterfeit interests, their white-skin privileges.

Renouncing Privilege (10)

Once again the signs point to an upturn in the militancy of the American workers, including the whites. And once again the white workers will be faced with a choice: unite with the black people for our common interests, including the defeat of white supremacy and the repudiation of the white-skin privilege; or unite with the boss to maintain them.

Solidarity between black and white requires more from the white than a willingness to "help the Negroes up if it doesn't lower us any." It requires a willingness to renounce our privileges, precisely to "lower ourselves" in order that we can all rise up together. If anyone says that it will be difficult to get the whites to renounce their privileges, I readily concede the difficulty - whoever said it would be east to make a revolution? But is anyone thinks it is possible to skip this renunciation and to build coalitions between blacks and whites who want to maintain their privileges, I will point to 1877, 1904 and 1940, and say that if this task is not tackled and achieved, we will see the same thing over again: the crisis comes, conditions worsen, the working people are radicalized, and then-defeat, because the white-skin privilege and its vile ideology were not specifically, directly, consistently and courageously denounced and renounced, in words and in deeds.

Tactics

Now, what does all this mean for our tactics? I have some suggestions:

- (1) in all our work we should bring the question of white supremacy to the fore. Thus in opposing the Viet Nam war, we should especially expose it as a racist, white supremacist war, an extension of U.S. genocidal policies toward Indians and Afro-Americans.
- (2) we should discover and take advantage of every opportunity to point out to white workers the nature of the white supremacist deal and show them how it operates against them by tying them to their enemy, the
- (3) for my third suggestion, I can do no better than to quote a memo written in June 1966 by Anne Braden to the Southern Student Organizing Committee:

"Now, the pendulum seems to be swinging the other way, and more and more white people are deciding they must reach the white Southerner . . .

"I am glad they are deciding this.

"What I disagree with is the concept that they will organize these poor white Southerners completely apart from the Negro movement -- and figure that somewhere down the road, maybe several years hence, maybe they'll get together in some sort of coalition.

"I don't think it can work that way. . .

Blacks Organize Whites (11)

"Again to be specific, if you are going to engage in a project (rural or urban) to organize poor white people, I can see how it might be desirable (and it may happen whether you think it is desirable or not) for Negroes to be organizing the black people in that community into an independent organization. But when you go to and organize the white people I think you have to say to them in front, from the very word go, that if they are going to be effective and solve their problems they are going to have to team up with those black people over there and find terms that are acceptable to the black

people to do it on, and I think you should go to these white people with teams of black and white organizers working together.

"White people may not be able to work in organizing Negro communities and maybe should not -- for all the reasons stated recently . . . But I think black organizers are urgently needed to work in white communities.

"In other words, I am saying that I think you have to confront the white Southerner you are trying to reach with this whole question of racism and what it has done to him from the very beginning.

"Some may say this is impossible -- it will frighten him off and you'll never get to him. I am not saying it will be easy. We will fail many times. But I think we must begin trying in the beginning because I think if you wait it will get harder as time goes on and not easier.

"In fact, if you begin to organize groups of white people without tackling this issue in a very concrete way, I think the problem is much greater than that you will just be wasting your time. I think you may be creating a Frankenstein. . .

"As I understand it, Saul Alinsky had this experience in Chicago. He organized Negroes on the Southside -- and he organized the Back-of-the-Yards movement which was all white and poor and very oppressed. The Back-of-the-Yards movement became very strong and effective in fighting its own oppression -- but later it was the backbone of a movement to keep Negroes out of that part of Chicago . . .

"What I am saying is that we must try to avoid such mistakes by beginning in the very beginning to try to convince white people that their interest lies in teaming up with Negroes -- even if the Negroes want and are forming their own organizations. And if we hope to convince them, we must confront them with the issue as we start -- because it will get harder as people get more organized, stronger in their own organization, more solidified, etc."

I think Ann Braden's suggestions for Southern organizing apply with equal force

throughout the country.

- (4) we should find and put forward slogans and issues which make concrete the repudiation of privilege, and which are tied in as closely as possible with building unity and winning real benefits. For example, in a shop which is not organized, instead of trying to organize a union around the demand of straight seniority (an obvious white-skin privilege, since it was the boss who decided whom to hire first), we should try to rally the workers around a demand like the following: a contract provision that at no time in a layoff could a greater proportion of Negroes be included than their proportion in the plant. Another provision might be that workers in the most dangerous, dirtiest departments (usually Negroes) receive a special seniority bonus. I think these demands would appeal to the sense of fair play of working men and women.

Like SDS Draft Position

(12)

An excellent example of the practical application of my thesis is the SDS position on the draft, of opposing the draft and, at the same time, denouncing the II-S student deferment as a racial (and class) privilege whose only purpose is to divide the anti-war movement, and not merely denouncing it, but calling upon all students to renounce it. I don't want to attribute the totality of my views to SDS; I merely applaud their stand as the only honest one under the circumstances.

I don't claim to have the best tactical solutions to the problem I raise. But I do say that if all of us in the movement don't find ways to win the white workers to repudiate their white-skin privileges and oppose white supremacy, then we might as well, as one of my friends says, "piss on the fire and summon the hounds," because the hunt is over.

At this point the main thing, in my opinion, is to create a wide-spread awareness among white working people of the nature of the white supremacist deal. I

am confident that the American working class, which gave birth to May Day and International Women's Day, which developed and creatively applied the tactics of the sit-in strike, going pickets and the slow-down, will be able to come up with plenty of ways to repudiate a deal once they have decided it is in their interest to do so.

Too Moralistic?

In discussing my thesis with movement people, I have sometimes encountered the objection that my approach is a moralistic rather than a materialistic one, that it relies on idealism rather than "self-interest". To this I answer as follows:

- (1) The "moralistic" John Brown made a far greater contribution to the struggle of labor than all of the sophisticated "Marxists" in the pre-Civil War labor movement (and there were some, even then) who shied away from directly opposing chattel slavery because, they felt, "the workers wouldn't go along."
- (2) As a worker I resent the prejudice, common among student radicals, that the workers can only be moved by narrow economic considerations while they, the students, are radicals for reasons of idealism. I point to the thousands and thousands of white workers who marched off to war for the Union singing, "As He died to make men holy, let us die to make men free." And I would predict that the next few years will show that the great acts of heroism on the part of the working people will be called forth not by demands for a nickel an hour but by the "idealistic", "moralistic" slogans of the solidarity and humanity of labor.
- (3) the repudiation of the white-skin privilege is in the interests, both short and long range, of the white workers, and the only problem is to help them (and some of our radicals) see it.

THE MOVEMENT

