

Advance Through Criticism of Past Errors

Busing and the Fight Against National Oppression and for Revolution

Few questions have provoked so much division within the ranks of the people—or so many instances of workers acting against their own class interests—as the question of busing school children in the name of achieving integration. In city after city federally ordered busing plans have generated turmoil and confusion, vicious mob action aimed at Black people, and a marked tendency for Black people and others opposed to the actions of the racist neanderthals to land in the arms of the liberal bourgeoisie. Of course, the basis for the intense feelings and struggle that busing has generated has never been an abstract concern over the merits or demerits of children taking a bus to school. Rather, busing and the movements that have developed in response to it have highlighted and exacerbated one of the central features of U.S. society—the inequality and oppression of Black people and other minority nationalities, and the corresponding reflection of this oppression in the sphere of ideology and politics.

It would be comforting to suggest that in the face of one of the bourgeoisie's most successful tactics to whip up reaction, divide the ranks of the people and strengthen their bourgeois rule the revolutionary movement in this country had been able to provide a clear, proletarian alternative to various forms of poison that have come to the fore around the busing question. Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Within the ranks of Marxist-Leninists and would-be Marxists, the busing question has led to confusion and, overwhelmingly, left revolutionaries (genuine or professed) tailing bourgeois ideology and bourgeois politics in one or another form.

The Revolutionary Communist Party and the organization that played the key role in its formation, the Revolutionary Union, has committed serious errors around the “busing question” going back to 1974 when the Boston busing plan and the reactionary movement it engendered first catapulted this question to national prominence. Although there was struggle around this question in the RCP and the RU before it and efforts were made to correct some of the glaring errors associated with the Party and the RU's line on busing, it was only following the defeat of the Jarvis-Bergman revisionist clique and the holding of the Second Congress of the Party in 1978 that it has been possible to thoroughly break with past errors on this question and sum up and fight to root out the basis for these serious errors.

What follows is a slightly edited internal document of the Party, circulated and discussed within the RCP within the past several months, which systematically examines the busing question and the Party's errors in relation to it. This document is being made public to assist class conscious workers and other revolutionary-minded people in learning from the mainly negative

experience of our Party around this question and to help create a situation in which similar errors will be less likely to be repeated. At the same time, the document should help acquaint the reader with how a genuine communist party, a party whose sole reason for existence is to lead the working class and the masses in making revolution and advancing to socialism and ultimately communism, is able to use the science of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tsetung Thought to rectify its errors and has no interest in concealing or perpetuating its mistakes, particularly when basic principles are involved.

As Lenin put it:

The attitude of a political party towards its own mistakes is one of the most important and surest ways of judging how earnest the party is and how it *in practice* fulfills its obligations towards its *class* and the toiling *masses*. Frankly admitting a mistake, ascertaining the reasons for it, analyzing the conditions which led to it, and thoroughly discussing the means of correcting it—that is the earmark of a serious party; that is the way it should perform its duties, that is the way it should

educate and train the *class*, and then the *masses*. (“Left-Wing” Communism, *An Infantile Disorder*, Peking FLP, pp. 50-51, Lenin's emphasis.)

No doubt there will be various opportunist groupings, some decked out in “communist” garb, who will try to use this self-criticism of the RCP to try to fling mud at the Party and reverse verdicts on their own opportunist positions of the past—and present. It seems to be a law of history that those whose very political existence is a colossal error will try to seize upon the errors of Marxist-Leninists to try to confound Marxism and revisionism. Thus it is necessary, by way of introduction to the document, to review the way in which, and the times during which, the busing question first became a point of controversy in the revolutionary movement. The theses of the opportunists must be criticized, not to justify or minimize the errors of the communists, but so that the reader will understand in an all-round way “the conditions which led” to the mistakes of the Party (and the RU) and so that, in addition, in correcting one deviation one does not fall into others.

Busing and the Opportunists

The Boston busing plan came on the scene in the midst of a major struggle that was going on within what could at the time be referred to as the communist movement in the U.S. In particular the struggle was centered around the question of *Bundism*, or the political tendency to adapt Marxism to nationalism (so named after the Jewish Bund or league in Tsarist Russia which had argued that Jewish workers had to be organized into a political organization separate from other class conscious workers in Russia.) This deviation was very strong in the U.S. at that time, growing out of the objective fact that the national struggle of Black people and other oppressed nationalities had, in the period of the '60s and early '70s, outstripped the struggle of the multi-national working class as a whole. This fact had led some revolutionaries to believe that the development of a multi-national party was conditional on organizations of Black and other oppressed nationalities *first* establishing a certain degree of influence among the masses

of their nationalities and that only *then* could a multi-national party be established. It was also linked to the view that within the working class "Black workers must take the lead" and that Black and other minority nationality communists should be guaranteed a special place (and special organizational forms) within the multi-national party.

This Bundist view also dovetailed closely with plain old fashioned liberalism which had always been a strong current among white communists coming out of the anti-imperialist movements centered in the petty bourgeoisie. This liberalism trailed the Bundism prevalent in the movement. Both views had in common an underestimation of and a contempt for the revolutionary potential of the workers as a *class*, particularly of the white workers. Both views raised the national question *above* the class question.

The Revolutionary Union distinguished itself by forthrightly struggling against this deviation in the movement, a deviation which, it is safe to say, was dominant at that time and had significant influence in the RU itself in its five years or so of existence. Because of this, the RU and later the RCP was blasted as "racist" and "national chauvinist" for failing to buckle under to nationalist and liberal deviations.

These charges were levelled because, instead of a slogan like "Black workers take the lead," the RU stressed the need for the multi-national proletariat to take the lead of all the struggles of the masses in the U.S., including the fight against national oppression. With this understanding, the RU, for example, led campaigns against various stark examples of national oppression (such as police killings, and Operation Zebra in San Francisco when Blacks were forced to carry I.D. cards as part of a so-called police "investigation" into a series of murders.) These struggles were taken up among the workers of all nationalities, as well as among the oppressed Black masses, and many white workers came forward in them.

When the Boston busing plan was first implemented in 1974, there was a well organized reactionary and chauvinist movement that developed in opposition to it. Reactionaries succeeded in winning over some sections of the white masses (including workers) to try to attack school buses carrying Black children, beat up Blacks who happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, and so forth. The plan itself was neither the outgrowth of mass struggle nor of any particular benefit to the Black masses. Ordered by the federal government with the excuse of a lawsuit by the NAACP, the busing plan aimed to accomplish exactly what it did accomplish—the intensification of national divisions among the people. While the reactionaries were busy trying to organize pogroms against Blacks, other bourgeoisie forces were trying to mobilize Black people behind their banner (making use of the services of the NAACP and the like) and to convince them that the white masses, not the capitalist ruling class, are the

enemy of Black people.

The attitude of most of the "communist" forces at the time was to tail completely behind the actions of the liberal bourgeoisie. The busing plan was hailed as a great concession to Black people. The federal government was called upon to send troops into the city to protect (!) Blacks against attacks by racist whites. Efforts were consistently made by such "communists" to paint the entire white working class community of South Boston (where resistance to the busing plan was the strongest) as hopeless reactionaries. In other words, a situation was being presented where the federal government, and the mainstream of the bourgeoisie, were presented as implementing a progressive reform while the masses of the white workers were, on the other hand, the enemy—one reactionary mass or mob.

Among some "communist" forces at that time—most notably the notorious October League (now called the CPML) and the *Guardian*, two groups who at that time were politically very close to each other—this view was linked to an analysis that the U.S. bourgeoisie was divided into a "fascist" section (Nixon, etc.) and a "democratic" section (Kennedy, and the people that supported busing or other "democratic" measures). Thus OL's calls for the *government* to "break up the fascist gangs" were directed at the "anti-fascist" section of the bourgeoisie to come to the aid of the masses of Black people.

In the face of this, the RU correctly analyzed what the bourgeoisie was trying to accomplish through its "busing plan," which was anything *but* bettering the condition of Black people or promoting real integration. The experience in the U.S. over the past few years has borne this out completely. The RU emphasized that the white workers were not enemies of the revolution, but had to be won to be a key component in it. The RU set out to find a middle ground ("break through the middle" was one of the slogans issued at the time) between the reactionary mobs and the liberal bourgeoisie and the Black bourgeois reformists on their payroll (or parroting their line without pay) who were masquerading as the saviors of Black people and trying to direct the movement for equality against the white masses. It was because the RU refused to tail behind the bourgeoisie, refused to support the Boston busing plan, and refused to write off the white workers to the camp of reaction that it incurred the wrath of the opportunists.

And all the while, in fact, it was only the RU that was actually organizing in South Boston against the racist attacks on Black people.

At the same time, as the document below spells out in some detail, the line the RU took at the time, and which continued to plague the Party for quite awhile, was not correct. While the Boston busing plan was not something that should be supported, the RU's opposition to it was not based on a correct analysis of the overall situation. This

took its most crude expression in the slogan "People Unite to Smash the Boston Busing Plan!," although the RU quickly repudiated this slogan and summed up some of the errors associated with it, in its own ranks and publicly in its press. However, the RU's work around this continued to be characterized by trying to find a common ground among Blacks and whites in opposing the busing plan, at a time when the busing plan was not really the actual question at all. Rather the central question was defending Black people against racist attacks, and building real unity of the working class—not by trying "to call a halt" in the abstract to divisions in the working class but by uniting the working class to attack the real source of those divisions, the inequality and the oppression of the minority nationalities fostered and promoted by the capitalist system.

It is essential to note here that the struggle within the Party to correct these errors on the busing question has been linked closely with the struggle against pragmatism and economism—trends which have had influence in the ranks of the RCP (and the RU before it) and which was crystallized in the revisionist political line of the Jarvis-Berman headquarters inside the Party. These Mensheviks judged everything in relation to building the economic struggle and the trade union unity of the workers—and thus downplayed and increasingly liquidated the fight against national oppression. (At the same time, it should be noted that the underlying pragmatism of the Mensheviks make it quite possible for them to flip over to tailing narrow nationalism and bourgeois liberalism.) Thus, with the defeat and repudiation of the economist, reformist and all-around revisionist line of the Mensheviks in 1978, the ground was laid for the RCP to more thoroughly sum up and root out the underlying political basis for the Party's errors on the busing question.

In sum, then, the RU (and later the Party) made a number of important and correct criticisms of the positions of the opportunists but failed to formulate a correct line which could lead the masses forward in the midst of an extremely difficult and complex situation. The criticism of these past errors summed up in the internal document below has not only corrected the Party's previous stand on the busing question, but also, by going into the basis for those errors, helps to minimize the possibility that similar errors around other questions will arise in the future.

Text of Party document follows

For several years now our Party has been involved in work around various busing plans ordered by the courts in several major cities of the country. In practically every one of these situations the bourgeoisie has made considerable headway in deepening the divisions within the working class—mistrust, violence and deep-seated cynicism have been fueled by these plans. Even where such plans are not immediately on the agenda, the bourgeoisie has made ideological capital out of situations like Boston and Louisville, raising the specter of howling mobs and people at each other's throats to demoralize the workers. And to some extent this is even reflected in our own ranks where the prospect of having to deal with this question is more than likely regarded as a thankless task. Not that it's all been cringing or that good work has not been done in some situations, but the brutal and undeniable fact is that we have not—to any significant measure—been able to decisively influence the masses around this question.

This is not to argue for pragmatism, i.e. let's cast about for something that will work; rather the point is to examine the assumptions that have guided and the framework within which this work has been carried out. The latest Central Committee document lays the basis to do this. It points out that while it has been correct generally not to support the recent busing plans (or almost all of them), "there has been a general tendency to put too much emphasis on opposing the plans and not enough on raising and finding the ways to build struggle around demands that are in the interests of the working class as a whole, including equality as a central part of this." More specifically that document emphasizes that "we should be more against the attacks on Black people—and certainly more *for* the fight against national oppression and inequality in all forms—than we are against the busing plans." Yet the thread that has run through much of the work that has been done is that anti-busing sentiment is largely progressive (except for the most chauvinist expressions of it) and that our task was, or implicitly became, to build off of it. But before this is scrutinized further it is necessary to review what the bourgeoisie has been up to with these plans.

Long and drawn out litigation in the courts—for the most part initiated by the NAACP—has resulted in city-wide desegregation plans involving extensive busing. These suits were not the product of nor a concession to mass struggle, but represented a conscious initiative taken by the bourgeoisie. That these plans were launched in rapid succession in 1974-75 only underscores this. Clearly, the bourgeoisie, having summed up earlier experiments and episodes around busing (the most noteworthy perhaps in Pontiac, Michigan some years back), decided to unsheathe its sword. These plans in so far as they were implemented were generally ac-

companied by school closings, personnel and program cuts, especially affecting minorities, and in many instances their actual effect (where already integrated schools were among those closed or broken up and where whites pulled out of the school system) was to bring about further segregation.

But these things, though an integral part and result of many such plans, were not the essence of the bourgeoisie's offensive. The principal objective of these busing plans has been a political one—to intensify divisions within the working class by playing upon and inflaming national antagonisms. It was more than coincidental that the most controversial plan—the opening shot, as it were—was in Boston in the fall of 1974 when the economy was entering into its deepest post-war contraction. These plans were launched exactly at a time of crisis, the further development of which was bound to stiffen the resistance of the working class. These plans therefore were not simply engineered out of cunning or conspiracy. They flowed from the needs of the ruling class to stem and derail the struggle of the working class, to cripple its ability to forge unity in the face of stepped up attacks, and to place a major stumbling block in the way of the working class' ability to develop a larger, more politically conscious movement.

... if we are going to resist this divide-and-conquer scheme we have got to attack the basis on which it is launched—which means fighting inequality and opposing its ideological reflections and reinforcements, particularly white chauvinism.

This political attack has centered on the schools because they can be made a convenient focus for national antagonisms—given the degree of segregation that exists in most cities, the generally more rotten conditions in the Black and minority schools and the emotional hysteria that can be whipped up around children. The bourgeoisie initiates these plans fully aware that they will arouse a reactionary response among some sections of white workers and petty bourgeoisie. Groups like ROAR, the KKK, the Nazis, as well as other scum with a more respectable veneer, are promoted for the express purpose of welding this resistance into a reactionary and chauvinist movement which can influence and sweep up significant numbers of whites who might oppose these plans for reasons of inconvenience, fear and so forth. Once these forces gain the upper hand and threaten or actually launch attacks on Black people, the bourgeoisie—posing as the champion of Black people's rights and pointing to the sentiments and actions it has deliberately provoked among white people—will seek to rally Black people around its agents and opportunist forces. And significant numbers of Black people who may have been luke-warm

toward or even opposed to these plans at their inception can now be won to them as a matter of principle on account of these attacks. The NAACP and the nationalists run amuck.

This in a nutshell has been the kind of situation that has developed—and to this point we have not made much progress in the way of countering this offensive. But the fundamental problem has not been the bourgeoisie's ability to maneuver or that the balance of forces is initially—or even for an extended time—an unfavorable one. All this may be true; yet what has limited the freedom of the Party to truly raise the banner of our class and revolution is that our approach to the question has been basically wrong. To put it bluntly, we've opposed busing largely for the wrong reasons and made opposing busing the main aspect of our work.

As indicated, these busing plans are political attacks and cannot—at least in most cases—be supported. The perceptual understanding of most people is that children are being shuffled from one basically bad school to another and that people are less united through the course of all this. But this divides into two because for many people this gets translated as "leave well enough alone" and also feeds a certain cynicism that Black and white people really *can't* get along. But beyond this, the main issue involved in these situations is the national question. And the only real meaning opposition to busing can have outside of working to make the fight against national oppression the pivotal concern is to sanction inequality—whether we intend it or not.

Why is it that the fight against inequality and discrimination is the crux of the fight against this divide-and-conquer scheme? Well, on one level the bourgeoisie pushes this question to the fore. By making a phony pretense of concern over segregation, the bourgeoisie attempts to channel Black people's hatred for segregation and discrimination into dead-end reformism and nationalism. Among the masses of white people, the bourgeoisie tries to whip up a reactionary and chauvinist movement in opposition to the struggle of Black people and to maintain the unequal status quo. And quite obviously what is happening is that the masses are being polarized and organized along national lines. But even here we are only looking at the surface of things.

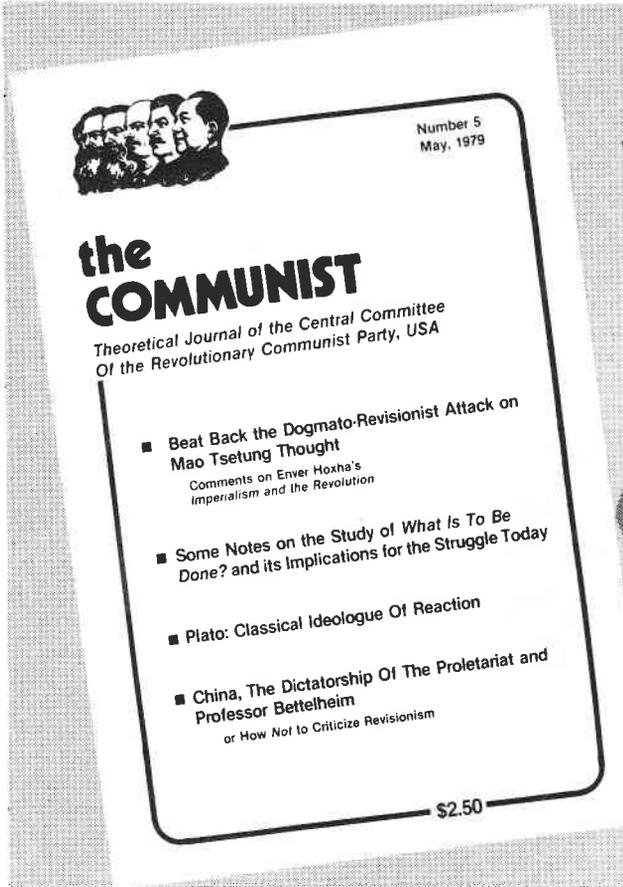
If we say—as we correctly do—that busing is a divide-and-conquer scheme, then we have to ask ourselves how is it that the bourgeoisie can get over with this attack? By capriciously fomenting divisions? By simply exploiting popular prejudices? No, there is a basis for the bourgeoisie to divide the class politically and that resides in the real material inequalities that exist between Black and white people. What the bourgeoisie is doing is exacerbating existing antagonisms which are rooted in the structure of national oppression

and reinforced in the superstructure. White workers do have access to relatively better job opportunities and do live in relatively better neighborhoods, etc. Through its ideological apparatus the bourgeoisie bends every effort to convince white workers that Black people are unwilling to work hard enough to escape their misery or are even the cause of it. Of course, compared to the suffering that workers of all nationalities have in common these differences are far secondary. But they are real, nonetheless, and provide the material basis for the bourgeoisie to further divide the class. So it's not just out of

nowhere that the bourgeoisie can coax whites to "protect what they have from the encroachments of Blacks" or to tell Blacks that "whites have all the goods or, at least, where whites are the goods will follow, so getting a better education depends on breaking their stranglehold on opportunity."

What all this means, then, is that if we are going to resist this divide-and-conquer scheme we have got to attack the basis on which it is launched—which means fighting inequality and opposing its ideological reflections and reinforcements, particularly white chauvinism. In the past our approach has

been something like this: "Busing is a tool to divide the class, it's being cooked up by the rich to turn us on each other, so let's unite—Black and white—to stop busing." But how can this possibly strike at the root of the problem, unless we believe that busing, itself, is the cause of discrimination and national antagonisms—which is not the case. So we have wound up issuing hollow calls not to be divided or appealed to people by means of a circular argument—busing is a trap, and how do we deal with it? By not falling for it. This has really been not at all effectual or inspiring.



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But it's worse than that because concentrating attention on busing and focusing on opposing it objectively conciliates with the backward sentiment that things ought to be left the way they are when, in fact, what we want to do is turn things upside down. In particular, with regard to busing, our aim should not be to hold the line against it. We should be striving to fill people with a hatred for the status quo and the bourgeoisie that benefits from it. We should be exposing the mechanisms through which the bourgeoisie fosters and perpetrates national oppression, and we must develop the appropriate forms of struggle against it—and on this basis forge unity.

In sum, the great majority of these busing plans are political attacks, but *busing is not really the issue*. Every last one of these plans could be scrapped tomorrow, yet this would be no reason to breathe a sigh of relief, since inequality still exists and is worsening. Actually, in those cities where busing plans have been delayed, the rulers use the fall-out from or prospect of busing to continue stirring up divisions, and this emphasizes that the issue is not whether the buses roll. And, by the same token, it is not necessarily an unmitigated disaster for these plans to actually take effect, for kids to be bused, if in the course of this, deeper political understanding and unity is built exactly by doing what has been talked about here.

A previous bulletin issued in 1976 drew attention to the error of not giving any real meaning to the demand for equality in the busing work, and the 1976 Central Committee Report went to great lengths to caution against liquidating the national question and underestimating the potential of these battles. Nevertheless the work was still infected with economism and eclecticism—and the Mensheviks were none too subtle in their disdain for winning workers to take up the fight against national oppression, which is why they sabotaged the march at the founding convention of the National United Workers Organization held in Chicago in September 1977], whose thrust was supposed to be against attacks on Black people in connection with the busing into Marquette Part (and we supported that particular busing). The Mensheviks attempted to turn this demonstration into an anti-busing extravaganza. But as the latest CC document also points out, this by no means suggests that such influences were solely due to them, nor that those errors have been thoroughly rooted out.

What characterized the busing work was the view that we had to unite broadly (as opposed to struggling sharply) with the white workers who opposed busing and to link up with Blacks who wanted to fight inequality—though usually we sought out Blacks who opposed the plans. The idea that we had to “break through the middle” became sort of a doctrine of the mean—being all things to all people. Developing the strug-

gle “on the terms most favorable to the working class” came to mean finding the lowest common denominator—and this was usually some variant of better education for everyone and no busing. “You don’t like busing because your kids will be forced to travel long distances; fine, join with us.” It was as though we were searching far and wide for every conceivable anti-busing concern to unite with and striving not to create any waves.

This was indeed paradoxical. Here was one of the sharpest attacks and most volatile situations that was faced in many cities, and we either left people unchallenged or confused as to our stand, except for some murky impression that we were against busing—but for Blacks and whites to oppose it together. This was not the totality of the Party’s work, but this work was at best marked by certain conflicting trends. For example, in one city people would chase down every anti-busing group or meeting to “check them out.” On the other hand the same comrades linked up with a determined struggle to keep open one of the few integrated schools in the city that was being shut as part of the busing program. A number of Black and white workers did come forward on a more revolutionary basis. But still, it was a matter of throwing everything into the anti-busing hopper.

This attempt to avoid controversy, to avoid having to offend and challenge (in particular the white workers) had a lot to do with a sort of goody-goody negation of the Trotskyites and other opportunists. They saw in the white workers an undifferentiated racist mass and saw in busing a weapon to chastise them for their neanderthal ways. These opportunists went so far as to call for the state to more forcefully intervene to protect Black people from this undifferentiated mass of racist whites—even when it was clear in practice (even if you lacked Marxist theory) that the police, etc. viciously attacked Black people and alternated between egging whites on to attack Blacks and clubbing and arresting whites themselves—and through all this protecting nothing but the interests of the capitalists while intensifying national antagonisms among the people. From our perspective the white workers were basically “good,” their opposition to busing just, and our job was to wean them away from the reactionaries by essentially calling for united resistance to busing. Typically, comrades would get up at some of these anti-busing meetings and make a speech to the effect that “none of us likes busing and what’s really needed is better education for everyone.” The response more often than not was benign neglect or a sort of “hmm, where are these people coming from?”

Even when we began to break out of this orientation—or take the first real steps in doing so—there remained serious confusion in our ranks besides outright opposition from the Mensheviks. This came out sharply, for example, in the response within the Party to

the article on the (limited and voluntary) busing in Chicago in September 1977, around the time of the NUWO convention. In particular, this response focused on the description of the hard-core reactionary whites organizing opposition to this busing—specifically women from the white neighborhood involved—who were called “hatchet-faced hussies” and the description “vicious pragmatism” applied to the line of those who know it’s the banks, etc. who are responsible for the deteriorating neighborhoods, etc. but find it easier to fight Black people (see *Revolution*, October 1977, p. 2). Both of these descriptions were considered by many in the Party to be “an attack on the masses.” This reflected within the Party a strong tendency to tail behind the masses—the white masses in particular—and actually, “through the back door” (so to speak), identify their interests with those championed by the reactionaries, rather than struggling with these whites to grasp their real and highest interests and leading them to forge unity with the masses of Black people on the basis of their real common interests—including, as a central part, the fight against national oppression—while of course also struggling against nationalism and other backward tendencies among the Black masses.

The reason we became largely irrelevant around this struggle was our failure to make the central focus of our work targetting and combatting the bourgeoisie’s efforts to organize a reactionary and chauvinist movement among white workers around the busing issue. Yes, the bourgeoisie promotes nationalism among Blacks and this must be struggled with, but the principal danger lies in the other direction. The point is that we have to draw a clear line of demarcation between the interests of the working class and these reactionary forces and find the means to expose and attack them in a mass and bold way. In fact, only by our drawing this line and bringing to the fore the centrality of fighting national oppression—while putting forward our stand on these plans and why and how they’re an attack—will the white workers who detest this bullshit be emboldened to go against the tide and those honest masses who have been swept up into it be broken from it.

What distinguishes us from the Trotskyites is not that they think whites have no good reason to oppose busing and we think they do—because to be perfectly honest, much of this opposition is either backward or narrow (since when is the concern over the complications of your kid getting sick at a school on the other end of town on a par with the fact that the conditions in the Black schools and in the Black community generally are what they are!). While some of the reasons many whites oppose busing involve legitimate concerns, nevertheless we have to struggle with people to see the more basic problems we face as a class and unite with people on this basis. What differentiates us from the opportunists is that we understand that the workers

of all nationalities can grasp their class interests and that white workers can be won to take up the fight against national oppression and all oppression.

How many times have we run into people who have told us that they're not racist, but oppose busing? How many times have we come into contact with honest white workers who have said they'd go to jail before their children get bused? Why can't we challenge these people and tell them "look, this busing plan sucks, but it's not the most important thing—what is, is the discrimination, segregation and inequality and the fact that this

... a big part of what the bourgeoisie is trying to do with these plans is to organize a reactionary and chauvinist movement among white workers—and we have a special task in combatting it.

whole system, its schools, hospitals, and so on are crumbling. And why in the world is it wrong, anyway, for Black and white kids to be in the same school? What's wrong is this cheap attempt by the ruling class to stir up hatred and this hell-hole they call education. If these kids get bused then they ought to be welcomed into the schools and we must turn this to our advantage to unite to fight all the rot we have to contend with. And we'll be damned if we're going to stand by and let some reactionary dinosaurs attack any of these kids. If it means going at them with 2 x 4's—then *that's* worth going to jail for!" Doesn't this concentrate the aspirations—the loftier aspirations and the actual class interests—of the multi-national working class? And won't this cause a bit more commotion at these anti-busing meetings?

Tailing after the spontaneous resistance of white people to these busing plans has led to an accommodation with all kinds of petty bourgeois ideology. The Mensheviks in Milwaukee raised the slogan "no forced busing," as though the problem was that something was being forced on the masses. This goes right along with the idea that the government is nibbling away at people's individual rights. But communists don't uphold some abstract freedom of choice. We don't think that homeowners have the right to sell their houses "to the buyer of their choice" if this means keeping Blacks out, for instance. And our vision of the future is certainly not defined by freedom from all compulsion—there is no such condition.

Another line that would often come up is "why should I pay, why should I give up what I've earned and worked for?" This was reflected in some of our agitation where we would assert that whites were being forced to bear the brunt of these plans or at least implied that there was something to unite with when this sentiment was raised. The problem with this was that on the one hand it fed some

economism and reformism—as though the essential thing was that people were righteously defending themselves against attempts by the bourgeoisie to lower their living standards, in particular to protect themselves against deteriorating education. This was a strange twist because we were at the same time proclaiming that the bourgeoisie was trying to get us fighting over crumbs. Nonetheless there was this tendency to make too much of protecting these crumbs rather than raising people's sights to fight for bigger things which would necessarily involve hardship and sacrifice.

On the other hand, and closely related, this notion that whites were being forced to bear the brunt of this attack smacked of chauvinism. Because to the extent that whites are better off, it is obviously not merely because they've worked overtime, held down two jobs, etc.; after all, minority workers sacrifice no less for their families. Rather, the situation faced by minority nationalities involves the entire network of institutions and practices which effectively keeps them in a subordinate position, whether it's the FHA or tracking policies in the schools. In other words, there are the real inequalities whose cause is the capitalist system and whose most basic form is super-exploitation of the minority workers, and if opposition to busing turns on some idealized view that somehow inequality can be fought without causing disruptions and dislocations and without individuals sacrificing short-term gains for higher interests (as would be the case, for example, in fighting for plant-wide seniority in a steel mill which would "inconvenience" those workers who were the "beneficiaries" of department-wide seniority), then we're not

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talking about waging revolutionary class struggle.

We do not believe in sharing out misery or in reshuffling the deck of oppression under capitalism. But neither do we believe in taking refuge in the status quo which, as has been emphasized, is an unequal one. For this reason we cannot endorse or accept as a principle the idea of neighborhood schools or simply oppose busing with the demand to fix up the schools in the neighborhoods instead. We would of course raise specific demands around programs and schools in the minority communities, and struggles do rage all the time around the conditions in particular schools in all neighborhoods. But "neighborhood schools" as such are a specific prop of inequality. The neighborhood schools in the Black and other minority communities are overcrowded, drug-plagued and crime-ridden. There is nothing quaint about these

schools; they exist because of segregation. There is nothing sacrosanct about neighborhood schools, generally, unless there is comfort to be derived from the fact that our children can go to a bad school—close to home.

And, as a rallying cry, "neighborhood schools" is a call to preserve the fabric of the status quo. To suggest that neighborhoods belong to the people who live in them not only leads to and reinforces insular and reactionary bullshit such as occurred in Carson Beach in Boston when ROAR organized whites to keep Blacks off of "their" turf, but it's a big myth—people do not choose, much less control, the neighborhoods they live in.

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This is determined by the workings of capitalism in the final analysis. Again this is not to negate particular struggles around specific schools; however, it does mean that we cannot put forward better neighborhood schools as the programmatic alternative to busing. In fact, we might support a specific busing or desegregation plan if it would actually advance the interests of the working class—and specifically the fight against national oppression—despite the consequences to the neighborhood schools.

So what can be summed up in light of these observations? To begin with, the key link in this work is the fight against national oppression. That we were beginning to move in this direction was indicated in our criticism of the "Smash the Busing Plan" slogan and the view that the fight for decent and equal education ought to be the lynchpin of our work. But this formulation was basically eclectic. Not that the fight for decent and equal education is unimportant or unrelated to these struggles, just that there is on the one hand the fight against inequality (which is not solely a question of unequal schooling) and national oppression overall, and on the other hand there is the fight against the attacks on education. In this regard we should consider the demand for "decent" education misleading. While equality cannot be attained under capitalism, it can indicate a direction for struggle. "Decent" education under capitalism has no meaning—except socialist revolution and a whole new educational system. The basic problem with this focus was that it tended to melt into the "better schools for everyone" line and more than this kept us from seeing the situation for what it was in many instances—where in fact the main question became attacks on Black people or when perhaps at earlier stages large numbers of whites were being swept up into this kind of knee-jerk resistance to busing. And, besides, we must consistently expose the *ideological content* of education in this

society—which is thoroughly *indecent* and reactionary.

With regard to the actual implementation of the busing plans, it is neither our intention nor objective to keep children from going to the schools to which they will be bused. The mainly white boycotts that have been organized in many cities where busing has been ordered cannot be supported. They are—objectively, if not on everyone's part subjectively—aimed at Blacks. And, needless to say, we must vigorously organize resistance to violence directed against Blacks, whether it's the stoning of buses, direct attacks on Black kids or other attacks on Black people. In a certain sense we can live with these plans—people usually adapt to them. What we cannot accept are the political and ideological inroads the bourgeoisie tries to make out of these situations. This means being prepared to go into the South Bostons, the West Sides of Cleveland, and the Marquette Parks of Chicago to struggle with people to raise their sights and against bourgeois ideology and organized reaction. It means taking an unpopular position—and undoubtedly some licks as well. But how else can the grip of the bourgeoisie be broken? And since when is progress a painless experience?

It is possible to identify three phases that these busing plans as a rule pass through and to give some sense of how we ought to proceed. The first is the time between the court decisions and the actual start of the plans. Particularly as the implementation date approaches, some of the local politicians start talking about the law is the law and must be upheld, signifying that the police will be ready to bust heads and make a show of protecting Black people (actually of course they will viciously attack and incite attacks against, Black people, while also beating and arresting whites, further fanning up national antagonisms among the people). Other politicians make their bids to be the "voice of the white people." Black officials demand guarantees of protection for Black school children, the NAACP warns that busing is here to stay, you've got to live with it, and the KKK and Nazi types start crawling out of the sewers. The School Board officials portray themselves as victims of outside interference, ad nauseam.

In this period as the social forces are beginning to gel and hysteria and fear are being whipped up, we should aim to expose the busing plan—why it's being pushed, who's behind it, what's at stake for the working class—through agitation and propaganda. But we should mainly put forward and emphasize our principled stand against national oppression and inequality and for integration—though not in a liberal reformist way as if integration is some sort of antidote to hatred in the world or is the solution to national oppression. (In short, integration can be a blow against inequality and discrimination—though at times the bourgeoisie's version of integration has been used as a blud-

geon against the struggle in the form of transferring Black teachers who have been linked with community struggles or in shutting and busting up schools that have figured prominently in such struggles. But generally integration puts the working class in a stronger position to fight national oppression, all other oppression and its source—the capitalist system.) We should not, in our agitation, be sucked into coming up with better plans, but we should raise specific demands that speak to the issues raised by these busing plans, such as no cuts in special programs in minority schools, new schools to be built in areas accessible to Blacks and whites, opposing red-lining by the banks and segregation in housing, and upgrading the schools in the minority communities.

And not only should these outrages be exposed, but we must find the means to build concrete struggle around these and related questions. For instance, in one city in the months prior to the scheduled start of a busing plan, militant struggle jumped off in the Black community where students were crammed 60 into a classroom and where bathrooms didn't even have toilet paper. Students and parents confronted School Board officials and the struggle extended to the threatened shutdown of the only vocational school in the Black community. At the same

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time this was going on, anti-busing groups were going into the white schools getting kids to wear "no bus for us" buttons. Here was an important opportunity to drive a wedge between these reactionary forces and the volatile masses by struggling with the latter to get up off this anti-busing shit and unite with and help build this fight that was going on in the Black community, pointing out what a powerful blow it would be if white and Black people closed ranks behind this struggle.

In this connection, a few of the neighborhoods where violent anti-busing reaction is likely should be singled out, and extensive agitation carried on exposing the political essence of the anti-busing movement and laying bare the nature of the bourgeoisie's attack. And there is no reason that in these neighborhoods it should be conceded to liberal and church groups to set up welcoming committees for bused students. We should be organizing house meetings and going out to students (and others) to form militant groups to welcome and defend bused students—not because merely by sitting in the same classrooms our problems will be

solved, but because only through building unity around our real common interests will we be able to take on this vicious system. It should be quite obvious that besides the Party itself, there is a major role for the Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade and the National United Workers Organization to play here in helping to turn these schools and neighborhoods into battlegrounds against the bourgeoisie and its agents.

Our approach, then, should actually be to *expose* these busing plans as opposed to organizing resistance to them; we should link up with battles which typify the abuses most sharply felt like the deterioration of the Black schools, the shutdown of integrated schools, etc. and build struggles which point the road forward; and we should be developing a backbone force of Black and white people who can exert a revolutionary influence through the twists and turns of these situations instead of trying to assemble some motley anti-busing coalition.

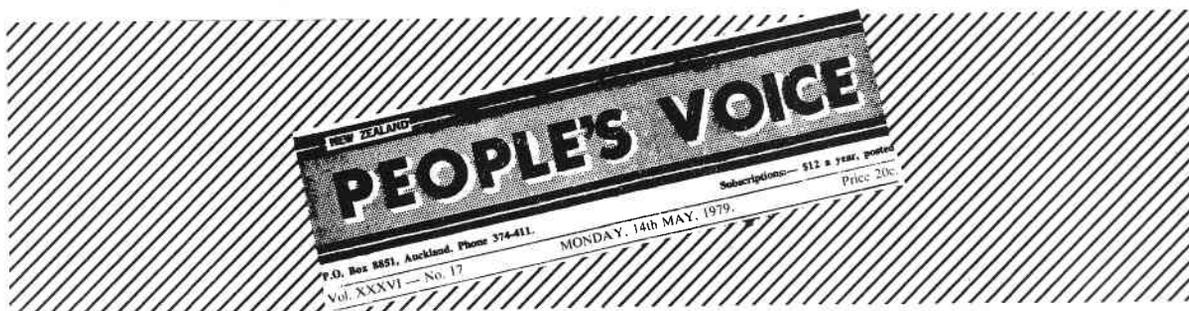
This will lay the strongest basis to deal with the next phase of the first day or weeks of busing when the question of mobilizing to defend Black people from attacks and taking on the force of the police and the vigilantes may come to the fore. On the first days of these busing plans, should we be setting up picket lines at the School Boards in opposi-

tion to busing, or should we be where the contradictions will be sharpest? If the thrust of this document is grasped, the answer is obvious—the latter, with particular emphasis on welcoming, and defending, Black school kids and actively opposing all attacks on Black people.

Finally, there is the phase of the continued struggle against discrimination and lousy education in the context of established busing programs. A more correct formulation of general slogans with respect to all of this would be: Down with Segregation, Discrimination, Inequality and All Attacks on Black People and All Minorities; No School Shutdowns, Layoffs or Cutbacks; and Oppose the Rulers' Divide and Conquer Schemes—Unite to Fight for Our Higher Interests!

Implicit in what has been said is the recognition of the specific tasks of white and Black communists. In other words, there is a necessary division of labor here. White comrades must be out among the white workers, combatting the chauvinism that the bourgeoisie is wildly—and sometimes more subtly or indirectly—fanning, and must be building

New Chinese Leaders Paving Way to Shelve Mao to Justify Their Policies



Editor's Note: The following article appeared in the May 14 issue of People's Voice, the weekly organ of the Communist Party of New Zealand. It responds to accounts in the New Zealand press regarding the possible rehabilitation of Liu Shao-chi. The subheads appeared in the original article.

Over the recent past the Communist Party and the People's Voice have been consistently exposing the betrayal of socialism in China by its present leaders, headed by Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng (Teng Hsiao-ping and Hua Kuo-feng).

This betrayal has been made evident to the world by China's honeymoon with US imperialism and the agreements made with scores of giant foreign monopolies for the exploitation of China's people and natural resources.

There are no doubt some people who still think that Deng Xiaoping and Co. are following the policies of Mao Tsetung, despite the evidence to the contrary. They shut their eyes to what everyone knows, for instance that under Mao, China kicked out the imperialist monopolies in 1949 and pursued a policy of self-reliance until Mao's death in 1976, when the present leading clique seized power, a policy now completely reversed.

"Rehabilitating" Mao's Arch-Foe

One of the clearest indications of how the new "leaders" are actually restoring all that Mao opposed comes from a news item in the NZ Herald of April 30, datelined Peking and headed: "What About You, Mr. Liu?"

According to "diplomatic sources" quoted in the item, the "rehabilitation is imminent of the main 'capitalist roader' in the Communist Party of China," Liu Shao-chi (now

spelt Liu Shaoqi). "It is no longer a question of if" says the news item, "merely a question of when he will be formally rehabilitated, although his reputation by implication already has been." The article also referred to Liu as "Chairman Mao's arch-foe," and to "hundreds of people purged or disgraced during China's Cultural Revolution" being "rehabilitated last week."

Once the People's Voice would have looked with suspicion on any capitalist press report on China. However, in view of the present "we love China now" attitude of US imperialism and its followers in NZ, including the Herald, we see no reason to doubt the correctness of the quoted item.

In Khrushchov's Footsteps

The process of "rehabilitation" has not just begun—it has been going on for months, during which thousands of counter-

Busing

support for the fight against inequality and national oppression and for the defense of Black kids. Black comrades must go out among the Black masses to bring communist leadership to the fight against national oppression and bring forward the common class interests of the Black and white masses, struggling against nationalism and specifically in this context against illusions that equality means fighting the whites for a "piece of the pie," that integration is some sort of a cure-all, etc. Among the masses of other oppressed nationalities the situation is often very complicated, because the bourgeoisie generally attempts to fan antagonisms between them and both the whites and Blacks—stirring up chauvinism in connection with busing among whites against all oppress-

ed nationalities, while also coupling busing plans with attacks on language programs, etc. in schools, is a typical trick of the bourgeoisie. Comrades of these nationalities must bring forward among them the common class interests they have with whites and Blacks, with the masses of all nationalities, and here too give proletarian leadership to the fight against their national oppression while linking this with the overall fight against the capitalist system and struggling against the nationalist line that pits each nationality against the others in a fight for crumbs.

Again, the overall key to uniting with the masses of different nationalities in the face of these busing plans is to build and give central place to the fight against national oppression and inequality—with regard to all oppressed nationalities—and to bring forward and struggle to unite the masses of all nationalities around their highest interests, their com-

mon class interests in fighting against all oppression of the people and its source, the capitalists and their man-eating system. And this work must be infused overall with revolutionary sweep, raising people's sights to the fundamental questions: why in the world would the bourgeoisie be compelled to launch these divide-and-conquer attacks if their system were not in such a deep crisis, what do the thousand and one ways they attack the people and attempt to set us at each other's throats say about their whole system, what are the interests of our class and how do they require us as a class to be the vanguard fighter against national oppression and all oppression—and against the whole capitalist system? And most of all, what does all this say about the future they offer us—and can only offer us—and the future that we can and must forge ourselves by putting them and their system in their graves and destroying the basis for such a system root and branch? ■