

STAND FIRM ON PRINCIPLE

In the anti-Bakke movement as in every other democratic struggle, communists must ensure that work unfold on a sound basis of principle.

In this case, the starting point, from which there can be no deviation, is the policy of equal rights--no national privileges and no national inequality.

Since the Bakke case also represents an attack on the democratic rights of women, it is also necessary to raise the principle of the absolute equality of the sexes.

If our leadership is not based firmly on principle, it is easy to limit the struggle of the masses for democracy to the narrow practicality of bourgeois reformism. If we fail to unfold our work on the basis of principle, how can we distinguish our positions from the positions of the bourgeoisie? Suppose for example the bourgeoisie "overturns" the Bakke decision? What is the perspective of our struggle in that case?

The criteria for evaluating the struggle in Bakke must be what best prepares the conditions for the class struggle of the proletariat. Imperialism is reaction all down the line and the democratic struggles of the masses can be mobilized as a powerful force to weaken the imperialist system and strengthen the struggle of the proletariat. We can build mutual confidence and solidarity among the working people, both men and women, of all nations only if the whole working class takes up the struggle for equal rights.

It is the struggle for equal rights that exposes bourgeois hypocrisy about "reverse discrimination". The call for equal rights is not a call for privileges for any nation. Imperialism rests on the superexploitation of oppressed nationalities and women. The struggle for equal rights is aimed at the heart of national and sexual inequality by attacking this double oppression. It is a demand that oppressed nationality workers and women have every right and privilege, economic, political and social, that white workers have. Thus it is not a struggle that calls on the laboring masses of any nation to give up anything but inequality and national privilege. It is a struggle that prepares the conditions for taking exploitation out of our lives. Workers of every nation support the just struggle for equal rights, and particularly workers of the oppressor nation. No nation is free that enslaves another nation. The oppressor nation working class must take the lead in the struggle for equal rights in order to prepare the conditions for its own emancipation from exploitation.

What are the tendencies in the anti-Bakke movement that undermine our firm stand on the principle of equal rights?

Some forces talk a lot about "equal rights" but they completely oppose the revolutionary democratic content of the slogan and apply it in a bourgeois reformist way which emphasizes formal equality and ignores national oppression. The stand of the CPUSA against "racism" and "poor education" is an example of that. Openly reformist in character, these forces promote reliance on the bourgeois state through the courts, civil rights commissions etc.

In the same fashion, the National Committee to Overturn the Bakke decision isolates the question of racism from the question of national oppression and writes: "racism against whites is no more tolerable than when practiced against minorities". This is a "reverse discrimination" line all over again. Putting whites and national minorities on the same plane, it obliterates the distinction between oppressed and oppressor nationalities. Both racism and national chauvinism are tied to imperialism and represent the ideological superstructure erected by the bourgeoisie to maintain national oppression.

Some who identify the question of national oppression still fail to take up the struggle for equal rights as a matter of principle. On the one hand there is a tendency to counterpose the national struggle to the class struggle. Ignoring the struggle for equal rights, this position says that since the source of national oppression is the capitalist system itself, what we need is to develop unity between whites and national minorities in order to overthrow capitalism. Since there can never be full equality under capitalism the oppressed nationalities should throw their full energies into the struggle for socialism.

This trend forgets to ask what is necessary to develop unity between whites and national minorities. Staunch support for the struggle of oppressed nationalities for equal rights is the sole basis. Isolated from the revolutionary struggle (though not necessarily from the mass struggle), opportunists do not appreciate the contribution the struggle for equal rights makes to preparing the conditions for class struggle of the proletariat.

Another chauvinist tendency fails to recognize the connection between the struggle for equal rights and the struggle for the self-determination of oppressed nations and make this connection a matter of principle. In failing to make this connection, they cannot identify the source of national inequality and end up talking about "human rights" and "equality for all". These concepts are easily used for all sorts of bourgeois demagoguery about the rights of the individual and are a way to liquidate the fundamental question of the inequality of whole peoples as oppressed nationalities.

In the same way chauvinists on the woman question fail to draw the connection between the struggle for equal rights and the second class status of women caused by the condition of domestic slavery in the monogamous family based on private property.

Proletarian revolution is impossible if communists don't work to develop the democratic struggles of the oppressed masses. Mutual confidence and class solidarity between working and oppressed people of the oppressed and the oppressor nations and between the male and the female sex will not develop if we fail to take up the struggle for equal rights. We must defeat not only bourgeois reformists who seek only this or that reform and ignore the source of inequality, but also social chauvinists who pretend to use the "class struggle" to cover up their unwillingness to take up the struggle for equal rights.

The proletariat is a consistent, vanguard fighter for democracy. As Lenin says, there is only one solution to the national problem and that is consistent democracy, "just as socialism cannot be victorious unless it introduces complete democracy, so the proletariat will be unable to prepare for victory over the bourgeoisie unless it wages a many sided, consistent and revolutionary struggle for democracy."

While great nation chauvinist errors are the main opportunist tendency in a struggle like Bakke, we must also oppose narrow nationalist and national exclusive tendencies. It is the duty of communists of both the oppressed and oppressor nationalities to put forth the demand for equal rights.

The tendency to national exclusiveness seeks to limit the Bakke struggle to minorities only and to only this or that minority at that, and seeks national privileges, not equal rights. National privileges however do not benefit the laboring masses of the oppressed nation. They are attempts by the bourgeoisie of the oppressor nation to bribe the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation into containing the national democratic struggle.

This point can be illustrated by the example of the special admissions programs under attack in the Bakke case. We support those programs and demand that they be maintained and expanded. But special admission programs can function either as a tool in the struggle for national privileges and national exclusiveness or in the struggle for equal rights, depending on the leadership of our struggle. If we are successful in overturning the Bakke decision and we have not connected the struggle to the struggle for equal rights, we risk promoting bourgeois reformism. If we have developed that struggle on the basis of a principled stand for equal rights, we have laid the foundation for continuing and broadening the struggle. Bakke itself is only a drop in the sea of national and sexual inequality.



By equal rights we mean the abolishment of all forms of economic, political and national or sexual oppression and social exclusion in every sense of the word. By demanding equal rights we demand that all the oppressed nationalities and women enjoy all the rights and advantages of the working class of the oppressor nation and other strata of the population. The significance of the struggle for equal rights is that it attacks both the main barrier to building the democratic struggle of the masses and the class struggle of the proletariat, great nation chauvinism, and at the same time the petty bourgeois deviations of national exclusiveness. By our firm support connecting concrete demands such as the demand for special admissions programs to the struggle for equal rights and connecting the struggle for equal rights and self-determination to the class struggle of the proletariat we create the basis for class solidarity and mutual confidence of the workers of all nations. It is in this way that we support the stand of the proletariat for consistent democracy.

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The WC(ML) can be contacted at:

WC WC
POB 1297 POB 11713
Chicago, Ill. 60690 Los Angeles, Cal. 90111

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