

Bends to white racism

Where RSB goes wrong on 'Bakke' fight

By Osborne Hart

How do you build a movement against the *Bakke* decision and in defense of affirmative action?

To most people, actions such as the march on Washington of 10,000 on April 15, called by the National Committee to Overturn the Bakke Decision, would seem like a step in the right direction. Such actions, which involve a broad range of forces—from students, to Black groups, unions, and women—are important and should be continued.

Almost everyone involved in the struggle against the *Bakke* decision sees clearly the racist character of the decision.

So they might have been surprised to see an article that appeared in the April issue of the *Young Communist*, newspaper of the Revolutionary Student Brigade.

The RSB is an organization of young people who until recently considered themselves in agreement with the Revolutionary Communist Party. Since that organization underwent a split some months ago (see June 9 *Militant* for an account of the split) the RSB also split. Supporters of the *Young Communist* now consider themselves in agreement with the Revolutionary Socialist Brigade led by former RCP member Micky Jarvis.

The *Young Communist* article attacks the Young Socialist Alliance for its strategy in the anti-*Bakke* struggle. The crux of the RSB's argument is that the YSA focuses too much on the racist nature of the decision.

"The YSA . . . turn every issue into a question of racism," the author complains, "so that each leaflet is indistinguishable from the past. Their strategy, as well as the arguments, never attack capitalism."

'White rights'?

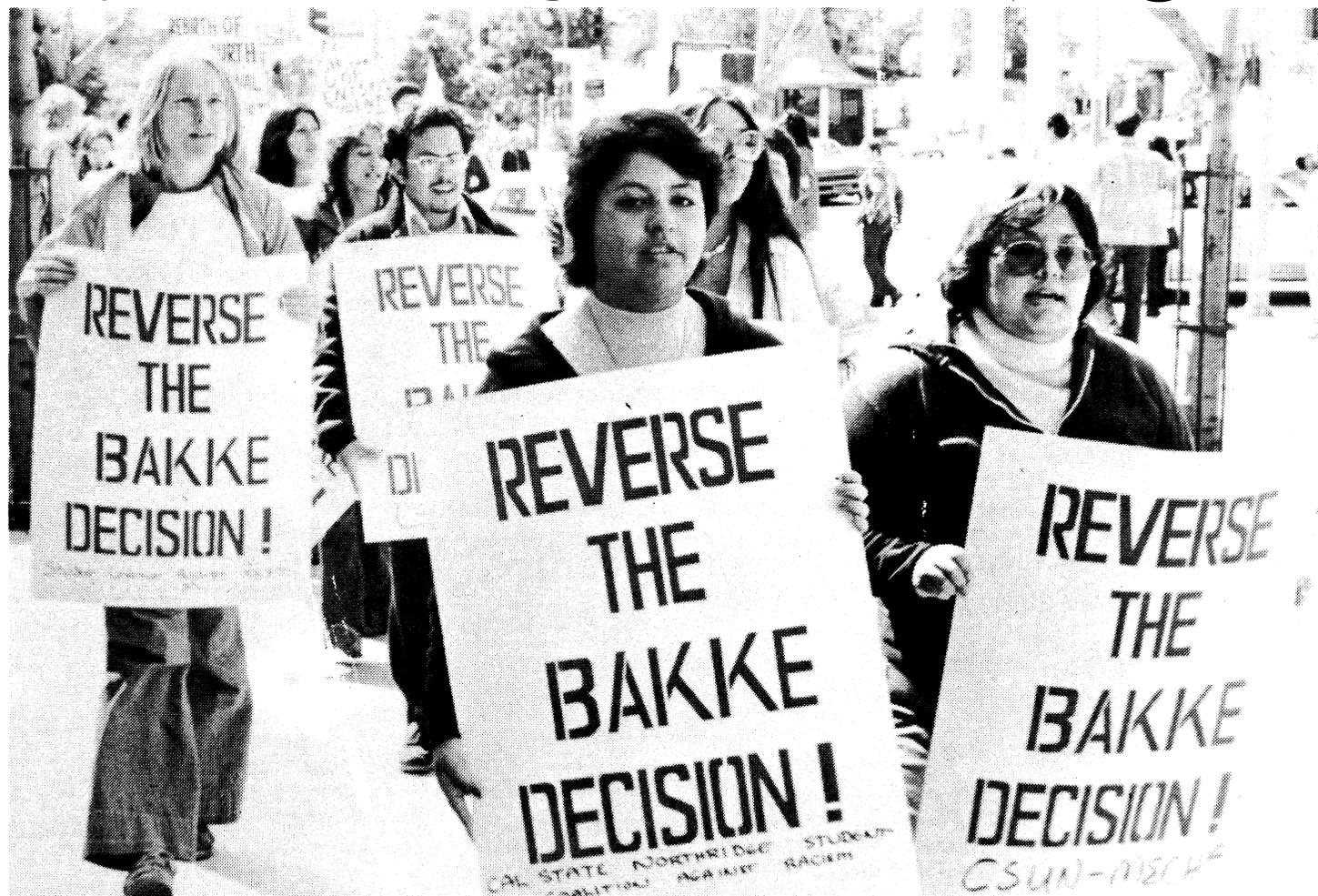
This is a strange argument.

The *Bakke* decision is an important centerpiece in the drive of the U.S. rulers against the most oppressed sections of society. The capitalists hope by attacking affirmative action to intensify racist and sexist practices essential to the profit system. And they seek to convince whites that affirmative action is against their interests.

Isn't it an elementary obligation of any group calling itself anticapitalist to point out the racist nature of the *Bakke* ruling and answer the "reverse discrimination" argument?

The RSB says no.

They point to a debate that recently took place in Boston between James Harris, national coordinator of the National Student Coalition Against Racism, and Avi Nelson, a racist local radio commentator. The *Young Com-*



Both minority and white students must be won to fight against racist 'Bakke' decision

munist falsely claims that NSCAR is a "front" for the YSA. NSCAR is a coalition in which the YSA plays an active role.

In the article, the anonymous author complains that the debate ended in a draw. "Many of the uncommitted students were white and were confused as to whether taking a stand against national oppression required abandoning their own rights." Elsewhere in the article, the RSB claims that "all nationalities are oppressed by capitalist rule."

Instead of building a movement against racism, they argue, the movement against *Bakke* has to be an "anticapitalist" movement.

Capitalism & racism

The RSB's argument is based on a completely false premise.

It's true that capitalist society oppresses all workers. It's *not* true that this oppression is exactly the same for all workers.

The ruling class tries to divide workers by granting limited privileges to some sections of the working class—such as white, male workers—at the expense of Blacks, Chicanos, women, and others.

Blacks are oppressed not only as workers but as Blacks. They are hired

last and fired first, forced into inferior schools, and deprived of needed social services.

These divisions hurt *all* workers. They make it harder to fight for better education and working and living conditions. They enable the ruling class to keep workers weak and divided.

Blinded to this divide-and-rule strategy, the RSB falls smack into the bosses' trap.

In fact, the *Young Communist* article actually refers to the most grotesque example of where their wrong position led the RSB.

They complain that the YSA "was two years ago demanding Federal troops into Roxbury [Boston]," during the fight to desegregate that city's schools.

It's true that the YSA demanded federal troops be sent to Boston to defend Black students from racist mobs. And we're proud of it.

Is the RSB proud of its role in that struggle? They shouldn't be. *They opposed desegregation.*

When the order to desegregate the schools in Boston sent white racist mobs screaming into the streets, the RSB and its parent group, then called the Revolutionary Union, did not condemn these attacks. They defended the white racists.

A leaflet passed out by the RU said, "We can't write off all white resistance to the busing plan as just racist." This was during the time when the slogan, "Niggers, go back to Africa," was scrawled on walls throughout South Boston.

Another leaflet put out by the RU complained that "anti-white sentiment has grown in Black and Latin communities, expressing itself in the attitude 'We're gonna show those honkies we can go to their schools if we want to.'"

Well, did the RU think Black students *didn't* have a right to go to white schools? That was what their position amounted to.

Although they later made some "self-criticism" of their more blatantly racist formulations, the RSB to this day has not retracted its opposition to busing. In 1977 in Chicago, RCP members participated in the Committee Against Forced Busing. The newsletter of that group stated at one point that "forced busing is the single greatest threat to our kids' education." Thus the newsletter objectively sided with the views of the racist antibusing

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forces on Chicago's Southwest Side.

Having no confidence that white students can be won to oppose racism, the RSB bends to reactionary prejudices. For them, struggles by Blacks to overcome discrimination become at best a diversion from the "real" struggle. In practice, the RSB's position has consistently placed them on the same side of the street as white, racist forces.

The RSB tries to make it sound as if building the anti-*Bakke* struggle around the demand, "end capitalism" will make the movement "more radical." But this demand is designed to duck the concrete struggle against racism. Ignoring this issue in favor of an abstract call to "end capitalism" is a *retreat* from revolutionary politics.

The RSB, in the *Young Communist*, charges that the YSA doesn't explain that the capitalist system is to blame for *Bakke*.

This is a lie.

The YSA has explained many

times in speeches, leaflets, and in our newspaper, the *Young Socialist*, that racism is a basic feature of capitalism. Furthermore, we are *active* in the struggle against racism, a central component of the fight against the capitalist system itself.

The *Young Communist* article claims, "The YSA champions itself as a leader of the struggle against national oppression, but in fact only serves to prolong it."

Look who's talking.

In Boston, the YSA fought for the right of Black students to attend any school they chose.

The RSB was on the other side, trying to stop "forced busing."

Like it or not, the RSB leadership, by their opposition to concrete struggles for Black rights, are objectively aiding capitalism's efforts to keep the working class divided. And an organization that does that has no business calling itself socialist, communist, or revolutionary.