

SPARTACIST-WEST

Published occasionally by the Bay Area Spartacist League, P. O. Box 852, Berkeley, California.



Vol. 2, No. 3
Nov. 25, 1967

PEACE AND FREEDOM And a Socialist Program

For the first time in twenty years, the country is ripe for a serious challenge to the ruling class and its two-party system. The Vietnam war and the Black revolt have so heightened contradictions within the system that whole sections are beginning to split away from the Democratic Party. Many people who voted for Johnson are now in such groups as the Peace and Freedom Party.

The question for radicals and socialists is: what should be their attitude toward this development? The answer to this question hinges on the internal contradiction of the PFP group. For many, the PFP is merely a tactic, a means of exerting pressure on the system without fundamentally changing it. Some, like Robert Scheer, see it as a means to build a constituency for specific use within the Democratic Party. However, there are other elements also, as yet ill-defined. These are people who see the necessity to break with the system, symbolised by the Democratic Party, and destroy it. What is missing from their thinking is a conception of the method, the road, the social forces for this end.

OBSTACLES FOR LEFT WING

Several factors work against the success of this incipient left wing. One is the embryonic state of the new upsurge in the labor movement. Another is the increasing influence of Black Nationalism which creates further barriers to the linking of struggles. Finally, there is the inevitable petty-bourgeois Scheer-CNP character and composition of the

PFP.

However, the fact that the Scheer-CNP types will probably dominate the PFP until its resulting death does not in itself dispose of the question of the proper attitude of revolutionary socialists toward the PFP. The question of actual participation is clearly posed, and this in turn breaks down into two sub-questions.

PARTICIPATION IN P.F.P?

First, would such a participation be principled? Would it mean sacrificing the long range interests of the working class by corrupting the ideology of a revolutionary group which seeks eventual hegemony precisely for that ideology within the working class movement, for temporary organizational advantage? The answer to this political question lies in the concrete situation. If the alternatives posed were such a petty-bourgeois group as the PFP and a genuine Labor Party, however undeveloped, such an entry would be clearly opportunistic.

However, although now more than ever the necessity for and the objective possibility for a Labor Party is apparent, this is not posed as an actual functioning organizational alternative. Furthermore, the program of the PFP is not yet fixed, but consists, formally at least, merely in the two points: immediate withdrawal and support for the Black movement. From these facts we conclude that it is permissible for revolutionaries to participate in the PFP.

Second, is participation really worthwhile? In the past, we have been bitter-

PEACE & FREEDOM & A SOCIALIST PROGRAM

ly critical of the PFP's parent formation, the Community for New Politics, especially for its opportunistic classless political attitudes which led to its rotten role in the Berkeley elections and the disaster in Chicago. We underline the validity of these criticisms, and we expect to have to say further harsh things about the character and actions of this section of the radical left. However, at a time when increasing numbers of petty-bourgeois intelligentsia are being spun-off from establishment politics, and the PFP is the means by which they seek to solve their problems, and when we can honestly support its avowed aims, we feel that the place for socialists is inside the PFP engaging in programmatic struggle.

Some people in the PFP can and must be won to a revolutionary class position. These elements are trying to cope with current problems through the PFP, and the presence of serious revolutionaries in that organization would be an important factor in deepening their understanding of the process they are involved in. If it is possible to effect this to even a small degree, the noxious presence of all the Scheers and other permanent swamp-dwellers will be quite irrelevant.

A PROGRAM FOR P. F. P

The question is not so much the establishment of a new organization, although that is important, but of program, i. e., what section of society will that organization seek to represent. If the objective conditions for a Labor Party are ripe, then it is our duty to help prepare the lagging subjective factors. The PFP cannot substitute for a Labor Party, or even be the nucleus of it. However, cadre from the petty-bourgeois intelligentsia will play a vital role in the formation of the Labor Party, and the PFP can become the instrument through which they are won to it, programmatically and ideologically. Within the PFP this means first of all struggle against

those elements which are opposed, not to the war, but to the conduct of it; who fear war and domestic racism because they embarrass the system, or personally embarrass them as supporters and beneficiaries of the system. Especially, it means a struggle for a working-class orientation, not merely in words, but in real activities. We propose to try to win support within the PFP for a program along the following lines:

(1) Complete break with the Democratic and Republican Parties and the building of an independent party based primarily on the working class, having either a substantial working-class base or a radical socialist program. Radicals must disabuse themselves once and for all that the system can be "reformed" and "improved" piecemeal. Capitalism grants more or less concessions, but it will never on its own give up its control over the lives of people.

(2) Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. The people of Vietnam are fighting for their just and legitimate interests against a corrupt ruling class supported by the U.S. government. "Negotiations" in any form would imply that the U.S. has some right in Vietnam.

(3) Defense of the right of the ghetto to bear arms and to organize to defend itself from police and the military. This means full recognition of the fact that the conditions of life endured by ghetto residents are imposed by the very forces that control the police and military; that these conditions are the underlying cause of the uprisings; and that one of the more intolerable conditions is the routine disrespect and brutality on the part of the police which usually touch off a situation which is then used to justify sending in rioting police and soldiers.

(4) Preparation of a one-day general strike through contact with union militants across the country. A turn toward the working class must be made if opposition to the war is to mean anything. The ruling class is perfectly willing for

T

ci
st
p:
h:
et
co
co
th

m
ur
st
g:
at
b1

us
ti
sc
or
tc
wo
an
th
cl
wo
wi

pa
ec
tic
si
to
th
a
ta

gr
iti
Th
ce
th
or
pr
ce
ne
si
ne
ob
th

, not
; who
ause
erson-
s and
ially,
class
out in
o win
gram

emo-
d the
sed
aving
base
radi-
e and
"re-
eal.
ices-
give
le.
with-
nam.
g for
s a-
orted
ons"
U. S.

hetto
efend
This
that
hetto
for-
tary;
lying
ne of
s the
the
h off
stify
s.
ieral
nili-
ward
ppo-
hing.
g for

come into direct conflict with the war, such as when they interfere with war production, the labor "leaders" call a halt, in the "national interest." The economic struggles of the workers are constantly bringing them to this point of conflict with the political interests of the bourgeoisie.

Only demoralization and the lack of a militant, revolutionary leadership in the unions prevents the expansion of the struggle to include political strikes against the war. Such actions would enable the anti-war movement to really bring the system to a grinding halt. Un-

us to continue demoralizing demonstrations and "resistance." But it could not so easily slough off a series of local one-day strikes in key areas, leading up to a general strike of several million working people—the people who make and transport war material and provide the cannon fodder. Only when the ruling class fears the organized strength of the working class more than defeat abroad will its war program end.

(5) 30-hour work week with 40 hours pay. This would cut sharply into bloated profits, offset the effects of automation and create new jobs, making it possible for a large sector of the population to re-enter the working class, rather than being siphoned off into a terrorized and easily manipulated lumpen-proletariat.

The fight in the PFP must be for programmatic as opposed to "practical" politics, for program as against platform. The history of the CNP indicates a concept of politics which tries to assemble the greatest possible number of voters on the basis of a series of platitudinous promises, catering to current prejudices and the current level of consciousness. Program, by contrast, is responsive not to current levels of consciousness within the constituency, but to the objective needs of the constituency, and the need to win the constituency to an

fortunately, militant-sounding tactics such as Stop the Draft Week only work against this end by expending the energies of the movement in premature confrontations which cannot really damage the system, but merely enrage it instead.

ANTI-WAR FRIDAY

Besides working for an anti-war Friday—a one-day work stoppage in factories, schools and offices—activists must fight for a militant, working class program within such formations as the Peace and Freedom Party. The PFP as it stands now is in flux, neither wholly the property of its reformist, ex-Democratic leaders such as Scheer, nor belonging to those seriously interested in building a revolutionary opposition on a sound programmatic basis. While we hold no illusions about the outcome of this struggle, we feel it imperative to win as many as possible to the fighting class program outlined in the other article in this issue. Only by making our start here and now will we ever build the political movement needed to cast off both wars and oppression forever.

understanding of these needs and struggle for them. In a middle-class (classless) organization such as the PFP, program is especially decisive. Personalities and candidates are not, and we would support any candidates who would stand on the basis of the program outlined above.

When and if the PFP reaches a point where this programmatic option is foreclosed, then the whole question of revolutionary participation would have to be raised again in the light of new concrete circumstances. Meanwhile, the PFP faces a formidable task in gaining ballot status. We intend to participate to the extent of our resources in this drive and subsequent activities, while struggling for the point of view we have outlined. We urge all revolutionaries to do the same.

The Dilemma of the Student Movement

For the time being at least, it looks as though the "third battle of Berkeley" has been a draw, if not a victory for the administration. The radical leadership was unable, despite a week of rallying and preparation, to build sufficient support on campus to confront the administration over the latter's blatant attempt at political repression of the anti-war movement. This came less than a month after Stop the Draft Week, which was widely hailed as a great victory, i. e., if it didn't stop the draft, at least it radicalized thousands.

Superficially at least, the problem seems to have revolved around the question of the deadline which the Movement Against Political Suspensions (MAPS) presented to Chancellor Heyns, after which point, if the threatened suspensions of the eleven anti-war leaders hadn't been lifted, there would be massive disruption of the campus. Everyone with any stake in the academic community at all, from faculty to the Daily Cal, condemned this tactic on the grounds that the students were seeking a premature confrontation before having "exhausted all channels" of possible reconciliation. This hue and cry against any boat-rocking on campus had its effect both among the liberal student body and within the more radical movement itself. A large MAPS meeting subsequently decided to postpone the deadline indefinitely and to disrupt the campus when suspensions were actually handed down.

LIBERAL GROUNDS

The radicals, in other words, were unable to rally support for the anti-war movement under political attack, and are now forced to defend the movement on the grounds that its attackers are violating their own standards of bourgeois democratic rights and procedures. This is not to say that the radicals are unaware of the real political nature of the

fight or that they have given up trying to convince the campus at large of this. The decision to lift the deadline, however, was a decision to wage this struggle until the administration has sufficiently exposed itself on liberal-democratic grounds to arouse the ire of a majority of the essentially liberal campus community.

Every mass mobilization of a campus, from the FSM through the recent strike at Brooklyn College, has been on the basis of bourgeois-democratic demands against an arbitrary administration. The struggle is thus limited to a middle-class conception of what is just, and cannot go beyond a restoration of the "normal" state of oppression on the declared principles of the oppressor.

STUDENT ROLE

Students have a vital role to play in changing society, but it goes way beyond the restoration of bourgeois norms, or exposing society to the people from the vantage point of the campus, or even leading great sallies forth to induction centers or to "mill-in" at the pentagon. The anti-war movement in this country must develop a cadre capable of long-range work to expose the war and society to the masses from the point of view of the interests of the working people, Black and white. Yet student struggle, as such, is totally insufficient to accomplish the task. In order to tap the fundamental contradictions in society, such as those manifested by the Black ghetto rebellions and the new rash of militant strikes, radical students must work for the development of conscious class struggle.

As the war progresses, the casualties mount, and the bite from takes and inflation gets worse, workers are becoming increasingly militant in defending and improving their standard of living and job conditions. Yet when the strikes