

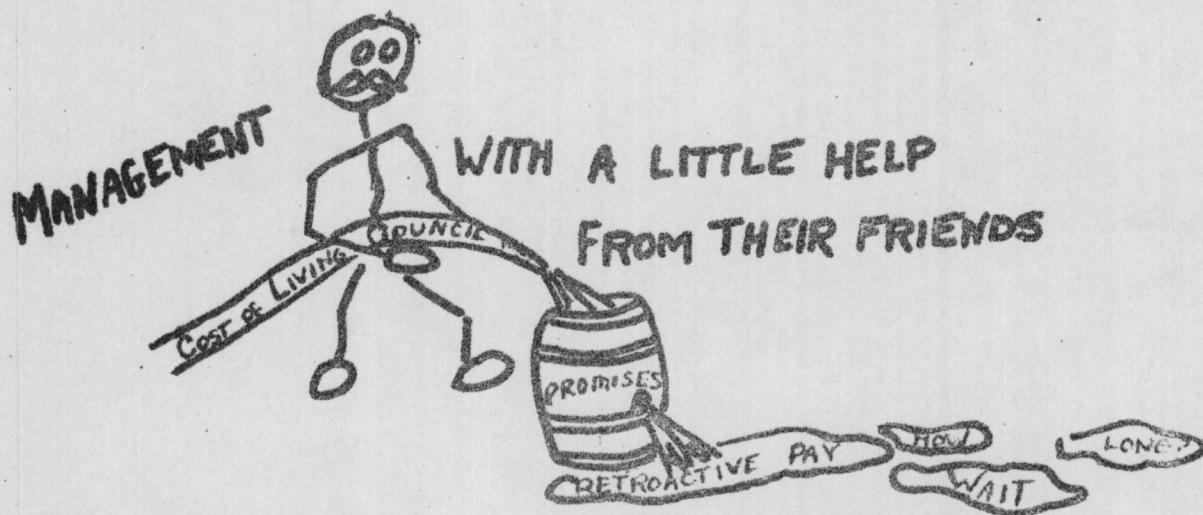
DETROIT REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT RECORDS

BOX 10 OF 16

FOLDER 11

MCLL METROPOLITAN
HOSPITAL ORGANIZING
ACTIVITIES

METRO WORK REPORT



OPEIU, LOCAL 42/ afl-cio, Education Committee

S & P

Introductory Note of explanation:

The purpose of this report is to primarily provide some data on what is and what has gone on at Metropolitan Hospitals and Clinics. We hope that it may serve particularly those comrades doing place of work organizing. Some political conclusions off this work is indicated. However, they are not fully dialetically developed in this paper. The S&P Commission will be putting out a critical supplement of the original Trade Union Paper where the political positions indicated here will be more scientifically analized.

Metro Work Committee of S&P

THE STRUGGLE AT METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL

HISTORY

The history of struggle at the hospital far precedes the presence of conscious elements. Petitions, grievances, a dietary walkout, the overthrow of a bad business representative and a generally aroused membership have existed for at least five years prior to Lindsay, Peter or myself working there. However, there are many differences our presence has made: the two major ones being the injections of class consciousness over trade unionist consciousness and organization. To quote Lenin on class consciousness;

"And in order that he (the industrial proletariat) may fulfill his function of representative in an organized sustained struggle it is by no means necessary to enthuse him with 'perspectives'; all that is necessary is simply to make him understand his position, to make him understand the political and economic structure of the system that oppresses him, and the necessity and inevitability of class antagonism under that system." (Lenin on trade unions)

A brief review of some of the struggles we have taken part in the last 2½ years may be useful. I was involved in a caucus about 4 months after starting there and put out the paper "Open Forum". We circulated enumerable petitions and began the process of organizing around speed-up. Later that first year, we ran a slate in the election which we lost by 11 votes. By this time the shape of the caucus was different - it now was multiracial combining elements of Open Forum, the old Metro Caucus and other folks. Soon after, we were in what was to be a marathon bargaining committee meeting nearly 8 hours everyday for 6 months. This is where our most crucial visibility came in with a consistent minority report to reject the contract. We succeeded for the first time in the history of the union in getting 2 no votes on the contract. We did this in opposition to the local as well as management and used to the height the expanded mass activity that negotiations create. It was at this time that our understandings of economism, anarcho-syndicalism began to take shape: that is that the struggle between the boss and the worker no matter how militant is an economist one, and that not to recognize the trade union as a primary form of organization of our class is to fail to be responsible communists. We began to understand the power of seizing positions within the union while exposing the limitations of trade unions as a sole forum for class struggle. After negotiations we created the education committee and finally took nearly every position our slate had ran for in the Oct. '73 elections, (with one exception). Now our understandings are projecting another problem - that is - how is it possible to avoid syndicalism in the absence of a revolutionary Marxist Leninist party. The need for the party sharpens daily with our experiences. This is not meant to be the least bit of an inclusive analysis. At the most, I hope that history has shown the length of actual struggle and perhaps slightly indicated some political understandings from (although no attempt here is being made to elaborate on those points).

There were many errors made in our history. A lack of understanding of economism, the failure to get rid of Mabel Holleran (Bus. rep. and pres. of Local 42) during negotiations, and the failure in fully prohibiting and permitting some legitimacy to the state during negotiations. (We did succeed in kicking out the state mediator but failed to by pass the state procedures to strike ie with state laws it would take us about 4 months to strike after a vote was taken).

The rest of this paper will focus on our present situation - with emphasis on the caucus, executive board, and education committee and the campaign. Then finish up with some projections.

PRESENT WORKING BODIES

Caucus - It may be an interesting note to point out that during the whole Open Forum period resisted the notion that we were a caucus. In many ways, we were in fact not one. Open Forum was much less an expansive organizing form than it was an agit-prop committee. We resisted the caucus form because we had seen too many caucuses become more self-protective than actually outreaching. Further, at that time we were essentially anarcho-syndicalist and refused to deal with seizing power within a union structure. But all was not negative with O.F. Our point was to inject a 'broad class consciousness' in the hospital and not to focus solely on hospital problems. Our point was to educate the workers as to their class position and the positions and class structure/power in the world. Our caucus now, Metro Action Committee, attempts to both organize and direct and sustain activity within the hospital as well as conduct within itself some introductory understandings of Marxism-Leninism. Further, without such a form the existence of bodies like the education committee would not be possible in that it takes planned, conscious tactic and strategy analysis to make structural and political changes within the union.

The caucus membership is not public. We do not have a by-laws or rules other than decisions are made by the majority and the minority are under discipline to uphold that decision (hasn't always functioned quite well!). The caucus is multiracial 99% female. There are 9 consistent members. At least 5 or 6 others who participate more sporadically and in the total history of underground organizing forms, has involved at least 10 others. Our primary functions are: 1. to ~~raise~~ ^{develop} class consciousness among our members. 2. to analyze current situations within the hospital and make tactical and strategic decisions around membership meetings, local meetings etc. 3. ran the slate explicitly as the Metro Action Committee slate. 4. puts out leaflets - this is more the function of myself and primarily Peter than the caucus, but it is becoming more collectivized. We meet at least once every two weeks at our members home. More often than not we end up meeting weekly. Recently, we have introduced poetry, pictures etc. The Journey is always distributed and members usually pass them on to their co-workers. All members of the caucus know I am a member of MCLL and that I am a Marxist.

Weekend Committee - This was a committee established out of negotiations to try to get every other weekend off for all workers in the hospital and clinics. Juanita, Maggie and myself were elected to it by the membership. Our original intention was to use the committee as a mechanism to create class unity since the nurses and doctors also participated in this effort. But the nurses eventually dropped out and the doctors' petit bourgeois position dominated their decisions. It has essentially been nothing more than a big hassle and frustration. A lesson has been learned - 'never' accept any post bargaining committee situation around an untenable and not highly charged issue, you have no power of implementation here. However, something was accomplished that was not anticipated. We succeed (more particularly, Juanita) in organizing and making substantive contact with the outlying clinics. This is of great value and also unprecedented. We challenged "big power chauvinism!" of the hospitals against the clinics. All three of us also learned more about management's power and what ~~the~~ they really are!

Cabaret Committee - this is a voluntary committee coming out of the education committee. Its purpose is to organize a cabaret probably in Jan/Feb.. The need is importantly cultural. Further, we hope to raise some money for the education committee through it and a raffle to organize for it. It has not yet met. But people are real excited about the idea and needless to say the class has fantastic and developed skills in this area.

★★ ★ Education Committee - This is by far our most important and most successful working body. History - the need for the education committee was most clearly recognized as negotiations came to a close - that was late spring. The need arose from the following: class consciousness must be systematically brought to the membership in order to sustain any long political struggle and attempt to make the correct decisions. 2. It is only through an understanding of the capitalist system and the socialist alternative that people can and will be able to persist in a struggle when the objective conditions of activity will be at a low point (no contract year till '75) and be able to build the kind of disciplined force to carry out and control and lead a successful, political strike, 3. the shame of union democracy (or lack of) was clearly exposed during negotiations. There had to be an above ground body to do many of the same things the caucus was doing that was democratically elected by the entire membership. The class must gain the skills to control our own future. 4. there was a need for a different form outside the regular union governing bodies, that would be independent of all other union forms and only responsible to the membership. 5. We have to have a mechanism to bring "outside" people in and legitimize discussions implicit and explicit on socialism using the dialectical method. Actual process in its creation - first a by-laws change was proposed and unanimously accepted. This had been preceded by an ad hoc committee of 5 elected people to lay out the perimeters and making proposals as to the content of the committee. Finally after the by-laws change, the committee of 5 were elected in the unit wide elections. One indication of the tremendous and rapid response to the committee was the fact that the voting turn out for these offices were higher than any other. Meeting process - the committee of 5 meets twice a month to determine the content of the meeting and insure publicity on it. The Education Committee sessions then meet twice a month on the hospital grounds. Attendance has been great considering that the afternoon shift used to make up the total quorums of all meetings and now they are prohibited from leaving their jobs to go to them. Thus we average between 15-30 people at all sessions. This means that at least 12 people go to a minimum of three meetings a month on hospital grounds, a lot for women to get out at night for. Further, it attracts all nationalities from the hospital, from all different departments *Roger* including the clinics and Metro West. Five elected members are Juanita, *Mariano*, Joann, Virginia and myself, (3 black folks, 2 white, and 4 women). Actual Agenda of Meetings - The meetings usually begin with discussions of grievances and attempt to give people tools on filing grievances as well as pointing out the weakness of our present contract in particular and the contract system in general. 2. Then we go into reports and discussions of other functioning committees. 3. We usually get into a discussion of other methods of struggle and openly organize petitions and imply support of slow downs, blue flus, wildcats etc. 4. The last part is the most exciting. Usually by now its 8:30 or 9:00pm, yet very few people leave. Here is when someone gives a presentation. We have done presentations and discussions on the following: Watergate - internal contradictions and struggles within the ruling class/ Chile/Indochina/Business unions vs. Class struggle unions/ structure of OPEIU and the UAW/ the Forge strike and the UAW contract/ the Teachers strike - which included sending a letter in support of the strike and the use of the WEU leaflet on the strike/ the WEU sleep-in blue flu/ the N.Y. hospital workers strike/ and a history of class struggle in relation to the bosses and the state. We have not yet put forth socialism as an explicit alternative, although we have a saying within the committee that "revolution is the only solution". At the last session, I put forth our invitation to the Coffeebreak session, At that point, a black male made a motion that we all go and "show support". This was in the context of the need to break down our own isolation and support other workers and have them support us. Right on! We really want to convey the excitement that does exist around this committee. ~~Also~~ We also read VPS poem which got a great reception and comments!

Executive Board - This is the official body of decision makers between membership meetings. It consists of 37 people, all elected by the membership in their various capacities. More often than not, these are the objective leaders of the workers. The body is all the officers, stewards, executive board members at large (2), the grievance comm. member at large and the alternate stewards. In the past, this body had either not met, or heavily relied on the grievance committee. In our first meeting of this body (minus the alternate), ~~we discussed~~ the different concepts of class struggle union versus business union. Our goal with this body will be to create a unified, functioning active leadership and seek to make people understand the limits of this particular contract as well as contracts, unions, and state laws in general. Our policy will be to fight for all grievances, advocate any form of working action and remember, you defend a member of the class, as yourself. So far we have only met once. But we succeeded in creating a militant and provocative agenda for our first meeting with management. It might be useful here to briefly describe the nature of several of the grievances our stewards have brought. This will be one of their major functions and through this and other socialist education, we hope to make and develop further strong leaders who are already "naturals" of our class. After two weeks in office, the new leadership has already filed 13 grievances. 9 of these are already in the third step, 2 are pending arbitration and one is already in arbitration. The grievances, by and large, are around speed-up. Today, for example, we had 16 angry people outside of administration during shift change - really freaked old management right out! There just simply has to be this kind of militant worker struggle happening in a coordinated, class conscious whole, and in order to do this, there must be a revolutionary party. ~~These~~ these people had all been organized through group and policy grievances - there was a conscious solidarity and trust that existed among people; all were cooperating with and aiding each other. So, this had been the nature of some of the workers/management struggles occurring at Metro. It is still not Class Struggle with the entire class of workers fighting the entire class of the owners and its state. - for this we need a revolutionary party of Marxists-Leninists. Further at the last Local 42 meeting, (this is monthly meeting that occurs with all members of the amalgamated union - mostly Metro and Solidarity House) we had 10 people from Metro come (very high #), and win a vote to take 4 grievances to arbitration if necessary. All these are economist struggles, but they do bring seeds of class consciousness. Again, what's necessary to transform this consciousness is a revolutionary party.

Election Campaign - Some of the internal goals of the election that the caucus had, was to change the nature and function of the structural union leadership. In a word, attempt to break down bureaucracy by collectivizing work more. We also projected a strong line and practice on union democracy - workers make decisions - not isolated bureaucrats. We are also practicing, that all workers grieved must be at their grievance hearing even, if 10 people are involved. The election literature projected the following: National and international solidarity with all workers, support for the education committee, end to speed-up and layoffs, freedom of speech and press on the job, patient rights, child care at union meetings, leadership development, militancy etc. Peter's leaflet included stuff on monopoly capitalism and numerous other things (see attached material). During the campaign I was red baited as a "Marxist and dictator" (When I first read it at a glance, I thought it said, "dictatorship of the proletariat"! Most felt that literature damaged the opposition. The slate won the entire election, with the exception of one, who still made a good showing. We won because we were trusted, *politically* consistent, militant.

Brief projections - Introduce explicit Marxist-Leninist concepts. Through international proletarian democracy introduce the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Fight the dominance of economism and parochialism by building a revolutionary party. Acquaintance with socialism. Cadre recruitment. Build a patient's rights committee to hook up with education committee. Link ups projected with other hospital workers poss-

ibly by Jan. or Feb. (Maggie's been agitating and organizing for this for quite a while, the caucus made its first projections for this last week, in part following a discussion of the N.Y. strike). Strike in '75 and refuse recognition of state procedure on strikes. Encourage illegal workstoppages; build class consciousness and leadership.

We hope this will be of much use and generate questions and discussions. How can we expect the class to unify unless its leading fighters do. How can we change a struggle between the workers and the boss carried on by trade unions, membership, to a struggle between the ruling class and its state wage~~ing~~ the arm of the proletariat - its revolutionary Marxist-Lenist party.

WHA/64

Metro Work committee report from
S&P

POSTSCRIPT - UPDATE:

Since this paper was initially written some stuff has come down that should be added.

1. The study of Marxist and Leninist materials is now beginning in the caucus. Our starting point is political economy - that is providing an understanding of our class position, (how and who and why we are exploited). We feel this approach develops the most materialist understanding of class consciousness. Our first sessions will concentrate on very short sections of Capital and the Communist Manifesto.
2. There was a good turn out of Metro workers at the Coffeebreak session. Off of this a vote was taken at membership meeting in support of the Farah workers following an exciting discussion of the film. A letter indicating support was also sent.
3. The grievances are still pouring in at the hospitals and clinics. Management is now forced to have group and individual sessions with supervisors on contract procedure (or more likely, management's strategy). There are more grievances now than in the history of the hospital. But we have a long long way to go in the conscious development of working class Marxist-Leninists.
4. Last week the Education Committee put out its first monthly newsletter. It was done above ground and was actually quite mild. We got it distributed to every worker in both hospitals and all four clinics. As a result of this and other activities, Management has banned the Education Committee from meeting on the hospital and has threatened the Committee members with firing if another newsletter appears. The caucus is working out a strategy to deal with that will organize the membership around our democratic rights and the nature of property ownership in a capitalist society. We will continue to hold our meetings probably off the hospital for a while so that we can continue to educate as to the alternative of socialism and what is necessary to achieve that: a Marxist-Leninist Revolutionary Party, a socialist revolution, and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Victory to the International Proletariat! !