



Boston busing

Fight divide & rule schemes

by the Revolutionary Union

The big struggle in Boston over the busing of school children is a good example of the ruling class's divide and rule schemes and what we must do to strengthen our unity.

First of all, the Black, Latino and white working class schools are lousy--just like they are in working class communities everywhere in this country. For example, South Boston, the area that black kids are bused to, has the lowest percentage of people in Boston who graduate and then go on to higher education.

To find decent schools with modern facilities, adequate number of teachers, etc., you have to go to the schools where the capitalists send their own kids. And these may as well have a big sign saying: "Working people keep out!"

BLACK SCHOOLS THE WORST

Black schools are even worse than the white working class schools. At predominantly black Jeremiah Burke High School, for example, things are so bad that students at one point had to organize to demand toilet paper and hand soap in the bathrooms.

And now, with a deepening economic crisis, the ruling class is increasingly cutting back in social services such as education. In the last several years, often using talk about "local control," (i.e. local schools should use local funds) as a cover, federal funding of education has been cut back significantly, including programs for "educational enrichment," remedial math and reading bi-lingual education, physical education, libraries, construction, etc.

It was in this context that the ruling class drew up the Boston busing plan for the purpose of pitting the various nationalities against each other for the shrinking educational crumbs (the plan was drawn up by HEA, ordered into effect by a federal judge).

When the plan went into effect last fall, School Committeeman John Kerrigan and City Councilwoman Louise Day Hicks led groups of several hundred white people to attack Black children and seized leadership of a boycott of the schools (which originally included large numbers of black people). People within the various nationalities had different reasons for boycotting. Some kept their children home because the plan didn't do anything to improve education, some for racist reasons, and

some because they feared for the safety of their children.

NATIONAL OPPRESSION INTENSIFIED

Instead of protecting the black children from attack, the Boston cops intensified repression of the black community (ransacking a day care center at Columbia Point, indiscriminately beating up black people) and to a lesser degree the white working class communities.

The combination of more rapidly deteriorating schools and greater police repression is part of what Marxists call national oppression.

For centuries the Black people of this country have been ruthlessly exploited and oppressed. First brought here as slaves to serve the rich, after the Civil War black people were denied the rights they had fought for and won.

They remained chained to the land in the "Black Belt" South, where they developed into a separate nation, mostly made up of sharecroppers and tenant farmers; dirt poor themselves, but producing plenty of profits for the big banks and landlords.

Today, the Black people remain an oppressed nation, only now most of them are workers in the big cities--spread out throughout the country, and at the same time forced to be concentrated in ghettos. Now most of them are part of the lowest paid, "last hired, first fired" section of the working class, and therefore continue to be a source of super-profits for the ruling class.

THE BUSING QUESTION

The national question--the struggle against the oppression of the minority nationalities, and the relation of this struggle to proletarian revolution, is at the heart

of the United Front Against Imperialism that must be built to overthrow the monopoly capitalists and their system--source of all oppression and exploitation in this country. This UFAI is the strategy to replace the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of the working class.

It is the duty of communists, when dealing with all aspects of the national question, to analyze the contradictions in a scientific way and to develop a line which will point the way forward towards ending national oppression, forging greater unity in the working class, developing people's understanding of who their friends and enemies are, and building the struggle to overthrow the ruling class.

Using the method of Marxism-Leninism (dialectical materialism), we must begin with a concrete analysis of concrete conditions.

It would be incorrect (idealistic and subjective) to say, as some so-called Marxists have, that because busing is progressive as a general rule, that busing is okay in every particular case.

In general busing is good because it integrates the children of different nationalities so that they can learn from one another and thus develop greater unity of the different nationalities and of the working class.

We oppose this particular Boston busing plan because concretely

it doesn't really do anything to improve education for either Black or white students--or to really do anything about discrimination and miserable conditions in the schools in the Black and Latin communities. In fact the busing plan is an attack on Black and other minority nationalities.

FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION

The fundamental contradiction (the one which defines the essence of the revolutionary struggle) in the U.S., as a capitalist country is between the capitalist ruling class and the proletariat.

This contradiction is intensifying as the current economic crisis worsens. To keep the working class distracted and divided the monopoly capitalists (imperialists) will try to heighten the contradictions among the people and also intensify national oppression.

This is precisely what is happening in Boston. The ruling class wants the white and black workers to fight over the constantly shrinking educational crumbs! The ruling class wants white workers to blame Black and Latin peoples for their deteriorating standards of living! Yes, and the imperialists delight in having black people (especially workers) blame white workers for police repression and lousy schools!

How should communists deal with this? To point out to the workers of all nationalities who the main enemy is. This is why the RU strongly disagrees with the October League (OL); Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Youth Against War and Fascism (YAWF), Progressive Labor Party (PL) and others, when they say that the only or main issue involved is racism. This means treating a contradiction among the people as the primary thing, while hardly even mentioning what in fact is the primary contradiction--the conflict between the people and the ruling class.

But doesn't racism (white chauvinism) exist among the workers in South Boston? Of course it does. Racism is created and seized upon by reactionary bourgeois politicians like Hicks and Kerrigan, who are in the leadership of the anti-busing movement in order to maintain their own profits and protect their own hides by getting different sections of the working class to fight among themselves.

DIVIDE THE ONE INTO TWO

What should be the position of Marxist-Leninists be, then, on the "White Boycott"? It should not be the OL's line of denouncing the boycott as totally racist and fascist. Why do we say this?

Lets look at the boycott from a dialectical perspective. The boycott has two aspects as does the opposition to busing in general among the people of the white South Boston community.

One of these aspects is racism. The other is the legitimate reluctance of the white parents to participate in a busing plan that does nothing to improve education for their children. These two aspects are in contradiction because while better schools are in the interest

What is the RU?

The RU is a national communist organization that actively participates in and builds the many struggles of workers and otheroppressed people today. Beyond this, the RU sees the liberation of the people lying in the overthrow of the imperialists by the working class, the replacement of capitalism and all exploitation with socialism, under the rule of the working class. To accomplish this task, the working class must have its own communist party to lead our struggles.

of white workers, RACISM IS NOT!

Of course only one aspect of a contradiction can be dominant at any one time. And if the chauvinist line of Hicks and Kerrigan went unchallenged in the white community, the racist aspect would remain dominant. But it is being challenged by the RU and other progressive groups and individuals.

Some people may object that the situation isn't favorable for getting the white workers to see that white chauvinism is self-defeating. Let's see what Mao Tse-Tung, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party, says about this kind of problem:

"At certain times in the revolutionary struggle, the difficulties outweigh the favorable conditions and so constitute the principal aspect of the contradiction and the favorable conditions constitute the secondary aspect. But through their efforts the revolutionaries can overcome the difficulties step by step and open up a favorable new situation; thus a difficult situation yields place to a favorable one."

The RU believes that Mao's point is at the heart of a correct line on the boycott. Oppose the boycott as it is (led by reactionaries), unite with the progressive aspect of the white opposition to busing and struggle to turn a bad thing into a good thing by uniting workers of all nationalities in the fight for quality education for all nationalities, and expose the role of the ruling class in the crisis as well as the racist leadership of the boycott.

The fact that racism is not the only reason for the opposition to the busing plan among whites in South Boston is revealed by an incident that happened Oct. 7. At that time a Haitian worker was being beaten by a crowd in South

Boston when white workers living in the area who were active in the boycott came to his aid. When the tactical cops came they arrested two of the Haitian man's defenders and charged them with violating the Haitian's civil rights!

STATE NOT PEOPLE'S FRIEND

Many of these same people who say the only aspect worth talking about in the boycott is racism, also call for federal troops to be sent into Boston to "stem the fascist tide" or "break up the fascist gangs" in order to "protect Black people."

Isn't it wonderful. The same federal troops who were sent to smash the Black rebellions in the cities during the 1960s are now going to "protect Black people." Rubbish! And these people have the nerve to call themselves communists. We would also point out that if what's behind this line is an attempt to raise Black people's consciousness about the role of the state then it is equally bankrupt. Marxists never manipulate the masses into situations to teach them lessons. Communists would never have any credibility if they did such things!

BUSING PLAN: DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS?

What about the line that says we should support the busing plan because of the right of Black people to be free to go to any school they want? Black people do have the right to go to any school they want but, if you look at the concrete conditions around the busing plan it is clear that in fact it doesn't help Black children attend the

school or their choice.

Can Black children from Roxbury go to schools in the Boston suburbs? No, the Supreme Court ruled in July that there can be no cross-jurisdictional busing. Can Black children who wish to remain in the Roxbury schools do so? No--the busing plan moves them to South Boston whether they want to go or not.

In fact, where has it been shown that the masses of Black people in Boston desire busing? As far as we can tell the only significant support for the busing plan among Black people in Boston has been to support the plan in opposition to Hicks and Kerrigan's racist reaction to the busing plan (Hicks and Kerrigan have been trying to categorically deny the right of Black people to go to white schools and have led attacks on black children).

What has happened is exactly what the ruling class wished--the setting of Black against white through this busing plan. Again our so-called communists tail right after the ruling class instead of patiently going among the people and explaining the reactionary role of the busing plan and of bourgeois representatives like Hicks, Kerrigan and Kennedy. And they have failed to go among the masses and build unity by building a struggle for quality education for all children directing their fire against the ruling class.

And why is it that these groups support the forcible assimilation of national minorities by the imperialists and never mention the destruction of national culture and language by the imperialists (Many bi-lingual programs have been eliminated by the busing plan). In fact the whole definition of an integrated school under the busing plan is racist. Schools defined as segregated are those with more than 50% black enrollment. In other

words all white schools are considered integrated and all-black schools are to be destroyed under the plan.

NO TO PHONY "EQUALITY"

Some people say that the busing plan in Boston, at least creates equality between the Black and White students being bused. But what is meant here by "equality?" That Blacks and Whites can redivide "equally" the shrinking educational pie? This is a defeatist--not a revolutionary position. We want the whole pie and plan to take it from the bourgeoisie who stole it from us in the first place. And since we're the ones who bake the pie anyway, we're also planning to make it bigger so that it can feed all the people.

Black people want, and the working class as a whole demands, the ending of oppression--not "equal," "democratic" sharing in oppression.

THE WAY FORWARD

The way to build the unity of the multi-national working class and the oppressed nationalities in the Boston busing controversy is to fight the ruling class's divide and conquer schemes and to fight for decent and equal education.

Within this fight it is essential that a struggle be built against the Boston school committees policies of racism, discrimination and segregation. And it is crucial to fight all attacks on the oppressed nationalities in Boston and to organize and support self-defense in the face of attacks on these minority nationalities.

In addition the Busing plan must be exposed as part of the ruling class's divide and conquer schemes and must be opposed. And it is necessary to fight attacks by the state (through the army, police, etc.) on all the people.

**All
Workers
Unite**



Busing struggle in San Francisco two years ago.