

A RECAP ON "JEB" AND "EMMA'S" RESPONSE TO THE BEANERY PAPER

The "Response to the Beanery Paper" written by Jeb Cabbage and Emma Evechild should not be overlooked or pushed aside.

What Jeb and Emma did in responding to the Beanery paper was in effect to throw a nasty bourgeois-intellectual stone from the unsanitary cesspool of anti-communism.

The deliberate twisting of quotes out of context and the gross distortion and spreading of untruths of communist history lead us to conclude that this Nixon type tactic is being used to try and discredit their political opposition. This is being done for two obvious reasons: to protect their control of Mill City and to protect the ownership and control of the class clique that now leads most of the coops.

Anyone who is acquainted with political revolutionary history cannot stand by and let someone like Jeb--who is a pseudo-intellectual anarchist molest socialist history and its authors and contributors. To do so will be an insult to the worldwide working class struggle, and especially a slap in the face to the Vietnamese socialist revolution.

The "response to the Beanery paper" can be divided into three parts: (1) coop leadership, (2) justification of the coop's function, and (3) the official or unofficial position of the coops, in short, what the coops stand for. We will discuss each of these three areas.

Part one: On coop leadership.

The Beanery paper made reference to the historical era out of which the coops and their founders emerged. This political era was "the latter days of the anti-war movement and the beginning of the anti-imperialist movement."

From the very outset of the anti-war movement there were two different trends:

A. The political trend. This was connected to third world struggles and the black liberation struggle. The thrust of this trend was aimed at the military-industrial complex--in other words, imperialism. It is an historical fact that the anti-war movement grew out of the anti-imperialist thrust of the black liberation struggle. When SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) raised the concept of Human Rights ABOVE Civil Rights they connected black oppression and exploitation with African freedom fighters, Latin American liberation movements and with the righteous struggle of the Vietnamese. Revolutionary elements in SNCC such as Stokely Carmichael and James Forman pushed the civil rights movement to the level of anti-imperialist which found its expression in the black anti-war movement. Later Martin Luther King came out against the war in Vietnam which provoked a storm of protest from white liberals and the government. Many white students who took part in the black liberation struggle in the South were given political education around the connection between black oppression and the oppression of the Vietnamese. They later came back to their colleges to push the student anti-war movement. So anti-imperialism was the track from which the black anti-war movement started, and it directly and indirectly affected the white anti-war movement's development.

B. The second trend in the anti-war movement was a Puritan Morality type of stand on war, or non-violent involvement with evil. The Puritan Morality trend grew and grew until it overshadowed the anti-imperialist thrust of the anti-war movement. The Puritan Morality trend was rooted in the upper classes of the white nation and its aim was to stay personally out of the Viet Nam war. The Hippies and Flower Children and other forms of cultural cliques were derived mainly from Puritan Morality. Puritan Morality led to escapism and holier-than-thou attitudes and a total absence of class solidarity. For instance, saying that the revolutionary violence of blacks or Vietnamese was the same as the reactionary slaughter by the imperialists, or looking down on the poor people who did not have the same escape routes as the white college students.

There should be no misunderstanding about what is being said about Puritan Morality overshadowing the anti-imperialist thrust of the anti-war movement. This in no way says that only blacks were anti-imperialist. There were many white anti-imperialists, but that did not alter the dominant character of the white anti-war movement. The money bags of the movement were Puritan Moralists and the ones who hold the money bags call the shots.

As the war in Viet Nam began to recede behind the Paris Peace Accords, the Puritan Morality trend, better known as the Peace Movement began to fade away. This has put the Viet Nam war back in its rightful anti-imperialist context.

After the Viet Nam war, political activists either saw themselves as anti-imperialists or went back to join the system. The anti-imperialist movement called for white political activists to organize white workers, in particular white working class women, around issues which transcend color and national boundaries, but which are common to all oppressed and exploited peoples, and which involved in some form or another, the aggression of capital.

Organizing in most parts of the country began to be done on a class base. Turning our attention to the Twin Cities, we see that "most of the original organizers of the coop stores didn't and couldn't make the qualitative leap from the anti-war movement to the anti-imperialist movement. Why? Because in order for their movement to build legitimacy, it had to be built on the firm political conviction, grounded in working class struggle, that monopoly capitalism must be overthrown and destroyed. However, the original founders of the coop stores were grounded in the colleges and universities." Even if they wanted to organize the working class, their college backgrounds put them out of touch. This goes way back to the class division in high school between those who are going to college and those who are going to work (to support the ones who go to college.) Job and Emma make a lot out of Karl Marx having gone to college and hypocritically call him a great revolutionary, but Karl Marx did not have a worker's revolutionary perspective right out of college. It took him years of struggle, exile and persecution to develop it.

So it is not that people who went to college have no place in revolutionary work, but they have got to understand what that elitist training does to your mind.

Anyway, from all apparent indications, the original founders of the coops had no intentions of organizing the working class. In fact, working class customers at North Country Coop and other coops have been driven away by many documented attitudes and practices of class snobbishness and contempt.

But: just because the leadership of the coops has historically been bourgeois and petty-bourgeois, by no means denies anti-imperialism its proper place in the motivation behind the coops. The coops have always called themselves non-profit and sometimes anti-capitalist. Even today there exists a form of moralistic type anti-imperialism in the coop's purchasing policy, for instance, there is a ban on all goods and items which come from countries

that don't acknowledge the legitimate demands of 3rd world workers, for instance, the lettuce and grape boycotts, Farah strike, etc...."

Moralism here refers to doing something that makes you feel good (pure and noble, not involved in the corporate rip-off) but doesn't really do much about the real problem. The highest act of solidarity is to struggle against the common enemy from where you are.

But let's set the record straight. Much credit is due to the founders of the coops. The coops were a progressive development in the Twin Cities. But now it is a new day and if the coops are going to keep abreast of the times, they are going to have to advance from their present position of escape from evil for a few people to really taking on evil, i.e., monopoly capitalism, for and with the masses of oppressed people. This means the leadership must be constantly transformed or be replaced.

The struggle against imperialism is a class struggle. Not to take a class stand--for the revolutionary workers and against the imperialists--is to not really be anti-imperialist at all. Just a new kind of Puritan Morality.

Part 2: The justification of the coop's function.

"The coops were born of the spirit of all liberation movements---to hell with the rich and the bosses---people working together can do it and do it better." (Setting up an alternative food distribution system.)

These are empty words. For most working class people the coops do not represent any form of liberation or alternative at all. The coops are liberation from having to join the working class struggle and an alternative to real struggle against the rich and the bosses for those few who are welcomed to participate.

Altho there are differences between the coops and regular grocery stores, they are still highly flavored with petty capitalism, disguised by community, neighborhood or workers control.

At least a million people are involved in the People's Bakery: from the workers who mine the raw materials for farm and bakery equipment, the workers who transport, refine, form, and manufacture the raw materials into different kinds of machinery, the workers who build the buildings for the factories and the housing for the workers, the workers who take care of the houses and feed the workers and produce more workers, the workers who do the paper-work that keeps this complicated system functioning---we could go on and on, thru the farmers who grow the grain, the millers who make the flour, the warehouse workers and the retail store workers, to the workers who put the bread together into sandwiches for other workers to take to work with them.

And yet SOME of the people at the People's Bakery feel like it is THEIR bakery...their property, to do whatever THEY want with. This is petty capitalism disguised as workers control.

"people sharing common visions and goals not from the imperative of a party or allegiance to an ideology..." (Jeb and Emma)

It is impossible not to have an ideology. Ideology is just another word for how you look at the world. And how you look at the world comes from your position or class in the social system.

It is precisely the WRONG class ideology that has turned the coops, under the leadership of people with ideas like Jeb, into a dead end program. As opposed to the coops being a political tool for building a revolutionary base among the working class, they have become exclusive and have taken on the character of the class that is directing them.

A survey was recently taken in the Hill City neighborhood and the most significant results were hostility and/or indifference to the store based on feeling like it was snobbish and exclusive.

the people who felt this way were NOT the rich and the bosses.

Part 3: The official or unofficial position of the coops, in short, what the coops stand for.

We don't know if Jeb and Emma's position on coops represents the official or unofficial stand of the coops. Nevertheless, here is their position:

1. "To be a revolutionary is to struggle against these fetters (racism and sexism) as strongly as we struggle against the capitalist state."

2. "We reject, too, any analysis of social change based on pure economic determinism."

3. "How revolutionary can any group be when they compromise strongly held principles just to 'reach the masses'?"

The question immediately comes to mind after reading number 1: How can racism, sexism and the capitalist system occupy equal importance in the rank? Had the authors made a concrete analysis of the principal contradiction in the U.S. they would have seen that racism and sexism are by-products of economic exploitation. Racism exists to justify economic exploitation of certain races and sexism exists to justify economic exploitation of women. It is impossible for capitalism, the present system of economic exploitation, to occupy the same level of importance as the attitudes arising from it such as racism and sexism. For instance, there are third world people who are exploiters, and there are also women exploiters.

This should not be mis-quoted to mean that we do not have to struggle against racism and sexism. But you can't get rid of them without getting rid of the economic exploitation that causes them. And even if you could, what good would it do a person to be thought well of and still exploited.

Number 2 clearly shows that Jeb and Emma have no understanding of working class ideology. Fundamentally there are two opposing ideologies, bourgeois and proletarian. One represents capitalism and the other one socialism. Since they reject "any analysis of social change based on pure economic determinism", how can they explain the origin of racism and sexism? Also, what historical reasons can they offer to explain the development of social SYSTEMS FROM PRIMITIVE COMMUNISM, TO THE SLAVE SYSTEM, TO THE feudal system, to capitalism, to socialism?

Who is the REAL enemy, Jeb and Emma ask. Number 3 makes it clear which side Jeb and Emma have put themselves on. Number 3 means the ELIMINATION of democratic centralism, and this is where we draw the line. Democratic centralism is a method through which the working masses along with their leadership (be it a central committee or shared collective leadership) share mutual relations with mutual confidence.

Democratic centralism is founded on the principle that criticism must flow from the masses to the leadership and that the leadership will take into account these criticisms and respond appropriately to them--and that the masses ALWAYS have the final say-so.

Any time an organization or a person feels that strongly held principles must be compromised to reach the masses of workers, then there is no doubt that the organization or person is counter-revolutionary and the strongly held principles are anti-working class. After all we are not making a revolution for a class clique.

Kris Judy Michael B.