

THE LEGAL QUESTION IS A CLASS QUESTION

A resolution:

1. We will not rely on the legal system of this country as our weapon against those who differ with us.
2. We will not be a party to police repression of political activists.

THE STRUGGLE HAS CHANGED

Once again the struggle in the coops has advanced and heightened the contradictions. Before, all the forces involved at least paid lip service to being progressive and anti-capitalist. Now, those whose primary allegiance is to the capitalist system have begun to show their hand clearly.

The legal question we are now facing is a critical test.

The legal system of the USA is a major instrument of the dictatorship of the capitalist class. They designed it to protect their private ownership of the means of production and to control and repress the workers. It legitimizes starvation in the midst of plenty and mass murder of oppressed people.

Now that the coop struggle has intensified, some people are turning to the capitalist legal system to gain control of the coops, to establish their legal ownership and repress or push out their political opponents.

By calling on the cops, the courts and the big corporations to carry out the interests of one side in the warehouse struggle, these people showed whose power they respect. Now, we see the same government/legalist power base in the wierdly complicated proposal that came out of the 3rd Force-PRB "writing committee".

If this Legalist proposal is adopted, it will definitely transform the coops---backwards. Before the present struggle, the coops existed in a kind of confused attempt to create socialist relationships of production for a small group. But the Legalist proposal means abandoning the attempt to be a progressive force and going backwards to capitalist relations of production.

We are at a crossroads similar to the one the old coops went through in the 1930's, when financial and legal advantages were thrown to a few capitalist-front elements to help them push out the revolutionary farmers and workers and become a safe, respectable, non-threatening business.

Now that this element has surfaced in the coop struggle, the work of analysis that was begun by the Coop Organization can be refined and moved forward. Although the emergence of a clear reactionary tendency was predictable ("if the coops do not advance to a higher level of struggle, they will retreat and become reactionary") the exact nature of this tendency could not be defined in the abstract. It could only be defined in living practice, as the forces showed their hand in the course of the struggle.

As of now, four major trends are in evidence: (1) the Legalists, (2) the Utopian Socialists, (3) the Anarchists, (4) the Marxist-Leninists. The progressive forces in this situation are the last 3.

1. The Legalists. They are now the dominant force that the progressive elements have to contend with.

They have gotten organized. But they have turned, not to organizing the oppressed, or even to organizing the "counter-culture", but to organizing bankers, corporate management, lawyers, courts, police and now even management consultant firms that deal with labor problems to be on their side and help them get their way.

Firing people for political reasons is another sign of this tendency. (Using business ownership as a weapon.)

(over)

These people are not themselves big capitalists and if they cross their more powerful allies they will be thrown aside like a used rag. They are just fronts for the real power behind them. But they have clearly fallen back on the capitalist legal system and its thinking. Once a move is made in that direction, it's hard to stop.

The Legalists have been joined by members of the 3rd Force who moved to the right when that group split up. Although the original 3rd Force statement stressed the reactionary nature of the PRB as a governing body, in practice some of the 3rd Forcers have turned reactionary themselves in allying with whoever seemed like they would get the upper hand. We aren't sure if they themselves want to move the coops in this Legalist direction or if they are trying to use (and being used by) the Legalist faction.

Other 3rd Forcers have remained in the progressive camp.

2. The Utopian Socialists. They essentially want to keep the coops the way they were (so do some of the Anarchists), but many of them are now open to the need for change. We want to make it clear that in spite of the necessary criticism that has been made of the Utopian Socialist tendency, this trend has been a progressive force in bringing the coops to where they are now. The Utopian Socialists have consistently taken a position against the capitalist system. They have put their resources into the coops to further their ideal of an alternative system. They saw the coops as being in the center of things, the decisive element in building a new society. The disagreement that we, the Marxist Leninists, have had with this trend has not been socialism, but utopian thinking and practice.

As the struggle advances, many Utopian Socialists are moving closer to a revolutionary socialist perspective.

3. The Anarchists. They and the Marxist-Leninists have been the only two groups with a formulated set of principles coming from systematic study of revolutionary theory and practice. They, too, have opposed legal repression of political activists and the legalist proposal.

While we don't agree with the Anarchist analysis, they, too, consider themselves political-revolutionaries. If they are serious about this and actually struggle to build a revolutionary movement, the test of practice will determine the correctness and incorrectness of our understandings.

As we have struggled to develop structures that would move the coops ahead in a revolutionary direction, the Anarchist group and the CO have come up with some fairly similar proposals.

4. The Marxist-Leninists. This group has been represented by the CO, but there are others who would also fit into it. We do not think a new and better society for the masses of oppressed people is possible without overthrowing the present capitalist ruling class and all its structures and replacing them with a different system run by the workers. Many people talk about "revolution". But we must think seriously about what it means. There's two basic classes: owners (capitalists) and workers. Now the society is run by a dictatorship of the owners, operating as a class. By revolution we mean that the workers take the power away from the owners. Millions of workers, particularly in the critical branches of production, must get organized, along with all other oppressed people.

If any group, Anarchist, 3rd Force, NAM, coops, or CO, can't rally revolutionary workers, there's something wrong with what they are doing and they better change it. Practice is the test.

Hard-core grass-roots organizing will move us ahead. We can't do it by supporting and joining up with a legal system set up to repress us.