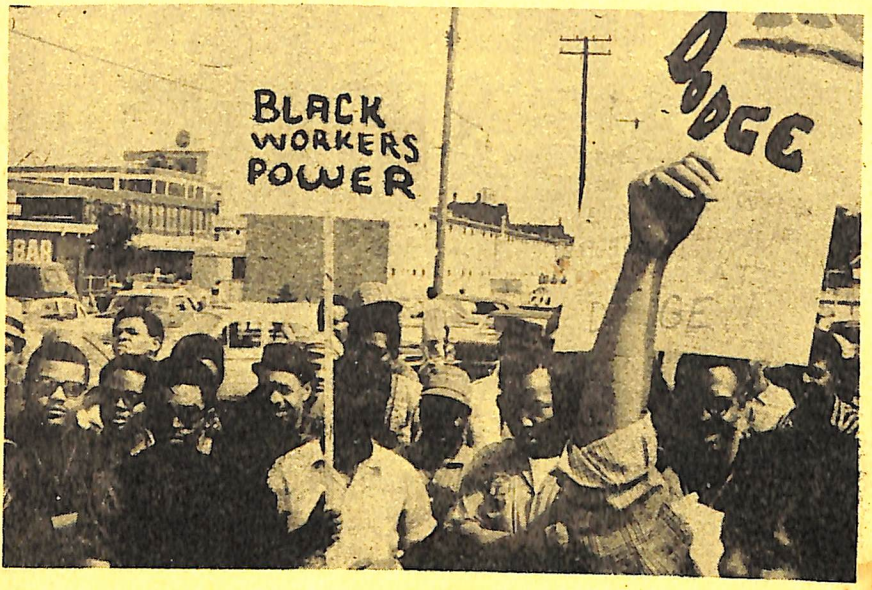
THE LEAGUE



# of Revolutionary Black Workers

(A Historical Study)

by A. Muhammad Ahmad

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A STUDY OF THE LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARY BLACK WORKERS (LRBW)

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INTRODUCTION

To approach a study of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, an independent black radical workers' formation in Detroit, as a consequence of the black liberation movement, several questions should be answered in the research. We should ask ourselves the history of black workers' relations in white unions. Also, is there any particular phenomenon that contributed to the League emerging in Detroit rather than in any other city? While the scope of this paper is too short to address itself directly to these questions, it is hoped that some underlying factors tracing the development of the League are answered. The purpose here is to present an objective analysis of the historical factors leading to the development and demise of the League.

In order to adequately address the LRBW as an organizational development within the broader context of the black liberation movement, it is necessary to make a few preliminary remarks concerning black workers in unions, particularly the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the automobile industry.

Black workers' involvement in large numbers began during the first imperialist war, when there was a shortage of laborers and Detroit was becoming the center of the auto industry. In 1910, there were only 569 blacks out of 105,759 auto workers. During the war, thousands of southerners both black and white migrated to Detroit in search of work. By 1930, there were 25,895 blacks among the industry's 640,474 workers.

The southern whites who migrated to Detroit brought with them racist attitudes. The large Polish minority who made up a large portion of the work force in the auto plants began to display the same prejudice against black workers after the southerners came. The auto industry was one of the last major industries in the United States to hire large numbers of black workers. Blacks were excluded from regular jobs in most auto plants. Until 1935 only the Ford River Rouge plant hired black workers in large numbers. Black workers who did work in auto plants were confined to janitorial work or to the unpleasant, backbreaking foundry jobs that white men did not want. Except in the Rouge plant, they were barred from skilled work.

> Approximately one half of the Negroes in the industry were employed by the Ford Motor Company and 99 percent of these in the huge River Rouge plant. The Negro employees of General Motors and Chrysler were also concentrated in a few plants: Buick No. 70 in Flint, Pontiac Foundry in Pontiac, Chevrolet Forge in Detroit, and Chevrolet Grey-Iron Foundry in Saginaw — all of General Motors; and Main Dodge of Chrysler in a Detroit suburb. Few Negroes were employed in automobile plants outside of Michigan.[A]

Of the auto manufacturers, Ford developed a policy of hiring ten percent blacks in his work force at the River Rouge plant. The story goes that at the beginning of the 1921 depression, black workers employed at River Rouge and black middle-class leaders from Detroit approached Ford and talked about his racist bias in layoffs. Ford is then said to have changed his hiring policy at River Rouge. He placed black workers in all departments and occupations in the plant. But he didn't extend this policy beyond River Rouge.

Ford assembly plants in the South only employed black workers as janitors and porters. However, Ford's employment policy won him loyalty of the black community, particularly the black church. Ford made financial contributions to selected black churches; he would then use the ministers as employment agents. Black workers were hired when they presented a written recommendation from their minister to company officials. Pork chop ministers loved Ford's assistance because it increased church attendance, helped the church financially and strengthened their community leadership position. Thus once receiving Ford's approval, a minister would willingly follow Ford's anti-labor position.

> When A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was invited in 1938 to speak at a Negro church, those of its members who were employed at Ford were threatened with firing. After Randolph spoke, some were actually dismissed and frankly told that Randolph's speech was the reason.[B]

Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, made a pro-union speech at a black church and three months later he was denied a second appearance.

Prior to 1929 the American Federation of Labor (AFL) was primarily made up of craft unions. The AFL discriminated against black workers. Black membership in the AFL in 1930 was estimated to be about 50,000, but thousands of black craftsmen were ignored by the AFL while others were in segregated unions. One exception can be noted for lack of racial discrimination: the United Mine Workers (UMW) under the leadership of John L. Lewis. With the depression, the militant rank and file of the AFL began to push for unionization of unskilled (industrial) workers. A Committee for Industrial Organization was established. In 1937 the committee was expelled from the AFL and became the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). The CIO recognized that if it was going to be successful it had to have the support of black workers. Blacks and the Communist Party were instrumental in helping to build the CIO. The National Negro Congress, formed in 1936 with 500 black organizations in its membership, was a left-wing worker-oriented organization. It supported the CIO vigorously. Led by A. Philip Randolph until black flunkies of the Communist Party began to direct its line according to Russia's foreign policy, it helped radicalize the black community. A black/CIO alliance began to develop.

But black workers weren't too receptive at first to the idea of becoming involved in labor activism. This probably stemmed from years of racial discrimination by labor and their precarious position at the point of production. When large sit-down strikes broke out in 1936 and 1937, few black workers participated. Most stayed at home, but they didn't serve as scabs either. In some plants there had been racial clashes in the plants prior to the strikes. The last plant to be organized in Detroit by the CIO was the River Rouge plant, where black workers resisted efforts at unionization until convinced by the CIO that it was on their side. By 1942 the Ford River Rouge plant was unionized after the majority of black workers had walked out on strike.

As progressive as the CIO was, black trade unionists still had to fight against racial discrimination within it. During the war, the Communists emerged as the extreme right-wing in the labor movement. They also advocated sacrificing the rights of blacks in the interests of the war. So when

A. Philip Randolph proposed a black March on Washington to protest job discrimination, he was opposed and openly attacked by the Communist Party. Roosevelt established the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) as a result of the proposed march. During the war, black workers were in constant struggles to get skilled jobs in the war industry. The auto plants were converted to war production. When a black worker was upgraded, many times white workers would walk off the job. The federal government and the UAW had to apply constant pressure to stop racist work stoppages by white workers. When the war ended, old discrimination patterns in hiring reappeared. Thousands of black workers lost their jobs. In the 1950's the labor movement purged the Communists. McCarthyism was the mad rage of the country. Even in a period of political hysteria, A. Philip Randolph constantly attacked racism within the CIO. In 1955 the AFL and CIO reunited. Right before the merger, black unionists met to secure the election of blacks to the AFL-CIO Executive Council and to get the federation to adopt a strong civil rights position. After the merger, black labor formed in major cities to fight for the interests of black workers.

> One of these organizations was the Trade Union Leadership Conference (TULC), formed by a group of Detroit Negro unionists in 1957. Most of the founders were from the UAW but in 1960 there were about as many Negroes from other unions in the TULC as from the UAW.[C]

Many Negro trade unionists attacked the TULC for racism in reverse. They feared the TULC and similar organizations would divide the labor movement. The TULC attacked these critics as labor uncle toms at the AFL-CIO convention. George Meany verbally attacked A. Philip Randolph. The TULC wrote a letter to Meany denouncing Meany's outburst and told Meany they objected to attacks on the NAACP by Charles Zimmerman. The TULC endorsed the NAACP's memorandum of December 4, 1958, charging racial discrimination and segregation by unions affiliated with the AFL-CIO.

> The TULC's 2500 members (in 1961) in the Detroit area had engaged in political action; contributed financially to various civil rights activities and to political candidates; worked to improve Detroit public schools; established contacts in the Polish-, Jewish-, and Spanish-speaking communities; helped Negroes in the Hod Carriers and Common Laborers local union replace "unfriendly" white officers with Negroes and more sympathetic whites; and served as a model for the Negro-American Labor Council and similar organizations in other Northern cities.[D]

So while the TULC was no longer considered militant as it was surpassed by the impact of civil rights activity in Detroit, it had set the precedent for the emergence of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM).

1.

Background to the Building of the Detroit Cadre

To properly evaluate the history of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, a social scientist would have to investigate the overall development of the black movement in Detroit.

Another factor that should be taken into consideration is the concentration of industry in Detroit.

More black workers were hired in the auto plants between the end of World War II and 1960. The black community for a large part relied on the liberal-labor coalition. There was adult black labor leadership as well as prominent black radicals in the community. Detroit's inner city was also the midwestern center of black nationalism. It is probably important to mention that the Socialist Workers Party had a strong base in Detroit. Their influence was felt in the black community in the early sixties.

Of the various groups in Detroit, GOAL (Group on Advanced Leadership) led by Richard and Milton Henry was representative of adult involvement in the movement. GOAL was a black nationalist, civil rights group. Reverend Albert Cleage was considered GOAL's ideological leader. James and Grace Boggs, who split with the "Facing Reality" group of C. L. R. James, played an instrumental role in providing a synthesis between black nationalism and socialism. The loose linkage of the Henrys, Cleage, and the Boggses provided young black radicals with an adult black radical leadership which could be their resource base. The Boggses were important to young black radicals, because they had a wealth of information, constantly wrote and published a newsletter called *Correspondence*, helped organize the Grassroots Conference in 1963 and the Freedom Now Party in 1964. Discussion sessions were held at the Boggs home which provided young black radicals with insight on concepts, goals, strategy and tactics of socialism and revolution.

> Whether one disagrees either partially or substantially with the politics of these organizations or individuals is quite beside the point; what should not be overlooked is that collectively they functioned as ongoing radical institutions which preserved and transmitted historical information and revolutionary values to a fresh generation of Detroit activists.[1]

Early in 1963 black students at Wayne State University formed a revolutionary black nationalist/socialist action cadre called UHURU. UHURU was more militant than GOAL, Rev. Cleage and the Boggses but maintained close relations with them. UHURU was led by Luke Tripp, John Williams, John Watson, Charles Johnson, General G. Baker, Jr., and Gwen Kemp. UHURU members studied Marx, Lenin, Mao, Fanon, Malcolm X, Robert F. Williams, Che and many others. They attended Socialist Workers Party weekly forums, listened to members of the Communist Party and followers of C. L. R. James. The UHURU cadre considered themselves Black Marxist-Leninists and were inspired by the Cuban and Chinese revolutions. In 1964, when Grace Boggs and Rev. Albert Cleage were instrumental in developing a strong statewide Freedom Now Party, some members of UHURU were organizers for it. Also in 1964, UHURU members went to Cuba, where they met Robert F. Williams, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara and Muhammad Babu. Some joined the

Revolutionary Action Movement (RAM). In 1965 they regrouped and formed the Afro-American Student Movement (ASM), which put out a theoretical journal called *Black Vanguard*, edited by John Watson. *Black Vanguard* was distributed to black workers in the plants but was too theoretical and thick for a positive workers' response.

General G. Baker, Jr. received his draft notice. He wrote a political letter to the draft board denouncing U.S. imperialism. ASM decided to protest Baker's induction. They put out leaflets and press announcements stating that 50,000 blacks would show at the Wayne County Induction Center when Baker had to report. Only eight demonstrators were there, but the threat of mass action had convinced the U.S. army to find Baker "unsuitable" for service.

Different members of the group began to go in different occupational directions. Watson and Williams became students at Wayne State and Baker worked in the auto factories. In 1965 Glanton Dowdell came into the cadre. Dowdell's street experience added valuable skills to the cadre.

> A dropout from the 5th grade, he was put into a home for mentally retarded at the age of 13. In prison on and off since he was 16, he was finally incarcerated on a murder and robbery charge in Jackson. There he organized a strike of black prisoners against discrimination by forming a selected cadre. In prison he read voraciously, learned to paint and after 17 years was released through the intervention of a black probation officer who recognized his genius.[2]

In 1966, Dowdell, Baker and Rufus Griffin helped form the Black Panther Party in Detroit. A mini-rebellion broke out on the east side and the three were picked up by the police and charged with carrying concealed weapons. Baker and Dowdell were convicted and placed on five years' probation. Early in 1967, Dowdell was given a suspended sentence. During the winter months of that year, RAM organized the Black Guards and self-defense community militias in Detroit. "Join the Black Guards" slogans were on walls all over Detroit. On July 22, 1967 the largest black insurrection in the history of the United States raged as bloods in the thousands took the streets and fought the police, national guard and the U.S. army for five days.

Dowdell and Baker were picked up on July 24th. They were later released on $50,000 bond. The Detroit Rebellion raised the national consciousness of black workers. It started an air of militancy for most blacks. Dowdell was elected the vice chairman of the City-wide Citizens Action Committee (CCAC), a coalition which attempted to organize the black community after the rebellions. At times over 2,000 blacks would attend the CCAC meetings. Baker returned to work in the plants. There he began to see that the consciousness of black workers was much higher than before the rebellions.

In September 1967, John Watson, Mike Hamlin, Luke Tripp, General Baker and others organized a black radical newspaper called *Inner City Voice* (ICV), which addressed itself particularly to the oppressive conditions of black workers and called them to organize.

2.

The Founding of DRUM

On May 2, 1968, a walkout of 4,000 workers occurred at the Hamtramck Assembly Plant which stemmed from a gradual speed-up of the production line. The facts show production soared from 49 units to 58 units an hour within the short period of a week. The mobility of the worker was retarded to the extent that it was difficult to keep pace. As a result of the walkout, picket lines were set up around the gates and individual workers began to mass. This situation occurred on the afternoon shift and carried over into the first shift. During the initial picketing, the company sent out photographers who photographed some of the pickets. The pictures were used as evidence against some of the pickets and were instrumental in the discharge and disciplining of certain workers who took part in the walkout and picketing.

Most of the overall administration of punishment, including discharges and disciplinary action taken against the pickets, was overwhelmingly applied to the black workers. They were held responsible for the walkout, which was directly caused by company indifference towards working conditions. Three black workers were fired; ten were given from one to five days off. Seven persons (five black and two white) were fired, but all except two — General Baker and Bennie Tate, both black and DRUM leaders — were eventually rehired. Chuck Wooten, one of nine workers who founded DRUM, describes how DRUM came into being.

> During the wildcat strike of May 1968, upon coming to work . . . there were picket lines established . . . manned by all white workers at the time and as a result of this the black workers received the harshest disciplinary actions. A few workers and I went across the street and sat in a bar. . . . It was here that we decided we would do something about organizing black workers to fight the racial discrimination inside the plants and the overall oppression of black workers. . . . And this was the beginning of DRUM.[3]

Prior to the wildcat strike at Dodge Main, General Baker began to pull together a group of eight black workers. They would meet in the offices of the *Inner City Voice*.

> Black workers who were either dismissed or penalized moved to organize the workers at Dodge Main by using a weekly Newsletter (DRUM) as an organizing tool. The contents of the Newsletter dealt with very specific cases of racism and tomism on the job and stressed the necessity of united action on part of black workers to abolish the racial aspects of exploitation and degradation at the plant.[4]

The first issue of the DRUM newsletter dealt with the May 2nd wildcat strike. The second issue carried an "expose" on several blacks in the plant whom DRUM considered to be "uncle toms." The issue also outlined the DRUM program.

> DRUM is an organization of oppressed and exploited black workers. It realizes that black workers are the victims of inhumane slavery at the expense of white racist plant managers. It also realizes that black workers comprise 60% and upwards of the entire work force at Hamtramck Assembly Plant, and therefore hold exclusive power. We members of DRUM had no other alternative but to form an organization and to present a platform. The Union has consistently and systematically failed us time and time again. We have attempted to address our grievances to the U.A.W.'s procedures, but to no avail; its hands are just as bloody as the white racist management of this corporation. We black workers feel that if skilled trades can negotiate directly with the company and hold a separate contract, then black workers have more justification for moving independently of the U.A.W.[5]

The third issue of *DRUM* dealt with charges and documentations of racist conditions in the plant and also attacked the UAW for endorsing the annual Detroit Police field day. It also listed a number of deaths attributed to the police department. After the third week black workers in the plant began to ask how to go about joining DRUM. Members of DRUM working in the plant proselytized and recruited black workers on the job. The strength and influence of DRUM grew tremendously.

> Around the sixth week the more militant workers wanted to go for some concrete action against Chrysler and the UAW. At this point the editors of DRUM decided to test their strength. They called for a one-week boycott of two bars outside the gate that were patronized by a large number of brothers. The bars didn't hire blacks and practiced racism in other subtle ways. DRUM received about 95% cooperation. This was achieved without the use of pickets or picket signs. As a further test of strength DRUM called for an extension of the boycott. Again DRUM received solid support so they decided to get down.[6]

Seeing that the boycott was a success, DRUM decided to test its strength by showing Chrysler and the UAW it could shut down the plant. The ninth issue of the DRUM newsletter carried a list of 15 demands. The newsletter prepared the workers for the proposed strike.

> DRUM demands:
> 1. DRUM demands 50 black foremen.
> 2. DRUM demands 10 black general foremen immediately.
> 3. DRUM demands 3 black superintendents.
> 4. DRUM demands a black plant manager.
> 5. DRUM demands that the majority of the employment office personnel be black.
> 6. DRUM demands all black doctors and 50% black nurses in the medical centers at this plant.
> 7. DRUM demands that the medical policy at this plant be changed entirely.
> 8. DRUM demands that 50% of all plant protection guards be black, and that every time a black worker is removed from

plant premises that he be led by a black brother.

9. DRUM demands that all black workers immediately stop paying union dues.
10. DRUM demands that two hours pay that goes into union dues be levied to the black community to aid in self-determination for black people.
11. DRUM demands that the double standard be eliminated and that a committee of the black rank and file be set up to investigate all grievances against the corp., to find out what type of discipline is to be taken against Chrysler Corp. employees.
12. DRUM demands that all black workers who have been fired on trumped up racist charges be brought back with all lost pay.
13. DRUM demands that our fellow black brothers in South Africa working for Chrysler Corp. and its subsidiaries be paid at an equal scale as white racist co-workers.
14. DRUM also demands that a black brother be appointed as head of the board of directors of Chrysler Corp.

The power base for these demands will be as follows:

1. Legal demonstration at Local 3 and Solidarity House.
2. Legal demonstration at Highland Park (Chrysler Corp. headquarters).
3. Legal shut down of Hamtramck Assembly.[7]

In the ninth week of its existence, DRUM moved. On Thursday, July 7, 1968, DRUM held a rally in the parking lot across from the factory which attracted over 300 workers. After speeches from DRUM leaders, black workers, along with a number of black community groups and a congo band, formed a line and marched to the UAW Local 3 headquarters, two blocks away. DRUM had carefully planned the picketing to coincide with the union executive board meeting. When the workers arrived at the local, they proceeded into the building.

The panic-stricken executive board immediately cancelled their meeting and opened the union auditorium to listen to criticisms aimed at the company and the union. DRUM leaders ran down how the union worked hand-in-glove with the corporation, the union's failure to address itself to the workers' grievances, and DRUM's demands. Unsatisfied with the defense of the union's pro-capitalist line by Ed Liska, president of UAW Local 3, and Vice President Charles Brooks, DRUM stated it would close Dodge Main in defiance of the union contract.

On Friday, July 8, 1968, DRUM and supporting groups arrived at the plant gates at 5 A.M. in order to be there when workers began arriving for the 6 A.M. shift.

> Picket lines were set up and manned entirely by students, intellectuals, and community people. Workers were excluded. White workers were allowed to enter the factory without interference but all Blacks were stopped. No force was applied but verbal persuasion was sufficient to keep an estimated 70 percent of the Black workers out of the plant.[8]

While the majority of white workers entered the factory, many honored the picket line and went home. Some 3,000 black workers stood outside the factory gates as production came almost to a halt. About noon, six DRUM members went to Local 3 and met with Liska and other union officials. DRUM presented their grievances again.

About this time the police arrived, massing across the street from the workers. They began putting on tear gas masks and got into riot formation. A detective then came forward and ordered the workers to disperse. DRUM dispersed most of the strikers after organizing at least 250 workers into car pools. The car pool drove five miles to Chrysler headquarters in Highland Park. DRUM held another demonstration in front of Chrysler headquarters. The Highland Park police arrived with gas warfare gear. Many of the demonstrators had gas masks. A group of DRUM representatives went into the Chrysler building and demanded to see the policy makers. They refused to meet with DRUM. The DRUM representatives returned to the demonstration and said the company had refused to meet. Satisfied with having achieved its immediate objectives, DRUM transported the demonstrators back to their homes.

> That Sunday a dozen DRUM members were invited to the regular citywide meeting of black UAW representatives. Tempers flared. Even after guarantees were given that the black UAW officials would support specific DRUM demands, there was clearly a parting rather than a meeting of minds.[9]

On Monday, the following day, DRUM again demonstrated at the plant. The Hamtramck police served John Doe injunctions on the demonstrators. The police proceeded to break up the demonstration. DRUM activists, feeling they had been successful, tore up their injunctions and either went to work or went home.

> The wildcat lasted for three days and Chrysler lost the production of approximately 1900 cars. No one was fired as a result of this action and DRUM leadership considered the strike an overwhelming success.[10]

In August a black organization made an attempt to usurp DRUM. The group was made up of black trade union men and a Chrysler professional employee who was pretending he had been fired from the company. The group filed incorporation papers in the name of DRUM — the Detroit Revolutionary Union Movement. They called a meeting between the original DRUM — Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement — and themselves. The Detroit DRUM said they thought the original DRUM leadership was incompetent and needed direction. The meeting didn't lead to positive results because the original DRUM criticized them for not having a base and also incorrect style of work.

But DRUM learned that in order not to be co-opted or misrepresented, it had to move immediately to formalize its structure and tighten up the organization.

Originally in May, DRUM consisted of eight Chrysler workers who

constituted an editorial board which met formally every Sunday. In September, DRUM had developed into a fairly large organization whose form was for the most part amorphous. In the middle of September DRUM submitted its constitution and theoretical structure for acceptance at a general meeting. Both the constitution and structure were accepted unanimously.[11]

A trustee in the UAW Local 3 died and a special election was scheduled for September 3, 1968 to choose his successor.

> DRUM leadership was divided as to whether they should run a candidate. Those opposed believed that participation in union electoral politics would: (1) appear to be compromising with a "corrupt" UAW; (2) might create the potential for opportunism in some DRUM members; and (3) the election might be lost. Those in favor argued that the election could: (1) demonstrate Black solidarity; (2) demonstrate DRUM's leadership; (3) serve as a vehicle for political education; and (4) aid DRUM's membership drive.[12]

DRUM chose Ron March, a DRUM member, to run for the post of union steward, and presented a platform for the upcoming election:

1. The complete accountability to the black majority of the entire membership.
2. All union decisions will coincide directly with the wishes of that majority.
3. Advocating a revolutionary change in the UAW (including a referendum vote and revive the grievance procedure).
4. Public denouncement of the racial practices within the UAW.
5. A refusal to be dictated to by the international staff of the UAW.
6. Total involvement in policy by the workers as opposed to dictatorship by the executive board.[13]

The election campaign was organized primarily as a tool for political education while also attempting to elect Ron March. Ron led the balloting in the election with 563 votes to 521 for his nearest competitor.

The Hamtramck police attacked some black workers near some bars the same night that the election returns were announced. Chuck Wooten, a member of DRUM, describes forms of harassment:

> The Hamtramck police department began to move in a much more open way. They gave us tickets on our cars and just generally harassed us. One day about fifty of us were in the union hall, which is right across from the police station. The mayor of the city and the chief of police came in with guns in their hands. They told us to stop making trouble, and we said all we wanted was to win the election. We asked them why they weren't harassing the others. While we were talking, a squad of police came through the door swinging axe handles and throwing Mace around.[14]

Between the time of the first election and the runoff, the union sent letters to retired workers appealing to them to participate in the election. While blacks made up 63 percent of the active work force in UAW Local 3, whites (primarily Polish-Americans) made up the overwhelming majority of the retired workers.

On October 3, Ron March was defeated in the runoff by a vote of 2,091 to 1,386. With negative publicity from the established and union press and repression from police forces, DRUM felt that Ron's pulling 40% of the vote under those conditions was a good showing. After running in two additional elections and receiving similar results, DRUM decided to terminate its direct participation in union electoral politics. Instead it supported black candidates who were not identified as DRUM members but who were progressive.

As DRUM expanded its operations, it had to address itself to how it was going to raise funds to carry out operations. The two main sources of finances were dues from DRUM members and contributions from workers. But these weren't enough to sustain the organization.

DRUM organized parties, demonstrations, and rallies which were attended by workers, students and people from church and neighborhood groups. DRUM also organized a picket line outside of Solidarity House to publicize its demands. DRUM decided to engage in fund-raising activity that would at the same time raise the consciousness of the workers and also inform the black community of DRUM's existence. With the help of the black clergy, DRUM was able to secure a church to hold a mass rally. DRUM sold raffle tickets prior to the rally which served as both a fund-raiser and a publicizer. First prize was an M-1 rifle, second prize a shotgun, and third prize a bag of groceries. The rally, which was held on November 17th, had a large community turnout.

3.

Revolutionary Union Movements Formed in Other Factories

The example set by DRUM inspired black workers in other plants to establish DRUM-type organizations at other factories. Brothers and sisters would attend DRUM meetings to learn the techniques of organizing and to discuss the situation at the plants all across the state, from which the enslaved black workers would come to help in launching chapters of DRUM. The strike at the Hamtramck plant called by DRUM stimulated the creation of FRUM (Ford Revolutionary Union Movement) and ELRUM (Eldon Avenue Revolutionary Union Movement). Both of these RUM's had their own newsletters.

> The ELRUM development was especially significant as Eldon Avenue was Chrysler's only gear and axle plant. In its eighth week of existence, ELRUM led a demonstration at the UAW Local 961 hall. A meeting resulted that lasted sufficiently long that 300 workers missed their afternoon shift starting time. When they returned to work the next day, 66 of the 300 were disciplined immediately and more were punished later. Punishments ranged from five days to a month off without pay. Protests against this punishment culminated in a wildcat strike on January 27, 1969.[15]

In the Eldon Avenue strike, a higher proportion of black workers participated and production was completely halted because blacks comprised a larger portion of the total labor force than had been the case at Hamtramck Assembly. Later the ELRUM cadres analyzed that the strike had been premature, because 26 strikers were fired despite the fact that picket lines were manned by support cadres. ELRUM in its early development had to deal with the fact that most of its cadres were thrown out of the plant and had to address itself to the sustenance of the families of the brothers fired.

As more RUM's sprang up in factories across Detroit and in other cities, DRUM and its support cadres felt the need for a centralizing organization.

4.

The League of Revolutionary Black Workers Organized

An important factor in the League's development is the fact that it came into existence as a reaction to the spontaneous self-organizing of black workers. The national (race) consciousness of black workers was at a high point as a result of the July 1967 rebellion. This carried over into the plants, where young black workers were more determined than ever to do something about the inhumane working conditions.

Though DRUM was in its formative stages as an in-plant study and action group, the May 3, 1968 wildcat strike at Hamtramck Assembly plant was the catalyst that made DRUM into a viable in-plant black workers' organization. Organization and structure didn't come into existence until two months after DRUM's development. Reacting to the spontaneous actions of the workers proved to be a contradiction that was never fully solved within the League. Sustaining activity and the interest of the workers became major problems for the in-plant organizers of the League. The concept of a League of Revolutionary Black Workers had been in the minds of activists General Baker, John Watson, John Williams and Luke Tripp for years. In 1964 and 1965 they had put out a theoretical journal called *Black Vanguard* which called for a League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Between December 1968 and spring 1969, meetings were held with the cadre collective (a loose coalition of activists who had worked together since the day of UHURU) to discuss the formation of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. The contradictions which later emerged within the League were prevalent from its inception. A major aspect of these contradictions occurred between in-plant organizers (workers), community activists and petit-bourgeois intellectuals. General Baker and Chuck Wooten (in-plant DRUM organizers) were the guiding force as far as the rest of the black workers were concerned inside the LRBW. The only book written on the League, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying* by Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, grossly distorts the history and development of the LRBW.

A community organizer not mentioned in the book was Glanton Dowdell, who organized most of the community support for DRUM and the League until his forced exile to Sweden in August 1969. Baker and Dowdell had both been members and leading cadre in Detroit RAM and had worked together for years. The incorporation of Ken Cockrel, Mike Hamlin, John Watson and John Williams into the leadership of the League was due to the fact that they had administrative and other technical skills needed to coordinate an expanding semi-spontaneous black workers' movement. The League published position papers and a public document titled "Here's Where We're Coming From." In order to develop internal democracy within the League, it was structured into compartments which had a semi-autonomous character. The compartments were broken down into a membership and circulation committee, an editorial committee, a financial committee, an education committee, a public relations committee, and an intelligence/security committee. All committees were directly responsible to the central committee known as the executive committee. The central staff was a body of League constituent cadres under the executive committee and was responsible for the day-to-day activities of the League. From the beginning, a major contradiction within the League was that the executive committee only included two black

workers, General Baker and Chuck Wooten. The executive committee was made up of Baker, Ken Cockrel, Mike Hamlin, Luke Tripp, John Watson, John Williams and Wooten. Glanton Dowdell was in charge of intelligence and security. Also Baker and Dowdell were members of the black liberation party (then an underground party) which was a vestige of RAM. While Dowdell was in Detroit, strict discipline was maintained within the League, and the out-of-plant intellectuals — Mike Hamlin, John Watson and Ken Cockrel — didn't dare to buck Baker and Wooten.

The LRBW legally incorporated in June 1969 and opened its headquarters at 179 Courtland Street in October. The League began public projection in July 1969 with the *Inner City Voice* as its official organ. For the most part, a city-wide black student movement developed in the high schools and colleges and affiliated themselves with the League. The high school groups, led by the students at Northern High School, put out a newsletter called *Black Student Voice*. While in Detroit, Dowdell was the students' mentor.

The Black Economic Development Conference

The National Black Economic Development Conference (BEDC) met in Detroit, April 25-27, 1969. Called by black clergy and lay people who had received some money from black caucuses in white Christian denominations, this conference has been noted as the turning point for the League.

At the conference, James Forman (formerly of SNCC and the Black Panthers) had drafted a Black Manifesto dealing with demands for reparations. The Black Manifesto demanded money from white churches to support things like a black publishing company, a black workers' strike fund and a land bank. Forman did not have much support, and the Republic of New Africa (RNA) saw the manifesto as a watered-down version of reparations. Forman approached John Watson of the LRBW and asked him to support the Manifesto. In return he promised to get money for the League. Watson called on the League cadres at the conference to support the Manifesto. After much bitter debate with the RNA, the Manifesto was passed.

Some members of the League joined the executive committee of BEDC and demonstrated at white churches with Forman. Forman then requested to become a member of the League and was eventually put on its central staff. Forman's entrance into the League was the beginning of real problems for the League. Through money provided from BEDC, the League was able to establish a print shop (Black Star Press) and a book store (Black Star Book Store) and to make a movie, *Finally Got the News*.

But none of this was without strings attached. The agreement on funding Black Star Press was that one of its first projects would be printing Forman's book, *The Political Thought of James Forman*. During this time a bitter debate took place between General Baker and Akbar Muhammad Ahmad over letting Forman into the League. The two would consult on a bi-monthly basis on internal development and problems within the League. Ahmad's position was that Forman was "a control or destroy nigger" (one who either controls an organization or divides it) and that while the money would help the League, it would boost Forman's influence in the League and the League would be split within a year.

The League drafted a manifesto and called for a black workers' congress.

> The manifesto received an excellent response yet the in-plant League leadership began to cool toward the whole idea. They felt that continued success in the factories had a higher priority than organizational ties with like-minded people in other cities. They were concerned that many of the Detroit RUM units were beginning to run out of steam.[16]

The first beginnings of an ideological split within the executive committee of the League occurred over the question of BEDC. General Baker voiced reservations about BEDC and refused to be on its steering committee. Cockrel, Hamlin and Watson, out-of-plant intellectuals and administrators, dismissed Baker's objections and joined BEDC. Baker also alluded to Forman as being questionable. All agreed to support the idea of establishing an International Black Appeal (IBA) as a tax-exempt charity which would be a self-sustaining fund-raising apparatus. John Williams was named IBA director.

6.

The *South End* Newspaper

The *Inner City Voice* began to run out of funds in September 1968. In October John Watson, who was an irregular student at Wayne State University, ran for editor of Wayne State's student newspaper and was elected editor for the 1968-69 academic year. The coalition of white and black students who supported him were firm supporters of DRUM.

Watson immediately turned the *South End* into a voice for the League. As the *South End* began to feature stories on various revolutions, particularly Palestine, it came under attack from the University administration and the white power structure in Detroit. On February 10, 1969, Joe Weaver, newscaster for conservative WJBK-TV, went to the *South End* offices to get a taped interview with Watson. Watson refused to be interviewed and closed the door to his office. Weaver forced his way into Watson's office. Watson ordered him to leave. Weaver continued to ask Watson questions with TV cameras filming. Other members of the *South End* staff came into the office to block the cameras. A rumble ensued, leaving Weaver with a black eye. Weaver left the office and went to police headquarters, where he filed charges against Watson for assault and battery. Ken Cockrel, the League's lawyer, defended Watson at his jury trial and he was acquitted. While Watson was the *South End* editor he helped build student support for the League.

> However, the *Inner City Voice* ceased publication during this period. It is doubtful if the student paper reached as large a segment of the Black community as had the *Voice*. It certainly could not relate to Black workers in the same manner as a publication specifically written for them.[17]

A dispute within the *South End* staff over collective decision-making resulted in Watson and DRUM losing control of the *South End* the following school year.

7.

Activities of the League in the Community and Relations with Other Groups

The primary focus of the League's activity up to 1970 was concentrated on organizing black workers at the point of production. All other activities were viewed as secondary with the intent of stimulating support for the RUM's. But as soon as the League received publicity, particularly exposure by parts of the American and European left, the out-of-plant intellectuals — Cockrel, Hamlin and Watson — began to project themselves as the leaders or spokesmen for the League and eventually lost all touch with the workers in the organization.

> . . . the primary concern of General Baker and Chuck Wooten was . . . that of plant organizing; that of Watson/Cockrel/Hamlin was more visionary, in the sense of advocating a greater political involvement of the LRBW in the larger Detroit community as well as beyond; and that of Luke Tripp and John Williams as steering a cautious middle course between these two positions.[18]

From the League's conception, it had a fraternal organizational relationship with the RNA. On March 29th, 1969, the Detroit police attacked the RNA during its meeting at New Bethel Baptist Church after a shootout between RNA security guards and police. One policeman was killed and the other wounded. The church was surrounded by police as they laid an armed siege. The police raided the church, arrested one hundred fifty people, and held them incommunicado.

Judge George Crockett, a black judge, was contacted by black State Representative James Del Rio. Judge Crockett came to the police station where RNA citizens were being held and found that no charges had been brought against anyone. He set up court in the station and released about fifty. He was stopped by Wayne County Prosecutor William L. Cahalan, but his actions had caused concern over violation of civil rights and the police released most of the RNA citizens the next day.

Judge Crockett immediately came under attack from the white establishment and white press. A Black United Front was formed to support Judge Crockett. Some sixty organizations were in the Front, ranging from the NAACP and the Guardians (a black policemen's organization) to the RNA to DRUM.

> On April 3, 1969, the Black United Front called for demonstrations in support of Crockett, and some three thousand people responded.[19]

The formation of the Black United Front and the demonstration threatened to polarize Detroit. Within a matter of weeks, the Detroit Commission on Community Relations issued a report favorable to Crockett. The Detroit *Free Press* published an editorial apologizing for previously publishing racist articles against Crockett. The Michigan Bar Association and spokesmen for the UAW and New Detroit defended Judge Crockett's legal positions.

John Watson of the LRBW was appointed director of the West Central

Organization (WCO) after it had received a $30,000 grant from BEDC. During this period the Detroit Board of Education announced a plan to decentralize control. WCO called a conference attended by 300 representatives from seventy organizations to deal with the decentralization plan. The conference formed a coalition called Parents and Students for Community Control (PASCC). PASCC addressed itself to community control of schools and a number of community issues. The League had influence on black high school students in particular and some black college students. A high school cadre began to form in Northern High. Their first advisor was Glanton Dowdell and later Mike Hamlin. Their newsletter, *Black Student Voice*, called for student control of the schools:

> The summer is over and we are back in the same old bag; white teachers, books, and heroes are still hanging on the walls of our schools. It is about time that the students and non-students stand up and be black men and women, and tell the teachers, principals, administration, and uncle tom students that you are sick and tired of this white bullshit that is going on in our black schools. What about your Black Heroes; Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, Nat Turner, Robert Williams, Huey Newton, and many others which your racist uncle tom teachers refuse to tell you about. All black students should join or support any black student organization working towards an effective change, and making the school more relevant to black students. These racist ass honkeys must stop controlling our black schools. The students should be making the decisions on who is going to teach and govern the schools period, not some racist white honkey from the suburbs.[20]

Black student revolts swept the inner city high schools in 1969. A city-wide Black Student United Front was formed. It demanded revoking all suspensions of students who had taken part in student demonstrations. Also among the demands were the flying of the red, black and green flag instead of the dirty rag; student control of curriculum; elimination of police in schools and student selection of faculty. The BSUF often leafleted and picketed at the plants for the League and served as its youth section.

The Oakland Black Panthers were growing into a national organization. The League cadre analyzed that the Panthers had romantic appeal for black youth and might attract potential RUM members. To offset the possibility of competition between the two groups, Luke Tripp and John Williams were assigned to organize the local Panther chapter. Some DRUM members joined the Detroit BPP. Luke directed the activities of the Detroit chapter of the Black Panther Party toward supporting worker organizations.

> [The League] believed that the Oakland-based Black Panther Party was moving in the wrong direction by concentrating on organizing lumpen elements of the Black community. The League did not believe that a successful movement could be based upon the lumpen as they lack a potential source of power. The League believed that Black workers were the most promising base for a successful Black movement because of the potential power derived from ability to disrupt industrial production.[21]

The relationship between the League and the Panthers soon broke down, as the national office in Oakland purged Luke Tripp and others in 1969. There were serious ideological differences:

> The black leather jackets and berets of the Panthers were good media fare, perhaps too good. The DRUM forces believed in keeping their membership under cover as much as possible, especially those involved in military operations. They felt that the masses should be presented with images that were realistic rather than those of superheroes whom they might admire but would be afraid to imitate.[22]

While the League was getting more involved in the community and becoming recognized across the country as a black revolutionary workers' organization, it was beginning to lose its base among black workers within the plants. The operations it continued to set up began to draw its personnel further and further away from its focus of organizing the plants. Also, a bureaucratic structure began to replace its once-flexible modus operandi. The ideological division which burst into the open was centered around tactical concerns.

8.

The Ideological Split in the League: The A Group and the B Group

As the League expanded its base in Detroit, questions over direction became more prominent within the leadership. RUM's spread among hospital and newspaper workers. Also RUM's developed in steel and other industries in other cities. The League had become the inspiration of black workers' caucuses around the country.

To address itself to questions of a national black workers' organization, the League leadership decided to form a Black Workers Congress which would coordinate the various RUM's and black workers' caucuses in the nation. The BWC would be an American version of a soviet: workers making decisions concerning their own liberation. But at this point of development, the League began to split into two factions which were divided between the in-plant revolutionary black nationalist workers and the out-of-plant, Marxist-Leninist intellectuals.

The split in the League raged for a year, beginning openly in 1970 and culminating on June 12, 1971 with John Watson, Ken Cockrel and Mike Hamlin resigning to go with the Black Workers Congress. The ideological differences were over different conceptual frameworks, issues, where priority of the organization should be, national consciousness, cooperation with white radicals, social relations, scope and the direction of the struggle. The League had become a bureaucratic structure with people working full-time in various projects. The RUM's, which came into existence because of the rise of national consciousness that the Detroit rebellion developed in black workers, were becoming more difficult to sustain. The in-plant organizers addressed themselves to the problem of maintaining high morale among the workers. Most of the RUM's developed from semi-spontaneous actions (wildcats) over grievances. But how to maintain an ongoing organization in the plants was becoming an increasing problem. Cultural affairs were organized by the League to provide members with social activities. These affairs were to allow League members to get to know one another and develop further cohesion among members. At one point there was a discussion of establishing a workers' supermarket to develop economic self-reliance.

While the League had a community-wide apparatus, it could no longer mobilize large numbers of black workers. Watson, Cockrel, Hamlin, and Forman began to travel more and more outside of Detroit, making press statements and giving interviews for white radical newspapers. Ernie MKalimoto Allen describes the situation:

> . . . there was the "Cortland office," main center for worker organizing; the "Linwood office," whose Parents and Students for Community Control as well as International Black Appeal were housed; the "Dequindre office," where the Black Star Bookstore and an abortive community organizing project were launched; the "Fenkell office," headquarters for the Black Star Printing operation. There were also geographically separate offices for Black Star Film Productions, the Labor Defense Coalition, and UNICOM, a community-organizing center. To outsiders the operation appeared quite impressive; rank-and-file insiders often saw it as an organizational and bureaucratic nightmare.[23]

Another major contradiction was the inability of the out-of-plant leaders to relate their theory to black workers' reality, failure on their part to listen to and learn from the workers and to treat them as equals. One weekend while General Baker was in New York, he convinced Ernie MKalimoto (an anti-war activist and organizer of the Black Panther Party of Northern California) to move to Detroit and work with the League. MKalimoto left New York. His involvement in the League helped polarize the contradictions within the leadership. He developed good rapport with the workers and was viewed as a threat by the out-of-plant leadership — Cockrel, Watson, Hamlin.

The League was racked with a serious problem of uneven political development among its members. Political education (P.E.) classes were set up for all League members. The classes on the basics of Marxism-Leninism were first taught by Luke Tripp. Tripp, not knowing how to break theory down into everyday language, would bore the workers, who often went to sleep in class. MKalimoto was asked to teach class. He broke it down plain and the workers enjoyed going to P.E. It should be noted that most of the workers were revolutionary nationalists. They weren't anti-Marxist. Marxism-Leninism was something new to them and if it had been presented to them gradually and in terms they understood, they would have eventually accepted it. But the relations the workers had with those purported Marxist-Leninists and their life styles alienated the workers.

John Watson thought that the League should become a black Marxist-Leninist political party. Watson called his faction, representing himself, Cockrel, Hamlin and Forman, the "B group," meaning Bolsheviks, and a faction represented by General Baker, Chuck Wooten, Ernie MKalimoto, Dedan, Mitch, Jalali and little AK as the "A group," meaning Akbar or nationalist faction. Before dealing with differences in the conceptual frameworks of both factions, we should deal with social contradictions.

Male chauvinism was rampant in the League. Sisters would be asked to give it up sometimes when coming to the Cortland office. Discipline began to break down in the ranks after Dowdell left. Some workers had serious drinking problems. Rather than address themselves to solving these problems, the B group (Watson, Cockrel, Hamlin and Forman) spent more and more of their time addressing the left and chasing white women.

Hamlin spent a lot of time organizing League input in the "Control, Conflict and Change" book club organized by the Motor City Labor League. Less than two percent of the approximately 700 members were black. Forman was attacked by the A group for having left a black wife for a white wife. He denied ever having been married to a black woman. Hamlin and Cockrel lived in the same house with their white concubines. Watson, though he was married, would "jam" white women at League parties and would openly admit he had a "Jones" for white women. Sisters in the League would watch the B group in disgust. The B group in fact was acting out revolutionary integrationism, something that many Panthers were doing in the same period. Things began to get out of hand, but General Baker refused to fight for his principles against his old friends.

> The political disagreements between the League leaders began to feed personal antagonisms. The in-plant people charged that the

BWC wing liked to be with "bourgeois" people and with white folks more than they liked to be with Black workers. Cockrel was cited for having what was termed an arrogant and authoritarian attitude toward comrades. Watson was charged with having become a dreamer who let transoceanic trips and film-making fantasies replace his former vision of a worker-led American revolution. Hamlin was said to be so enamored of the idea of a national organization that he had lost his common sense. As for James Forman, who had entered the League through BEDC, he was the wrecker and splitter Baker had suspected him of being all along.[24]

General dissatisfaction emerged in the central staff. Ernie MKalimoto and some of his supporters were purged from the League in April 1971 for purportedly attempting a coup d'etat under the guise of ultra-democracy. The battle continued to rage until June, when the central staff demanded more voice in decisions of the League, resulting in Watson, Hamlin, Cockrel and Forman resigning. The ideological differences between the A group and the B group were over what James A. Geschwender calls the capitalist exploitation model and the colonial model.

The B group (Cockrel, Hamlin, Watson and Forman) felt the League should be turned into a black Marxist-Leninist party. Essentially they viewed black people as an oppressed minority exploited on both a race and a class basis. Their essential world view was that the black worker was the most significant element in bringing about a revolution in this country. They felt that national oppression (race) would be eliminated through a socialist revolution. They believed in an integrated society after a socialist revolution.

The A group also believed that black people are oppressed on a race and a class basis. They believed that 200 years of slavery had developed Africans in America into a nation. The national culture and institutions of the black nation became entrenched during the hundred years of racial prejudice after the Reconstruction period. The A group felt that the black nation's national historical territory was the black belt South. They envisaged a black-led socialist revolution in which there would be several independent socialist states cooperating with one another but maintaining political independence. The A group published two pamphlets which explained their position, *Revolutionary Nationalism and Class Struggle* by Ernie MKalimoto and *World Black Revolution*.

So a principled question was, where do we put our emphasis, struggling against national or class oppression??

The intellectuals went into the Black Workers Congress and most of the workers stayed with the League until General Baker went into the Communist League.

9.

Conclusion

The problems in the development of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers and internal contradictions which led to its demise are problems and contradictions which have recurred in the black liberation movement time and time again.

Some of these problems which black radical organizers have had to address since the 1920's are:

1. Choosing the correct method of relating to and sustaining the spontaneous development of the masses.
2. The role of an organized cadre in that development.
3. Finances: self-reliance or from external sources.
4. Role and relationship of radical intellectuals to the rank-and-file members of the organization or masses.
5. Lack of a comprehensive conceptual framework that is relevant to the living reality of the masses.

It seems to this author, when studying the high tides of the black liberation movement since the Emancipation Proclamation, that both eras, the 1920's and the 1960's, were basically spontaneous mass movements. That is, they were spontaneous in character with organizations trying to harness the mass activity. Neither of these movements lasted more than fifteen years without dissipating either from internal contradictions or external pressure or both.

When studying the 1960's, the social scientist can assess that organizations such as SCLC grew out of the success of the spontaneous action of Mrs. Rosa Parks' refusal to give her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, which led to the organization of the Montgomery Improvement Association and the Montgomery boycott. From the success of the Montgomery boycott and others, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was organized. Similarly from the sit-ins, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) grew.

It can be argued that without the presence of or the emergence from mass activity of a cadre, led and further accentuated by mass activity without cadres, the mass movement of the '60's wouldn't have progressed as far as it did.

Similar was the case of Detroit. This study has attempted to show how a young cadre was developing. It should be noted that this cadre was trying to relate to and advance the spontaneous character of the black liberation struggle in Detroit. But the League (LRBW) would not have come into existence if the urban rebellion of July 1967 had not occurred. The urban rebellion heightened the "national consciousness" or race awareness of black workers in auto plants, making them more receptive to organizing outside of the UAW. What makes Detroit unique is its tradition of black radical continuity, a factor that should not be underestimated. The fact that there was an embryonic cadre to organize the wildcat strikes of the workers is an essential factor that led to the development of DRUM and other RUM's. The importance of a cadre in advancing a mass movement and transforming it into a social revolution can not be underestimated. In social revolutions,

a cadre's role in the development of a mass movement has usually been the determining factor in that movement's success or failure. An important point to make is that in the '60's, most activists felt that correct social theory came from social practice. Theory evolved from practice and in return was to correct practice. So the methodology we can learn from the League experience is *practice*, *theory* and *practice*.

One decisive factor we can learn from the League experience is the role of finances. In this case I have attempted to show how finances coming from external sources re-directed the League from its focus of purpose: organizing at the point of production. The question of building independent economic resources based on self-reliance, which may take many years to do, or receiving funds from foundations, etc., was and is a problem for the black liberation movement. Financial resources from forces outside of the black community thwarted development of SCLC, SNCC, and the Black Panther Party as well as the LRBW.

Again we come to the question of the role of intellectuals who are not in the center of activity and their role with the masses. In the League there arose an arrogant, self-righteous commandism on the part of the intellectuals in directing the mass organization. There seems to be a crucial problem in America of the inability of intellectuals to be willing to listen to the masses, take their suggestions, learn from the masses, and share in leadership with the masses. The ego-centrism created in intellectuals in the American educational system seems to make most so self-centered that they refuse to be flexible when working with people. Many of these intellectuals — who many times use Marxism-Leninism, nowadays Mao Tse-Tung thought, as a dogma rather than a method of achieving empirical truth — unconsciously become the "scientific" saviors of the heathen masses. The problem of university-trained intellectuals has to do with class composition, class suicide and living reality of the masses.

Workers and intellectuals have different life experiences, which lead them to view the world differently, while all black people share racial and class oppression on a dual level. Therefore, black workers as well as black prisoners are more than likely to have different conceptual and theoretical schemes than intellectuals. This was the case with the League.

In the 1960's, as in earlier periods, most intellectuals failed to grasp this reality. That is, their reality is not the masses' reality. As a result, as organizations grew to mass membership, ideological splits took place which usually had a class disposition to them. Very few organizations or leaders developed a conceptual framework that our people could understand, grasp and improve on. The lack of a comprehensive conceptual framework based on empirical data is what is still lacking presently in the black liberation movement. To develop that conceptual scheme may mean developing a new paradigm, one which may even challenge the existing Marxist paradigm.

While I am not condoning or advocating spontaneous activity, it plays an important role in the development of mass organization. The failure of the Black Workers Congress to build a mass base may attest to this.

With these five factors taken into consideration, it is imporant for cadres to seriously study the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. In our limited understanding of history, it was the most advanced black workers' organization to emerge from the black liberation movement. Learn from past mistakes, build a solid cadre for the future, and *Dare to Struggle, Dare to Win!*

FOOTNOTES

A. John A. Bracey, Jr., August Meier, Elliott Rudwick, eds., *Black Workers and Organized Labor*, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1971, page 156.
B. Irving Howe and B. J. Widick, "The U.A.W. Fights Race Prejudice," *Commentary*, Vol. 8, No. 3, September, 1949.
C. Bracey, et al., *op. cit.*, page 212.
D. *Ibid.*, page 214.

1. Ernest MKalimoto Allen, "Detroit: I Do Mind Dying, A Review," *Radical America*, Vol. 11, No. 1, January-February 1977.
2. Grace and James Boggs, *Detroit: Birth of a Nation*, pamphlet, October 1967, page 7.
3. James A. Geschwender, "The League of Revolutionary Black Workers," *The Journal of Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3, Fall 1974, page 4.
4. Luke Tripp, "DRUM — Vanguard of the Black Revolution," *The South End* (Wayne State University Student Newspaper), Vol. 27, No. 62, Thursday, January 23, 1969.
5. *DRUM* (Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement) *Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 2, page 3.
6. Tripp, *op. cit.*
7. *DRUM Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 9, page 1.
8. Geschwender, *op. cit.*, page 6.
9. Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975, page 47.
10. Geschwender, *op. cit.*, page 6.
11. Tripp, *op. cit.*, page 2.
12. Geschwender, *op. cit.*, page 7.
13. *DRUM Newsletter*, Vol. 1, No. 13, page 1.
14. Georgakas and Surkin, *op. cit.*, page 49.
15. Geschwender, *op. cit.*, page 6.
16. Georgakas and Surkin, *op. cit.*, page 161.
17. Geschwender, *op. cit.*, page 11.
18. Allen, *op. cit.*, page 71.
19. Georgakas and Surkin, *op. cit.*, page 69.
20. *Black Student Voice*, Vol. 1, No. 2, October 1968.
21. Geschwender, *op. cit.*, page 9.
22. Georgakas and Surkin, *op. cit.*, page 74.
23. Allen, *op. cit.*, pages 71-72.
24. Georgakas and Surkin, *op. cit.*, page 162.

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