

To: CC members, District leaders
and cadre

April 3, 1975

This is a report from Buffalo on the Black Women's United Front. We are still attempting to assess whether we should work in this form and if so what should be the character of the work. We would appreciate it if you could unfold upward your experience with BWUF and your opinion of what should be done. If you have not had experience in your district with BWUF or CAP we would still appreciate your comments in regards to which direction we should take. A note expressing your views on this written the next 3 weeks would be very helpful.

The I.C.

February 4, 1975

Progress Report-BWUF
Conference-1/25/75, Detroit, Mich.

This report will cover five areas. We will attempt to not only tell what went down but why certain things went down the way they did and put forth some resolutions for future work.

1. -Flow of events

This entire effort began with the formation of the task force in Sept. of 1974. At this time seven organizations came together to explore the feasibility of developing an organization that struggle around the day to day problems of blackwomen. We feel that the task force as a method of bringing together various organizations in an attempt to struggle around a specific problem and build a more lasting unity is a correct one, and as the first step was a positive development. However, this formation could only function correctly under certain conditions. The main thing that has plagued this effort and ultimately the conference in January has been the belittling, especially on CAP's part of the importance of line. While the question of lack of consistent participation, especially on a practical level by all the others organizations is a factor, it must be considered as directly related to the belittlement of the question of line. We cannot speak on the specifics of the development of the task force since we only attended one meeting, but the general developments seem to be clear.

The work of the task force culminated in the January conference in Detroit. Approximately 500 people attended, the number which had been anticipated. In the morning session five organizations made presentations. These were: YOBU, AARPP, PASOA, BWC, CAP. there general positions will be summed up later in this report. The afternoon session set out to discuss structure and statement of principles. It became obvious very early that the question of line had not been settled, and since the agenda had not allowed time for the discussion of line a number of contradictions immediately developed particularly between CAP and AARPP. Only CAP of the task force and OL from the audience came prepared to deal around the question of structure. Every one else either came for clarity on the line or to specifically struggle around the question of line.

O.L. made its proposal for structure to include the following: That the BWUF should be a broadly based, organization including all black women. That black women workers should lead the organization and the black professionals should give direct aid and support. That it be composed of a steering committee with representatives from the various organizations and some individuals, that chapters should be organized but only made a part of BWUF after they have proven themselves in practice. That the BWUF should be built by a series of workshops across the country, have regional bodies, and that men should only be able to do support work and ^{NOT} fully participate. Other third world people can only be observers and not participate inside BWUF, and that we rally around International Women's Day at the U.N. under the slogan "Imperialism not Overpopulation". See, CAP's proposal for structure in their general proposal for a BWUF. Basically the structure adopted was that of Cap's with a few modifications. The vote was 154 for and 6 against, with the majority or at least half the women present abstaining. After dinner, instructions were given and people broke down into states and cities planning the first meeting everywhere for for 60 days from that date and selecting responsible people from each state and city to call people together.

2**Lines of Debate

All of the organizations represented, except AARPP, supported the call for black women to come together and struggle around their day to day problems. We were not present for most of the YOBUS speech but we were told by CAP members that they spoke mainly on the need to build a revolutionary student organization, and that they were as an organization, working toward this end. Welfare rights called for an organization of women that was "changeable, broadbased, participatory, educational, action oriented". CAP in its presentation alluded that black women as the most oppressed of all sectors of the working class might be necessarily the vanguard of the struggle, raised the need for socialism in the U.S., and stated that the main task during this period was to build a multi-national communist party. Stated that the main struggle was to draw lines of demarcation and struggle against opportunism. Opposed particularly sectarianism and dogmatism and while it was not stated out-right seemed to say that left deviation is the main deviation in the communist movement. Also spoke to white chauvenism of a certain communist organ-

ization. (R.U.) The AARPP position is included with this report. Ethiopian students was not present, but they are represented on task force and will be participating in the BWUF. ALSC and OL which are not represented on the task force will be participating in future work.

The main lines of debate revolved around two basic questions. The first was over whether or not having a black women's organization was correct as opposed to a all black organization. And the second question which flowed directly from the first was whether or not men should participate in BWUF. The main debate was between CAP and AARPP, with CAP attempting to squash all opposition, and all debate around the question of line. The women from Welfare Rights, who spoke as an individual in the situation, and PASOA generally supported CAP's position, while BWC and YOBU abstained from any position. PASOA and Welfare rights put forth the closest to the bourgeois feminist line, indicating they felt that it was impossible for men to understand women's oppression, and treating them like the enemy. CAP because of its incorrect methods of struggle, alienated even those people who were in general agreement over the question of line. At this point it is not clear whether these mistakes were conscious or not.

3. Our Role

In general, our participation in this whole development has thus far been at best peripheral, unplanned and spontaneous, lacking any clear direction or commitment. We did little to help clarify issues and lines and even added confusion at different points. This directly related to our current two-line struggle and made itself felt in the course of this conference. Basically, we presented the speech prepared by comrade T.A. and that was it. We did not participate in the discussion in the remaining part of the conference. We informed the Task force early that we would not participate in this part to avoid as much confusion as possible. While the speech was good the presentation was poor. Comrade T.A. did not speak loudly enough nor forcefully enough, especially under conditions of extremely poor microphone set and bad acoustics. We felt under present conditions it was correct for us to have not participated in second half of conference. CAP raised a criticism of us at the end of the conference for not supporting them around specific question and a general criticism that the communist forces were not united around anything in the conference.

We would like to speak briefly on the general errors which have been made and the deviation which was at the root cause of these errors. Our entrance into this formation was haphazard and impetuous. There has been no analysis of what are the key struggles for us to engage in during the period of party building, how those struggles and our participation in them will push forward the C.T. of party building, or what are our organizational capabilities are at this time in history. The C.C. had neither been informed, nor had full discussion of this development before it was initiated, or after either for that matter. Furthermore, the whole context in which our participation began was to "win over the advanced and give Marxism hegemony in the Black Liberation Movement" Report on African Woman's Conference 7-17-74. This was the only consideration given at least on comrades T.A.'s part and we must assume on the part of others. This view has never been criticised not for what it says, but for what it does not say. This view belittled the importance of giving leadership to the struggles of the class and oppressed nationalities even during the period of party building and did not correctly relate the three strategic tasks. However around September the left deviation was further developed. At this stage it was advanced that we should go forth and lead the most important struggles of the class as the key task because of the depth of the current crisis and the effect it was having on the working class. The task of ideological work and drawing lines of demarcation were at best treated as secondary and at worst ~~as~~ were given no consideration at all, being treated as though they were already settled. Not only ^{did} this deviation belittle the task of party building but had it fully developed we would have begun to move as if we were going to be the party ourselves. Internally the slogan was being raised that organization is key, our paper was laid out as the new Iskra, and cadre were told that we had the correct line and the task was to gain hegemony in the communist movement. We were on our way to becoming the "jack of all trades, master of none." We were and are not going to be the party. The work in the BWUF was never put on a firm footing and a correct analysis on whether or not to participate was ever made.

There are some time considerations in that the work of the BWUF occurred concurrently with the outbreak of two line struggle making it much more complex to deal with. However, the fact

remains that this work developed in the context of the left deviation and was colored by it.

4. General Assessment

The positive aspects of the conference were:

1. People who attended the conference showed a strong~~er~~ understanding of the importance of line.
2. Speeches in general were very good.
3. Stand of conference was good.

The negative aspects were:

1. The task force, principally CAP and events leading up to and including conference belittled the importance of line, which limited the degree of unity which could have been achieved by the leading groups.
2. Method used to consolidate forces generally around principles related to BWUF were ultra-democratic opening the way for bureaucratic methods of coming to decisions, particularly by CAP.
3. CAP's method in particular was arrogant and served to further the disunity which already existed.

Only the task force members had a basic understanding of what was trying to be done. Positions were read and not discussed or struggled out to the fullest, when they were struggled out at all. Principles of unity were laid out and never really fully explained to the people. Number of people who voted is evidence of unclarity that existed at this conference around rank and file in attendance. With all efforts to gain clarity being put down by CAP, they were able to push their program through, and many people including most of the task force members left somewhat disgusted with CAP. We have not determined whether or not this was done consciously or unconsciously by CAP. CAP in discussion, felt their method of struggle was correct against forces they said were trots (which we could not identify, and which never identified themselves) and narrow nationalists who came with a plan for disruption. They felt that they were maintaining a strong and principled stand. They criticised us for not helping them and felt that one of the main errors was that the advanced forces were not united.

5. Recommendations

1. That we not continue work in the BWUF at this time and that the forces involved be informed as such. We have many internal questions that must be settled as well as a need for an analysis of what our main tasks should be during this period.

2. It is our view that more consideration should be given to work around unemployed and around developing a national program in that area.

We have some serious questions at this time as to whether the BWUF is going to really get off the ground except in a few cities where cap is strong. It depends on whether or not the question of political line is given its proper place, on whether active criticism and self-criticism is adhered to and mistakes corrected along the way, on whether the advanced forces play the leading role they should, and ultimately whether or not it is a correct tactic for work during this period.

In Struggle,
Western New York D.C.