

## ON CONTACT WORK, THE CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE DIALECTIC:

Who are contacts and where do they come from? How quickly can and should you assess a contact? How far do you press a contact? What is the value of a contact? Are there long and or short term aspects to contact work?

Most of the contacts we have made are directly traceable to someone going out into the class struggle and opening their mouth! Other contacts were found, or found us on the internet.

Contacts will not approach us just because they heard there is a new Trot in town! We have to go where the militant workers, youth, precariate and students are. We have to offer them something they need, a program and method which intersects with their material conditions and organizational needs. To do this we must have a understanding that our work in the mass movement is contact work, because what we offer-socialism-can only be attained by the application of our program through building the Leninist Party, objective necessity demands that the vanguard workers build.

Thus our task on the street, on the picket line, in the political meetings is to distinguish our method from the labor fakers and fake socialists. We always need to explain how the independence of the working class has real power, the classes methods of attaining that political independence and self expressing though its own organizations and its historic objective. Exposing the role of the labor fakers and fake socialists, reformist, anarchist etc. we engage the militant workers who understand, or come to understand our critique, this is where the contacts will come from. In fact if our militants do our job right-making public addresses in the mass movement, intervening in discussions, organizing united front actions, the workers will come to us to ask advice, to express their concerns to look for answers and organization!

Contacts arrive when you offer something concrete to the awakening militant. In order to offer that something, (theoretical clarity, strategic & tactical input, and appropriately bold action), you have to be there. In the heat of the class struggle-you have to show up and participate. To do otherwise is to be abstentionist, will not lead to making contacts, will not develop the confidence of the class in our leadership abilities and will leave our comrades isolated and talking to ourselves in a cozy little talk shop.

Rather than blaming or labeling as kin to economism, the *minimal* amount of activity and participation in the class struggle that HWRS has carried out since 2008 we should be looking at the chronic abstentionism and dependence on a very limited number of the comrades (often only one) to carry on consistent interventions in the class struggle.

The WERC conference, the socialist climate change conference, the Labor Notes conferences, the inter-union organizing committee, the furlough Friday pickets, the banner hangings at the overpass, the banner hanging by state workers in-front of the governor as his drove in for a photo op, the solidarity picket with the State park workers, the solidarity picket with the CNA, the UTA, the UTR, the CAPT, the WCCUSD fight against school closures, engaging parents, students and the Richmond Teachers, the UPWA forums where we presented our economic theses our program and method, the BART solidarity meeting, the anti-free trade with Korea action, the picket to expose Diane Feinstein and Richard Blum, the March 4<sup>th</sup> Committee, the October 23<sup>rd</sup> strike for Oscar Grant, the April 4<sup>th</sup> Strike for public workers, the intervention in the FLT (winning the CWG/RWG), the Sean Gillis committee, the ILWU defense committee, the various anti-imperialist actions, the LB&B work, the CAPS interventions and campaign, the Iowa Caucus, the two #Occupy led port shut downs, the workers memorial day presentations, the Occupy Labor Solidarity these interventions and participations were the least we should ask from any group which claims the moniker of revolutionary Marxism. For the pragmatist these are all separate actions which we can pick and choose from. For the revolutionary worker, for the dialectician, for the revolutionary organization they have an inner dynamic and continuity which the conscious revolutionary both recognizes and constructs, as we reach into the process of the class struggle and make history.

These actions bore a certain consistency and built upon each other. Singling out any one area of work, such as the CAPS election or UPWA, as the culprits labeling them as thefts of valuable party time is both dishonest and a cover for the real problem of personal demoralization and the anti-Bolshevik norms leading to an escapist method of sectarian abstentionism. While some comrades put other priorities first (dating, video gaming, multiple-vacations) those who put our program in front of real workers have results, making contacts and recruits as well as having planted seeds which, if tended, will bare fruit. It is not the work we do in the class that is holding us back; it is the work we do not do which limits our contacts our possibilities and the fate of humanity itself.

It has been suggested that the work around the Richmond Teachers was a waste of time but like the argument against the CAPS work this is fallacious and based on the ignorance that is the product of isolationism and abstentionism. Week after week we took to the schools to fight school closures, we spoke in front of hundreds and were on TV more than a few times. Only once an HRS comrade joined us in the leafleting of parents and once HRS comrades came out to leaflet the UTR during the contract meeting. More LIT and FSP comrades intervened than HRS comrades.

These interventions put us, not only in joint work with the Progressive Teachers of Richmond, but with parents and the community. This work lead to contacts with militant teachers, AH and DM in the transport unions, leaders of the American Indian Movement, and other working class activists. It was on the

streets in Hercules giving speeches to hundreds of Latino families where we caught the eye of CS. He contacted us. His contact brought us into the UPWA work. It took a few working meetings with CS to figure him for a Maoist. B's first activity was to attend the UPWA conference where HRS intervened with our program and method. It was there we met MH from the Latin Radio station. Later she (MH) led the fight against Alan Benjamin (fake Trotskyist) at the WERC conference by demanding of Alan, in Spanish, that our speaker be invited to speak from the stage. Recall DW and MH defending our speaker (from the Workers Compost thug BL) at the end of the WERC conference in defiance of the reformists. Remember MH passing our flyer out to hundreds while our comrades sheepishly respected the no-leafleting inside the hall rule. These contacts and joint interventions were made possible by the interventions in the WCCUSD fight. Did we have a one on one contact meeting with MH yes we did. She is not going to be organized as a Trotskyist. But did that stop her from putting our speaker on the radio in Venezuela for half an hour explaining the limits of Bolivarianism, the imperialist role of China and the road to Socialist Revolution? No it did not! Was this work and its continuum a waste? We should say no! Resolutely No! It is not only the wind up and the pitch but, the follow through, the potential energy becoming kinetic that unfolds the consequences of which cannot be foretold. Suffice to say the ground work laid intervening with the UTR and the WCCUSD will result in future gains for our movement.

Diane B is a militant black Democrat, with good street sense but not ready to break with the Democrats, her slate eventually won the UTR presidency and e-board, this is no reason to avoid the work. If we were going to avoid every Democratic rank and file trade unionist who leads workers into struggle we will be talking to ourselves. If we wait to do trade union caucus work until we have a strong group of socialist workers with us we will never do anything!

In the class struggle and in the trade unions our job is not to avoid militant black Democrats rank and file trade unionists, our job is to try to break them toward working class independence by patiently working alongside them showing them the method and program of working class independence, breaking with them over support of the capitalist politicians does not mean abandoning work with their rank and file in the contract fight.

This begs the question, when our comrade was approached by Diane and MB after intervening at the school board, was our comrade supposed to ask these rank and file teachers, "are you Democrats, are you potential future bureaucrats, tell me your program then maybe we will work together"? No, our task was to respond positively to these two teachers when they said, "we have to meet later", when they made our comrade their publicist, when they encouraged the militancy and class independence we exhibited in our programmatic contributions. Of course, DB's support for our statement for class independence exposed a contradiction in her understanding and practice. She has yet to resolve this contradiction. But it will be with no small prodding from us when she does!

Did we let D &MB go without a contact meeting? Did we pounce on them right away? No, as stated they came to us, they showed us that they had a long term caucus in the UTR, their caucus was and is still a united front of (communists (PL), pacifists, Greens, PFP, RPA, anarchists, including ol'e Arne Swabec's grandson). To the extent that it (the bloc we made with the rank and file caucus) mobilized the workers, students and parents around our method and program to oppose the concessionary contract and school closures we supported their actions often standing on picket lines of a handful of people. It was in consort with the UTR and the parents that our statement/program was broken into 10 parts and read two minutes at a time at a mass meeting at the School Board in February 2009 that went out over the district wide TV and was applauded by hundreds driving a wedge between the rank and file and the UTR leadership by exposing the nature of the budget cuts and explaining the independent road for the working class.

Once we had established ourselves in the struggle we initiated contact meetings with Diane (and indeed spoke with or assessed the various caucus members as possible contacts or not) and concluded she would not move beyond her role as a militant Democrat, we met with 5 other individuals in that episode discussed with them and when we deciphered where they stood we moved on. Are they still contacts for class struggle work? Yes they are. Will the intensification of the class contradictions show that our method and program needs to be reconsidered? Indeed it will! Can we expect those contacts to be moved under the pressure of future events? Indeed our entire method is predicated on the dialectical observation that subjective consciousness lags behind the objective conditions. As the conditions become more acute their consciousness will catch up with the seeds we planted! MUST CATCH UP! AND WE WILL BE THERE TO WATER THOSE SEEDS! COMRADES THAT IS CONTACT WORK!

In those contact meetings we came to understandings of why each of these contacts would not be moving in our direction over night. Why not? Their class consciousness has not yet caught up with the objective conditions. Does that mean it was a waste of time? No to the contrary we established ourselves as non-sectarian fighters for working class unity and that kind of street credibility carries over years and miles. It was based on this work that with the UPWA we launched the small yet successful march to expropriate Chevron uniting, teachers, students and community members against big capital in an exemplary manner. There will be further gains, indeed just last week I saw a teacher in the UTR (an executive board member, AS's grandson) at the Occupy and he indicates they may be moving toward strike in the fall. Why did he tell us? Because he knows who we are!

We are also admonished that the time making speeches was wasted and is not real contact work. I will remind comrades that it was after the speech to the March 4<sup>th</sup> action that we made contact with the LOI-Br. They approached us, bought the

paper and it was not till a year later that we consolidated that contact. On more than one occasion at work black workers who had seen me on TV fighting for their kids' schools approached me. This established me in their eyes; this set the stage for the credibility based upon which we were able to launch the Inter-Union Organizing Committee (IUOC). At the UPWA conference where we presented our economic analysis on the stage with GW and DM we met CD and made first (possibly second) contact. It was also at that meeting that a militant black co-worker attended. Is he a prospect? No not now but I have had hours of talks with him and he is receptive can we get him to LB&B educationals, it is highly probable if his time allows! Was his edification a waste? Absolutely not, he came to every IUOC meeting, joined me on the overpass with the Strikes not Furloughs banner and joined DW, SB and CR at UCB when we faced down the Alameda PoPo with thousands who defended the occupiers of Wheeler Hall. When the class struggle here heats up he will be there.

As for CD (caught both on the street and at the UPWA forum) the contact work took months, one on one meetings were initiated by myself and followed up with others when he showed he was serious. Joint work with CD coincided with intervention in LB&B. Our speaker presenting for LB&B self defense at the anti-Meserle rally and at the ILWU defense meeting put him on notice that he had to answer our call. Winning CD was a consequence of a long series of interventions who can say which one or ones could we have dispensed with and still had the same result. With TD it is much the same, we introduced ourselves to him, challenged him, had him and his crew over the house making picket signs, met with and worked with him and finally he called for a one on one. This is how contact work goes it is a result of persistent participation in the class struggle. I have many other stories of contacts and each has its own trajectory most of which can not be attributed to the "salesmanship" of the primary contact person or the persistence of the contact work but rather to the subjective consciousness of the contact themselves and their willingness to go farther.

A few contacts were made on the internet SB, A and C all found us on the there. C found us from our union work (the very CAPS work the sectarian abstentionists tell us we should not waste time on. SB and A found us from our web site.

Contrast the results of the persistent work in the class struggle with the impressionistic and misguided message delivered to the FLT conference in Argentina. Base on nothing but subjective desire rather than actual participation in the class struggle, the comrades who remained in Oakland, informed the FLT congress that we were on the brink of recruiting a whole layer of youth in Oakland and that they should send us some comrades to help do this work. This message was not based on objective reality, it was based on one intersection of DG with an organization of precariat youth called Advance the Struggle (ATS). Without HRS comrades seriously investigating these comrades or even meeting them the FLT congress was informed that recruitment was on the imminent. This

pipe-dream form of contact work blew up in our faces when we worked with ATS in struggle a few months later. Ultimately ATS did not even respond to our letter of introduction. When we encountered them in the class struggle they capitulated to pragmatic activism over the principle of class independence. In the long term some of the ATS comrades may be won over but it will not be overnight, it will be because we engage them in the class struggle, it will be because they go through the experience of their own inadequacy and start looking for answers.

Remember how we drove a wedge between reformism and the syndicalist/centrist currents in the UPWA, and how we forced UPWA not to allow the Greens to speak from the stage. Remember how our participation drove the Democrats out of UPWA leaving us almost alone with SZ and CS? This work in the class struggle half cleaned the UPWA, clean enough that we were able to bring C here from Iowa to yet again expose their limitations and advance our program and in so doing set the stage to win C who seriously wants to be convinced on China.

Do we need a contact director? Yes, like the treasure they should not be there to chase down the contacts (every member should be making contacts by intervening in the class struggle) but to record, systematize and follow up on the initial work done by the comrade who first makes the contact. But the pragmatism of creating a contact director as a solution to a political problem will not work. Our groups chronic abstentionism, based on alienation and questionable has not been dealt with politically and its solution will not be found in an org chart or a weekly activity chart!

CR & DJC  
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