

We are a small group of people and are not an organization. This Statement is not meant to represent the views of any organization and we alone are responsible for its content. We leave this Statement unsigned for security reasons. This Statement was written because we felt compelled to reply to the paper of the Thursday Night Group (TNG). Since we have worked in the Chinatown community and with several social service institutions. We felt we should share our experiences. More importantly, however, we felt the TNG has made several fundamental theoretical errors in its approach to AADAP. It is important to critically discuss these errors because these same tendencies are entrenched in many areas of community work and constitute a major obstacle in the way of the progressive movement in reaching a clarity of analysis and a correctness of work.

This Statement is made from the perspective of Marxist-Leninism Mao Tse Tung thought. It was written for those considering themselves within this scientific framework. However, we hope that many others concerned with community work and social service institutions can also learn from this Statement.

In analyzing our work, we realize we have made many errors in the past. We did a lot of "self-help" programs, which were only reformism. Some of us have even fostered the belief that our utopian "serve the people" community programs were in some way building socialism in America. We were wrong. We also have worked in several social service institutions serving Asians in LA. Like the TNG, some of us felt that we could make these "people's" institutions or "people's" programs by controlling them. Again we were wrong. We were able to control some programs, but we could not make them into anything more than reformist programs and could not turn them into a vehicle for socialism.

The TNG makes three basic criticisms of AADAP--inability to meet people's needs, a growing bureaucracy, and a lack of a progressive direction. We feel these criticisms are valid. This is the only agreement between the TNG and ourselves. We feel AADAP must be analyzed in the context of US society and in light of all of the knowledge built up by MLM Thought. We feel there are five extremely important points on which the TNG makes fundamental errors in its analysis of AADAP and its proposed "solutions."

Criticisms of the TNG position:

1. The TNG fails to grasp the fundamental nature of capitalist society; that is class society. They fail to analyze how institutions function in capitalist society. The result is that they shift the focus from attacking the capitalist system to reforming a single institution.

The TNG gives token recognition that AADAP is part of a larger context, but they fail to identify that context as the capitalist system. The TNG also gives token recognition that the solution to problems must be "part of something larger--a movement for social change" (p13). They again fail to identify what type of movement they see solving problems. Maybe a bourgeois reform movement? They don't say.

They do, however, openly show their reformism in their preface when the group states "Section V contains what we believe are solutions to the problems we have examined in the criticism section." The problems they expect to solve are the inability of AADAP to meet community needs, the growing bureaucracy, and the lack of a progressive direction. In Section V we find their solution is greater community input and control. What happens to the capitalist system? These are real problems, but does the TNG have real solutions or petty reforms?

In spite of their slight recognition that this "system" has an effect on AADAP, they focus almost entirely on the isolated institution. The TNG clearly states its narrow purpose on p.2:

"It is important to note, that the purpose of this paper and the group of people who put it together (TNG) is not an effort to destroy AADAP, but an effort to redirect and rebuild a community drug program which will be responsive to the needs of the community it is serving." (our emphasis)

The TNG thinks a few vague phrases about the "system" can convince people that they are not looking at the institution in isolation. People should not be misled by the narrow view of the TNG and isolate an institution or a community from the context of capitalist society.

2. The TNG errors in its idealism of building alternative survival institutions which follow a utopian "serve the people" policy. They want to build model institutions with "collective decision making" and a "collectivization of salaries" on a capitalist material base because that is the way institutions are under socialism. They would like to build an entire community as a model of socialism. They think they can slowly build socialism by gradually changing the superstructure (institutions and communities) of a society. There is nothing wrong with a collective process, however, collectivity cannot be a strategy. The TNG recognized that problems have some origin in the material conditions and historical development of society, but they refuse to look for solutions in that very same material base. Instead they try to mold socialism to fit their preconceived ideals.

The TNG thinks AADAP can be a model institution; actually serving people's needs. Since AADAP fails to fill this role, the TNG has decided to rebuild it until it does. The TNG fails to realize that institutions under capitalism oppress people and are not suppose to or are able to actually meet people's needs. Attempts to transform institutions are contrary to their material reality.

The TNG promotes its idealistic romantic thinking of building a community and tries to fool others into accepting it. This idealistic outlook is the source of other TNG's errors. It sounds nice but it just isn't so. This cannot continue to happen. People must make an analysis of the concrete situation and not try to build dreams.

3. The TNG fails to recognize how federal funding blurs class contradictions in society. Federal funding raises contradictions between workers in social service institutions and the people they are supposed to serve; among various workers in a single institution; and between different national minorities contending for the same money. A narrow community building line causes these contradictions among the people to overshadow the basic class contradiction in society. The failure to recognize this reality and expose the problems inherent in federal funding is a serious error.

Many people are aware of the high level of hostility reached by the antagonisms between people concerned with AADAP. Resignations, fights, and slander were reflections of these tensions. Similar tensions existed in the Asian Women's Center. This experience is similar with other federally funded programs in other minority communities. The TNG attributes these problems to lack of support from other people or a lack of struggle by the people concerned. In making their petty criticisms of the movement on page six they say:

"Too many of us ended up saying 'fuck it' after one or few difficulties arose, instead of staying to struggle with and support AADAP...We did not provide support to some brothers and sisters who did go into AADAP out of concern and commitment, but instead, we created an atmosphere of defensiveness and guilt about dealing with funded programs." (our emphasis)

The TNG cannot see that these contradictions are due to the nature of federal funding and that they are raised to antagonistic levels by the pushing of a narrow line for community building. Erroneously the TNG tries to blame the movement for its no struggle, no support attitude. Instead the movement should be blamed for its lack of theoretical understanding and its lack of struggle on theoretical issues. The TNG objectively misleads people about the true nature of problems within institutions and aids in maintaining contradictions among the people at antagonistic levels. This only aids the bourgeoisie.

4. The TNG misleads the mass movement from confronting real issues and diverts it into the reformism of purely legalistic battles (advisory boards) or struggles to gain control of the administration. These narrow institutional reforms call for back-stage manipulations and petty politics, rather than depending on the masses of people. The masses cannot take part in these narrow struggles. The end result is the same small group of "community spokespersons" always representing the masses. The TNG...

reality on its head when it claims that the involvement of the communities will result in a correct program. In truth, only a correct line and a correct program can bring the involvement of the communities.

A Community Advisory Board (CAB) is proposed by the TNG to insure the communities have involvement with AADAP. The TNG expects this to enable AADAP to better serve the needs of a community. The TNG encourages concerned progressive people to work on this CAB and struggle over narrow petty bureaucratic questions. This is how the TNG projects building a revolutionary mass movement and this is how the TNG expects to derive a correct understanding of what are our revolutionary tasks. The TNG fails to see that revolutionary theory must guide our work and that in the absence of a MLM outlook our work will always fall back to reformism.

This misleadership of turning the mass movement to reformism is especially harmful at the present stage of development of the movement. It deceives many sincere progressive people into thinking petty reformism can be a solution to problems. It channels them into working long hours in reformist social service programs. The result is burning out, disappointing, and frustrating many developing people who are just entering the spontaneous mass community struggle. The bourgeoisie uses reforms to deter the mass movement and the TNG objectively aids this strategy.

5. The TNG claims its AADAP position paper only poses short term tactics for improvement and is not its political line or the political line of any of its organizations. This argument totally abdicates any responsibility for analyzing AADAP in a larger perspective as they, themselves, claim must be done. The group's use of short term tactics as a process of growth shows its total lack of theory and its bowing to the spontaneity of the situation. The CAB is supposed to provide the long ranged planning for AADAP. They neglect to provide a framework in which this can be done. In the absence of MLM ideology, the dominant ideology of society, bourgeois ideology, will prevail in our thinking.

Suggestions

We believe there are many sincere progressive people following tendencies similar to the TNG and making the same extremely fundamental errors. We have outlined what we consider to be a more correct way of viewing our work with AADAP and other social service institutions. We hope people can read both this Statement and the TNG position paper and compare our suggestions with their plan. We feel the two approaches reflect completely different political outlooks on community work.

1. We must recognize that many problems do exist in our oppressed communities. These problems result from our oppression as workers and as national minorities.
2. It is correct to demand our democratic rights that the government meet these needs with improved programs and more federal money.
3. We cannot view these programs as the solution to our oppression and must not fool others into thinking these are solutions. Only socialism can start resolving these contradictions. Socialism requires revolution and a change in the economic structure of society and not the petty reform of an institution.
4. A few progressive people should work in these government social service programs to allow progressive people:
 - a) to expose the contradictions of these programs to the masses of people. By this political education, progressive people will struggle against the contradictions among the people becoming hostile and overshadowing the fundamental antagonistic class contradiction. Such education will also isolate those who persistently substitute reformism and utopian thinking for class struggle and the struggle for state power.
 - b) to unite all those who can be united in supporting mass struggles for democratic rights. Progressive people must provide independent leadership and not tail the reformers in these struggles.

- c) to recruit and develop sincere, honest progressive people coming into contact with these social service programs.
 - d) to get paid for working to meet limited community needs and doing mass work and for them still to have time free to work on important political tasks.
5. Progressive people should not waste their time trying to make these social service programs into something these programs cannot be.
6. The administration of these institutions must be left to the defenders of the bourgeoisie. Administrators will expose their own vacillating class nature and the inability of reform programs to solve problems. Any "progressive" person in a director's role can only deceive the masses into thinking his/her reformism is the progressive movement's solution to community problems.

Conclusion

As we have stated before, we believe many sincere, honest people, including ourselves, have made the same errors as the TNG. These same errors have been manifested in many other areas of community work besides AADAP. It is not just a tactic of dealing with AADAP, but a reflection of the outlook and political strategy of some people. When will these people analyze situations in a larger context? They had better do it before they make more mistakes in their tactics at AADAP and with other areas of community work.

We see these errors as 1) substituting reformism for revolution; 2) thinking idealistically; 3) blurring class contradictions; 4) diverting the mass movement; and 5) advocating tactics while lacking a basic theoretical framework. These errors can all be due to inexperience and the lack of theoretical understanding. These errors can all be corrected if people persevere in confronting them. If we cover these errors or try to justify them with elaborate, idealistic theories, we would only be retarding the movement and be making a far more serious error.

The movement is full of well intentioned people. It is a movement of heroic people rising to resist unjust oppression. Good intentions and emotions, however, cannot win us victory. Only our grasping of revolutionary theory and our struggling to apply it to the mass movement can bring success.