

# Serve the People: Become One with the People

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For the last six months members of our collective have joined workers in their daily struggles on the job. While it is too early to provide a comprehensive summation of our experiences thus far inside these work places, we offer the following observations which we think may be of use to collectives attempting to forge mass links through fusing with the masses.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It was very helpful to read this 1967 study in *Peking Review* of Mao's famous *Serve the People* speech when writing this document: <https://www.marxists.org/subject/china/peking-review/1967/PR1967-02e.htm> Two important quotes:

“To destroy self-interest and promote devotion to the public interest, it is necessary to handle the relations between revolutionary interests and one's personal interests correctly. This is a line which marks off those comrades who are serving the people wholly and entirely from those who are serving with certain reservations or halfheartedly. To serve the people wholly and entirely, we must put above all else the interests of the revolution, the people and the liberation of all mankind. Personal interests must be subordinated to the revolutionary interests unconditionally. Chairman Mao has taught us: “At no time and in no circumstances should a Communist place his personal interests first; he should subordinate them to the interests of the nation and of the masses.” (The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War) Certain comrades choose between different kinds of work. They are willing to do work that gives them higher wages and more favourable conditions, but not work that does not. They are glad to do work that conforms to their own aspirations, but not work which goes against their aspirations. They like to do work that can bring them fame, but not work that cannot. In short, they place personal interests first. This has nothing to do with the idea of serving the people wholly and entirely. The experience gained by many people illustrates that when people think only of themselves they become narrow-minded, and when they think of nothing but revolution they become open-minded.” It get at what we are really trying to do by joining these workplace struggles and working to transform their dominant character.”

“In order to serve the people and carry out the tasks of revolution, our revolutionary ranks must solve the question of internal and external unity. Unity is strength. Only when unity is reached within our revolutionary ranks and between our revolutionary ranks and the broad masses of the people under the great red banner of Mao Tse-tung's thought to form a solid militant entity can gigantic power be generated to defeat the enemy, overcome difficulties and win victories in revolution and construction. Chairman Mao has pointed out: “The unification of our country, the unity of our people and the unity of our various nationalities—these are the basic guarantees of the sure triumph of our cause.” (On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People) Our proletarian revolutionary fighters must pay great attention to the immense significance of revolutionary unity.”

## 1

Regular meetings outside the workplace are key for advancing conversations and political development. This has been one dividing line, among others, by which we have been able to identify workers who see a basis for actively opposing oppression and exploitation. Their interest in initial earnest collective struggle at the worksite can be contrasted to those who represent ideas and stands typical of the broad left. Repeatedly, those in this latter category who are outwardly “political”—i.e. those who fixate on electoral politics or liberal solutions like Sanders—have been some of the more reactionary members of the workplace. This often coincides with forms of explicit liberal identity politics and implicit white chauvinism. While such individuals have the appearance of being politically engaged, when it comes to issues in the workplace—which are right in front of them—they generally stand with management, snitch, and police others who may break the rules. Conversely, we have laid a foundation for collective proletarian struggle by confronting supervisors and challenging anti-worker policies, and by working to build unity with those who are willing to meet up to discuss issues, not with those who merely have the appearance form of being politically engaged.

## 2

The challenges faced in this endeavor, as with most revolutionary work, are arduous and entail overcoming many obstacles. Engaging in mass work at proletarian work places with pairs of comrades has been beneficial. A small collectivity is necessary to sustain initiative in multiple respects. It helps to overcome subjectivism, provides an initial grouping upon which to build, and allows comrades to have more diverse engagement with workers throughout the workplace. In the course of such work, setbacks can appear draining at first. But through a patient approach that prioritizes building deep links over a “do it now!” style of work, new paths have already started to open up.

## 3

We are going against the current in multiple respects, some of them unique to our moment. In the 1960s some of the masses were active in revolutionary movements. Others were aware that unions should serve the interest of workers even if these unions overwhelmingly betrayed workers through mediation with management. Today, lacking a revolutionary movement in this country, we are starting from an even weaker position. We have seen that management broadly in the U.S. has seized upon historic defeats of the workers’ movement. It has imposed new measures to isolate workers and to enforce the idea that workers are disposable and should aspire to sell-out their fellow workers for a few scraps or be grateful to subsist on a bare minimum scarcely sufficient for them to

reproduce their daily existence. However, things do not have to be this way, and we must demonstrate this in theory and practice to workers. The present reality and historical examples provide rich material to draw upon in meetings, confrontations, and in one-on-one conversations. Through a collective approach to organizing, and by drawing on the history of revolutionary struggles, we have been able to operate from a position of strength despite our relative isolation.

#### 4

Comrades entered these workplaces not out of personal convenience, but instead for the purpose of fusing with the masses, and transforming the nascent resistance of the masses into a force capable of overcoming reactionaries and reactionary ideas. The process is a long and protracted one, in which links with the masses always takes precedence over spectacle and proletarian politics takes precedence over revolutionary form and imagery.

#### 5

Building sustained links with mass contacts has proven to be vital not only to workplace organizing but to our early attempts at neighborhood organization. This entails basic but important work, such as following up with contacts, comradely discussions over how and where to focus our efforts, discussions about the drafting of fliers and the planning of group events. This also entails taking the ideas that people have seriously, while being willing and eager to correct our own mistakes. We cannot expect members of the masses to become revolutionaries overnight. Instead, we must struggle against the current to forge the conditions and relationships to sustain comradely discussions with contacts on a protracted and planned basis.

#### 6

We have held regular collective studies throughout this period, which has been essential for our overall political development. Through studying dialectical materialism and revolutionary history we have been able to apply lessons non-mechanically. This includes recognizing the qualitative differences in the work we are engaged in now, and work that becomes possible after prolonged engagement with mass contacts through the course of political struggles. A collective approach to study, including sharing responsibility for presenting content, has been important to this process.

As always we look forward to sharing our ongoing experience with collectives interested in engaging in similar work.

Mass Proletariat