
If the Shoe Fits...

The January 1972 issue of Workers Vanguard made the following apt comment on corruption in the Black Panther Party:

“Hero worship is one of the ways bourgeois ideology enters the revolutionary movement and destroys it. Its corrupting nature is evident in Huey Newton’s \$650 a month penthouse, paid for out of Party funds raised in defense campaigns, while rank-and-file Panthers hide from the police in rat-infested hovels. The Panther paper justifies Newton by noting that he had ‘stood up and faced the pigs (from which he was wounded and spent two years in prison)’ and that he had ‘put his life on the line in the fight to end this racist, exploitative system.’ The

paper went on to state: ‘Huey and his generals of staff should have the best as they plan their party’s strategy.’ (*The Black Panther*, 27 February 1971) The belief that the past sufferings of militants entitle them to the good life at rank-and-file expense is an important subjective justification for bureaucracy in the labor and radical movement. Moreover, left-wing leaders can continue to enjoy the good life only with ruling-class cooperation, obtainable by holding back the organizations they are supposed to lead against it. Many present leading AFL-CIO bureaucrats were beaten, shot at and jailed in their youth. Newton’s penthouse and the Party’s defense of it indicate a deeply anti-socialist attitude.”