

*[Received May 17]*

Dear Editorial Board,

I am a first time writer, long time reader. I have noticed negative changes or a bad trajectory with your publication. I wish to provide you with the following observations and concerns in the spirit of direct criticism.

First, and most importantly, Tribune displays a weakening and in some ways a backward political line. On top of this it shows a failure or unwillingness to orient toward the average working person. I want to begin with the issue of the political line while being clear that the line and the orientation are component parts of an integrated whole.

Tribune is guilty of masking the stench of its political confusion with flowery verbiage. It is unable to articulate concise and clear politics so it dresses this political funk in wordy attempts at the poetic which fall horribly short and in fact expose its grotesque bedsores for us readers to suffer. This method of flowery language and poor poetry to cover up ones political anemia is actually (ironically) indicative of the greats among the postmodernists. We can add Tribune to the literary ranks of Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, at least when it comes to stylizing ones deficits in order to trick and confuse.

You, the Editorial Board try and enamor us readers with nonsense! You say things like; "the horizon is quaking." What does this even mean? It is nonsense, meaningless drivel. This same tendency you have developed causes you to write wordy paragraphs with long run on sentences, reminiscent of the former publication you correctly, rightly and mercylesly criticized! Incendiary News' style is back from the dead and it has possessed your body. We long-term readers have had our fill of muddled politics concealed behind preposterous rhetoric.

You editors issue grand sweeping statements which indicate that you might live in a bubble or a survival bunker somewhere isolated from the people. You tell us that, "no one can ignore that new waves of rebellion are on the horizon." Enough with the horizons already, this was bad enough from Alain Badiou, beyond this, the statement is not even true. Plenty of people do just that, deny that there is more uprisings coming, while doing everything to prevent them. Mainly the powers that be, the state and the media alike all concern themselves with this. Furthermore, your style exposes how empty your political line is, a horizon is a vague non-qualifiable thing, by nature you never arrive at it, it moves ahead. Which is why you comrades and Badiou alike are frankly full of hot air. What of the horizon you speak of? has it moved ahead again like always or has it come to be? Consider the fact that you strike a pose saying things like this. The murder of working Black people has been in the news almost nonstoped for months, and no mass uprising has materialized. Yes, inevitably the conditions remain more or less the same, so the masses will again rise, and you are right to say so, but say this and stop prattling on in whimsical nonsense. In this editorial, the reader is subjected to two full convoluted paragraphs and one good quote before we are even given what the editorial is about. This is political posturing as well as bad writing and bad editing.

We readers as well as the public who might read Tribune, are presented with silly exaggeration, the Editorial Board says, "each child of our class, no matter how young, is nothing more than a target for the police..." What a preposterous claim. Let us look at this claim a little closer, please. Is it true? I mean is it true for each child of the working class, each and every one? Obviously not. The proletarian youth, as a whole are not targeted by the police, if they were then there would be too few left to grow into workers and man the machine that keeps the profits flowing into the pockets of the ruling class.

Next let us consider this claim that the police see our youth (Black youth) as "nothing" but a target. Is that true, is it possible? It is not, they also see them as a source of intel, as a source of cheap labor, as a source of entertainment, and as a source of sexual gratification among other horrible things. This is the reality of our children's conditions, Tribune's tendency towards reducing reality to one subjective aspect robs its readers of the whole truth.

More importantly dear Editors, when you say things like "each child of our class" is a target, you are actually denying that specific sections of our class are targeted specifically. You might as well come out and say that police killings are not racially motivated or race related, which you more or less do when you go down the liberal rabbit hole and talk about "darker skin tone" as if it were not a totality of Black features, traits, and culture which is so reviled and despised by America. You actually go so far as to say that the plight of these Black children is "principally for belonging to the working class." It is not principally their class as if class were in competition with race or nationality. In fact reality is not so mechanical comrades. What is principle in the contradiction between these children and the Old State, is neither simply race nor class but the convergence of the two. By way of failing to comprehend dialectics you ended up making statements which inadvertently prop up white chauvinism. I chalk this up to an overcorrection against the base identity politics which plague yours and other small leftwing movements. Here the medicine you give has a side effect as bad as what you try to cure.

All the gross reductionism, and subjectivism which your editorials are so guilty of cannot provide a succinct concrete analysis of concrete conditions, or answer the real questions of the real masses. In fact, all your flowering rhetoric convinces only you that you are saying what needs to be said, for average people these editorials are just strange and aloof, missing the actual reality of our class. You are harming yourselves and will come to no good end unless you take a sober look and make some hard changes.

In the interests of being thoroughgoing, I would like to highlight a few more instances of your editorials going off the deep end and provide some recent examples. You write a very muddled bit of political confusion when you give readers this mess to decipher:

"Peasants have proudly fought for their land for decades, in truth for centuries, and spilt their blood without hesitation, knowing that nothing that the Brazilian ruling class can offer them will satisfy what they deserve; everything!"

Yes that is all one sentence, and yes it says "knowing that nothing that." One has to ask is this intentionally written to be difficult to read, did the editors proof read it, does it make much sense? Why is Tribune trying to cram so much into a single sentence? Is it necessary to be so erratic and repetitive? I will leave you and your readers to answer, I ask only in order to criticize. I will offer you a rational succinct re-write with none of the stumbling and awkwardness in the original so that you can take note and improve:

"Brazilian peasants have fought tirelessly for centuries aware of the fact that the Old State beholden to the landlords is both unable and unwilling to meet their basic necessities, making agrarian revolution a necessity."

Do you see how sensible writing can be without posturing and striking a pose? It is possible to say more with less, if you take up the teachings of Mao Zedong and oppose stereotyped party writing.

In your editorial from April 22nd, readers are told to "celebrate the Floyd family." A directive which goes against your previous political stance. It should be known to you, as it is pretty obvious that the Floyd family are outspoken reformists, pro-police, and that they have been purchased and used by and in the interest of the old state. It is not correct, in fact it is backward to tell your readers to celebrate a family who has been duped into serving as a public relations stunt for the very system that murdered their loved one. It is correct to learn from this sad experience and to pity the Floyd family, but you editors are not acting on political analysis, but perhaps emotion or some type of populism.

This editorial is particularly fully of technical issues to the point of being amateurishness and well below your previously established standards but I lack the time and space to spend on it, it is the bad politics which are the most pressing. Tribune has the nerve to tell us readers that, "...the police are fully known as criminals in the eyes of the working class and the poor..." If this were the case, then surely we would not need to keep telling everyone that the police are criminals! Surely Tribune itself would not need to devote so much time and resources to saying just this in every issue! Or, are you editors just that committed to telling our class what we already "fully" know? The real question is, does our class "fully" know that the police are criminals? I argue that this is false posturing again.

Our class does not fully know the police are always not their friends, let alone that they are criminals at least not our class as a whole. Our class is not unified around the truth yet. In reality proletarians are not automatically going to have a proletarian class stand, bourgeois ideas permeate bourgeois society. If the relationship to production guaranteed an automatic consciousness there would be no need to carry out political education, society would be transformed immediately. The bourgeois state rules through both consent and coercion, even the police utilize consent frequently and preferably. What you comrades are doing is idealizing the working class, likely from outside, because workers ourselves are well aware of the backwards and ignorant among us, and the petty bourgeois tend to romanticize us.

Please verify this, go ask workers about their views on the police. You will find this; a vocal minority who nearly worship the police and policing, these are the backward; a great majority who are more neutral, they know there is problems with the police, they still think these police are a necessary evil, and they do not trust them but tend to take them on an individual basis, but oppose the excesses and the violence and hate the racism, this is the intermediate; then you have a relative few who expose the police, and are fully aware that they are criminal. Your class stand is wrong because you do not stand among the actual people and therefore cannot wage actual struggle. That is to say the necessary political and educational work among the people cannot be carried out by those who only have a subjective understanding of who and what they are working with. To tell your readers that the working class fully knows the true nature of the police is outlandish. I believe that you are telling yourselves this, that you are self-assuring and re-assuring, and that this causes delusion, prevents clarity. Impedes you from grasping reality. The reality is this, our class is not yet united around the advanced position as you pretend.

In fact, backward ideas run amok among us workers, we must educate our class siblings and organize them to lead the other potentially friendly classes. Instead of this kind of rational, sober dedication we readers get what amounts to intellectual flexing from Tribune, when you often attempt to assure readers by saying things like "we know" this or "we know" that. "We know this will be returned in kind," well good for you! Who exactly are you trying to impress? Reminding us what Tribune knows reeks of insecurity.

Worse yet, Tribune makes a serious mistaken analysis when the Editorial Board falsely contrasts "liberal politicians" with those who "strengthen the police further." You dear editors, have fallen for

bourgeois tricks and you should know better. The liberal politician is one and the very same with those who seek to further strengthen the police, there is no distinction. It is the liberal politician who is the most vocally critical of the police and policing who is doing the most in reality to strengthen the Old States policing apparatus. The liberal critic does this more and better by saving the police from themselves and winning over the public on the basis of empty reform. They humanize the repressive state. This serves the police far better than those who foam at the mouth for the blood of Black people.

Tribune honorably and correctly denounces attempts to divide protesters into "good and bad" or "violent and non-violent" categories, yet falls into this same septic tendency of division when saying; "Biden made it clear prior to his election that he will target combative protesters as fiercely as his republican counterparts." This is true, however Tribune fails in its duty to maintain vigilance against the division of protesters, by not highlighting the fact that the Biden administration has poised itself from its very inception to destroy and attack any protest movement in which the Democratic Party does not maintain hegemony, be it combative or not. In fact, Tribune has done a lot to highlight Biden's attacks on democratic rights and it is even surprising that the word "combative" was inserted here since in this case it inevitably divides protesters. Biden for his part is no more willing to tolerate civil disobedience that goes against his class and its agenda than he is to tolerate combativeness from the people. You comrades would do good to expose this to your readers.

There is an alarming lack of political consistence in Tribune, if the editorial line has been changed, so be it, but you should at least issue a statement taking responsibility. Tribune has failed to challenge liberalism and in doing so has veered into liberalism itself, it is at risk of becoming a radical liberal publication. Mainly, the Editorial Board has touched on matters lightly.

Tribune produced several useful articles on the topic of homelessness and homeless camps, then uncritically reports on "Kansas City Homeless Union" and fails to challenge its moronic name, thus legitimizes it. Tribune cannot pretend like it does not understand what a union is, but for the sake of readers I would define it as an organization of individuals with common interests who come together to exercise collective bargaining power with some type of leverage, usually labor power, which they can apply or withhold to get their demands met. By definition the homeless lack such credentials to rationally be called a union. Tribune is negligent to the education of their readers when ignoring this issue.

To make matters worse, Tribune and "KCHU" pretend that sending the homeless in Kansas City to one of the state sanctioned open air prisons is somehow a "conquest." You in the Editorial Board surely are familiar with the correct position taken on these city sanctioned camps, like the one in Austin which is almost universally opposed by radical housing activists and homeless advocates. Austin is condemned for their abuse of the homeless in the same types of camps which in Kansas City are lauded as some type of victory. This is political opportunism, it is the liberalism of switching up when convenient, it compromises your honesty, your trustworthiness, your reliability and your integrity. Homeless people coming together have no collective bargaining power and are not a union, and the city granting open air prisons for our homeless brothers and sisters is not any type of conquest. How did the bar go so low that people settle for such a capitulation?

Tribune is again suspiciously inconsistent when reporting on an anti-Asian-racism demonstration in Austin, having not so long ago issued a thought provoking article about how the mass shooting in Georgia was not so much an instance of anti-Asian violence as it was violence against women linked to human trafficking and prostitution, yet somehow forgets all this when writing about the protest in Austin. Tribune states that there was a banner reading "Fight Sexism, Fight Racism" however banal this

banner slogan is, Tribune still has the responsibility to highlight the role prostitution and trafficking played in the Georgia case, since again you mention it, and it should also be clear that the people targeted were not all Asian to begin with. No effort to uphold your own analysis is made, it appears that individualism (read liberalism) reigns now among the Editorial Board.

It is important that I bring up the other issue, beyond the muddled politics that is to say, the right opportunism which simultaneously tails the people while avoiding orienting toward the masses. Tribune is doing this in subtle ways under the misleadership of the Editorial Board, either due to being slipshod, negligent and lazy or due to intentional distortions and trickery, I am not able to say which.

Who does Tribune write for? In my analysis you write for your friends, and not the average worker, and in doing so you show off your lack of professionalism. For instance you have tells in your editing, when writing about George Floyd you are like any professionals and correctly refer to him as "Floyd" instead of "George," yet systematically if you refer to someone your paper is close to, or the small movement you support is very active in, you switch to the casual first name basis; you say, "Garrett," "Alex Jr.," "Whitney," etc. This defaulting to casual use in certain cases says to readers that; 1. the journalist or reporter is inexperienced, this is forgivable; 2. That the editors are negligent and not paying much attention, this is far less forgivable; and 3. There is a clique or sect like small group environment for insiders and the new reader is forced into the role of outsider, that is unforgivable.

[In past articles, editorials, and opinion pieces, we have referred to victims by their first name. We refer to Honor and Glory to Garrett Foster, Servant of the People, Defender of Black Lives:  
"Many of us at Tribune of the People had the pleasure of knowing Garrett and his fiancée, Whitney Mitchell"

This has been a stylistic and political choice, utilizing the names by which their loved ones referred to them as and know them by. Perhaps we should be stricter that within news articles, we should stick with the formal style, and allow for more freedom when it comes to editorials/opinions. In any case, there is a need to reevaluate this - and that we as a paper should not assume familiarity with these victims when there is no clear reason that we have earned it, despite our outrage at their unjust killings or .]

The tendency described above is the clearest in the always poorly edited "week in struggle" section which systematically assumes that the reader is already acquainted with the many large and miniscule organizations described, most of which are still unfortunately not very well known. This problem is not limited to "Week in Struggle" by a longshot, it is consistent enough to where one could assume it is editorial policy.

[We spell out names and acronyms at all times, and attempt to add modifiers when appropriate, i.e. housing struggle organization.]

By assuming the reader is already aware of sometimes obscure groups, at least obscure to mainstream Americans, Tribune is doing one of two things, first you are failing to include necessary facts which would improve the understanding of new readers, secondly you discourage new readers from remaining readers for more than a precursory glance. This will result in a small loyal readership seeking to confirm their bias more than it will foster a growing flourishing readership, and that really does not serve the individuals, organizations, or struggles that Tribune is dedicated to covering. If Tribune wants or expects new readers, then it is the responsibility of the Editorial Board to stop being so lazy, and start explaining things in each and every article, as if it were a professional newspaper.

Carry out this experiment, others have and it is a lot of fun, assemble 20 or so workers with a moderate to advanced social consciousness, read them a sample of articles and encourage them to interrupt when they hear something they do not understand, someone they never heard or something that is unexplained. You will not get through most recent samples. This is because you are constantly assuming your readers already know things they do not, then failing to tell them much. It is the exact wrong way to make propaganda, because it is so obviously inconsiderate of the audience.

Here is an example of befuddling writing which does not consider the audience, "In Houston statements in speech was made" this nonsensical unintelligible sentence still fails to say who was speaking or what was actually said, we just get to know that they made the statement "in speech" whoever it was, and that whatever it was they said was generally in support of a good cause. This is not reporting it fails to meet basic reporting standards.

Tribune provides partial facts that leave readers speculating and pondering without any clear answer, "gunshots were fired at the buildings glass doors"... ok, fired by who, and according to who, furthermore did the shooter miss? Was the building damaged? Does Tribune even care about providing facts and telling the whole story or are your contributors just copy and pasting random things from the internet without sourcing? We are waiting...

There are Tribune articles which would be useful to working people, but end up useless due to total failure to source anything and the fact that the Editorial Board takes no notice of this failure. For instance in a recent article about temp workers at Gilbane, your writer Ms. Ahmed only sources one statement in the entire article, and even then she only sources "a worker" for one quote. She does say that the workers are facing "life threatening conditions" and I have no reason to doubt that this is true, however a good journalist and a good newspaper does not expect readers to just take their word for it. How does Ms. Ahmed come across this information? Did she witness first hand the falling buckhorse? No? Well then she, and especially you at the Editorial Board have the professional obligation to source that information, if you do not you must at once retire, stop expecting us to take you seriously, stop taking yourselves seriously.

Sourcing in journalism is one of the most important principles, it is how your readers verify your claims, it is how we trust you. Failing to source is really bad and really lazy, even if you are telling the truth you cost yourself readers and harm your reputation, and no one who knows anything about journalism will count on your publication as a resource, just because you are small and independent does not mean that you face no responsibility to be journalists, in fact your responsibility is greater because more than ruling class papers, you are supposed to be on the side of the truth. All of this indicates that you are not writing for the public, but for the sake of your pre-existing groups, your actually existing comrades, instead of taking up your post as a collective educator and central organ as you have proclaimed.

As bad as the lack of sourcing is burying the lead, which happens in about 60% of your articles. For example, in a recent article about a reversal of a prison sentence, your article started out with the fact that a protest was taking place; "Community protested" however this is not the most important fact, a news story should say something more like, "Ignacio Ixta Jr's sentence guilty verdict for murder was reversed, the announcement of dismissal was made to a jubilant crowd of his supporters who were protesting outside the court." Instead, your writers default to chronological order, as if they were writing fiction, what is truly hard to believe is that you editors allow them to do that!

This is all unsurprising since you have given up on quality control and are not maintaining your own publications style. It is important editorially as well as politically to maintain a clear standard in publishing. That means if you name it "the May Uprisings" then you must stick to this, you should not allow your writers to freely call it "the summer uprisings" or anything else, as if your own writers do not read Tribune themselves! Politically this kind of mistake shows disunity, individualism. lack of leadership, eclecticism and lack of consistency. It is indicative of bad unqualified propagandists, making poor quality propaganda which will inevitably be counter productive. It has already caused this long term reader to question continuing.

Who is at fault? I blame the head editor and the publicist, and Tribune contributors and supporters should too. Let me conclude by saying that in this reader's opinion you have allowed the three ill winds to return. That is to say you have begun using dogmatism, subjectivism/sectarianism, and stereotyped party writing. You have sunken into a dozy stupor of avoiding the masses by not considering your audience. You have become conceited and arrogant in your editorial style, and most importantly the quality of your political analysis has plummeted. You have stopped putting in efforts to meet basic journalism standards and it shows.

All that being said, and mainly due to a lack of competition, Tribune is still an important resource. There are people, not a great many but at least thousands of people like myself and others who rely on it to hear about things the mainstream media is not going to cover. I hope this criticism shakes you up and bombards your headquarters. I hope you take out your garbage so that you can be an actual tribune of the people, as Lenin taught and not be a tribune of the small set of the already convinced and already knowledgeable because it takes a lot more than the few thousand readers you have now to really give life to the world we all long for.

It is up to you whether or not you publish my long letter of course, but it would be wise to at the very least allow your entire publication and all of its supporters to read and consider it. It would be fatal to the future of your publication to attempt to sweep it under the rug for the sake of keeping up appearances. I wish you well, and hope to see your publication develop into a real and lasting tribune of the people. This brutal and ignorant country is in dire need of such an organ.

- An Avid Reader