

The Organizer

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PUBLISHED BY THE UNITED WORKERS ORGANIZATION

Clique shaken at Briggs

Last month members of AIW Local 232 at Briggs & Stratton won a big victory in their local elections. Three progressive candidates were elected to the important Executive Board positions of President, Vice-president and one Trustee.

They ran on a platform of breaking control over the local by a small company-

mindcd clique which included regional rep Ann Schmitt, State AFL-CIO President John Schmitt's wife, and the former vice-president Jack Rohde. The candidates also spoke to the need for a more democratic and open union, and for a more aggressive approach in dealing with Briggs. The

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Movement for Martin Luther King Day grows

Martin Luther King Day--January 15, 1981. Almost 100,000 people, led by singer Stevie Wonder, marched in Washington, D.C., demanding that Congress make the birthday of Martin Luther King a national holiday. One thousand people gathered in Gary, Indiana in a rally sponsored by Mayor

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City workers speak out

Workers for the city of Milwaukee have been working without a contract since Dec. 31st, with talks now in mediation and a settlement perhaps a month away.

In addition to wages and benefits, several other important points are being negotiated. The city wants to modernize with new types of side loading trucks, new types of garbage containers, and maybe curbside pickups such as they have in suburbs like Shorewood. We say modernization is o.k. as long as the brunt of the burden for making it work doesn't fall on the backs of the workers and at their expense.

Also being negotiated is the banning of all "agent orange" type herbicides that are being used here and throughout the country for roadside weed control. Agent orange, you remember, is the toxic agent used to defoliate

Vietnam during the war, and which caused much illness and later, birth defects.

Milwaukee Aldermen Frank and Cuci are now pushing a proposal they've designed to bring in outside contractors to take over the work, and thus do away with union jobs. AFSCME rank and filers say that over 400 jobs could be lost, with up to 15 years seniority.

The drivers have prepared and are ready to start circulating a petition calling for a ban on all outside contracting for city laboring jobs. The Sanitation workers Local #61 and AFSCME Council #48 are working jointly on this petition.

Let's support them! We don't need any more scabs or scab companies in this city.

If you don't want this in Milwaukee and don't want to see city services cut, call your alderman at 278-2221.



SCABS ATTACK G&H STRIKERS

For 5 long months now, the 88 G&H workers in Kenosha have been on the front lines of a battle against union busting. Behind that small group of IAM members has been the tremendous support of the union people in the area. Literally tons of food and thousands of dollars have been donated to help the strikers survive.

On the other side of the \$30,000-keep the union out-fence at G&H sit the forces that want to turn back the clock on union members. There is Joe Melli, the lawyer who has made a career out of union busting and making people suffer. There is the local management of G&H and their corporate bosses on the East Coast. And then there are the scabs, still less than 20.

These low lifes caught 6 picketers by surprise at six thirty am. on December 23 in sub-zero weather. First, one scab tried to ram the pickets and knocked over the fire barrel. Then in full view of management, 15 scabs who'd just crossed the picket line, opened their trunks and pulled out pipes, tire irons and ax handles. The 15 sur-

rounded the strikers and began threatening them. "One of them with an axe told me he was going to split my skull" said one man.

The police arrived then and told the scabs to put their weapons away and go back to work. "Nobody got arrested" said one striker. "We've had guys arrested for spitting and swearing. Here's these guys with axes and tire irons, threatening our lives, and nobody does a thing".

Since then, the scabs have mounted more attacks on pickets. The Federal Judge forced an injunction against more than four pickets at one time.

On the face of it, it doesn't seem to be much of a contest. On the one side, union members with a righteous cause and on the other a handful of scabs.

But the scabs and the company have a powerful ally in the courts. One lousy piece of paper called an injunction tips the balance in favor of G&H.

The one thing that will win the G&H strike is continued working class solidarity in the form of donations and on the picket line.

On February 21st, the Strike Committee is sponsoring a beer bash at the Union Club in Kenosha to build up the strike fund. Everyone is invited. Donations to the strike fund can be sent to: G&H Strike Fund; IAM Lodge #34, 1010 56th Street, Kenosha, Wi. 53140

AMC newsletter free speech fight gets wide support

Fighting Times is a rank and file newsletter published by members of UAW Local 72 at AMC in Kenosha. Fighting Times is being sued for \$4.2 million for libel by several foreman. The following letters were sent in response to a fundraising appeal.



FROM NEW YORK--

"We have read...about the libel suit you are facing because Fighting Times is doing a great job of challenging management's idiocy at AMC. As a rank and file paper in the telephone company here in New York City, we strongly support your activity and realize that your battle is ours too.

We feel confident that, with the strength and support from the rank and file movement, you can beat the suit. But of course, it will cost, so we are enclosing a share of that cost as a token of our support.

In solidarity,
Brent Kramer
for the BELL WRINGER

FROM NEW JERSEY--

"I am a Belgian member of the Labor Party and trade union movement of my country and also a student doing research on reform activists in the American unions.

I've come across the news of your caucus...My paper will be published in Europe to make known the heroic struggles undertaken in this country.

Thank you,
Michael Bauwens
Maple Shade, N.J.

FROM CHICAGO---

"I read about your struggle with the AMC foremen in Labor Notes. I'm sorry I can't send any money at this time. I work at Schwinn Bicycle and am on strike. Schwinn refuses to negotiate with our union (UAW) which we recently voted in. We have some foremen which I'm sure would be contenders for your "Scab of the Month" column.

I'll try to scrape some money together to send you. Until I can, I extend my solidarity to you and will tell my fellow workers about your struggle.

For Freedom,
Rodney Stockmeat
Chicago, Illinois.

250 RALLY AGAINST KKK

Over 200 people of all races crowded into the Community Baptist Church on Dec. 18 to protest the acquittal of 6 Klansmen and Nazis who had murdered 5 anti-Klan demonstrators one year ago in Greensboro, North Carolina. Speaker after speaker denounced the decision by the all-white jury giving reactionary, hate groups in the country "a license to kill."

The rally, addressed by both community activists and labor union leaders, demanded that the U.S. Justice Department prosecute the Klansmen for civil rights violations.

They also demanded an independent investigation of the role of federal agents and police in the shooting incident alleging active involvement on their part.

A little over a year ago a car caravan of Nazis and Klansmen drove through an anti-klan demonstration being held in the city of Greensboro. The klansmen opened fire and killed 5 of the demonstrators, wounding several others. Now all the klansmen have

been cleared of any charges. Only anti-klan demonstrators still must go to court facing felony charges of inciting to riot among other things.

In response to the verdict, demonstrations and protest meetings were held throughout the country. These were particularly sharp in North Carolina where thousands of students in four separate demonstrations took to the streets to demand justice.

Howard Fuller, chairman of the Coalition to Save North, told the crowd that the murders and acquittals were an attempt by reactionary forces in the country to intimidate people who oppose injustice. "If it can happen in Greensboro, it can happen to you," he said. Other speakers linked the murders in Greensboro with the more recent murders of 5 Black men in Buffalo, NY and the abduction and murder of 15 Black children in Atlanta Georgia.

The Coalition is now trying to raise funds to run a newspaper ad about the situation.

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Hatcher and the United Steelworkers; three thousand in Philly; three thousand in L.A. In cities throughout the country, this very scene was repeated.

Here in Milwaukee, thousands signed petitions at the Martin Luther King community center and 400 packed the hall to hear Dexter King, Dr. King's son, speak. That same evening, a standing room only crowd of over 700 packed into Smith Steelworkers Memorial Hall. The enthusiastic crowd was there to demand that Dr. King's birthday be made a day off with pay. As Howard Fuller told the electrified crowd, "Dr. King's birthday should be a national holiday because it is about time that the contributions and struggles of Black people, the 25 million Black people who have poured their sweat and blood into this country should be honored." But Fuller also warned the crowd that there was no time for nostalgia. "This is not a time to talk about what happened in the 60's. We are living in dangerous times. Times when Black men are being murdered in the streets of Buffalo, black kids killed in the streets of Atlanta. It is not time to

JANUARY 15th

FOR DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY TO BECOME A NATIONAL HOLIDAY.

talk about the 60's. It is time to deal in the 80's.

The Milwaukee Common Council in December passed a resolution calling for Jan. 15th. to be made a national holiday.

UAW Local 72 had an event Jan. 16th attended by over 300 people. AFSCME in Milwaukee distributed 1,000 buttons to their members. Members of the bus drivers union, ATU 998 drove their buses with headlights on throughout the 15th.

Around the country the slogan "Honor Dr. King" has become a rallying cry for Black groups, unionists, people who are concerned with the Reagan administration, and all justice loving people.

An important development in Milwaukee was the strong labor support for the King movement. Thousands of buttons were distributed and worn. While there was much "official" support from international unions and top union leaders, in many cases the word never reached the

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rank and file union members. This was pointed out in the Local #72 event as Helen Robertson challenged, "If all we are doing is commemorating King's birthday tonight and not dealing with the problems the membership faces daily on the shop floor, then we are wasting dues money on an evening meal."

The movement to honor Dr. King has built a high tide of momentum. Last year the bill to make Jan. 15th a national holiday was frus-

trated by only a few votes. This year the Congressional Black Caucus is more determined to win. Calls by Reagan forces for an end to affirmative action and an end to efforts to desegregate schools, and the shocking murders of Black people in several cities along with the Klan acquittal in Greensboro, N.C. have turned Jan. 15 into a massive day of protest against racism and discrimination.

Dr. King's view from the mountaintop is still a dream deferred, as the spectre of racism, unemployment, and soaring inflation haunt the American people. But Jan. 15 is becoming a call to action and for all people who want to make Dr. King's dream a living reality.

Right now petitions are being distributed throughout the country in an effort to get a million signatures to present to Congress. The next local coalition meeting will be held Feb. 14 at 12 noon at A.O. Smith Steelworkers Memorial Hall.

THE DREAM LIVES!

DR. M. L. KING
Jan. 15, 1929

JUSTICE & EQUALITY

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Polish workers stand up

The 16,000 militant sit-down strikers of the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk have given the world a vivid demonstration of the power that unity and determination can bring to the working-class movement. Most people in the U.S. took their side in this battle.

As the strike spread from factory to factory, backed by Polish workers from the Baltic Coast to the Silesian coal mines, the Polish government first ignored the movement, then arrested 28 dissidents who helped spread the word, then was finally forced to make changes in its own ranks. As soviet tanks stood ready to roll into Gdansk, we waited anxiously. A workers victory would be a victory for all Poland; a Soviet invasion could bring devastating defeat.

U.S. unions donated \$120,000 to the Polish workers. While we all support the Polish workers, it would be nice if top U.S. labor leaders gave the same support for workers at home as they do abroad. After all, can you imagine AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland leading a factory occupation in his 3 piece suit?

In Poland, the workers had to fight for the most minimal degree of democracy: trade unions separate from the government they work for. But we should also recognize that Polish workers are struggling for rights that go well beyond what we enjoy in the U.S.

The Polish workers are government employees; the Lenin Shipyard is a government enterprise. In the U.S., it is not legal for government workers to strike, nor can a federal employee union call for, engage in, or even condone a strike, work stoppage or slowdown for any reason.

Also, most of the 21 demands for which the Polish workers struck would not legally justify a strike in the United States. Federal labor laws sharply limit the right to strike to only those issues over which an employer must bargain. Many of the demands of the Polish workers--for example, calling for the release of all political prisoners--would not constitute legal grounds for strike here.

And if you look at some of the other demands raised you will see that the Polish workers were striking for

GPF strike drags on

On January 1 striking members of I.A.M. Local 2110 at the GPF company entered their seventh month on the bricks. This long and often bitter fight is more and more exposing the company as the real obstacle to settling the strike. After breaking off talks in November, management so far has refused to reopen negotiations.

Although hurt by the loss of income, especially during

the recent holiday season, striking workers continue to man the picket lines. Company attempts to weaken the picketing suffered a setback when a Milwaukee court, a short time ago, acquitted several strikers charged with vandalizing company property.

Whatever the outcome of the strike, GPF strikers have added a proud chapter to the long history of labor struggle in Milwaukee.

Polish Workers

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many things we are not even close to obtaining here—adequate daycare for all working mothers or three year paid maternity leave might never be granted by U.S. employers short of a nationwide struggle of the type just waged in Poland.

Although U.S. newspapers claim Polish workers are directing their movement against socialism, the government is anything but socialist. In fact, if working people really controlled Poland, they would have no need to force their demands on the government.

Workers in the U.S. are right to support the Polish strikers in their workplace occupations, in their demands for a better standard of living, and in their fight for greater political power. With continued recession and inflation, we need to learn a few lessons from the workers of Poland. When you think about it, they have a more vital and powerful labor movement than we do.

Victory to the Polish Workers!

Clique shaken...

FROM PAGE 1

candidates and their supporters built an active and broad campaign. Thousands of leaflets explaining the candidates' program were passed out and hundreds of buttons reading DUMP ROHDE-VOTE SANDY were worn. The sentiment was clear. The membership wanted new leadership that represented the membership's interests and not the company. The new president, John Langford and the new vice-president, Sandy Friedel won with over 60% of the vote. Trustee Dan Torbeck also won by a wide margin.

The old executive board of 232, the largest industrial local in the state, never challenged the company in any

serious way. Many grievances that should have been won were lost or traded off and those filing grievances were simply told "it was the best we can do." People became disgusted with the lack of union backing on the job and many would not even bother filing grievances at all.

The old leadership rewarded their friends with appointments to union committees and with the privilege of paid time off to attend conferences and labor schools. They allowed the regional rep Ann Schmitt to practically run the day to day affairs of the local. She acted as if the local was her personal

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"Just a small group of activists. . . ."

Clique shaken...

FROM PAGE 10

property. The local was totally undemocratic.

Combined with this lack of democracy has been a general deterioration of conditions in the plant. Briggs, which is trying to consolidate its control of the small motor market is well known for its rigid discipline and constant harassment of its employees. In the face of this and the millions of profits they make, the union has done little. Rank and file resentment has grown in response.

This election victory was not won overnight. For years there has been rank-and-file activity. The United Workers Organization, a rank-and-file caucus, has taken up various struggles on the shop floor; in last year's election a reform committee was formed to challenge the ruling clique; and during the '80 contract a rank-and-file Good Contract Committee formed to pressure the board. And over the past several years the union membership has waged several battles within the local for a more democratically run union.

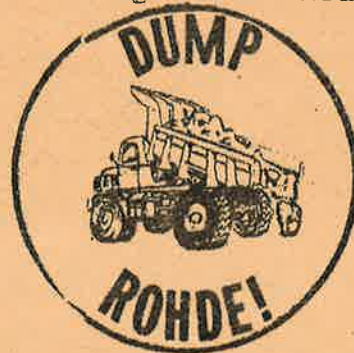
In August of '79 The Briggs Worker (newsletter of the UWO) led a broad campaign for a third shift grievance rep. and against the leadership's proposals for an anti-commun-

ist "loyalty oath" for union officers. The executive board opposed a grievance rep for the 1000 third shift workers and called the third shifters' demand "a communist issue."

Large numbers of people were mobilized to come to the union meeting where these issues would be voted on. The proposals were defeated and the third shift grievance rep position was won.

Several months later the membership raised and won having biennial steward elections for the first time. This was long overdue. In the past few years, several militants have won lower level union positions. For the past several years the membership has been struggling with the Executive Board to hold elections at the plant gate to make it easier for people to participate.

The dissatisfaction with a union that stands more with the company than the membership was shown when people cast their ballots. The new officials took office in early January. Expectations are high as rank and filers want to see what the new changes will mean.



Who We Are

The United Workers Organization is just that-- united workers. We are union members, rank and file, and officers who are tired of being harassed and pushed around on the job. We are working to organize the rank and file members of our locals to stand up to the increasing company attacks and violations of our rights and to demand our unions do the same. We are dedicated to building our unions into the fighting and democratic organizations they must be. We are active in the shops

and locals, where we work, and in building more unity among all workers in the area through strike support and other activities.

The UWO also serves as a co-ordinating center for various information such as workers legal rights, workers comp. regulations etc. If you need information or help in organizing or want to have a struggle **in your shop** written up in the Organizer call us.

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