LABOR CONFERENCE Special Issue

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COMMUNISTS AND THE PRESENT CRISIS



DIFFERENT
TIME,
DIFFERENT
WOMEN
...SAME

Members of the United Farm Workers of America (UFWA) at a rally in Delano, California last spring. (above) CALL photo. Migrant woman and children in California, 1936. (below) LNS photo.

Conference Stresses Role in Labor Struggles

For the second consecutive year, the October League sponsored a conference of communists working among the working class. This report is a summary of discussion held in the various workshops lasting three days over the Thanksgiving weekend.

Meeting with great enthusiasm and a high spirit of proletarian internationalism, more than 200 people, representing over 25 communist groups and organizations, from the U.S. and abroad, took part in the Conference on Communist Work in the Labor Movement,

The conference was held in Chicago with a program which included speeches, panel discussions and workshops designed to give direction to the work of communists in the growing rank-and-file movements.

The loudest applause was heard as speakers from other countries gave solidarity speeches. These included Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU); Mouvement Revolutionnaire des Etudiants de Quebec; and the Committee to Defend the Democratic Rights of Haitian Workers.

The keynote speaker was Odis Hyde, a veteran of 40 years of activity in the communist movement who spoke on the great communist tradition in the labor movement and in the Black liberation struggle. He told of his own experiences in working with communists in the great steel struggles in which the Black community was deeply involved in the Chicago area. He pointed out how the organizers made every workers' struggle a community struggle and every community struggle a workers' struggle.

Discussing the betrayal of the CPUSA in the past 20 years 'Odis Hyde told of how moved he was at seeing the new communist movement emerging again as a force within the working class and Black liberation struggles.

The next presentation was made by Michael Klonsky, October League Chairman, who spoke on "The Present Crisis and the Task of Communists." Klonsky showed how the deepening crisis in the imperialist system has led to an intensification of the fascist offensive against the working and and oppressed people.

Pointing to the mounting discontent with Nixon's policies, Klonsky said that communists must be in the forefront of the struggle to "Dump Nixon and Stop the Fascist Tide." While maintaining independence and initiative, he said, communists cannot stand on the sidelines of this important anti-fascist struggle.

STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

The conference heard a presentation of the "National Question and Labor" by Sherman Miller, who showed how the struggle for the democratic rights of Black and other minority people must be a central part of our work in the labor movement.

The conference had a panel on "Organizing the Women," which included a speaker from DARE, a branch of the Chicago Women's Liberation Union which has been active in fighting for the rights of women workers.

Another panel had people active in the struggles of the farm workers, the Oneita textile workers, the Farah strikers and the Gulfcoast Pulpwood Association, summing up the lessons of these "Important Labor Struggles '73"

Some of the groups taking part in the conference were August 29th Movement; Black Workers Organizing Committee; DARE; Cincinnati Workers Unity League; East Bay Labor Collective; El Comite; Guardian newspaper; Gulf-coast Pulpwood Association; Haitian League of Marxist-Leninists to Support the Parti du Travailleurs Haitienne; Wor Kuen; J-Town Collective; League of Revolutionary Black Workers (Chicago); Prairie FireBookstore (Houston); Struggle Collective (Boston); and Tampa Socialist League. Lawyers active in labor work and friends from Boston, Chicago, Cincinnati, Denver, Detroit, Portland, New Orleans, Louiswille and other cities also attended the conference.

"COMMUNISTS MUST NOT ABANDON WORK WITHIN THE UNIONS"

This is a summary of the Labor Conference workshop on on "The Struggle Within the Unions."

The importance of this question can be seen in the fact that the trade union is the starting point for all of our labor work. It is the most comprehensive form of organization the working class has, arising spontaneously under capitalism as the basic method of worker organization.

In their development in the U.S., the trade unions grew out of the various craft and skilled tradesmen's organizations and finally, with the rise of the CIO, began to draw into their ranks large sections of the "basic proletariat." Throughout the development of the unions in this countty, communists and revolutionaries have played the leading and decisive role.

The birth and development of the trade unions was met on two fronts by the capitalists. First, with open terror, ie. murder, jailings and beatings, the companies tried to destroy them altogether. But the might and power of the working class could not be beaten down. Realizing that the unions were here to stay, they began to rely heavily on the "labor aristocracy" along with the gun.

By the labor aristocracy, we mean the bribed section of the working class. As Lenin said, "Imperialism which means the partition of the world and the exploitation of other countries, which means high monopoly profits for a handful of very rich countries, creates the economic possibility of bribing the upper strata of the proletariat, and thereby fosters, gives form to and strenghtens opportunism."

BRIBED STRATA

Today, it is the job of this bribed strata, which is represented by such "leaders" of labor as I.W. Abel, George Meany and Leonard Woodcock, to keep the rest of the working class chained to the capitalist system, divided and weak. In exchange for this, they are elevated above the basic conditions of misery and exploitation which the overwhelming majority of the working class faces each day.

It is within the ranks of this strata that the ideology of white chauvinism emanates and understandably so, because if it were not for the plunder and oppression of the people of color throughout the world, these parasites could not exist as they do. The ideology that this small, but influential section spreads within the working class is one of privilege, "serve yourself" and patriotism, as characterized by such slogans as "Be American, Buy American!" These ideas run counter to the basic ideology of the proletariat, "An injury to one is an injury to all."

The consistent struggle against opportunism and more precisely, against the influences of the labor aristocrats, is the cornerstone of our trade union work. Our objective must be to isolate and finally overthrow this leadership from their positions within the trade unions and bring the trade unions under the leadership of the revolutionary forces.

By stressing the fact that the union is the most comprehensive form of organization, we don't mean to say that the



A spirited group of community and working people marched through Denver October 27, calling for unity in the labor movement and chanting, "Unite to Fight Union Busting!" (Denver-Boulder Strike Support Committee photo.)

unions are inherently revolutionary or socialist organizations. Even under socialism, the trade unions will still exist as organizations which encompass the broadest sections of the middle and backward sections of the working class as well as the most advanced sections. What this does mean however is that communists must not abandon the work within the unions through various dual unionist or syndicalist schemes. It also means that we must take the lead in the struggle to organize the unorganized. We cannot skip over the stage of union organization.

AVOID DUAL UNIONISM

Dual unionism is an "infantile disorder" within the workers movement that has continuously plagued it since that movement began in this country. In its "left" form, it means trying to build "pure revolutionary" unions in order to draw workers out of the existing trade unions. This policy was soundly criticized by Lenin in his book, "Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder." Lenin said;

"If you want to help the 'masses' and win the sympathy and support of the 'masses' you should not fear difficulties, or pinpricks, chicanery, insults and persecution from the 'leaders' (who being opportunist and social-chauvinists, are in most cases directly or indirectly connected

with the bourgeoisie and the police). but must absolutely work wherever the masses are to be found."

The fact that this "left" policy is right in essence can be seen by the splitting, dualist policies of the Teamster Leadership towards the United Farm Workers.

Syndicalism is another disease which keeps the workers' struggle on the economic level, ignoring the political question of state power and seeing the unions as the socialist form of organization. Both syndicalism and dual unionism reflect a petty bourgeois outlook and stand in the way of a revolutionary policy towards the labor movement.

This revolutionary policy consists of forging a united front front of the working class forces in alliance with the nationally oppressed peoples under revolutionary leadership. The cornerstone of this united front is the unity of workers of all colors and nationalities. This unity must be built within the trade union movement by winning the unions to a consistant fight for the democratic rights of the Afro-American, Chicano and other minority people.

It also means taking an active role in support of the struggles of the farmworkers, textile organizers, Farah strikers

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STRIKE SUPPORT KEY TO LABOR MOVEMENT

In the past year and a half, there have been a number of struggles that have inspired and strengthened the fighting capacity of the working class. The lessons of class unity, national equality, fearlessness and singlemindedness have been heard far beyond the factory gates of Oneita, Farah, Mead and Norwood or the agricultural fields of the Southwest. While the success of these struggles lies primarily with the workers themselves, they have been aided by strike support work done by communists, other workers, unions and other progressive people. The political and material support have been an important factor to the success of these struggles. As Elizabeth Gurley Flynn said, "Strike support acts as a shield for the working class." Through strike support work we can popularize the most advanced and strategic struggles of the working class, such as those mentioned above.

Our starting point in building strike support should be amongst the working class, particularly the organized labor movement. Trade unionists have learned from their experiences the importance of unity. But our work shouldn't be limited to this. Based on our work in the unions we

should go among the broader sections of the population,, such as students, teachers, and housewives to rally their support for the battles of the working people.

Building strike support can weaken the position of the capitalists and their labor misleaders. They attempt to hide from the rank and file our real strength. Our real strength lies in our unity, organization and numbers, and the fact that we produce all the wealth in the society. Their goal is to keep us ignorant of this and to keep our outlook petty and isolated. They want us to rely on them instead of the masses of workers and oppressed people. Through strike support we can build unity between the organized and the unorganized, the men and the women workers, and especially white and the nationally oppressed workers. Strike support can be a catalyst for uniting the working class and the non-working middle forces.

PARTICULAR QUESTIONS

An important point is the neccessity to take up the particular questions of each struggle. For example, the Farah strike is not only a fight against the open shop but also against the oppression of the Chicano and the Mexicano people and the oppression of women. To neglect and liquidate these questions and to treat it as a pure and simple trade union question betrays the real needs of the workers. We should popularize the strength, determination and the objective unity of all struggles against the capitalists. But it is important to concentrate on the most politically important and influential struggles, especially those struggles directed against policies of discrimination.

Two tendencies that block effective strike support work are 1) refusing to work with the trade union leadership and 2) relying on the union leadership and not developing independent contacts, independent mass work and organization. Both of these mistakes hinder the support possible for a struggle. Refusing to work with the leadership, one

is left open to getting isolated through the accusation of dividing the strike. But, failing to develop independent contacts, one is left as an appendage of the labor leaders.

It is vital to make a concrete analysis of each situation to determine what policy to adopt and how to carry it out. Experiences with labor leaders vary widely. Sometimes bureaucrats discourage any help except "offical" union assistance and other times unions give money to strike support committees to put out propaganda about the struggle.

LABOR DEFENSE HISTORY

Labor defense work has had a long and commendable history in the United States. In the Great Flint Strike, women formed a brigade that brought food, clothes and supplies to striking workers who won the right to a union from General Motors. In the famous Gastonia strike of '29, food brigades were formed all over the country to assist the valiant workers who faced starvation because of the infamous efforts of the textile barons.

And labor defense didn't stop there! When Tom Mooney and Angelo Herndon were framed for their militant activities, world-wide support was organized to defend them.

Labor defense in the past, as well as today, takes many forms. Committees have been organized in unions all over the country to support the Farm Workers, Farah and the Gulfcoast Pulpwood Association. Community and school committees have been formed to support these battles. Struggles are supported in many different ways through imagination and consistancy. Picket lines, demonstrations, car parades, songs, plays, dances and posters are just a few ways in which a battle of a few workers is made into a battle on behalf of workers all across the country.

By paying particular attention to taking up the struggle against policies of white chauvinism and male supremacy, we will build a firm unity that will unite the working class and its allies to stop the fascist attacks on the American people!

2-LABOR CONFERENCE-JANUARY, 1974

"STRIKES ARE A SCHOOL FOR WAR..."

VIVA LA HUELGA! !"

The workshop on "Strike Tactics" attempted to apply Marxism-Leninism to strike struggles. Lenin has pointed out that strikes are a "school for war" which shows the workers that their situation is not hopeless, gives the workers a sense of their power—makes them aware that without their labor, the capitalists couldn't produce a thing. Strikes teach the workers the neccessity for unity, which is their most important weapon. The workers also see the need for unity with workers outside their plant and the importance of allies from the progressive sections of other classes.

Many times, when faced with the opposition of the press, the police, the courts and other arms of the state, the workers become aware of the fact that they are not just facing one employer in one industry, but a whole class which controls the major institutions of US society. This is even more true today when every strike brings the demands of the workers into conflict with the government wage-freeze policies.

A strike situation brings out, in a concrete way, the differences between a class collaborationist and a class struggle approach to the trade union struggle.

Often a strike struggle opens the workers' minds to broader political questions and to socialism, in addition to bringing out the need to improve and strengthen their un-

Although strikes are a "school for war", they are only one form of struggle of the working class. In seizing state power, armed struggle and not strikes will be the main form of struggle.

The main principle guiding the participation of communists in a strike is to fight these battles in such a way as to increase the fighting capacity of the workers both in terms of raising their class consciousness and in strengthening their organization.

One of the major issues in the two-line struggle in the labor movement is the strike weapon itself. To rob the workers of their right and ability to strike is one of the main goals of the fascist labor front. The more the work-



Florida farm workers demonstrate in front of Democratic Convention in Miami. (LNS WOMEN'S GRAPHICS COLLECTIVE photo.)

ers need and use this weapon, the more frantic are the efforts of the labor aristocracy to take it away. This is being done in an open way with United Steelworkers' President I.W. Abel's no-strike agreement, and in a more subtle way, with Woodcock's no-win strikes and mini-strikes. The purpose of these tactics by Woodcock and Abel and others is to convince the workers that strikes "don't accomplish any anything," and "hurt everybody" and that "new methods are needed" in dealing with giant corporations. Basically, the labor aristocrats are pushing the line of cooperating with the capitalists and depending on their good-will. They say that this is the best way to improve the conditions of the workers. Communists must defend the strike weapon with the class struggle line of "we will never get an anything we don't fight for."

STRIKE PRINCIPLES

Five general principles that we can apply to strike struggles are:

1) KNOW THE ENEMY AND KNOW YOURSELF. This means choosing the time to strike, when the people are prepared. This is both in terms of their consciousness and determination, and in material terms (strike funds, strike support and good organization). Knowing the enemy means striking when the company can least afford it (back log of orders, no inventory, etc.). There are times when a company will try to provoke a strike at a time of the workers' weakness in order to bust a union or as a substitute for a layoff when they have a large inventory.

The evaluation of the company and the strikers should continue during the strike in order to make a correct judgement about staying out. At times an "orderly retreat" may be necessary to pervent demoralization or the busting of the union.

2) ENCOURAGE DEMOCRACY AND PRACTICE THE MASS LINE. Democracy in the conduct of a strike is one of the keys to ensuring the solidarity and fighting spirit of the workers. The demands must be formulated with full participation of the workers. They should represent the real wishes and needs of the people and the people should be united on what the two or three most important demands are. The negotiation committee should be elected. Negotiations and the conduct of the strike should be regularly reported on and discussed, and not kept secret. The initiative of the workers should be encouraged and developed.

3) GO ALL OUT IN A STRIKE AND EXCHANGE BLOW FOR BLOW. A strike is a class battle, not a family squabble as the labor mis-leaders would have us believe, and it should be fought as such. This means mobilizing the entire membership for strike duty, and for mass picket-lines and demonstrations when necessary. It means going to other workers and their unions for support and getting the support of progressive sections of the population through strike support committees. Meeting an escalation of the company's with an escalation of strike tactics is important to maintain the morale of the strikers. For example, meeting an attempt to use scabs with a mass picket-line, or meeting a court injunction by breaking it or demonstrating at the city hall, whichever people are ready to do. When the company refuses to concede anything and attempts to wait you out, additional forms of struggle, such as boycotts should be initiated where it is possible.

4) APPLY THE UNITED FRONT TO THE STRIKE SIT-UATION. Unity is one of the main weapons the workers have in a strike. Communists should make sure that this unity is on a firm basis by ensuring that the special demands of the minority and women workers are raised in a concrete way and fought for. We should oppose efforts to get something for one section of the workers at the expense of another section. An example of this is when the company offers to raise the wages for seniority employees but keeps the wages of the new-hires low and extends the probation period. Leftist errors in the struggle against the labor opportunists are especially costly during a strike struggle.

5) MAINTAIN INDEPENDENCE AND INITIATIVE. In many cases the strikes where communists are involved will be partly or entirely led by opportunist or do-nothing leadership. Even though the strike cannot be run in the ideal way, we should not leave everything in the leadership's hands. We should use initiative on different levels, of "ask and then do it, do it and then ask, and do it and never ask." One example of "do it and never ask" is urging individual people to come down to the picket line during the morning shift change when the company tries to use scabs. Once this happened it would be difficult for the union leader to oppose it without exposing himself. If "mass picketlines" had been proposed to the union officials in a meeting it would have been unsuccessful.

Our ability to exercise independence and initiative depends directly on the extent to which we speak from a base--where the progressive elements in the union have been consolidated and organized.

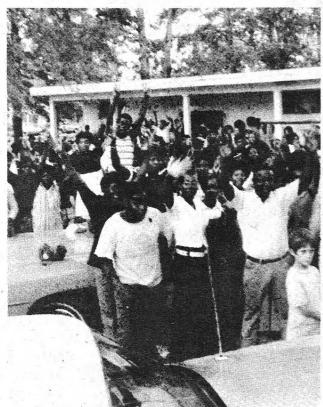
During and immediately after a strike, the lessons of the struggle are fresh in the minds of the people. We should pay special attention to propaganda, study groups, and recruiting efforts. Winning the advanced workers to communist politics and organization is an important part of maintaining our independence. During this time it is very important for communists to work consistently in raising the workers' understanding that their struggle is political—the struggle of a whole class against the capitalist ruling class.



Shell oil workers' wives picket sheriff's department during strike at Shell, Martinez, Calif. (CALL photo)

ORGANIZE THE UNORGANIZED

"WE'VE GOT TO UNIONIZE, WE'VE GOT TO



There are over 50 million unorganized workers in the U.S. who comprise 73 per cent of the working class and suffer under unbridled exploitation in the garment, textile, electronics and food industries.

A majority of these unorganized workers are Chicanos, Afro-Americans, Puerto Ricans, Asians, other oppressed nationalities and women. (Only 12 out of every 100 women workers are organized.)

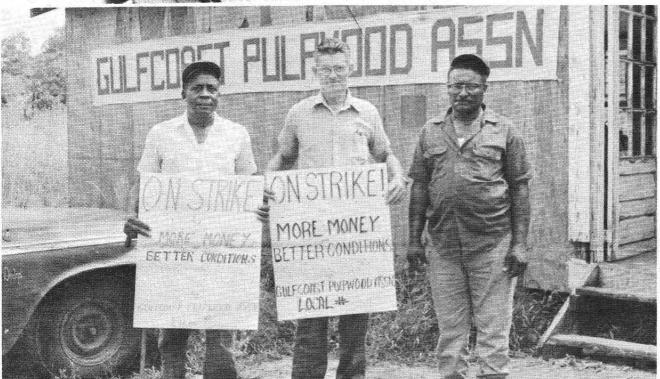
The monopolists have used this pool of unorganized labor, especially in the South and Southwest, to create competition by pitting worker against workers, nationality against nationality, in order to drive wages down and to bust entire unions.

In addition, runaway shops are constantly fleeing the organized cities into these unorganized regions.

Today, organized labor has its most stable roots among the skilled and craft workers and in large industries where wages are three to four times greater than in the unorganized sweat shops. Within the labor movement, it has been the trade union bureaucrats who have been the main obstacle to "organizing the unorganized."

They are afraid of organizing because they fear huge battles with the capitalists and, most importantly, that it will mean a general disturbance to their nests of business union-

Two examples of organizing drives in the South. Oneita workers after strike victory (above) and members of Gulfcoast Pulpwood Ass'n. during strike. (CALL photos.)



ism with the rise of new leaders, the growth of the Left and their own displacement. In general, they have always shrunk from organizing the unorganized.

Even when driven into organizing campaigns through pressure (or being offered a local on a "silver platter") they have continuously refused to lend real support and at best they only trail along.

Historically, it has been the Left that has taken up this task. Communists have had the energy, courage, political understanding of the necessity of organization and long-term interest, and have always represented the interests of the entire working class and not just a privileged stratum.

By organizing the unorganized, the Left has the chance to gain the confidence of thousands of workers and of building links between the national movements and the working class struggle as a whole.

Aside from discussing the overall significance of this task, the workshop centered on two main points: 1) how do communist tactics differ from those of the bureaucrats; and 2) how can we combat the obstructionist role of the labor aristocracy?

NEED FOR SELF-RELIANCE

There was unanimous agreement on the need to build up the self-reliance and initiative of the workers during organizing drives since the kind of union established depends on how this is done during a union campaign.

Comrades who have been involved in numerous campaigns in the last few years, stressed the need to get members to see themselves as the actual organizers of the union and to involve fellow workers by developing a division of labor where everyone participates.

Furthermore, the workshop stressed the importance of using a Marxist-Leninist, scientific approach in analyzing the various sections and groups of workers such as skilled and unskilled; different nationalities; men and women; old and young; advanced, middle and backward. This analysis was emphasized in order to make the union campaign and the organizing committee the broadest united front of the workers.

One method of avoiding bureaucracy is to link up the basic demands of the workers to the need for organization, and to fight the bureaucrats' idea of "no struggles until we get the union in." One person suggested keeping an ongoing list of grievances, compiled by organizing committee members in their departments.

How do you fight paternalism by the company and really convince the hesitant worker of the need for a union? It must be proven to these workers that, far from losing security (a common fear), that the union is one of the best ways of gaining security under this system.

Many comrades related negative experiences where they lost elections by narrow margins because they neglected work among the more backward or hesitant workers. It is

THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND LABOR

"It's a struggle of Chicano people for liberation. It's a struggle of workers against the boss, a struggle which involves a whole lot of things. . .more than just a fight for a union. A striker said, 'It is people like Willie Farah who long ago stole our land and paid cheaply for our ancestors. And it's time that we Chicanos stand up and say Basta Ya! That's enough! No more!'"

from panel on IMPORTANT LABOR STRUGGLES'73 on the Farah strike

The central importance of raising the national question and of fighting discrimination was a common thread which ran through all of the workshops at the Labor Conference. In the workshop, "The National Question and Labor," however, the role of communists in fighting discrimination and white chauvinism, in uniting the class, was discussed in great detail.

In building mass organizations among the workers, both national and multi-national forms can be used. The form of organization depends largely on the objective and subjective conditions in each shop. Often caucuses that are national in form raise demands that are in the interest of all the workers.

DIVISION OF LABOR

It is necessary that communists apply the principle of "division of labor" in our shop work. That is, the white comrades have a special responsibility to do work among the white workers, combatting racism and winning them to support-the special demands of the nationally oppressed workers. At the same time, it is essential that national minority comrades concentrate especially on building up the political movement and organization of nationally oppressed workers, and in so doing, build up working class leadership for the democratic struggles of their entire peoples.

As the labor aristocrats struggle to maintain ideological and political sway over the workers, white chauvinism is one of their main weapons. In the South and Southwest, the failure of the union bureaucrats to seriously take up the task of "organizing the unorganized" in textile, agriculture and other areas, is another example of white chauvinism. It is in these areas where great potential exists for unity among the national minority and white workers.

We must avoid being arrogant and "know it alls" in the shop, and place special emphasis on following the mass line. Workers of different nationalities have different cultural background. We must build mutual respect among the workers in this area. In the plants where there are workers who speak different languages, we must push the union caucuses and other workers' organizations to publish material in the various languages spoken.

In combatting white chauvinism, it is often necessary to

go "against the tide." Communists should avoid, however, being abstract and dogmatic about the national question, recognizing that only in the course of practice and struggle can the need for unity be made concrete.

One of the main ways in which discrimination manifests itself in the shops is through the seniority system. How can communists fight concretely against the "jim crow" use of seniority?

Communist organizers must come "face to face" with the issue. We cannot sidestep the question of seniority simply because it is controversial or unpopular among a certain sector of workers

The main thrust of the attack must be made at the company, where the primary responsibility rests and not on the white workers. In taking up the struggle against the racist use of seniority, however, a small handful of white workers might be displaced. The main point is that the defeat of the racist seniority system is in the interest of the vast majority of workers of all nationalities.

On the question of democratic rights in general, in order for principled unity among the workers to be built, the white workers must be won to support the demands of the nationally oppressed people against discrimination in all areas of society, not simply as it affects the national minority workers in the shop.

We must win the workers to oppose imperialism and its policies of national oppression and genocide abroad as well well as here in the United States. Fighting against deportations is one example where stressing proletarian internationalism is the key. These attacks on foreign nationals. Haitians and Mexicans for example, working in this country, must be stopped if real class unity is to be developed.

We can see how the failure of communists and communist organizations to unhesitatingly take up the fight against national chauvinism has led to their isolation and downfall.

In general, the fight against national oppression and for unity of the class must be waged in aprincipledway. Communists must avoid building "unity" simply for temporary economic gains. The white workers must be won to see the need to develop this unity to a working class perspective

ORGANIZE"

not enough just to "talk union" but the workers must be convinced that at least their most immediate economic demands can be won more readily with a union.

Will raising the special demands of minority or women workers against discrimination hurt or help a union campaign? It was pointed out that unless these issues are taken up as concretely as possible and chauvinist ideas combatted, trade union and class-consciousness cannot move forward.

Organizing efforts can also be used to build broader unity beyond the immediate shop or area as exemplified by many of the recent struggles such as the Farm Workers, Farah, Oneita, the Woodcutters, etc. which have forged a united front that links labor, the oppressed nationality movements and the community in general. This is absolutely vital in building solidarity and in teaching workers who their friends and enemies are.

Several members of the workshop are presently organizing independent unions. These are especially necessary in areas where the labor bureaucrats have refused to organize. However, the workshop concluded that refusing to organize into the AFL-CIO as a matter of principle would be a mistake; since it would hinder our long-range goal of moving the entire labor movement to the left and and crushing the domination of the labor aristocracy.

We can't make our strategy "running the other way" and creating tiny, left-led locals detached from the general labor movement. Since the labor bureaucrats present such an obstacle, our battle plan for isolating them must be well-planned.

This means that we should utilize contradictions among them since different unions have more and less willingness to organizing and some use red-baiting more than others.

DON'T RELY ON BUREAUCRATS

We must pickand choose thebest grounds for challenging them, do the necessary work of winning the workers before meetings, and challenge the bureaucrats on issues which can unite the workers and teach lessons.

The main principle is not to rely on bureaucrats for doing the basic organizing work but to build our own base for the union among the workers. Sometimes we may go to the union representative to get things done, but everything should not be done through them; for example we should try to build confidence in the organizing committee to publish their own newsletter. On the other hand, unnecessary squabbling or antagonisms over minor issues has a negative effect.

The trade union bureaucrats have a long history of using the Left to organize the unorganized, then kicking the leftists out afterwards; therefore, we must see to it that the workers and the Left hold on to their victories and that the bureaucrats and monopolists' anti-union policies are smashed.



Chicanas picketing a Farah Pants factory in El Paso, Tex. (Womankind/CNS photo.)

Women Workers:

LAST HIRED, FIRST FIRED

"Women just started coming into heavy industry out of basic needs. One of the lies and myths that is created is, 'women don't need this job. 'The truth is that most women working in these plants are supporting families. They're raising families either alone, or the man doesn't have a job, or the combined salary of the woman and the man is just barely enough. So women are there for a purpose and have just as much right to be there as anybody else!"

Breaking down the barriers to political awareness for the masses of working class women is one of the major jobs facing communists. Besides the oppression of working basically two jobs (one in the shop and one in the home), the woman faces the various forms of discrimination and degradation piled on by the employers. Working class women face rising unemployment; and while unemployed they have to cope with the welfare cutbacks, the forced labor programs, the child-care cuts, and on and on. And above all, it is the nationally oppressed women who bear the heaviest burden of this crisis. On the job, they are the last hired and the first fired; often being placed in the heaviest and most arduous jobs. Neglected by the male chauvinist labor aristocracy, of 3.7% of all working women today are in the unions! Of the major unorganized areas of work in the U.S. today, many are comprised largely of minority women, such as in the service industries (maids, hospital workers, restaurants and hotels), sweatshops like the garment shops of the Chinatowns in the major cities and the small textile and garment factores in the South and Southwestern states; where Afro-American and Chicana women are currently beginning to organize.

In view of the rapid development of activism among working class and nationally oppressed women in the past year (in the movement against welfare cutbacks, in the food price movement, in the Farah and Oneita strikes) new opportunities for work among women are opening.

The major trade unions have adopted positions of support for the Equal Rights Amendment for women. Many women are entering new jobs in heavy industry. This has added greatly to the militancy and consciousness of these women; and has also pushed some of the unions to start women's rights committees (such as the U.A.W.).

While agreeing in general that the E.R.A. would benefit the working class and other women as well, the workshop also noted that the communist forces must prepare the workers to resist any attempts to take away labor protection laws under the guise of "equal izing the conditions of men and women in the shop."

Rather, it was pointed out, labor protection has never extended to or been enforced for the Black women workers and other minority women who have been subjected to harmful working conditions, sexual abuses and jobs often dangerous to their reproductive systems. More than one workshop participant had heard a foreman say, "I wouldn't allow my wife to do that job," and then assign a Black woman to it!

Special attention is needed for the severe and brutal forms of oppression of minority women; who have been denied equality to a more severe degree.

This means that in addition to fighting for equal opportunity for all in pay, hiring, promotion and access to the skilled trades we must pay attention to the position of the minority women. We must formulate special ways to educate and fight discrimination in these cases. For example, even in shops like the GM body shops, where men and women are getting equal pay already, we find Black women being assigned the heavy lifting of parts and equipment, whereas the white women often get easier work.

SUPPORT EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

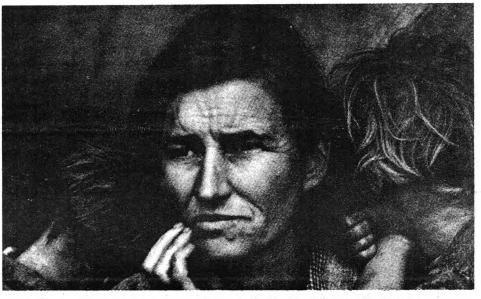
We must get the unions to actively push for the advancement of working women and for the passage of the E.R.A. They must also be moved to fight for the preservation and extension of protective labor codes for women. It was pointed out that the CPUSA bases its opposition to the E.R.A. on the grounds that it will put an end to special protection for women. Women do indeed need special protection due to their physical characteristics, but this should not be an obstacle to unity and opportunity. The protective laws have not been enforced either for nationally oppressed women; especially for the thousands in unorganized shops. To speak of the extension of labor protection must mean--not only extension to men, but to the majority of working women who are still totally unprotected.

Male workers sometimes feel their interests are threatened by the emergence of a women's rights demand in the plant.

We should patiently educate them as to why they should support it. "Most men are too proud to ask, 'how is it going to help us?' But once they understand it, they'll generally get behind us," one woman said. In the case of Afro-American women, since their demands for equal treatment are for the betterment fof their entire people, they have often received support from Black men in their fight.

One of the male participants in the workshop noted that the task of doing this education among the men is a special responsibility of male communists. Women working in industries where there are only a few women related some of the problems they were having carrying out political work with men workers. "The more help we get from men, the easier the job," said one female steel worker. Generally, she she had not encountered open hostility on the job, although the company had tried to promote it by spreading rumors about the women "taking away men's jobs." By placing emphasis on getting to know the men's families, she hoped to meet more working class women and do away with some of the social problems of working with mainly men.

"Don't think of women as 'backward'," said one workshop member, "think of them as being 'held back', under this system." Special efforts must be made to involve women due to the double job and heavy burdens which hold them back. Thinking of women as being politically backward has sometimes resulted in neglecting the working women in the plant and paying attention only to the more



Migrant woman and children in California, 1936. (LNS photo)

outspoken male workers. Having been by and large excluded from the trade union movements and particularly from their leadership, the union can be one avenue to start to mobilize the women in a shop. The caucuses and other organizations built by or worked in by revolutionaries cannot be strong and whole unless they consciously seek to involve, and speak to the demands and needs of women.

In addition, some other ways to advance womens' political consciousness are:

—building of special organizations of women based on the struggle for democratic rights and the need to fight back against the worsening living conditions.

—getting involved in the personal and family lives of the working women. Learning from their experiences as well as raising their level. While not confining our work with women to talk of the family, babies, food, etc., we must not ignore such matters for they are matters of life and death which fall on the women's shoulders. With the deepening of the economic crisis, these are good opportunities to educate the women and to build mass movement. We must pay attention to and learn from these problems which preoccupy many women.

—utilizing the Farah strike to educate women about the relation of the class and national struggles and the struggle for women's rights.

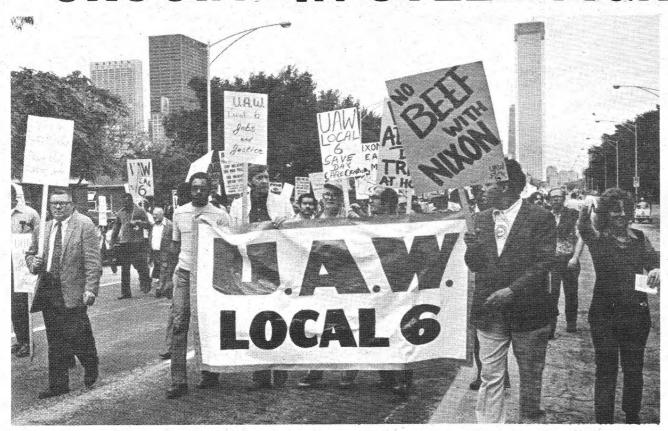
providing child care for meetings and trying to get union locals to do the same, to encourage female participation.
 meeting women through their husbands and showing housewives the importance of their role, getting them involved through the food crisis.

-special propaganda and literature for women is needed to draw them out, capture their interest and protect their rights

—education about the severe forms of oppression of minority women, not just inside the shop: sterilizations, the cutbacks and the forced workfare programs should be exposed to all the workers, men and women, in order to promote unity and support for the women and anti-fascist feeling among all the workers.

Steel Workshop

NO-STRIKE PACT-CRUCIAL IN STEEL FIGHT-



March of more than 5,000 people in Chicago September 8 in protest of Nixon's policies which have led to skyrocketing prices while wages have been frozen. Shown here is the United Auto Workers contingent. (CALL photo)

Auto Workshop

STRENGTHEN WORKERS FIGHTING CAPACITY

The central theme of the Auto Workshop was that the fight against discrimination and white chauvinism was the key to building the rank-and-file movement against the auto monopolies and Woodcock and the top UAW leadership. The workshop was attended by communists who were actively working in auto during the contract negotiations, including representatives from plants where walk-outs and wildcat strikes had occurred.

Workshop participants summed up the contract period by noting the wide gap between the spontaneous rebellions in the auto plants, like in Detroit, and the lack of progressive leadership in the UAW. Though the UAW leadership got a ratification of the poor new contract, the majority of auto workers saw the sell-out happening step by step. The sell-out generated a great deal of pessimism, but also made many auto workers determined to fight to get rid of Woodcock and the top UAW leadership.

Taking into account the slumping economy of the US, the probability of huge lay-offs in auto, and the sell-out contract, workshop members found unity around the main demands of auto workers.

RIGHTS FOR MINORITY WORKERS

Most important will be the demand END DISCRIMINA-TION and EQUAL RIGHTS on the job and in the union for for all national minority workers. GM, Ford, and Chrysler consistently hand minority workers the hardest, dirtiest, lowest-paying, most dangerous jobs. They are denied promotions and are subjected to racist harrassment from supervisors. The UAW leadership has never taken this fight up aggressively and even practices discrimination in its own ranks. To build principled unity between minority and white workers, the white workers must be won to take up the fight for the equal treatment of Black, Chicanos, and other minority workers in the plants and in the UAW.

The other important demands were seen as:

1) A LIVING WAGE AND OPPOSITION TO NIXON'S 5.5% WAGE GUIDLINES-There is no way the 3% annual wage hikes will get auto workers through til 1976. The union must be pushed to put up a fight against the government's policy of putting the cost of the economic crisis on the workers.

2) A FIGHT AGAINST MASSIVE LAY-OFFS-Again, the economic and energy crisis shouldn't be used to put auto workers out on the streets. Lines can be slowed down, short work weeks instituted and production cut back in-

3) EQUALITY FOR WOMEN ON THE JOB AND IN THE UNION-Provisions must be won for women workers' special problems like childcare and maternity leave, as well as an end to harrassment at work. Baby-sitting at union meetings and special efforts to involve women in union activities must be made, too.

4) AN END TO SPEED-UP AND NO MORE MANDA-TORY OVERTIME

5) DEFEND OUR RIGHT TO STRIKE AND EXPAND THE LOCAL UNION'S RIGHT TO STRIKE

6) DECENT HEALTH AND SAFETY CONDITIONS-The energy crisis is being used as an excuse to cover up deteriorating health and safety standards.

7) DEMOCRACY IN THE UAW AND MORE AND BET-TER UNION REPRESENTATION-As the UAW's leadership's influence over auto workers weakens, they are resorting to more undemocratic methods of running the UAW, red-baiting and corruption. To win the above demands, rank and file auto workers are going to have to regain control of their union.

Communists working in auto must unite all who can be united to fight for these demands. We must provide militant, correct tactical guidance for the day to day struggles while educating auto workers, through their lives, that they're up against a trio of enemies-the auto giants, the UAW top leadership and the US government.

Wherever possible, rank-and-file caucuses should be built. firmly rooted in shop floor struggles, and aimed at the small handful of bureaucrats running the UAW. While often sparked by young newly-hired workers, these caucuses must be based among the assembly line workers with 5-10 years seniority in plants, for they are the stable core of the work force. Black workers in many plants have already taken the lead in this.

FORGE ALLIANCES
This core is not enough. Workshop members agreed that alliances should be forged with other groups of auto workers, including the skilled workers, and local union leaders, many of whom are getting disgusted with the undemocratic practices in the UAW. Also, President Woodcock must retire in a few years so the contradictions among the UAW bureaucrats are growing sharp. These contradictions should be turned to good use.

In the rank-and-file movement, communists shouldn't put winning an election or one demand before the longrange task of destroying the influence of the UAW bureaucrats over the masses of auto workers. Workshop participants agreed that our main emphasis must be strengthening the fighting capacity of the auto workers. However, it is okay to build alliances with local union leaders who oppose the International or auto companies because they seek prestige, or who don't see eye to eye with us on every issue.

The workshop agreed that attempts to form "alternative unions" or to seperate militants and communists from the majority of auto workers should be opposed, especially now when the government is attacking the whole trade union movement. This would only leave the majority under the influence of the chauvinist UAW leadership.

(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 8)

How can communists take the lead in mobilizing steel workers around the demands for mill-wide seniority and and end to the Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA), also known as the no-strike pact? This was the focus for the discussion in the workshop on steel.

One of the workshop participants, a steelworker from the giant Bethlehem plant in Sparrows Point, Maryland, reported on the 11 year struggle against discrimination. Taking up the demand for mill-wide seniority, a demand which strikes a blow at the main form of discrimination in the steel industry, Black workers have recently won an important victory. Black steelworkers were able to utilize legal challenges in the courts, supported by mass actions, in order to gain decisions which recognized the systematic nature of the discrimination Black workers face at Sparrows Point and elsewhere. In the course of the struggle, they built a caucus in the union and a broad united front from the Black community, including CORE, NAACP, Congressman Parren Mitchell,

The Sparrows Point case went part of the way to ending the "jim crow" system of seniority, which keeps Black and other minority workers in the dirtiest, most dangerous jobs. But, of course, no single court decision will end discrimination, and this fact, along with the United Steelworker President I.W. Abel's opposition to its implementation, means that the struggle has to be raised to a higher level.

While some ultra-leftists argue that the court decision doesn't mean a thing and should be ignored, and the revisionists would like us to go no further than the court-room, we must take the court decision as a starting point, but not stop there. Within the USWA, and in the rank and file caucuses, we must fight for implementation of the Sparrows Point and other decisions, and we must fight against the "go slow" line of Abel's International leadership.

SENIORITY DEMAND

It is especially important to win white workers in steel to support of the demand for mill-wide seniority. Many of these workers see the court decision as a direct threat to their positions in the plant and even to their jobs. While it is true that some white workers may be bumped by this decision, it can and must be made clear that this decision will benefit the overwhelming majority of steelworkers.

One concrete benefit will be the increased unity and fighting capacity of the rank and file. The need for this unity is becoming increasingly important in the fight against the Experimental Negotiating Agreement. This no-strike pact, which was not even voted on by the general USWA membership, calls for a 3% raise, and most significantly, for binding arbitration of the 1974 contract between the union and the giant steel monopolies.

There can be no doubt that if Abel and the steel companies get away with the no-strike agreement in steel, than unionized workers in every industry can expect that same deal soon. Taking away the right to strike goes hand in hand with the price-gouging policies of the food, oil and other capitalists.

Already, Right to Strike Committees are being formed in steel plants all around the country. The Right to Strike Committee in District 31, the Chicago-Gary area, have collected more than 8,000 signatures on petitions condemning the ENA. Rank and file demonstrations have taken place at meetings attended by I.W. Abel in New Jersey, Chicago, Baltimore and Fontana, California,

But, if a broad movement of steelworkers is to be built in opposition to the no-strike agreement, then the key link in that movement will be the fight against discrimination and the implementation of the demand for mill-wide seniority. Only a united movement of steelworkers will deal a death-blow to Abel's class collaborationist policies



BUILD THE UNITED FRONT AGAINST IMPERIALISM

As communists, it is our task to develop working-class leadership within the united front against imperialism. We must begin to carry out education among the workers and raise their level of understanding about imperialism, as well as organize the workers to actively support the anti-imperialist struggles around the world.

The workshop agreed that in order to do this, we had to avoid two mistakes. First, we must oppose a narrow trade unionist outlook on our labor work. Using the experiences of the workers, we must show how the enemy of the workers is the imperialist system itself. We must raise the question, who are our friends and who are our enemies, and concretely show how the workers and oppressed peoples around the world are the true allies of the working people in the US. This means confronting head-on the view put forward by the labor aristocrats like Meany and Abel—that the problems of the working people in the US are caused by workers in other countries. It also means combatting the CPUSA revisionists—who try to limit the workers movement to trade unionism and politically keep it under the wing of the Democratic party.

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

At the same time, we must avoid an ultra-"left" view of raising anti-imperialist issues in our labor work. Simply raising anti-imperialist slogans can never win their support. We must consistently link up anti-imperialist struggles around the world with issues that the working people here directly face. For example, the increasing defeats of the US imperialists abroad have had direct implications on the tightening up and initiating of economic controls in the US, as well as heightened attacks on the oppressed nationalities. While carrying out agitation that exposes the US government's fascist domestic policies, we should link these to their aggressive and bullying policies around the world.

The workshop discussed several such campaigns that have been carried out over the past year. Among the most outstanding was the campaign carried out in support of African Liberation, which culminated with massive demonstrations last May. These demonstrations were sponsored by the African Liberation Support Committee (ALSC), and were highly successful in mobilizing large numbers of black workers in many cities. In reviewing this campaign, it was obvious that in many areas good methods were used in the mobilization. Representatives from the A.L.S.C. did a lot of ground work among the workers, raising the issue within the unions and especially through progressive rank-and-

file caucuses. The issue of support for African Liberation was raised in conjunction with the fight against discrimination in the U.S., which was a real impetus to gaining worker support.

Tied to this same issue is the organizing campaign currently being carried out around the boycott of Rhodesian chrome. Dockworkers in Burnside, La. and Baltimore, Md. have refused to unload Rhodesian chrome—showing solidarity with the Zimbabwean people. A representative of ZANU (Zimbabwe African National Union) who attended the workshop pointed out how these actions provided concrete support to the Zimbabwean liberation movement. It is necessary to heighten this work among all the workers—especially education among the white workers in order to develop Black-white unity and foster proletarian internationalism.

Another example of anti-imperialist work in the labor movement was the work done in preparation for the China National Day Celebration in the Bay area, last October 1.

To gain workers support and participation, the organizing committee did more than just leaflet the plants. They actively went out to the unions and caucuses, where they showed slide shows of China, handed out literature and explained to the workers why they should support normalization of relations between the US and Chinese government. These activities resulted in a real increase in worker attendance.

During this period of economic crisis, it is important to tie the mass deportations of foreign workers to the struggle against imperialism. In Los Angeles alone, there were deportations of over 20,000 Mexican and Chicano workers in the month of June, 1973. The immigrant workers are being used as an escape valve to take the heat off the imperialists during this crisis period. At the same time, the imperialists are continuing to oppress and exploit the countries of the Third World, driving more and more people into the US seeking jobs. We must win the workers to op; pose the fascist deportations of immigrant workers who should be afforded all the rights of the rest of the people in the US. We must also win the workers to oppose the imperialist oppression, exploitation, and interference in the affairs of any other country. The issue of deportations is a vital one to be taken up over the next period.

The present is an excellent time for doing anti-imperialist work within the labor movement. In addition, the increasing contention between the US imperialists and the Soviet social-imperialists and the role of the Soviet Union as a superpower throughout the world, necessitates clear and concrete education exposing both US and Soviet social-imperialism.



More than 2,000 people held mass demonstrations against deportations of Latinos and against the Rodino Bill on June 16. Shown above are demonstrators at Los Angeles City Hall. (CALL photo)

We have got to pay attention to the democratic aspirations that the people have. Now, bourgeois democracy has never meant anything but misery, has never meant anything but oppression, terror and lynching, the degradation of women, the starvation of children. It is clear that only under socialism does democracy become democracy for the majority of the people.

But today a fascist offensive is taking place. Nixon is attempting to unleash open terror. We must realize that this is because the imperialists are getting weaker. They cannot rule in the old way any more. The people don't believe the illusions anymore! Thus, we have got to pay attention to these democratic aspirations of the people!

In order for Nixon to unleash open terror he has got to consolidate power within the ranks of the mo monopolists. But the monopolists are not ready to do that, at least a significant section of them. Even some of the same sections that put Nixon into power are now calling for his impeachment.

Now, impeaching Nixon is not going to change this system. And I think most people know that. Most people you talk to in the streets will tell you impeaching Nixon won't make a big change or do much to improve the conditions of the people. But the people still want Nixon dumped! They'll tell you "We know Gerald Ford is no different than Nixon." That's obvious. They know McGovern wasn't much different. They're all representatives of the capitalists. They'll tell you in different ways. They say, "All these politicians are the same." "They're all crooked." But they still want Nixon dumped! I heard someone say the other day, "We know Nixon is the agent of the capitalist class. But they'll just have to send us another one, cause this one won't do!"

SUPPORT IMPEACHMENT DEMAND

And I don't think we can isolate ourselves from this sentiment. It is this sentiment that has caused alot of the trade unions to call for Nixon's downfall. This is especially true in the most progressive unions such as the United Mineworkers, and the United Farm Workers. It is this sentiment that has caused the major civil rights organizations in this country to call for impeachment. This reflects mass discontent. People cannot live this way anymore.

Within this move for impeachment there are many lines being put forth. George Meany thinks Nixon is crazy and therefore supports impeachment. Two years ago, though, when Nixon was attacking the working and poor people relentlessly, Mr. Meany saw fit to support him. And the Communist Party with the slogan of "Impeach Nixon, Let's Revote," is trying to foster illusions among the people about the nature of this capitalist system. Like Meany, they pin their hopes on the election of a better candidate.

Well, we say "Dump Nixon, Stop the Fascist Tide." We're not spreading any illusions about this system. We're expressing the concentrated opinions and feelings of the masses of people. We have to muster the forces to see impeachment through. Already Nixon has gone on rours in order to prettify himself and regain some lost stature. And already the bourgeois forces talking impeachment are beginning to vacillate. The only way a real blow can be struck at this fascist offensive is for the masses of people to be mobilized, to move the trade unions, to move the rank and file organizations, the mass democratic organizations, and demand that Nixon be dumped! In the process the people will surely build up their own fighting capacity. And if we do our job the people will learn revolutionary lessons. That is, if we aren't standing on the sidelines. If we're out there among the masses of people!

OCTOBER LEAGUE CHAIRMAN CALLS FOR ANTI-NIXON DRIVE

Excerpts from THE CURRENT CRISIS AND TASKS OF OUR MOVEMENT, speech by Michael Klonsky, November 24, 1973

UNION WORK ...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

and woodcutters, who, in their efforts to organize have come directly into a battle with the labor aristocracy and its racist line that "only white people can build a union.

By basing our work within the trade unions, the organized sector of the working class, and lending all our possible efforts towards organizing the unorganized section espesically the minority workers' struggles, we can build the core of the united front and in the process, expose the opportunist policies of the labor aristocracy. At times (increasingly so as the crisis sharpens) we will have to confront the power and influence of the revisionist CPUSA, which has firmly entrenched itself within the labor bureacracy. In many ways, the revisionists are even more dangerous than the reactionary union leadership because they have disguised themselves as "communists" and therefore must be exposed, not through name-calling, but through the the practice of building the workers' struggle and strengthening the trade unions.

As this is done, we will be attacked as "outsiders" by both company and union leadership, and the CPUSA. We can combat this by rejecting ultra-leftist, anti-union policies and by forging deep roots at the point of production.

While the workshop only began to touch on some of the questions involved in the "struggle within the trade unions" it laid the foundation for further study and a higher level of trade union work.

AUTO WORKERS ...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

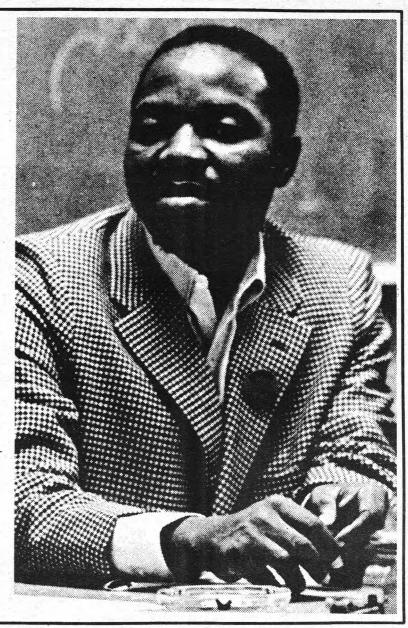
Building unity with other workers and anti-imperialist struggles was also discussed. Doing work supporting the Farah and Farmworkers' struggles and around political issues such as Nixon's impeachment must be taken up in the UAW, to raise auto workers' political consciousness and to develop the united front against imperialism in the US.

Finally, with the growing number of lay-offs, workshop members agreed that communists must establish good lasting ties with the stablest groups of workers in their plants. Whether individuals are laid off or not, communists must be helping to lead struggles in auto. Most important, the auto workers, themselves, must be trained to lead the rank-and-file movement, rather than relying on a few "heavies."

The workshop ended in the spirit of unity—participants were anxious to get back home, put what they had learned into practice, and provide good leadership for the upcoming struggles in auto.

"We very much appreciate what has been done by the workers in the United States of America, that at one stage they have refused to unload a cargo of chrome imported from Rhodesia. We feel it is a victory on our side and once it is a victory on your side it is also a victory for us! It will help our people to know that there are friends outside of Africa who are with us in the struggle."

from SOLIDARITY MESSAGE by Zimbabwe African National Union Mukudzei M. Mudzi, Executive Secretary, P.O. Box 2231, Lusaka, Zambia



This report on the Labor Conference was written and published by the October League. For more information on the October League, or for more copies of this special issue, write to THE CALL, P.O. Box 2278, Bell Gardens, Calif. 90201.



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