

CONVENTION RESOLUTION

**STATE OF THE UNIONS AND IS WORK
KIM MOODY**

NOTE: This resolution was passed by the NAC as the bases for amendment. There may be amendments by individual members of the NAC, or the NAC as a whole.

CONVENTION RESOLUTION:

The State Of the Unions & IS Work

BY Kim Moody

For nearly two decades American trade unions were able to win real economic gains for their members. Real spendable weekly earnings rose by over 26% from 1950 to 1965, in spite of the "trade off" policy, which swapped established working conditions organization for wage increases, and in spite of fluctuating unemployment, the standard of living of the majority of workers rose. Blacks, of course, did not reap these results and were still only a small force in most unions for most of this period.

The union leadership of both the craft and industrial wings of the AFL-CIO were able to accomplish this without serious challenges to the employers, much less to the system. Reformist to the core, these leaders settled in to the routine of systematized collective bargaining. The strike was still a respectable weapon for winning wage gains. Economic militancy only seemed to re-enforce the labor leadership's claim that the capitalist system was as good for the workers as for anyone else.

The secret behind their relative success, of course, was the permanent arms economy which allowed for expanded employment, regular wage gains, and a more or less stable economy. In this context, the labor leadership was able to entrench its own political position within the unions, without stirring up mass rank and file opposition.

But by the mid-1960's the effects of the arms economy began to backfire. Inflation began its uncontrollable race ahead of wages. The burden of arms production left U.S. producers at a disadvantage on the world market as new competition emerged from Japan, Germany and other European countries.

On the one hand, inflation drove the rank and file to greater militancy. On the other hand, the pressure of the employers and the habits of 15 years left the labor bureaucracy without a strategy for dealing with either the ranks or the bosses. Unwilling to wage a serious fight, the bureaucracy came into constant conflict with the ranks.

The rank and file rebellion of the late 1960's was largely disorganized. Nonetheless it broke some of the patterns of the previous period. Wildcats and contract rejections became common and the sense that you were fighting both the company and the union leadership was widespread.

The top labor leaders were caught unprepared. Their response was confused and uneven. Heavy handed tactics were mixed with attempts to buy off militant leaders. Internationals opposed wildcats, but often stepped in to sanction or even lead them when they didn't simply disappear.

The more or less traditional AFL/IUD (Industrial Union Department) split gave way to new alignments in response to the rank and file rebellion and to the growing mass social movements of the 1960's. Reuther left the AFL-CIO to form the ALA (Alliance for Labor Action) but was not joined by most of his

IUD buddies. Instead he allied with the IBT--an unlikely ally in Reuther's fight against Meany--:ovestone's foreign policy, or against the over racism of the building trades.

q The ALA was supposed to break with the stodgy practices of the ALF-CIO in order to organize the unorganized--something the IBT does, though in its own way--to lead a reform movement in civil rights and foreign affairs, to bolster the left-wing of the Democratic Party. For Reuther, the ALA was the last gasp of social unionism--long since grown putrid. For the IBT it was a chance for new allies and a little image polishing. Neither of these motives were enough to make it work.

The general response of the labor leadership to the growing rank and file militancy was to bend slightly with the wind. From 1967 on the size of wage and benefits increases grew rapidly. Before 1966 first year increases of 5-6% were generally enough to keep incomes ahead of inflation. First year increases rose from 7.3% in 1967 to 13.9% in ~~1972~~ 1971. In spite of this, real average weekly earnings after taxes fell in every year after 1965 except 1968, when they rose less than 1%. Thus, even a semi-aggressive application of their traditional reformist methods could not keep up with inflation. Orderly collective bargaining including orderly strikes, could no longer win real gains. Similarly, liberal ward healing in the Democratic Party produced no tangible results. The politicians, after all, were worried about the big economic picture, foreign competition, etc, and wage increases did not fit into that picture very well.

Toward the end of the late 60's and the opening of the 70's, disorganized rebellion began to move toward organized opposition. A small number of rank and file organizations emerged in various industries on a local and even national scale. UNC, TURF, MFD, as well as DRUM, UBB (United Black Brothers), and other black caucuses were products of this era.

The black groups that arose during this period were a response to the widespread growth of revolutionary black liberation organizations, particularly the Black Panther Party, just as the TULC (Trade Union Labor Council) and NALC (Negro American Labor Council) had arisen as part of the Civil Rights movement of the early 60's. But they were also a part of the very core the rank and file rebellion. It was black workers who sparked and led the national postal wildcat in 1970, and who played an important role in wildcat movements in auto and steel.

THE ROLE OF NEP

Left to their own devices, it is doubtful if the labor bureaucracy could have controlled the growing rank and file movement of the late 1960's. Blacks in large numbers and concentrations were new to most industries, Beyond buying off some leaders, the bureaucracy had little idea of how to deal with militant black workers. Skyrocketing inflation--as strong in slump times as in a boom--was beyond their control or comprehension. In all likelihood, the labor bureaucracy was saved from serious confrontation at the opening of the 70's when a Republican government carried out the program of their Democratic friends and imposed wage-price controls. The government-sponsored crushing of revolutionary black groups a couple of years earlier also weakened resistance.

There is no doubt that the labor bureaucracy greeted wage controls with a sigh of relief. Most labor leaders at the international union level were already on record for wage-price controls--of the "equitable" sort, naturally. While government wage controls present certain problems for even the most cynically pro-company union leaders, these problems were far-preferable to the idea of entering the next bargaining round with demands for 15-20% increases when the employers were already hysterical about international competition and the monetary crisis.

The NEP was a great boon to the capitalists and to the labor leaders as well. The NEP laid the basis for the boom of 1973 and also regained US capitalists a toe-hold on the world market. Decisive action by the government spared the labor leaders a confrontation with their ranks.

The vast majority of workers took a wait and see attitude toward wage-price controls. There was a feeling that the government just might stop inflation and let wages creep ahead of prices once again. Furthermore, most of the leaders of the rank and file rebellion were inexperienced. With few individual exceptions, the leaders were not politically trained people. Certainly they were not revolutionaries. In any case, they had no strategy as a group and had had little time to generalize from their own experiences. They were not prepared to ~~take~~ take on the government.

As soon as the last major strikes of the previous round ended--the mines and longshorement--the militancy of the past four years seemed to melt away. From the all-time high from strike activity in 1970, the number of strikes dropped by hundreds in 1971 and 72. The number of workers involved and man-days idled dropped even more dramatically. The young rank and file organizations were cut off from their base and withered ~~and~~ or died.

The exception was MFD. The leaders of this opposition had two things going for them. First, because their 1971 contract ~~was~~ was settled under the wire of Phase II they avoided having to face the problem directly. Secondly, one aspect of traditional miner militancy is a high level of community solidarity. Strike waves, particularly wildcats, tend to take place on a regional basis: western Pennsylvania, West Virginia (north and south sections of the state), southern Illinois, etc.

For awhile, the wait and see attitude seemed to pay off. Real wages once again moved up in 1971 and 1972. This happened in spite of a drastic drop in the amount of wage and benefits increases in new contracts, from 13.9 in 1971 to 7.9 in 1972. Part of this increase was the result of an unusual growth in overtime work from 1970 to 1972. Nonetheless, the pressures producing militancy had abated for the time being.

NEP was a great success for the capitalists. Devaluation and lower wage increases put US goods back on the world market and ~~we~~ cut down the growth of foreign goods on the US market. Labor costs were held down and actually dropped for two quarters in 1972. By 1972 profits were up and business was moving towards a boom.

No less important was the fact that the labor leaders seemed to have been completely tamed. Aside from some grumpy theatrics from Meany, labor seemed

to go along with the program¹. Even when prices began moving up at a faster rate and when it was announced that controls would become voluntary, labor pledged to keep its demands down. Wage and benefit gains stayed below 8% for first year increases. The employers, however, failed to voluntarily lower their price levels--prices sky-rocketed again and real wages began to fall.

NEP was a defeat for the WW working class. It was also a defeat for those revolutionaries with a working class perspective. The years from 1970 to 1973 seemed to invalidate our own perspective toward the building of a rank and file movement. Comrades in industry faced an often demoralizing and conservatizing experience as they tried to carve victories out of the material of defeat. The conditions that made NEP such a victory for the ruling class have abated. New conditions are producing militancy in the ranks and a process of political sorting out in the labor bureaucracy.

RETURN OF REBELLION

Under monopoly capitalism, supported and burdened by the permanent arms economy, prices can only be held down for long at the risk of a recession. But US and European businessmen smelled a boom by the end of 1972. Labor costs could be reduced no farther, so the pressure to release controls grew. Early in 1973, Phase III made wage and price controls voluntary. As we have noted, wage increases remained low, but prices went wild. Immediately real wages began to drop. From the 1972 average for real weekly spendable earnings of 96.40, they fell to 95.08 for 1973 and 90.95 as of Feb., 1974.

All of the pressures that produced the rebellion of the late 60's have returned with greater force. Inflation continued throughout the 1974 recession, while unemployment grew. Though some economists expect an upswing in the economy in the second half of 1974, they also predict higher unemployment and continued, though perhaps moderated, inflation.

The labor bureaucracy is holding on, however. They are still asking for 7-8% first year increases with slight improvements in COL. Even with COL, the cost of this year's contracts has been 8% for the first year and 3.5-4% or so for the second and third years.

Capitalizing on the relative quiescence of NEP, the labor leaders have gone further than at any time in the past to hold down militancy, originally a general move to the right by the bureaucracy. Abel's ENA (the no-strike pledge in steel) is the most dramatic step. But it was followed by lavish praise from Meany and many other top union officials. UAW officials have gone farther than ever in opposing their ranks. To the breaking of the Mack strike has been added the new three-year office term and the more or less flat statement that they will decide when contracts are or are not ratified. Beirne of the CWA secretly negotiated for national bargaining with the Bell System, and came up with a plan that cuts out negotiations by districts or locals and puts all national issues in the hands of six top bureaucrats. A voluntary tri-partite arrangement similar to the Construction Industries Stabilization Committee (CISC) was set up in the food distribution industry with the enthusiastic participation of the Retail Clerks, IBT, and Amalgamated Meat Cutters, in anticipation of the end of controls.

Rank and file workers, however, have started fighting back at the conditions they face. There was a slight and very uneven upturn in strike activity in 1973. In early spring, Rubber workers wildcatted against their settlements. There were a few strikes in auto, in addition to the annual heat walk-outs which occur every summer. Teacher strikes were again common last fall. Teamsters in food distribution and UPS have wildcatted in numerous cities within the last several months. West Virginia miners went out over fuel shortages.

It was when all controls were officially lifted in May, 1974 that strikes seemed to break out everywhere. In the construction industry, drastic wage leapfrogging set in as soon as the CISC was disbanded. The strike level there doubled immediately and wage gains went from 9% for one year to 12-13%, with some reaching 23-40%. For all of industry, the level of strike activity doubled in May-June. In those months strikes hit several GMAD plants, including Lordstown, Norwood, and St. Louis. Pre-contract walkouts have occurred in a number of cities in the Bell system.

SMALL GAINS IN ORGANIZATION

The rise in strike activity has been accompanied by small gains in rank and file organization. As a result of its intervention in the skilled workers' contract rejection at Ford, and its leadership role as the opposition at the UAW convention, the UNC has seen some growth in size and influence, though it is still far from having a mass base or even much stability. The ten or so Dump Woodcock stales in Detroit in the UAW Convention delegate elections also produced some new rank and file organizations at the local level and put some new life into a couple of old ones. The Voice of Chrysler Workers at Dodge Main, the Mack Ave. UNC caucus, and the Chevy Gear and Axle Justice Committee are among the strongest.

Similar developments have occurred in steel. There, the District 31 Right to Vote Committee emerged in opposition to ENA in the USW's largest district. Older groups, such as RAFT (Rank and File Team) have become more active and a small national network of oppositionists has taken shape.

The growing willingness of militants to join opposition groups, as yet very small in numbers, was seen also in NY CWA where a Membership Contract Committee attracted the support of many stewards and where the small small United Action caucus recruited some stewards.

In the AFT opposition groupings in NY state and California grew within the last year. The Grass Roots caucus in NY and a journal called Network in California now function as opposition poles within their state AFT's. The big locals, however, in addition to NY City, tended to move into the Shanker camp this past year. The political split between Selden and Shanker has tended to box the small left wing opposition groups into a corner.

Similarly, the development of large organized opposition groups in the IBT may be slowed down by the return of Hoffa to that union. The small groupings that do exist are not likely to go for Hoffa, but there is little doubt that Hoffa would attract much of the natural base for any growth among opposition groups. Nevertheless, a national network is taking shape.

The beginnings of rank and file organization are not simply a continuation of what was halted or defeated in 1971. The political atmosphere in and outside the unions is quite different than it was in the late 1960's. First of all, the mass movements, based largely on middle class elements, are gone. But many of the ideas and goals they fought for, have filtered down into the working class consciousness in various diluted or transformed forms. Secondly, Watergate and the flood of subsequent and apparently unending scandals have undermined much of the traditional belief in the American government, the Presidency, etc. Third, under the pressure of events, the labor bureaucracy is itself going through a process of political sorting out. And finally, the leaders of today's rank and file group tend to be radicals of one sort or another.

In the late 1960's there were very few revolutionaries or radicals of any sort in the working class. The strikes, rejections, and organizations that grew in that period did so largely without any aid or direction from politically conscious workers. Around 1970, however, hundreds, perhaps thousands of young radicals entered industry hoping to recruit workers to their brand of revolution. The ideas with which most of these radicals entered industry were confused. Nonetheless, they played a role in changing the political atmosphere of organized industry. By the end of NEP a great many plants and work places had small groupings of radicals, black and white.

The old leadership of the late 1960's collapsed with NEP. Most of this leadership has gone on to other things--including jobs in the bureaucracy--or is just worn out. Today, it is the radicals, young and old, from both working class and petit bourgeois backgrounds, who are leading the emerging opposition groups. Today, the young radicals have 3-4 years experience in the industry. For the most part they don't have the stature to be national leaders, but they are no longer regarded as outsiders.

In a few cases, radical-led opposition groups have been able to become the recognized opposition within their local union. That is, where there were typically two opportunist groups, the "ins" and the "outs", the radicals have been able to become the "outs", but on an entirely different basis--a programmatic and usually recognizably left-wing basis. Significant numbers of workers are now willing to support, if not yet join, such groups. Red baiting seems to have less effect than in the past.

THE LEFT

In general, it has been our experience that workers are now more open to radical political ideas than in the past two decades. Naturally, this is truest among black workers, but it is no longer limited to them. All of the political factors mentioned, plus the experience of NEP itself, and the pressures of capitalist crisis, have produced a small mass base for the left to work in and to organize. As yet, it is more a matter of openness than a higher level of consciousness, it is nonetheless a very different situation,--a much more promising one.

In this context, the specific politics of the various tendencies on the left becomes important. In general, the IS is the only revolutionary organization that has a perspective for building a rank and file movement as part of the process of building a revolutionary workers movement. The Trotskyist left has by and large written itself out of any real rank and file movement. The SWP has done this by a consistent orientation toward lower level bureaucrats. The current SWP policy combines open-ended opportunist maneuvers with labor bureaucrats, for example in CLUW, with an abstract propaganda directed at no one in particular. The WL, RSL, CSL, etc, have locked themselves in their own sectarian worlds. The SL also has a sectarian orientation toward its trade union work, but unlike the others actually pushed it aggressively where they have people in the unions. While they have been able to attract handfuls of people ~~from~~ in a couple of places, they generally cut themselves off from real movements by their cranky style of sectarian program mongering.

Far more serious in working class activities are the Maoist groups, particularly the RU, OL, and CL. None of these groups has a perspective for building a rank and file movement as such. The CL, for example, believes you must build the party first before you can do mass work. CL does form groups in shops, such as JARUM, but these are anonymous arms of the party and not broad mass groups. The CL is more Forsterite-Stalinist than Maoist.

The RU and the OL share the United Front Against Imperialism conception as the framework for rank and file work. That is, to both of these groups, rank and file opposition groups are but one element of a united front which includes other social elements including even the anti-imperialist petit bourgeoisie. For them the party is built out of a mass milieu, but the rank and file movement is not seen as a working class movement with its own ~~life~~ life and integrity--the party makes the revolution and takes power, not the masses of workers.

The OL and RU, however, differ violently on the implementation of this Pop Front approach to rank and file work. Until this spring the RU was clearly orienting toward the lower level bureaucracy, making friends with local leaders or anyone who was open to them. Then, they made a "left" turn and became instant sectarians. They have recently stood outside of real groups and criticized.

The OL has a distinctly opportunist ~~xxx~~ approach and seems to be more adept at carrying it out. The OL is able to function in high circles in CLUW by keeping its mouth shut. At the same time they are influential in the Steel Workers District 31 Right to Vote Committee where they put forth a line that is scarcely different from anything we would propose. The OL seems to be having some success in industrial work and will no doubt be one of the more significant tendencies in the emerging rank and file movement.

The fact that none of these groups has really a rank and file or even a working class perspective does not mean they won't play a role in any rank and file developments. Even the CL, with its sectarian, Third Period outlook has been able to play a leadership role in strikes. CL leaders are experienced and self confident and tend to impress people ~~xx~~ when they show up at meetings, as they did at the Memorial Day meeting of steel groups.

While it is necessary to remember that a real rank and file movement will not be limited to those groups built by organized revolutionaries, it is clear that the radicals are in on the ground floor this time and will play a political role far beyond their numbers. As most of the organized groups present perspectives that are misleading or fatal to a rank and file movement, we will have to fight their policies. This cannot be done by polemic or name calling. In general our approach to the Maoist groupings is that of the United Front--the working class united front, not their Pop Front version.

In addition to the organized national groups, there are scores of industrialized collectives, most with a tendency towards "soft Maoism". The old perspective of these groups, to eventually unite into one party has collapsed and few of them have even experienced much growth. They, therefore, tend to be drawn toward one or another hard group, including ourselves. For the most part, they are poorly positioned in industry. That is, they tend to work in small shops or for smaller companies of secondary importance. Nevertheless, these collectives represent some of the best human material in the radical movement today. Focused around a national organization such as the IS they could play an important part in the developing rank and file movement.

The rank and file movement is only in its embryo, but we can see that it is again growing. The politicization of its leadership is only a germ in that bigger process, but it is one with a dynamic rooted in the current crisis itself. Groups in industry composed mainly of radicals, even transplanted ones, cannot be written off as they could have been in the late '60's. Political development in the ranks will be painfully slow and uneven from our point of view, but the signs are clear that that will be a fundamental part of the growth of this rank and file movement.

Developments in the Bureaucracy

The bureaucracy is moving at a much faster rate in its own process of political differentiation. The labor bureaucracy has always been self consciously political. What is occurring now within the bureaucracy is more a sorting out than either a major split or the development of new ideas. The context for this sorting out is a general move to the right by all.

The pressures producing this sorting out are not primarily from below. That is, it is not, as radicals habitually say, a result of pressure from the ranks - though the potential of such pressure is obviously part of what motivates the bureaucracy. It is rather the objective pressures of the crisis, the pressures from the capitalists and their government, and to a lesser extent the pressures from a middle class milieu.

At the heart of these pressures is the contradiction now arising in the role of the reformist labor leadership. They believe that to win decent things for their members the economy must be healthy, the companies doing business. But caught in an international crisis, these labor leaders must protect their companies at home and abroad. In all cases this means holding income increases within the limits of productivity, market conditions. The fact ~~that~~ that they cannot win gains through the old methods has brought their long standing policies into question. The notion that the ranks must be policed by the leaders is not in question. That was decided decades ago. What is in question is the precise policy for that and, more importantly, what is the most effective way to win gains at least large enough to stave off an uncontrollable rebellion by the ranks.

In their own minds, the labor leaders undoubtedly really want to win reforms. The major conflict, not yet a clear split, in the bureaucracy is over the strategy for doing just that. Generally, there are two wings of the top bureaucracy on this question. First, is the traditional social-cum-business unionism which uses a variety of economic and political tactics. This wing, ~~includes~~ includes the UAW leaders, AFSCME, UMWA, CWA, 1199, and others. While they are no less collaborationist than the others and detest struggle as much as the worst of them, they want to keep open their tactical possibilities. They do not, for example, want to give up the ~~st5ikek~~ (only the ranks' ability to control strikes) and they will fight to protect that right. Nor does this wing favor things like arbitration of contracts as general policy - though they may use it at times. To some extent they believe that their power and influence still depends on their ability to put up a fight ~~x~~ now and then. Politically this wing also tends to believe its own rhetoric about moving the Democratic Party. Most of them supported McGovern and shunned the likes of Henry Jackson.

The other wing is that lead ~~ty~~ by Meany and Shanker. While they are not yet ready to wage an open fight for the abandonment of the strike as a weapon altogether, that is clearly where they are going. They favor "voluntary" arbitration of contracts and are far more open about doing away with the right of ratification. They think ENA is ~~fantastic~~ fantastic and I.W. Abel is one of their boys in most ways. The politics of Shanker and Meany are more systematic than those of the liberal wing. They are, of course, the politics of later day Schachtmanism (Social Democrats, USA), that is, the

politics of the extreme right wing of the international social democracy. Their dynamism, however, stems from their understanding that the old social-business unionism is at a dead end. Their strategy is a political one.

They want to be done with strikes because they can't really "solve" the problems the union leader faces in today's world. What can solve those problems, they believe, is the political participation of the unions - that is, top bureaucrats - in government decision making. Their strategy is to pressure and gain control of the Democratic Party. At that level, and that level only, can you determine labor's share in the national wealth - they believe. Collective bargaining and striking one company or one boss is ineffective. But mobilizing the masses of labor to work for and pressure the Democratic Party or the government can achieve results. Their dictatorship of the proletariat is a veto-proof congress.

This process of political sorting out, of the Europeanization of the US labor leadership, is going on at the secondary and staff level as well as at the top. The leading pole of attraction at the moment seems to be by Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC). This group had its first convention last October. By May its claimed membership doubled from 500 to 1,000, the largest single group being trade union officials and staffers. Beyond its socialist rhetoric, DSOC's politics represent a fairly systematic version of the liberal wing of the bureaucracy: reform the Democratic Party, keep the right to strike, etc.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ For the secondary bureaucrats, something like DSOC represents a political reassurance that their liberal views of the labor movement are correct and part of a broader ideology. It also seems to offer a more democratic version of union participation at the government level (German codetermination being the official DSOC model) than Shanker's back room maneuverism.

At the moment, the focus of the fight between the Shankerites and Harringtonites is in the AFT. Selden, of DSOC, is defending the traditional policies of trade union leaders and calling it democracy. Selden is a loser, but he is also not typical of the types being attracted to DSOC. ~~They~~ The dynamic behind Harrington's political comeback is the secondary bureaucracy.

CLUW and CBTU

The crisis and the pressures from the social movements of the 1960s also helped spur black and women labor leaders. Again it is doubtful if direct rank and file pressure played any role in the ~~launching~~ launching of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU) or CLUW. Rather, the influx of large numbers of blacks and women into certain unions in the 1960's created a mass base, as yet potential, for black and women bureaucrats whose ambitions within the bureaucracy have often been thwarted by racism and sexism. The movements of the '60's provided a lesson for these frustrated bureaucrats - by organizing a base among the masses, or one that seems to speak for them, you can break your way into higher places. To attract support from the new thousands of black or women workers, you must organize something that appears to be in the interest of all black or women workers. This was not necessarily a consciously

thought out process, but it explains the dynamic behind these groups.

CLUW attracted much more of that support than the bureaucrats needed or wanted. The CBTU has similarly grown rapidly in the last year. Neither group has set the black or female working masses in motion, but the very dynamic the opportunists wish to exploit could very well run past them as the crisis of the system becomes more severe. Unlike DSOC or SD-USA, CLUW and to a lesser extent CBTU represent a social dynamic in the working class that can go beyond the control of the bureaucrats as soon as the struggle sharpens. Naturally, they can also act as road blocks to that dynamic by providing a conservative leadership to a growing movement. However, CLUW and CBTU contain contradictory political tendencies within them as well as social contradictions.

The CBTU appears to be more conservative than CLUW. In part this is because it was formed in the wake of the defeat of the black movement. The leaders of CBTU tend to be black TU officials who came into their positions after they had "outgrown" their own militant past or after they replaced broken militant groups like DRUM. For the most part the policies of CBTU are lackluster and follow the lines of official AFL-CIO, UAW pronouncements, including a strong orientation toward COPE. Politically, however, CBTU falls with the liberal wing of the bureaucracy. It is open competition with the Shanker-Meany controlled A. Phillip Randolph Institute, which also organizes among black TU officials.

The leadership and base of CLUW did not get whatever positions they hold in the unions as a result of the defeat or success of the women's movement. In fact, the women's movement never ~~sunk~~ sunk roots in the working class. For the most part, CLUW leaders and backers have whatever positions they have by virtue of being tough women - this tends to be true even where they are machine hacks like Olga Madar. They, and the ranks of CLUW, have been infected with the ideas of the women's movement of the late '60's and some have been around things like NOW. Far from riding the crest of a movement, many CLUW leaders seem to hope to build one of their own. Naturally, they wish this movement to be in their own image and under their control. They are bureaucrats and respond to dynamism in a conservative way. This explains their desire to close the ranks and radicals out of decision making in CLUW, but also their apparent tenacity in maintaining CLUW's existence.

CLUW and CBTU are based on social dynamics that are likely to receive an enormous thrust as rank and file rebellion grows and economic pressures continue. In a context where the bureaucracy as a whole is moving rightward, but beginning to divide out along political lines, CLUW and CBTU can be important in forcing fractures within the bureaucracy and opening new channels of struggle for the ranks.

Our Perspectives

The context we face, in the economy and the unions, represents an opening for our perspective. Rank and file upheaval can turn a process of political differentiation in the bureaucracy into open splits. A leftward moving rank and file faces a rightward moving, politically dividing bureaucracy.

At the same time, growing economic militancy among workers is on a potential collision course with the government. As prices continue out of control, unemployment threatens to grow, and the future appears uncertain, the pressure already mounts to re-introduce some form of controls. It may be a Democratic Congress, or a Democratic administration in 1976, that implements some new scheme of controls. While it is possible under those circumstances that much of the base of the rank and file movement will again retreat without a fight, the dynamic at the moment is one of collision.

As we have shown, strikes and militancy are on the rise. The government and the employers are worried. The speed with which things develop depends in part on the ability of some unions or sections of workers to win something - or to drive back an attack by the bosses. In construction, the workers seem to be winning everywhere and the bosses, deprived of their CISC, are in disarray. Construction increases will be a spur to other workers. This is truest of other skilled workers, like the auto tradesmen. The timing of events will also depend to some degree on the outcome of the coal and longshore contract fights this fall. If the coal miners, in particular, are able to force a big settlement, this will be a further spur to general militancy. There is at least a good possibility this will be the case.

The meaning of all these trends and events for our perspective is fairly simple. Visible organization and rank and file publications become important, no longer as the holding actions they have often been for the past three years, but as potential rallying points for militant workers in search of ideas, strategies, tactics and organizations. The growth we experienced in the recent UAW delegate elections and in the CWA contract fight in NY, is but a first sign. Groups that are now only a core could grow rapidly or quickly be replaced with broader ones in which we are at the center. Where we have the network, industry-wide journals, such as those in auto, IBT, and CLUW, can speed-up the education and political self-awareness of new militant leaders.

It is equally important that we remain active in groups further removed from our influence, such as the UNC and the loose network in steel. These groups may become vessels for at least part of the organized movement in those industries. For example, if the auto skilled tradesmen are pushed to greater militancy by the recent increases in construction (which is what happened in 1967), the UNC is likely to be one of the two major poles of attraction. (The other, of course may be the International Society of Skilled Trades (ISST) or some similar separatist movement.)

Our perspective for building an organized rank and file movement and for cohering a revolutionary tendency within it, is once again actionable in a dynamic situation. We stand to play a central political role, far beyond our numbers, because we are one of the only groups that has such a perspective and strategy. The notion of giving a rank and

and file rebellion political and organization coherence through local, and eventually, national opposition caucuses within the unions is ABC to us, but poorly understood by most of the left.

Furthermore, as the objective situations opens up, it becomes easier for us to see the immediate tasks and direction of our work in the process of the over-all perspective. ~~KMX~~ For the first time, we are in a position to see the concrete possibility of gathering around us in the coming months a milieu of militants and industrialized radicals, many of whom we have already worked with and influenced for some time. Furthermore, for the first time we have the tools we need to carry through this task - Workers Power, the rank and file bulletins, the industry-wide journals in auto, IBT, and in CLUW. It is with these political tools that we can begin to shape, organize, and politicize this milieu into an influential element within the general increase in worker militancy and activity. It is also within this milieu that we can begin to recruit in the next year and make the next important step in our transformation into a revolutionary workers organization based in the working class.

July 10, 1974