

POLITICAL COMMITTEE MEETING No. 8, November 14, 1975

Present: Breitman, Gersh, Hansen, Lovell, Seigle, Thomas, Waters

Visitor: Lyons

Chair: Lovell

AGENDA: 1. November 19 March on Washington
2. Steelworkers Fight Back
3. Harassment from the National Caucus of Labor Committees
4. Cuba

1. NOVEMBER 19 MARCH ON WASHINGTON

(Burfeind and Studer invited for this point.)

Gersh reported on the national march on Washington D.C. called by City Universities of New York student senate and the party and YSA's activity to help build it.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

2. STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK

Lovell reported on a national caucus in the United Steel Workers formed to campaign for Ed Sadlowski for national president of the union and on a letter to branches urging comrades in the USW to participate in this formation. (See attached.)

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

3. HARASSMENT FROM THE NATIONAL CAUCUS OF LABOR COMMITTEES

Jeness reported that several branches and the national campaign committee have received recent threatening phone calls from members of the National Caucus of Labor Committees. The similar nature of the calls indicates a national campaign of harassment against SWP.

Discussion

Motion: To approve the report.

Carried.

4. CUBA

Breitman initiated discussion on coverage of Cuba in our press.

Meeting Adjourned.

14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014
November 15, 1975

To Branch Organizers and Trade Union Directors

Dear Comrades,

The enclosed material from Steelworkers Fight Back was received by the Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee. It indicates that Ed Sadlowski, District Director, District 31, United Steelworkers of America, is preparing to run for president of the International in 1977. What will happen depends upon the ability of those who want to replace the Abel bureaucracy in the USWA to organize a national caucus.

Sadlowski begins from a position of power. District 31 is the largest and one of the most strategic districts in the union. He won his present post in a bitter struggle with the machine politicians in the union. He is trying to use his position to mobilize the rank and file for democratic control of the union.

We want to support this effort in every way possible. Where comrades are working, have friends, or can establish relations in the steel mills, they should inquire about the Sadlowski campaign and explain what we know about it with the idea of winning support for it. They ought to write to Steelworkers Fight Back about conditions in mills and USWA locals where they are acquainted, sending in local literature published by opposition groups and by the local bureaucrats. They should also take charge of collecting local volunteer contributions for the caucus and forward them to Chicago. Comrades in the USW will, of course, want to receive all future communications of Steelworkers Fight Back.

There ought to be a good response to the call that has been sent out by Sadlowski. It appears as if he will get initial support from some officials in other unions, possibly the United Mine Workers, AFSCME, and the United Auto Workers. This is indicated by the letter of encouragement from Victor Reuther. But the success of his campaign depends upon his ability to mobilize the ranks of the USWA. He needs to develop a genuine movement for membership control of the union.

Anyone who hopes to challenge the Abel bureaucracy will need plenty of money for a national campaign with a regularly published campaign newspaper and a full-time staff of campaign organizers. It will have to be done on a much more efficient basis than Miners For Democracy which did, in fact, develop and train a staff that went with Miller into the national office of the Mine Workers after he was elected.

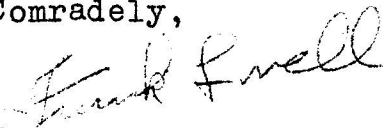
The call from Sadlowski shows that he is aware to some degree of the size of the job that has to be done. This is why he puts out a broad appeal for funds, not limited to the membership of the Steelworkers union.

Reuther's letter indicates that the Harrington wing of the Social Democrats (DSOC) is probably giving encouragement to Sadlowski and is prepared to provide material aid and personnel for his campaign.

Serious challenge of the Abel bureaucracy is new and timely in the union movement, and ought to receive support from all militants. It can mark a new stage in the trend that started with the victory of Miners For Democracy.

Right now we want to get as much information as possible about specific opportunities for us in your area, whom you know, what the response is to your initial approaches about this campaign, what you think can be done in the period ahead. Send us reports as soon as possible.

Comradely,



Frank Lovell
National Office

Note: The material from People's World is included only for your information, as an example of what the Abel bureaucracy is attempting to do to cripple Sadlowski early in the race, and what the steel corporations are doing. The correspondence from Burns Harbor shows something about the present mood of the steel workers and the kind of struggle that is going on in the mills.

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STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK
9271 South Chicago Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60617

Dear Friend,

I'm writing you because you are a fellow member or supporter of the labor movement, and because I think you agree we have to do something pretty fundamental to get the trade union movement moving again.

Much of what I'm about to say you may already know, but I want to ask you to read through this letter because I want to ask you to give us a hand with a movement in the Steelworker's Union that is aimed at getting our section of the labor movement back on the right track. We are determined to eliminate the kind of tuxedo unionism some of our leaders have practiced in the past. We want to give our union back to the membership; and we're determined to make our union the kind of progressive political force its founders intended it to be.

I don't have to tell you that the little guy is getting screwed sixteen different ways. We've got people being layed off right and left in almost every industry and Ford is telling us the recession is over. You take a trip to the corner store and a loaf of bread we paid 36 cents for last year costs 55 cents. You go out and buy a pair of shoes -- my youngest kid's 10 years old and her foot's no bigger than my hand, and the things are costing \$15.

Of course that isn't all. People all over the country have begun to feel they've lost control over their government, their standard of living, and their lives in general. People who have worked for years to provide a little economic security for their families can't make ends meet. We've got a government full of corruption and national leaders that are often so beholden to the special interests and big monopolies that they might as well be on their payrolls. The government can find millions to bail out big businesses, but can't find enough to finance a decent health insurance system.

I was talking the other day to a guy who works in Gary in the big U.S. Steel mill and he has to drive about 10 miles to work. He said, "Look, I've sacrificed all I can. I walk or take public transportation as much as I can, but even if Ford does increase gas prices 15 cents a gallon I've still got to drive to work." Increasing gas prices isn't going to hurt Nelson Rockefeller -- just the average working man or woman.

The only way we can fight back is through our unions, but in the last few years, the leadership of many unions simply hasn't done the job. In fact, many labor leaders today have become absolutely conservative. They've bought into the national status quo. They ignore the feelings of alienation and powerlessness among their own membership. They refuse to address membership demands for democracy in their own unions and for more power over the political and economic decisions that affect their lives in general. And they have no intention of making the labor movement into a vehicle through which everyday Americans can substitute democracy for the monopoly control that dominates so much of our political and economic lives.

Take Viet Nam for instance. The position the AFL-CIO leadership took on Southeast Asia was a tragedy. Who's the guy that was going? It was my son that works in the steel mill. It's not the banker's boy. The kid in the damn trenches in Viet Nam, that was the working-class kid. If 50,000 American kids laid dead in Southeast Asia, it was 50,000 sons of George Meany, that's the tragedy of it.

Of course in many ways the problem is that -- just with Rockefeller -- increased gas prices aren't going to hurt I.W. Abel or George Meany either.

Abel makes \$75,000 a year as President of the United Steelworkers where the average member makes about \$5 an hour. At a time when our paychecks barely stretch to the next pay period, the Union leadership railroaded through a dues increase and at the same time voted many of the top officers and District Directors salary increases of up to 40%. In many cases the amount of their increases were as much as the average steelworker makes all year.

That's symptomatic of the kind of country club unionism our union leaders and many others have fallen into. You know there are different kinds of corruption. The corruptness of attitude is the worst of all. A lot of people will readily state, "Oh Abel's sold out to the steel industry." Well he may not have taken a kickback or something, but he's done something maybe even as bad or worse. He's developed an attitude that he can do whatever he likes without listening to anybody. And that in the end screws the worker even more than a guy that takes a kickback. He's stealing something very important to me, he's stealing my vote and my voice.

Let me give you an example of Abel's attitude. During the recent effort to clear out corruption in the United Mine Workers and even after Jock Yablonski and his wife and daughter were murdered, Abel called up Tony Boyle's Secretary-Treasurer and complained that organized labor was not doing enough to help Boyle.

Many labor leaders today seem to think that the union is simply their little empire, their business. Leadership like that just won't go to bat for the members. To them the union is no longer a movement to improve the conditions and promote the interests of the workers. Instead it has become a staid business where their positions are more secure if nobody raises any hell.

When democracy is snuffed out in our unions, when leaders begin to view the union as their personal gravy train for their fat \$75,000 salaries, it's no wonder that when times get tough real wages for the average steelworker drops 5% in a year. It's no wonder, with that kind of staid inbred leadership, that the labor movement has a lower percentage of the total work force under contract today than it did 30 years ago. And it's no wonder that much labor leadership has failed to provide serious progressive leadership in American politics.

Now more than ever we need a tough, democratic labor movement. Some labor leaders believe in that goal, but far too few of the crew that sit around the AFL-CIO act like it. I know that personally for

a fact. When I first ran for District Director of District 31 (Chicago-Gary) of the USWA in 1972 the election was stolen by flagrant vote fraud. It was stolen because our movement in District 31 refused to kow-tow to that kind of tuxedo union leadership.

A court ordered honest re-run last year resulted in our victory because the election was conducted under the eye of 300 federal investigators. We shouldn't need 300 federal investigators to have democracy in our unions.

So in the last few months we've begun to organize STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK -- a rank-and-file organization aimed at making our part of the labor movement that kind of democratic, tough, voice for the interests of the average American working man and woman.

Right now we're engaged in a campaign to call a special convention that would reorganize the union dues structure and roll back the salaries of International Officers and District Directors. We need 1500 locals to pass resolutions calling for this kind of special convention and we have almost half of that number to date.

In the future STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK will undertake other campaigns around different issues -- all intended to make our union live up to its potential as a vehicle to serve the interests of working people instead of high paid union bureaucrats. This may very well include running a slate of candidates for International Offices in the Steelworkers in 1977.

We've begun to build considerable momentum, but we have one major problem: we need money -- lots of money -- if we are to make a serious attempt to change our union. We're already getting some from hundreds of rank-and-file union members -- through dinners, through raffles, carnivals -- you name it. But particularly in the next two months, that simply won't be enough.

We're now to the point where to keep the momentum going and to consolidate the gains we've made so far, we've got to open an expanded office, we've got to have money just to follow-up on the hundreds of inquiries that are coming in from all over. We've got to send people to other areas to meet with people and help them get organized in local areas. We've got to begin all of this in the next two months, because if we don't, the terrific momentum that is developing will be lost.

That's why I'm writing for your help. I know times are tough for all of us, but if you can send \$15, \$25, or \$100 or whatever you can, I think it will be an investment that will benefit all of us who want a real trade union movement again.

Sincerely,
Ed Sadlowski
District Director, District 31
United Steelworkers of America

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VICTOR REUTHER

Dear Friend,

Because of the type of causes you have supported in the past, I feel sure that you are interested in the labor movement as a progressive force in American life. I am passing on to you a copy of a remarkable letter that recently came to my attention.

It was written by Ed Sadlowski, the young rebel steelworker who made news last year when he took on and beat the union hierarchy in a contest for director of the Chicago-Gary district of the United Steelworkers.

You may have seen an amazing Studs Terkel interview with Ed on Television sometime ago. If you did, you must have felt, as I did, a surge of pride and faith in the labor movement as it once was and can be again.

Unlike some of the entrenched, self-perpetuating labor leadership of today, Ed doesn't play golf with politicians. He doesn't ride around in a limousine. He doesn't treat his district as his own private business or petty empire.

He has never lost touch with the membership, and never lost his respect for each member's right to be heard and counted in making policy and ratifying contracts.

Joe Rauh, who worked with my brother Walter for so long as attorney for the UAW, says Ed Sadlowski reminds him of Walter Reuther thirty years ago. I agree.

But Ed knows that it's not enough just to bring union democracy to his own district. He wants to make the labor movement into a tough, democratic vehicle for progressive change. He knows that to begin that task steelworkers have to challenge the power of the clique at the top that run the United Steelworkers.

So he and his friends have started a rank-and-file organization called STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK. That's what the enclosed material is all about. It tells what they are trying to accomplish and why they need our help.

Now those in the Steelworkers leadership who themselves called for labor support for Tony Boyle against Miners for Democracy will surely cry out against my "interference" in Steelworkers affairs. But the destruction of democratic unionism in any part of the labor movement is a direct threat to all democratic unions and to the institution of Democracy itself. It is never "interference" to support workers in their right to establish control over their own affairs through democratic elections. That's why, as a lifelong unionist, I am proud to support Ed Sadlowski's efforts to strengthen democratic unionism in the steel industry.

The labor movement is the largest, most potentially powerful base of support in this country for progressive political and economic decisions. If Sadlowski and his friends succeed, and join forces with progressive leaders in other unions who are dedicated to humane working conditions and rank-and-file democracy as he is, it could mean more than just a better deal for the members of their own unions. It could help get the whole country moving forward again.

So I urge you to listen to and heed what Ed has to say.

Sincerely yours,
Victor G. Reuther

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO:



STEELWORKERS FIGHT BACK
9271 South Chicago Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60617

I wish to support your program. Enclosed is my check for amount:

\$15 \$25 \$50 \$100 \$500 \$

[Empty box for check number]

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Socialist Workers Party
Natl. Campaign Committee
14 Charles Lane
New York, N.Y. 10014

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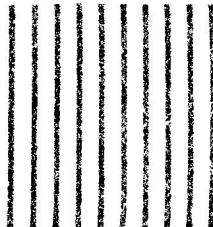
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Washington Post

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1974

Phone (202) 223-6000

A New Power in Labor

John Herling

A new labor star has been born. He is Edward Sadowski 26, a rangy steel worker with the gift of hard-hitting eloquence, who has just been elected director of the Chicago-Gary district of the United Steel Workers. As the new leader of District 31, the largest in the country, Sadowski is considered by many in the union as a strong possibility to become president of the Steelworkers in 1977.

Sadowski, a third generation steelworker, overwhelmed Sam Evett, the incumbent director, by a 2-1 margin. Evett had been heavily supported by I. W. Abel, president of the international union, and by the union establishment. District 31, with 140,000 members, has one-tenth of the total steelworkers membership.

The last time an electoral upheaval of comparable magnitude in the union caught public attention was 19 years ago when Mr. Abel, then secretary-treasurer of the union, challenged and narrowly defeated David J. McDonald, the incumbent president, in a referendum vote of the entire membership.

This time the electoral struggle was concentrated in the district which occupies a strategic place in the union's political life. For more than 30 years, it was headed by Joe Germano, without whose support Abel would not have been elected. Upon retirement, Germano tapped Evett, 62, his long time assistant, as heir to the district directorship. It was expected that Evett would make it without troublesome opposition.

Instead of a smooth transfer of power in the election of Feb. 13, 1974, Evett's way was blocked by Sadowski, a former president of one of the district's largest locals and a staff man. Sadowski raised the banner of reform and the demand for a more responsive leadership.

In full control of the election machinery, Evett was able only to squeak through by a vote of 23,354 to 21,806. The international union leadership registered surprise and consternation at the closeness of the margin. Sadowski and his followers challenged the result. Protests were filed with the Labor Department. Sadowski charged that Evett's election was the product of considerable fraud in various parts of the huge district.

In his challenge, Sadowski secured the aid of, among others, Joseph L. Rauh Jr., the Washington attorney who was a key figure in the United Mine Workers election of 1972, when Arnold Miller decisively defeated Tony Boyle.



By Margaret Thomas—The Washington Post

Under powers available to it under the Landrum-Griffin Law, the Labor Department conducted an intensive investigation. It determined that fraud had indeed been committed. The department then moved to obtain a court order for a re-run of the disputed election. But that remedy was slow in coming.

For a year and a half, the top officers of the international union and their counsel sought to abort Sadowski's demand for a new election. When it became clear that a trial would probably end in Sadowski's favor and at the same time reveal fraud spread over a wider area, Evett reluctantly consented to the new election under the auspices of the Labor Department.

After more legal sparring, the court set the election for the period of Nov. 12-15. More than 300 Labor Department representatives supervised the voting in the huge district. On successive days, they maintained a constant vigil at hundreds of polling places and finally counted the thousands of ballots. This time, Sadowski got 39,637 votes to Evett's 29,658.

In the tension of election, the fight between Evett and Sadowski had settled down to a struggle between the incumbent union leadership and rank-and-file presumably dissatisfied workers. Heavy contributions of money and manpower were poured in to beef up

the Evett campaign and fight off the Sadowski threat. While Sadowski could not match his opponent's high-level support, he successfully raised the standard of rank-and-file dissent. His victory is regarded as a stunning defeat for the union hierarchy.

Lacking heavy organizational apparatus, Sadowski had to rely on ad hoc rank-and-file committees and intensive appearances at plant gates. Sadowski relied heavily on a large turnout to reflect the deep-rooted dissatisfaction which had long prevailed in the Germano-controlled district.

Inside the union, observers saw this election re-run as much more than the choice of another district director. They believe the victory gained by Sadowski is a possible stimulus for future challenges to incumbent union leadership in other districts. Moreover, at the next international union election in 1977, neither President Abel nor Secretary-Treasurer Walter Burke will be eligible to run for office again. The union constitution calls for compulsory retirement after 65.

Should Sadowski try for the presidency and win, it could mean a restructuring of the union's internal policies as well as a more aggressive attitude in labor-management relations. This is why management and the American labor movement are keeping a close eye on Mr. Sadowski.

Effort to undermine District 31

Steelers vs split try

By MIKE RAYNER

GARY, IND.—Joe Rank and Ed Sadowski, both of District 31 (Gary-Chicago) of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), are successfully resisting steel union President J. W. Abel's renewed attack on newly elected District Director Ed Sadowski. The effort has taken the form of an attempt to split the District 31 membership in the USWA.

International officials have attempted to force Sadowski to resign from his position as District Director. Sadowski, however, has refused to do so. In fact, he has been elected to a second term in the position. The fact that he has been elected to a second term is a clear indication of the support he has received from the rank and file.

In addition, the rank and file have formed a new organization, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), based on the original Sadowski supporters. This new organization has elected Sadowski as its president. The rank and file leaders who have taken up this issue and called for a mass picket line outside the suburban offices of Sam Ewell, the man Ed Sadowski defeated in the last election. After the election, Ewell was appointed Abel's personal representative to the mid-west at a salary of \$30,000 a year.

The demonstration, which numbered almost two hundred steelworkers, included representatives of every major

basic steel local in District 31 from both Illinois and Indiana as well as a number of the smaller locals. It included both representatives of rank and file committees and local union officials.



Ed Sadowski

The issue has been particularly sensitive to workers in District 31 because of the history of corruption which resulted in the overturning of the first election. Sadowski contested. This was followed by the theft of District records before Sadowski took office. Since then Abel and his

henchmen have been harassing Sadowski with the obvious intent of making it impossible for him to function as District Director.

This newest move, the attempt to split the district, is tied to the fact that Sadowski is obviously getting up to run for international president next year. Steelworkers were also upset at the manner in which those resolutions were handled. In both local 6871 (Bethlehem Steel, Burns Harbor) and local 7011 (USWA) the resolutions were presented by the officers in a manner which was completely unrepresentative of the rank and file. In both cases, the resolutions passed. There

were fewer than 100 workers at either meeting. In local 6871 the Rank and File Committee organized to overturn the resolution at the next meeting by a vote of some 200 to 30.

In local 7011, the splitting resolution was pushed by a coalition of the international staff and an after school group which is trying to organize the local in the USWA. They also pushed a resolution to call for a general strike. The resolution was passed. There

Steel victory

LED BY the United Steel Workers of America (USWA) Local 6787 Rank and File Committee, the workers at Bethlehem Steel's Burns Harbor Works have just won a great victory. Paul Kaczocha, chairman of the Rank and File Committee, and candidate for President in next April's local elections, has been reinstated with full back pay.

Kaczocha was fired last month on a phony drug possession charge trumped up by the company's security force. His reinstatement was the result of the involvement of hundreds of workers at the Burns Harbor Works, the tireless efforts of the Rank and File Committee and the uniting of the whole union in his defense.

The morning after he was fired the Rank and File Committee issued a leaflet alerting the workers. A second leaflet was distributed two days later on the facts of the case and expressing the Rank and File Committee's determination to launch a mass fight which would continue until Kaczocha was reinstated.

Three days later the regular issue of the Rank and File Committee newsletter highlighted the developments in the fight to reinstate Kaczocha. By this time three thousand stickers had been distributed within the mill with the slogan "Where's Paul?" (a take off from the title of a pro-speed-up film called "Where's Joe?").

A DAILY vigil was established at the plant gate demanding his reinstatement. This continued for a week and culminated in a mass demonstration. Meanwhile nearly 300 workers showed up in a union meeting to demand that the local union is currently doing the best it can to demand that the local union accept the reinstatement of Paul Kaczocha.

That meeting decided several things. First, the local union committee demanded that Paul Kaczocha be reinstated. The firing of a worker on behalf of all the workers in the plant was unacceptable. The firing was an attack on the rights of all employees. That is why we are going to demand that the company furnish an assistant governor, Paul Kaczocha, who was known as a vibrant fighter for the worker's rights and in the same time eliminate someone from the local executives of whom the company had good reason to be afraid.

This position after the intervention of District 31 from the Rank and File Committee was finally agreed to by the local union. In a company, in an extraordinary move, some outside of the zone of a procedure and requested a speed-up meeting with Kaczocha, the local leadership and the international statement. At this meeting they tried to divert the question by referring that Kaczocha might have been fired, but suggested that it was another action effort who had done it, not the company. There was immediate pressure from the local officers and the international staffman to accept this story.

The Rank and File Committee rejected this ploy. Their position was that it was the company that accused and fired Kaczocha. It was the company that was going to have to rehire him. They reiterated their demand that Kaczocha be reinstated. By this time the Kaczocha case had become the dominant question throughout the mill. Less than three weeks after they fired him Bethlehem Steel agreed that if he would pass a lie detector test, they would take him back.

On Monday, Oct. 20, Paul Kaczocha went back to work.

Rank and File Steelworker