

Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

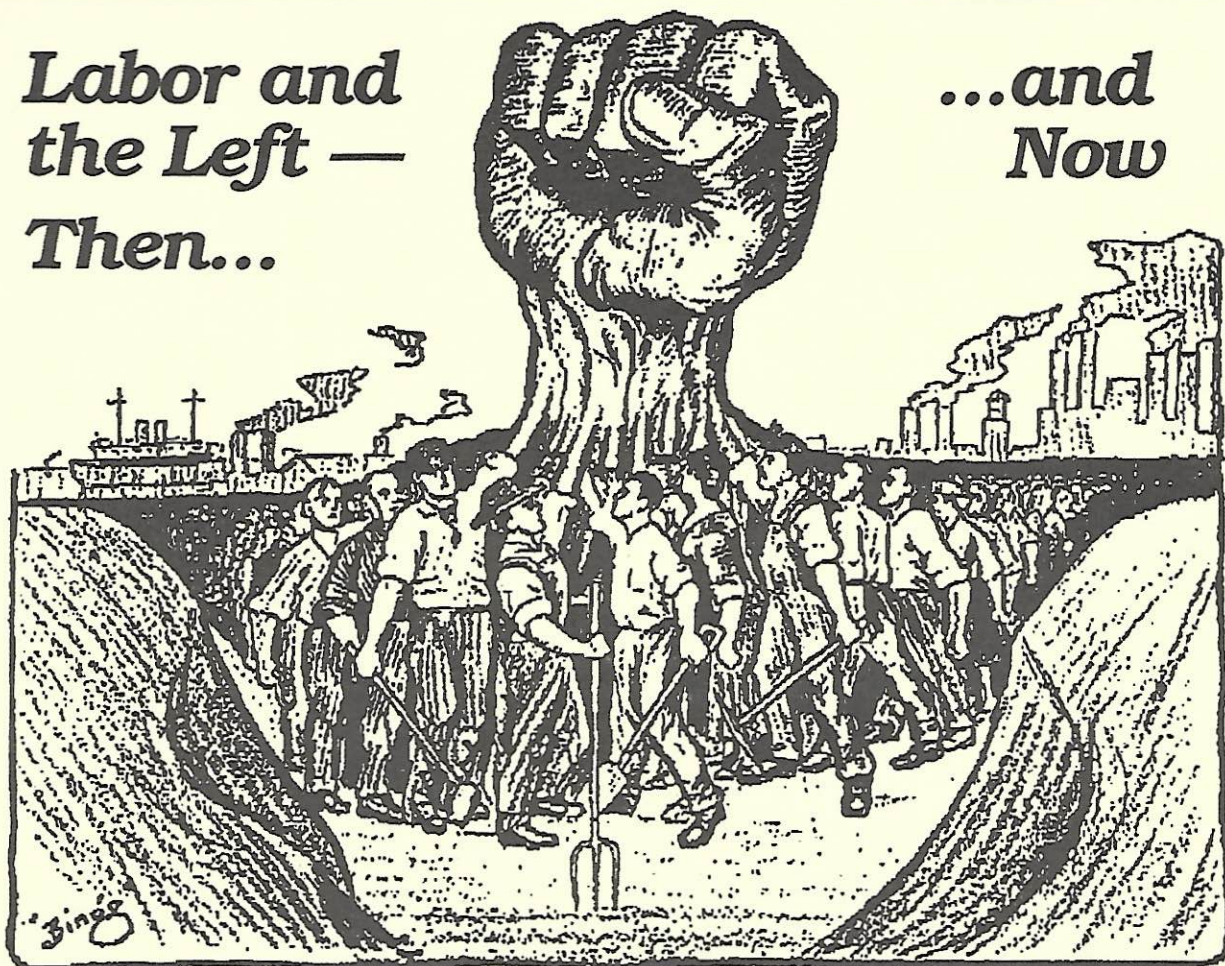
In Defense of Marxism

Number 109
September 1993

\$3.00

**Labor and
the Left —
Then...**

**...and
Now**



In This Issue

No Illusions in the "New Face" of Imperialism No to U.S. Intervention in Bosnia or Anywhere!	1	Discussion	
by Tom Barrett and George Saunders		Racism and the Labor Movement	16
Single-Payer Health Care and Independent Political Action	4	by Tom Barrett	
by Jean Tussey		Working Women and U.S. Unions	21
Operation Rescue's Summer Campaign Fails to Close Clinics ...	5	by Evelyn Sell	
by Patricia Stall		Teamster Samizdat	25
Marxism and the National Question in the Former Soviet Union .	6	by Marilyn Vogt-Downey and George Saunders	
by Marilyn Vogt-Downey		Back Again: Employee Involvement Plans	
Ethnic Organizing: A Double-Edged Sword	9	Have Been Tried Before	29
by Dan Georgakas		by David Zlatchin	
Two Riddles About Labor and the Left in the United States		Dan Rosenshine (1943-1992)	32
During the 1930s	11	by Paul Le Blanc	
by Paul Le Blanc		The Left and Labor in Chicago	33
The Left and Labor Today	14	Reviewed by William A. Pelz	
by Elaine Bernard		Letters	35

Who We Are

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism is published by an independent collective of U.S. socialists who are in fraternal solidarity with the Fourth International, a worldwide organization of revolutionary socialists.

Supporters of this magazine may be involved in different socialist groups and/or in a broad range of working class struggles and protest movements in the U.S. These include unions and other labor organizations, women's rights groups, antiracist organizations, coalitions opposed to U.S. military intervention, gay and lesbian rights campaigns, civil liberties and human rights efforts. We support similar activities in all countries and participate in the global struggle of working people and their allies. Many of our activities are advanced through collaboration with other supporters of the Fourth International in countries around the world.

What we have in common is our commitment to the Fourth International's critical-minded and revolutionary Marxism, which in the twentieth century is represented by such figures as V.I. Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, and Leon Trotsky. We also identify with the tradition of American Trotskyism represented by James P. Cannon and others. We favor the creation of a revolutionary working-class party, which can only emerge through the conscious efforts of many who are involved in the struggles of working people and the oppressed and who are dedicated to revolutionary socialist perspectives.

Through this magazine we seek to clarify the history, theory and program of the Fourth International and the American Trotskyist tradition, discussing their application to the class struggle internationally and here in the United States. This vital task must be undertaken if we want to forge a political party in this country capable of bringing an end to the domination of the U.S. imperialist ruling class, establishing a working people's democracy and socialist society based on human need instead of private greed, in which the free development of each person becomes possible.

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism is independent of any political organization. Not all U.S. revolutionaries who identify with the Fourth International are in a common organization. Not all of them participate in the publication of this journal. Supporters of this magazine are committed to comradely discussion and debate as well as practical political cooperation which can facilitate eventual organizational unity of all Fourth Internationalists in the United States. At the same time, we want to help promote a broad recomposition of a class-conscious working class movement and, within this, a revolutionary socialist regroupment, in which perspectives of revolutionary Marxism, the Fourth International, and American Trotskyism will play a vital role.

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism will publish materials generally consistent with these perspectives, although it will seek to offer *discussion articles* providing different points of view within the revolutionary socialist spectrum. Signed articles do not necessarily express the views of anyone other than the author.

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

Volume 11, No. 8

Whole No. 109,

September 1993

Closing News Date:

August 8, 1993

Paul Le Blanc, *Managing Editor*

Editorial Committee

Tom Barrett
Steve Bloom
Michael Frank
Lisa Landphair
Roy Rollin
George Saunders
Evelyn Sell
Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Editorial Board

Alex Chis
Claire Cohen
Kate Curry
Lloyd D'Aguiar
Lee DeNoyer
Saturnino Gonzales
Marty Goodman
Dayne Goodwin
Gladys Grossman
Vimukthi Jayadeva
Peter Johnson
Mandy Kivowitz
Michael Livingston
Frank Lovell
Sarah Lovell
Carol McAllister
Mike McCallister
Malik Miah
Jim Miles
Bill Onasch
Jon Paul Patafio
Cheryl Peck
Nanci Richards
David Riehle
David Weiss
Vera Wigglesworth

Send correspondence and subscriptions to *Bulletin IDOM*, 27 Union Square West, Second Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003. To subscribe to *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, send \$24 for 12 monthly issues or \$15 for 6 issues to *Bulletin IDOM*, 27 Union Square West, Second Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003. Back issues are \$3.00 each. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

No Illusions in the "New Face" of Imperialism

No to U.S. Intervention in Bosnia or Anywhere!

by Tom Barrett and George Saunders

One cannot read the press accounts or watch the broadcast reports of the slaughter in the former Yugoslavia without becoming sick at heart. It is a war that takes the heaviest toll among noncombatants, especially children. The spectacle of wounded and maimed children lying in bombed-out hospitals elicits an emotional response: "Can't someone just put a stop to it?" But it is hopeless of course to expect any worthwhile results from U.S. military intervention. Only a mass anti-intervention movement, including against the arms embargo on Bosnian Muslims, and international grass roots solidarity with the workers and the oppressed of Bosnia could achieve meaningful results. A mass working-class International could provide such solidarity and thwart imperialist intervention. But in the absence of a mass international movement the cycle of death continues, and there seems to be no end in sight.

If anyone had the illusion that American imperialism would adopt a more benign policy in world affairs after the sinister former CIA-man, George Bush, was replaced by the puff-cheeked former Oxford antiwar student and right-to-work governor of Arkansas, the U.S. missile attack on Bagdad by the Clinton administration should lay that illusion to rest. Regardless of which figurehead sits at the head of the executive committee of the U.S. ruling class, the world's most powerful capitalist state continues to pursue imperialist policies, using ruthless and violent methods in the interest of finance capital, the giant multinational corporations and banks that dominate the world economy.

The relative indifference of the U.S. ruling class and its government to mass destruction rained down upon civilian populations was evident not only in Iraq and Bosnia but also in southern Lebanon, where Israeli bombing deliberately created a mass refugee exodus of hundreds of thousands of people virtually overnight, with little more than a murmur from Washington.

Gulf War and "New World Order"

In the Gulf War two years ago U.S. imperialism — using the UN as a vehicle — demonstrated the lengths it would go to, and the military and political clout it could mobilize, to re-establish its practice of intervening with force anywhere in the world where it felt its interests justified such intervention. In the wake of the crushing of Iraq, Bush boasted that at last he had "kicked the Vietnam syn-

drome" — referring to the fear of mass opposition to war which had limited the U.S. rulers through much of the 1970s and '80s.

In the wake of the Gulf War, with the U.S. enjoying its position of sole world superpower in the "new world order," it used the excuse of the need to save people from famine in order to engineer an intervention in Somalia with hardly any protest from the American people. But this may change as the real motivation for that intervention becomes evident. U.S. forces in Somalia are being used to favor one Somali faction over another — striking mainly against the Farah Aidid faction — as we warned they might (in the February 1993 *BIDOM*). In the Somali capital of Mogadishu, in June and July mass protests against the U.S.-led UN intervention were met by deadly gunfire from UN forces. With U.S. helicopter gunships in the vanguard, UN troops slaughtered dozens of Somalis, who were armed with rocks or at best small arms. The Somalis were demanding that the UN get out, that attempts to put their country into UN trusteeship were in fact a step toward restoring colonialism. (Somalia had been colonized by Italy, Britain, and France until after World War II. For decades until 1990 it was under de facto U.S. control, through the military dictatorship of Siad Barre, a U.S. ally.)

The Bush-Clinton bipartisan justification

for intervention in Somalia was to "save lives." The U.S. military was supposed to guarantee food deliveries to areas of mass starvation resulting from chaotic civil conflict in the wake of the overthrow of Siad Barre. (He was overthrown by a coalition of opposition groups arising from within Somali society itself.) Now the U.S. and UN forces, instead of "saving lives" are taking them, in order to maintain their hold on the country. This in spite of growing objections from around the world to the U.S.-dominated UN role in Somalia.

It is obvious to many in today's world that the people of Somalia must be allowed to determine their own fate without the intervention of foreign military power. Why the insistence of the U.S.-UN leadership on overstaying their welcome? The answer has to do with considerations like the potential oil deposits and other mineral wealth Somalia is known to have and its strategic geopolitical position from the point of view of international investment interests, the powers that pull the decision-making strings in both the U.S. and the UN.

The Situation in Bosnia

In Bosnia, in the former Yugoslav federation, there is a different kind of charade going on. The U.S. government, and the other Western capitalist powers, claim they are civilized and

Editor's Note

The theme of this issue is "U.S. Labor and the Left in Historical Perspective," which was the focus of the excellent Socialist Scholars Conference panel discussion sponsored by us and reproduced here, involving — along with the managing editor of this magazine — Dan Georgakis (an editor of the outstanding *Encyclopedia of the American Left*) and Elaine Bernard of the Harvard Trade Union Program. David Zlatchin's fine discussion of past "employee involvement" schemes and Bill Pelz's incisive review of a study on labor and politics during the 1930s add important dimensions to this historical survey.

We are pleased to be offering other articles related to but also transcending the "historical" theme. "Teamster Samizdat" highlights the radical-democratic ferment that is enlivening growing sectors of today's trade union movement. Evelyn Sell's detailed exploration of women in the trade unions today provides key information on the intersection of class and gender. Tom Barrett's historical piece on racism and U.S. labor relates to the ongoing debate in this magazine on Black nationalism. (This particular debate will be concluded in our next issue, but, of course, discussion and analysis of the African American struggle and self-determination for oppressed nationalities will continue.) But Barrett's article also helps to advance the discussion on "building a revolutionary party in the United States," initiated by Paul Le Blanc in the previous two issues of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. We look forward to more discussion and debate on that question in future issues.

There are other valuable articles in this issue, but none are more important than that on the nature of imperialism in the "New World Order," co-authored by George Saunders and Tom Barrett. There is significant debate and confusion around this matter on the left, but it is essential to "get it right," so we urge our readers to give the article special attention, discuss it with friends, and also let us know what you think.

want to ensure freedom and human rights. They would like to look good in the eyes of public opinion, which is horrified by the fascist-style “ethnic cleansing” being carried out mainly by the Serb chauvinists with the backing of the former Stalinist Milosevic regime in Belgrade. The unending slaughter of civilians, mass rapes, and forcible expulsion of Muslims from areas where they have lived for centuries impel people to ask, Can’t something be done to stop this!? Clinton has taken the position that he wants to lift the embargo on arms to the Bosnian Muslims and make air strikes against the Serbs besieging Sarajevo but that when he consulted his European allies in May they were reluctant to go along with him. His European allies, on the other hand, say that he didn’t strongly advocate those measures, but simply asked their opinion and they explained why they didn’t think those measures would work. As we go to press, NATO is still considering the threat of air strikes — but this is mainly a threat meant to pressure the Serbs to make concessions. Similar threats in the past have caused the Serb forces to temper their aggression and temporarily halt their “ethnic cleansing,” only to resume their attacks with renewed fervor upon recognizing that the threats were empty.

The U.S. and UN and NATO all feel under pressure to go through the motions, to make the appearance of doing something in Bosnia. But they have *no real intention* of helping the Bosnian Muslims. For over a year they have imposed an arms embargo that effectively denied military materiel to the Muslims, while the Serbs were liberally supplied by the Serb-dominated former Yugoslav army. For example, the Serb chauvinist forces are reported to have more than 300 artillery pieces in the hills around Sarajevo, plus many tanks, while the defenders of that city have only a few dozen artillery pieces and little ammunition. As a result, since the middle of July Sarajevo has been in danger of being cut off from outside supply and of falling to the Serb chauvinist forces. According to the July 30 *New York Times*, the CIA was reporting that Muslim resistance was on the verge of collapse. The *Boston Globe* on the same day quoted a British think-tank journal predicting that guerrilla warfare would go on long after Bosnia was partitioned. Such reports indicate that the imperialist powers are inclined toward leaving the Muslims to their fate, as they have the Palestinians and the Kurds. Intervention by the UN and U.S. forces to defend Bosnian independence from the Serbo-Stalinists and their proto-fascist allies is clearly not perceived by the imperialists to be in their interest. *If* on the other hand, the U.S., or NATO, or the UN — all of which in fact operate in the interests of finance capital — were to make a major military intervention in Bosnia, the result would ultimately serve, not the people of Bosnia, but the interests of finance capital in one form or another. This would be true even if such intervention tem-

porarily stopped the Serb offensive and saved the lives of many Bosnian Muslims. As in Somalia, we would soon see that these essentially imperialist military forces, once they were on the scene with the pretext of coming to “save lives,” would end up taking lives. They would do so in order to quell popular protest against the very proimperialist policies that these military forces would inevitably introduce and enforce.

Actually, Serb expansionism at present fits in with the game plan of some important imperialist interests. The dominant financial powers in the world have gone along with Serbian expansion because they feel they can work with it and profit by it. They are willing to let the former Stalinist, now Serbian-chauvinist, forces “stabilize” the area, stability being necessary for doing profitable business.

Chauvinist Forces in the Ex-Stalinist Lands

In the former Soviet Union and the former so-called “socialist” countries of Eastern Europe — ex-Yugoslavia included — certain elements of the old Stalinist system (government and ministerial officials, factory managers, black marketeers, and “new entrepreneurs” from the educated and privileged strata of society as well as from the criminal world) are using the advantages they had under the old system to stake out new positions of power, privilege, and profiteering in the so-called “transition to a market economy.” Often they have organized armed gangs to pursue their aims and have not hesitated to use the most brutal and violent means, including civil war and mass destruction, as the old Stalinist bosses have done in Tajikistan, with help from Yeltsin’s Russian military, and as the Stalinist-chauvinist Serbian expansionists are doing in Bosnia. In many cases these elements have operated in direct collusion with some representative body of international finance capital (banks or other lending agencies, individual corporations or consortiums, some enjoying the backing of Western governments, etc.). This phenomenon has been pointed out in numerous issues of our magazine, especially in articles by Marilyn Vogt-Downey.

The Serbian chauvinist expansion, with estimates as high as 200,000 Bosnians killed and nearly 2 million made refugees, is a naked land grab unlike anything the world has seen recently — not since the Israelis stole the land of the Palestinians and drove them into half a century of life in refugee camps. (Of course, this kind of thing is an old story in the history of class society. For example, Native Americans experienced “ethnic cleansing,” though it didn’t go by that name, from virtually the first days of European entry into the Western Hemisphere. Their land and resources, from which many a “civilized” fortune was made, were considered fair game. The same goes for all the areas colonized by capitalist Europeans.)

In early August a tentative agreement was reached to divide Bosnia into three states — with the Serbs who constitute only 30 percent of the Bosnian population being allotted more than half the territory. Actually the Serbs have seized about 70 percent of the territory, and so, if they lived up to this agreement, would give back about 20 percent of their land grab, an unlikely development. The rest of Bosnia would be divided among Croats and Muslims. Although Muslims constituted more than 40 percent of the population, they were being offered only about 25 percent of the territory.

It is not clear that this “peace” will go into effect or if it will be durable. Despite reluctant Muslim consent to the plan, the Serbs and Croats will probably go ahead and violate the agreement, with the aim of grabbing all the Muslim land — on the basis of their military superiority. In such a situation, it is possible that the Bosnian Muslims would decide to fight on, even though their military situation looked hopeless. Even if the Muslims are crushed, the complicity of the Croat leadership in this crime could backfire against the Croatian people. The Serbian chauvinist gains in Bosnia are likely to whet their appetite for more, leading eventually to a renewed assault against the Croats, as in 1991–92.

End of Cold War and Crisis of the Left

An important element in the present world situation, since the time of the Gulf War and before, is that the Cold War has ended. The geopolitical struggle between imperialism and the workers’ states, which had been a factor in nearly all of the civil strife of the past 48 years, is no longer a factor. Clinton and Yeltsin are on the same side and are often supporting the same forces in the world’s trouble spots. A powerful force, which for its own reasons had served to block the imperialists from imposing their will throughout the world, has ceased to exist.

In the advanced capitalist countries, trade union bureaucrats and Social Democrats, who long ago made their peace with imperialism, face little challenge today to their influence over the working masses. In nearly every country, the revolutionary left is in disarray, lacking not only organizational strength but — worse — confidence in the political ideas which have defined revolutionary socialism and served the working class well for over a century. Now, beginning with confusion concerning the ill-named “Operation Restore Hope,” which sent U.S. troops to Somalia, some radicals are equivocating on their opposition to imperialist intervention abroad. The emotional response to the very real human suffering in Bosnia and Somalia has been mixed with a generous measure of demoralization over the prospects for socialist revolution. As a result, some serious radicals, who are neither stupid nor dishonest, are actually calling — with certain

conditions, to be sure — for United Nations or even unilateral United States intervention to stop the fighting in the Balkans and giving support to “Operation Restore Hope” and its successor UN intervention.

Where Principles Come From

Marxist principles, unlike religious principles, are not eternal or unchanging, nor are they exempt from re-evaluation. For Marxists, material reality comes first. If the truth does not support the theory, it is the theory, not the truth, which is discarded. Socialist leaders and organizations who have clung to theories even after the facts have proved them false have inevitably come to grief, sooner or later. The converse, however, is true as well: socialist leaders and organizations come to the same grief if they *discard* principles which repeatedly are proven true in the crucible of world events.

Again in contrast to the tenets of religion: Marxist principles are not handed to prophets on stone tablets, nor revealed in dreams (as the book of Revelation was given to John), nor are they the product of that mystical phenomenon known as “automatic writing” (as the Qur’an was supposedly given to Muhammad). Marxist principles come from real-life experience, analyzed with the tools of dialectical logic. Marx at his best wrote about the social conditions and events of his own day and explained what they meant. Lenin’s *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* contains table after table of economic statistics, proving conclusively the hegemony of finance capital and the growth of multinational corporations, which has only continued and intensified since 1916, when *Imperialism* was first published.

Cataclysmic struggles and events taught the hardest lessons to the international workers’ movement. The Paris Commune divided socialist from anarchist; World War I and the Russian Revolution divided Communist from Social Democrat, and the degeneration of the Russian Revolution — leading to the smashing of the second Chinese revolution, the rise of fascism, and the holocaust of World War II — divided Stalinist from revolutionary Marxist. Marxist principles are nothing more and nothing less than the lessons accumulated from the monumental historical events through which the workers’ movement has lived. It is appropriate to question and re-examine them in the light of present-day experience. It is not appropriate to discard them without clearly showing why objective conditions today are qualitatively different from those existing at the time the principle was established, or why the lessons drawn from those past events are not sound. Those who have offered justification for sup-

porting imperialist intervention in Bosnia and Somalia have not shown that.

Imperialism in the Real World

Revolutionary opposition to imperialist military intervention is based on experiences which are remarkably similar to the Balkan and Somali situations today, and in the case of Bosnia, directly parallel. Though we know that the assassination of Austro-Hungarian Archduke Ferdinand in the streets of Sarajevo was not the *real* cause of World War I, competition for control of the Balkans was a very important one. That is just one example.

Imperialist military intervention has rarely in history had simple motivations. Even in the case of the Gulf War — in which oil was the key issue — there was never any serious threat that Europe or Japan, let alone the United States (which still gets the majority of its oil domestically) would be deprived of oil, even if Iraq had succeeded in its annexation of Kuwait. The U.S. loss in Vietnam had few adverse economic consequences. In Angola, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the U.S. government actually carried out a policy which hurt the economic interests of a U.S. corporation, by supporting the UNITA counterrevolutionaries, who carried out attacks against the Gulf Oil refinery at Cabinda. Gulf operated that refinery according to the terms of an agreement negotiated with the legitimate government of the Angolan People’s Liberation Movement (MPLA).

Historically, the role of “peacekeeper” has been a favorite one for imperialist powers to assume. But the so-called peace brought by great power intervention has always worked to the advantage of the conqueror. A standard justification given by the British imperialists for maintaining their presence in India for more than three centuries was that they brought “peace and order” to the warring states and ethnic and religious factions of that subcontinent. (In fact, the British themselves initiated or provoked many of the conflicts that ended in the Pax Britannica and the sole dominance of the British Raj in India.)

Imperialist forces have often moved into an area on the pretext of being “peacekeepers,” only to establish permanent domination later. For example, after eighty years of turmoil in Egypt, with the French, British, and Ottoman empires vying for dominant influence there, the Liberal British Prime Minister William Gladstone dispatched troops to occupy that country in 1882. He did so with reluctance, he said, all the while denouncing “imperialism.” However, he said, he could not allow continued instability in a region which Britain considered vital to its interests. (Egypt had been behind on debt payments to Britain and France.)

More recently, in 1969 Harold Wilson’s

Labour government sent troops to Northern Ireland, allegedly at the request of some in the Catholic community who hoped the British would protect them from the brutality of the Protestant Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). They found instead that the British troops were as oppressive as the RUC, and the people turned to the Irish Republican Army for protection. Twenty-four years later, British occupation continues.

In nearly every instance of imperialist military action, including the two world wars, government spokespeople have cited enemy atrocities against “defenseless” small countries and innocent civilians as justification. And in almost every instance, they were telling the truth. British newspaper headlines screamed about Russian atrocities against Turkey during the Crimean War of 1853–56. President William McKinley did not have to exaggerate Spanish tyranny in the Philippines or Cuba when he used that to justify the Spanish-American War of 1898. With a straight face, the champions of democracy in Washington denounced colonialism as they took possession of Cuba and the Philippines.

Imperialist Aggression, People’s Resistance

In this century there have been few worse examples of human suffering than in China during the 1930s. After Stalinist misleadership caused the disastrous defeat of the Second Chinese Revolution, the people were trapped between the forces of Chiang Kai-shek in the south and a collection of brutal warlords in the north. As Chiang moved to assert his dictatorship over the whole of China, starvation and violent reprisals against civilians were the norm. However, their savagery was amateurish compared to the efficient “professional” savagery of the Japanese, who invaded China in 1936.

Then, as now, well-meaning people in the U.S. and Britain called on their governments to do something. Some English and American volunteers joined in the fighting, the best-known being the “Flying Tigers,” who provided air support for Chinese resistance forces before the U.S. Congress declared war on Japan. However, was Japan any more “evil” than the British Empire or the United States? Japanese rhetoric was just as “anti-imperialist” as Gladstone’s and McKinley’s had been in earlier times. They claimed to be “liberating” Asia from the European barbarians, and certainly the Indian people under the British Raj or the Chinese people subject to the “open door policy” needed liberation.*

Of course, what the militarists in Tokyo were doing was no different from what their imperialist competitors had done before them. Britain and the United States (and to a

Continued on page 24

*The “open door policy” meant that no one Western power had exclusive rights in China; the door was to remain open so that all could put their snouts in the trough.

Single-Payer Health Care and Independent Political Action

by Jean Tussey

The author is a member of Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 4340 and of Labor Party Advocates in Cleveland.

The struggle for Canadian-style single-payer health care in the United States is building a movement that not only challenges the sanctity of the profit system in the health services and insurance business but may well serve as a rallying point for a united, independent, labor-based fightback against reactionary proposals for cuts and privatization of other social gains, like Medicare, Medicaid, unemployment insurance, and workers compensation.

The new Democratic administration of President Clinton, facing economic and political crises at home and abroad, advocates "managed competition," which tries to control health care costs through a mixture of "free market" forces and government regulation. This would institutionalize the giant health maintenance organizations (HMO's) as the main health care providers, guaranteeing nothing but their profits. (See "The Struggle Over Health Care Reform," by Dayne Goodwin in the July-August issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.)

Even before the promised mid-September release of the Clinton administration's national health care reform legislation, while the Democrat vs. Republican faction fight over economic program was dominating the political scene, skirmishes related to health care were breaking out on a number of fronts. This sharpened the battle between managed-care and single-payer supporters and raised questions in health care coalitions about what can be done to defend and extend gains won through collective action by working people.

In a story headed "Clinton Health Care Plan Sits in the Waiting Room," the *New York Times* of July 27 reported:

White House officials say they...expect to have the health plan completed and announced by mid-September. They have already organized a "boiler room" operation to manage lobbying and public relations tactics on the issue....And on Capitol Hill, Democratic leaders in the House and Senate have been meeting weekly to plot strategy....

Uwe Reinhardt, a health economist at Princeton University, said that after all the working group sessions and briefing papers, "What Clinton faces now is the question he faced in December: How do you pay for the damn thing?"

The *Wall Street Journal*, in a July 26 news story headed "Doctors Lobby Patients in a Campaign to Shape Clinton Health-Care Package" reported the "start of what is likely

to be a major campaign by doctors and insurers to protect their interests in the health-care reform debate." According to the *Journal*, the American Medical Association says that

in September it will mail its "detailed analysis" of President Clinton's health plan to all 630,000 doctors in the U.S. Similar mass mailings to health insurance policyholders are contemplated by insurers and their trade groups....That strategy will let the health industry groups take issue with new government programs that might curtail people's choices — and reduce medical earnings.

The retrograde movement under way on health care was illustrated at the National Conference of State Legislatures, held in San Diego the last week of July. A proposal to call for repeal of a federal rule that forbids states to charge Medicaid patients a share of fees for hospital emergency room services lost by only one vote.

And in Ohio, Democratic Representative Bob Hagan withdrew HB 175: Universal Health Insurance for Ohio (UHIO), which he had introduced in the state legislature February 1991, and substituted a managed competition-type bill. This led to a split in the Ohio health care coalition, where a majority supported Hagan while organizations that stuck by the principle of a single-payer plan, like the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW), the CWA, the Northeast Ohio coalition, and others withdrew from the state coalition and are attempting to regroup for a united state campaign for single-payer health reform.

Although much of the activity of the labor/community single-payer coalitions across the country has consisted in organizing support and lobbying for the American Health Security Act of 1993 (HR1200/S491), trade unionists, retirees, and other social activists not co-opted by populist rhetoric and "gentleman's agreements" are beginning to question reliance on the Democratic Party and to consider independent political action alternatives.

For a Health Care Referendum in Ohio

A Universal Health coalition conference in Huron, Ohio, on June 19, closed with a political caucus meeting to consider proposals for action to win single-payer universal health care reform. Basically, two different approaches emerged.

One was to continue lobbying Congress, "pressuring" the Clinton administration, and raising funds for media ads and events, conferences, etc.

The other was a strategy for an Independent Universal Health Care Campaign patterned on Ohio labor's experience in mobilizing close to a million voters, in the reactionary climate of 1958, to defeat the phony Ohio Right-to-Work Bill with a massive, resounding No vote on a ballot referendum.

At that time a leadership emerged to form United Organized Labor of Ohio (UOLO). It included the AFL and the CIO (which in Ohio had not yet merged), the Teamsters, the United Auto Workers, the railroad unions, the Mechanics Educational Society of America, and other independent labor organizations. It was not tied to any political party. Rank-and-file initiatives were welcomed in local unions, shops, offices, communities, county fairs, churches. UOLO sponsored radio spots, and union representatives participated in public debates with GE and other company representatives.

Today a new Independent United Labor and Health Care Coalition of Ohio could place a single-payer bill on the Ohio ballot with a massive educational initiative petition campaign for a "Vote Yes" referendum vote. The unions have the resources, the political action committees, the means and the experience for organizing workers and their families and friends and reaching out to the growing numbers of unemployed, homeless, and hungry, so as to outvote the opponents of the kind of health care system we all need.

This kind of United Labor of Ohio campaign could again win the support of union members and potential union members, including those employed in the growing health care industry (workers who are among the worst victims of "managed competition"). It could also enable unions to negotiate health benefit provisions with employers subject to being reopened when single-payer health care laws are won on the state level or in Congress.

Such an independent campaign could unite and strengthen the growing number of grass roots local and national coalitions for health care reform, building the organized base for winning a national single-payer universal health care system.

A Survival Issue for Labor

Organizing to deal with the national health care crisis is becoming a question of survival for the labor movement.

The July 26 national *AFL-CIO News* (in an article entitled "Health care battles send unionists to the barricades") explained why "union members have rushed to the front lines in the battle for national health care reform":

*The health care issue is at the heart of more than 75 percent of current contract disputes,
Continued on page 34*

Operation Rescue's Summer Campaign Fails to Close Clinics

by Patricia Stall

This summer's confrontations between Operation Rescue (OR) and abortion rights supporters showed that the struggle to protect and expand women's reproductive rights has retained its independent and militant character. The well-organized defense actions and large mobilizations clearly proved that pro-choice advocates are not passively waiting for President Clinton and other politicians to maintain women's reproductive rights. The movement for abortion rights has not been weakened by the many battles it has been forced to undertake, nor has it been lulled into complacency by victories or disoriented by changes in tactics.

Operation Rescue's annual summer assault on women's health clinics targeted seven cities this year: Cleveland, Dallas, Jackson (Mississippi), Melbourne (Florida), Minneapolis, Philadelphia, and San Jose (California). The 10-day anti-abortion campaign, called "Cities of Refuge," began on July 9. Over the past three years, these summer campaigns prioritized blockading clinics, but a different strategy was employed this time. Before the on-site actions, OR sent letters to local doctors and clinic workers warning them to stop providing abortion services or risk being harassed. Sue Finn, an OR spokeswoman, described plans that included picketing medical workers' homes, barring them from getting to work, and publicizing their photos and names on "Wanted" posters tacked up in public places. Finn said, "It is our goal to expose these abortionists right in their own neighborhoods."

Abortion rights activists announced they would protect women's access to health services by utilizing trained clinic defenders, providing guards for doctors' homes, and escorting women into clinics. In some cities, clinic operators erected protective fences and bolted shut clinic windows. Some physicians obtained court injunctions against OR harassment, and some began wearing bulletproof vests — especially after Dr. David Gunn was shot and killed at a Pensacola, Florida, clinic by an anti-abortion activist on March 10.

Not wishing to cope with a repetition of OR's 1991 terrorist tactics in Wichita, Kansas, the state of Minnesota and some of the targeted cities enacted legislation to hamper physical blockades of

clinics. The San Jose City council adopted a "bubble zone" ordinance, which creates an 8-foot protective area around patients seeking entry into a clinic, and a second ordinance forbidding picketing within 300 feet of the home of a targeted individual. In Philadelphia, the city council passed a law protecting clinic accessibility. The new Minnesota law provides for large fines and yearlong prison terms for persons blocking access to clinics. In Dallas and Cleveland Heights, residential picketing was banned by new legislation.

A combination of factors caused OR to modify its most extreme forms of aggression this year: the national outrage resulting from the murder of Dr. Gunn, the loss of support from anti-abortion forces eager to distance themselves from the murder and from blatantly announced plans to deliberately break laws, and the continued persistent mobilization of abortion rights supporters. Some anti-abortion leaders publicly called on OR to drop its confrontational actions. Bill Price, president of the Dallas-based Texans United for Life, explained, "Their tactics are hurting us more than helping us." OR founder Randall Terry, who spoke at various church meetings and rallies during the 10-day campaign, told listeners to refrain from blockading clinics but to fight against pending legislation limiting anti-abortion actions at clinics. Bob Jewitt, OR's national communications director, said there would be no clinic blockades in Ohio because OR wanted "to show the people of Cleveland this is a peaceful, non-violent organization." OR leaders have apparently begun to feel the pressures of a growing isolation within the broader anti-abortion movement, which is still strong, as well as the impact of numerous legal problems and fines. Since 1988, OR actions have

resulted in more than 50,000 arrests across the country.

The chief OR organizer in Cleveland, Rev. Joseph Slovenic, announced beforehand, "There will be no rescues. We will not be chaining ourselves to doors or barring people from clinics. ... We're not going to do anything that's going to get us arrested." Pro-choice forces, however, prepared for the worst-case scenario by organizing massive daily defense actions at four clinics, training hundreds of clinic escorts, and preparing abortion rights supporters to speed to homes of picketed doctors and clinic staff members. OR did not carry out any activities at the clinic in Cleveland Heights, and their actions at the three Cleveland clinics included praying, singing, and marching quietly. At each of these three locations OR was greatly outnumbered by clinic defenders, who waved signs, chanted, and called out pro-choice slogans.

Not all local OR groups were as "peaceful" or as concerned with projecting a changed public image as the one in Cleveland. Six OR persons were arrested in Jackson on July 10 when they tried to block a car from entering the Mississippi Women's Medical Clinic. Over three dozen OR activists were arrested outside a Planned Parenthood clinic in San Jose, and over a dozen were arrested for picketing a San Jose doctor's home. In the neighboring city of Los Gatos, on July 14, OR actions included jumping over protective barriers and breaching police lines outside a clinic; 33 OR people were arrested.

At this point abortion rights forces do not know what strategy groups like Operation Rescue will utilize in the coming period. Rev. Slovenic commented at the end of Cleveland's summer campaign, "This is not the end. This is only the beginning." He told

reporters that OR could return to confrontational tactics at any time. The unrelenting fight against women's reproductive rights continues to be carried out by very powerful forces in this country. What the events this summer demonstrated was the alertness, vigor, and determination of abortion rights supporters. These are key ingredients for the ongoing struggle to safeguard and advance women's reproductive rights. □

Labor Conference for Cuba

The U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange and the Worker to Worker Canada-Cuba Solidarity Committee are cosponsoring an **International Trade Union Conference in Solidarity with Cuba**, to be held in Toronto, Canada, October 1-3, 1993 (Friday through Sunday). This conference will give North American workers the opportunity to hear from representatives of the Confederation of Cuban Workers, to exchange ideas and experiences, and to become better informed about the situation of Cuban workers.

To help publicize this conference, endorse it, or obtain further information, write or call: U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange, P.O. Box 39188, Redford MI 48239. Phone no., 313-836-3752. Fax no., 313-836-3752.

The Fifth Cuba Labor Seminar of the U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange will take place November 1-15, 1993. For details, write or call the above address or telephone number.

Marxism and the National Question in the Former Soviet Union

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The following is a presentation made by Marilyn Vogt-Downey as part of a panel sponsored by the New York Marxist School Saturday, July 17. The panel was on the topic "Nationalism, Racism, Ethnocentricism: Conflict, War, and Crisis under Capitalism." Marilyn was asked specifically to address the issue of nationalism in the former Soviet Union.

Marxists do not mourn the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The Union of the republics had long ago ceased to be voluntary.

The Soviets as the designation for the councils of workers, peasants, and soldiers that had grown up in 1917 and served as the basis for democratic, proletarian rule established as a result of the Bolshevik revolution in October of that year had long ago ceased to function as such. Those councils that survived the civil war of 1918–1921 soon became victims of the bureaucratization process that led to the revolution's degeneration in the 1920s. From then on, instead of being organs of workers control, they became transmission belts for the dictates of the bureaucratic rulers in the Kremlin.

Finally, the totalitarian dictatorship of the bureaucracy which came into being by destroying the soviets and crushing the Marxist opposition led by Leon Trotsky was *not Socialist*, even though it presided over a post-capitalist, nationalized, and planned economy.

Neither the Russians nor the populations of the other 14 non-Russian republics had any rights to self-determination. On paper they had the right to secede, but in reality, even to raise that issue ended you in a labor camp for 15 years or worse. An example of this was the case of Oleksei Tikhi and Lev Lukyanenko, who were sentenced to death in 1961 for trying to organize a Ukrainian Workers and Peasants' Union to agitate for a referendum on the desirability of an independent workers and peasants Soviet Ukraine. Their sentence was commuted to 15 years. Tikhi died while in the camps for lack of proper medical care.

Only force and terror held the republics together.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was vastly accelerated by the attempted coup in August 1991. But the decentralization of the economy, the dismantling of the centralized ministries that happened during Gorbachev's reign, along with the democratization that had been opened up by the glasnost policies had already set centrifugal forces in motion.

These forces originated in the widespread, understandable, and justified hatred of Kremlin rule, the privileged apparatus which the Communist Party represented, Russian hegemony and domination, and Russification. These sentiments nourished powerful and

popular independence-minded mass movements among the non-Russians, starting first in the predominantly Armenian region of Nagorno-Karabagh inside the Azerbaijan Republic in early 1988.

As you will recall, in the aftermath of the defeated coup attempt, Boris Yeltsin banned the Communist Party in a counter-coup.

As the CP bosses and apparatchiks ran for cover, there was no longer any force holding the republics together.

However, although all the non-Russian republics officially declared themselves independent, the genuine nationalist and independence-minded democratic forces were far from victory. In fact, their "independence" was short-lived. Within weeks, all but the Baltic republics and the Georgian republic were to have joined the bureaucratically initiated Commonwealth of Independent States.

Outside the Baltic, only in Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova did popular, non-CP, nationalist leaders get elected president and only in Armenia did the old apparatus — on the strength of successive social traumas and political upheavals — find itself at least partially displaced by a new layer of non-CP forces — mostly from the intelligentsia.

In all the other republics, the old CP chiefs — yesterday's pro-Moscow oppressors of the movements for national rights — were able to switch camps overnight and — barely batting an eye — put themselves forward as champions of national rights. Tajikistan saw a slight variation on this theme. There, the old apparatus led by Rakhman Nabiyeu, tried to swim against the political stream to reassert the rule of the Stalinist apparatus, only thereby feeding massive discontent and opposition. Although temporarily thrown out, the old rulers managed to reestablish themselves but only with the help of mercenary armies led by former criminals like Sangak Safarov. Safarov, after having served 23 years in prison for common crimes, ended up in command of the bloody and merciless attack on the opposition in southern Tajikistan. He was subsequently designated head of a nonexistent "Popular Front" movement, and one of his lieutenants was appointed minister of internal affairs when the old clique reestablished their government. You can find telling biographical material about this vile character in *Moscow News* No. 15, 1993. It turns

out, incidentally, that Safarov died as he lived. He was killed in March 1993 in a shoot-out with one of his competitors over division of the spoils — disputes over "division of territory and posts in the new government." Nabiyeu himself died April 1993, but his apparatchiks, their mafia, "businessmen," and other criminal cronies continue to rule.

Subsequently, even the popularly elected president of Georgia — Zviad Gamsakhurdia — former dissident and political prisoner of Eduard Shevardnadze — Georgia's former CP and KGB chief — was violently overthrown by local gangster forces with private armies, who restored Shevardnadze to power in the winter and early spring of 1992.

Thus, despite the strength of the long-suppressed national-democratic aspirations in Belarus, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan, as well as Uzbekistan and the other Central Asian republics, the bureaucratic apparatus born during the Stalin years still holds the reins of power — *now as born-again marketeers*.

In other words, what is happening there cannot be blamed on the revival of "nationalist" movements — quite the contrary.

True, these republics are now no longer obliged to function under the dictates of the Kremlin bureaucracy's plan per se. But they are *not really independent*. By the logic of the market reforms which *all* the republican governments — even Armenia's — have pledged to pursue, the apparatuses of these republics *are obliged* to follow the commands of a new dictator — the International Monetary Fund — if they are to get the imperialist aid and investments they are relying on. Although functioning in vastly transformed circumstances, this old bureaucratic apparatus still has control of the resources and the police and military forces and still has the backing of the Kremlin. Where mass struggles have emerged, they have been brutally suppressed. Major struggles lie ahead if these regimes are to be overthrown — by that I mean if there are to be *political revolutions*, through which organized and armed workers and peasants take power from the bureaucrats and smash their machinery of state.

The National Struggles Today

I have spent a great deal of time studying, in as much detail as possible, the devastating armed conflicts that have been going on in the former Soviet Union since 1988 — when the Azerbaijan government, with the backing

of the Kremlin, set out to crush the national-democratic movement in Nagorno-Karabagh.

I have written a number of articles on this issue that have appeared in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. Some of these articles go into considerable detail, perhaps more detail than you would ever want. However, I feel that it is important to record this data for those who feel, as I do, that it is vital for Marxists to critically examine these events rather than be satisfied with the generalizations we get from the big business media.

I wanted to learn who and what were behind these wars. Although it is obvious that we have far from all the necessary material available, we can learn a great deal from the reports that do exist.

Several generalization can be made:

Policies similar to the "ethnic cleansing" carried out in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina by the Serbian Stalinists, headed by Slobodan Milosevic, and by proto-fascist allies like Radovan Karadzic, have been pursued by local Stalinists and their gangster allies in the former Soviet Union not only against Armenians in Azerbaijan and Nagorno-Karabagh, but against Muslims and other opponents of the old Stalinist apparatus in Tajikistan (in the conflict I just mentioned), against Ossetians in South Ossetia and Abkhazians in Abkhazia by Georgian forces sent by the central Stalinist apparatus, and against the Ingush people in North Ossetia, to name a few.

Large areas have been devastated. In South Ossetia alone, 117 villages were razed to the ground by Georgian militia in an effort to crush the independence movement in 1992. Almost the entire population of 100,000 was forced to flee — driven out by the terror of the Georgian forces. Two gangster forces, the "National Guard" set up by Tengiz Kitovani — until recently Shevardnadze's defense minister — and the "Horsemen" (Mekhedroni) set up and commanded by Zhaba Ioseliani — Shevardnadze's interior minister — are private armies that have been responsible for an overwhelming proportion of the atrocities, against both Ossetians and Abkhazians. "They rob everyone and everything, irrespective of nationality," a *Moscow News* report from these regions explained. The resources for these two armies of goons come not only from the privileged apparatchiks but from their mafia/"businessmen" cronies who want an even greater share of the national wealth.

Thousand and thousands of people have been killed. An estimated 10,000 were killed in Tajikistan as a result of the war by the pro-Nabiyev thugs against the democratic movements in Tajikistan in 1992.

Over a million people have been made refugees by such conflicts. This means that these people not only live in conditions of absolute misery, but their land is untilled and production at a standstill. To this is added

new incidents of diseases like cholera and catastrophes like massive food poisoning. In southern Tajikistan — in the Kurgan-Tyube region ravaged by Safarov's forces — some 3,500 people have died from consuming flat-cakes made from a flour containing not only wheat but poison seeds from a plant that got harvested with the wheat because the farmers, in the war conditions, couldn't conduct the harvest properly.

On top of this are the routine economic catastrophes caused by the market reforms, with galloping inflation and exorbitant prices for what little food is available.

In addition, populations that have dared to rise up have become victims of economic blockades and military sieges that have isolated not only towns but whole republics. This has been the case with Armenia, where an economic blockade by the Azerbaijan regime has created fuel shortages causing most of Armenia's industries, schools, and other institutions to shut down. The republic has had almost no electricity, heat, or hot water for over two years.

How Is a Marxist to Respond to All This?

It is quite common to hear people who call themselves progressive or even Marxist to speak contemptuously of nationalist struggles and blame nationalism for these bloody conflicts, full-scale wars, and territorial disputes that have erupted in the workers states — a term developed by Leon Trotsky, leader of the Marxist opposition to Stalinism, to define the Soviet Union. (It means a system in which capitalism has been abolished and the means of production are "owned" collectively by the entire working class. This system is progressive and must be defended. However, the full potential of this economic system is blocked by the bureaucratic caste of rulers originating under Stalin, which usurped political leadership and privileges for themselves by crushing workers control. It will take a political revolution by the work-

ers to overthrow this caste and remove this historic obstacle to human progress.)

This tendency to condemn nationalism is especially common among commentators from afar who have not themselves experienced national oppression, or worse yet, among those who by accident of birth belong to an oppressor nationality themselves — Russians, white Americans, etc.

If, however, we seek to build a new and just social order from the ruins around us, revolutionaries need to understand, as *Lenin and Trotsky did*, that the national struggles of oppressed peoples for the right to self-determination are fully as legitimate as other struggles for basic democratic rights and, like other such struggles, have a revolutionary dynamic and must be supported.

Such movements directly challenge the continued existence of bureaucratic, as well as imperialist, political and economic institutions. In fact, the realization of the national-democratic aspirations of the oppressed is a precondition for the realization of other democratic rights.

After all, freedom of speech and press, once achieved, will be in whose language? Access to science, technology, or information in all fields of knowledge will be available to people in what language? How will resources be allocated? Who will decide?

If one reads and understands what Lenin wrote on the nationality question, particularly in his "Testament," written in December 1922 and suppressed for decades, and what Trotsky wrote, particularly in his "The Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads," written on the eve of World War II, in July 1939, it is obvious that revolutionaries should be the advocates of these mass movements for national self-determination of oppressed peoples and not look down our noses at them or avoid them on the basis of some allegedly superior "proletarian internationalism."

The Bolshevik revolution was able to inspire the world not only because the Bol-

For Russians especially, the conflict in Tajikistan can no longer remain someone else's problem. Just this July, 25 Russian soldiers stationed as guards on the Tajik-Afghanistan border were reportedly killed by some Tajik rebels who had fled into Afghanistan to escape the military terror by the pro-Nabiyev forces and regroup. The Russian soldiers on the border, according to *Moscow News*, live in conditions nearly as wretched as those of the Tajik refugees in Afghanistan.

The Kremlin is backing the old Nabiyev apparatus — the "new government" — against the opposition democratic forces. Since that attack on July 13, Russian forces have begun shelling refugee settlements in Af-

ghanistan killing and wounding hundreds of people. More Russian troops are being called up to fight against incursions by Tajik rebels.

On July 26, Yeltsin, in replacing the border commanders, admitted how chimerical Tajikistan's "independence" is when he stated angrily to the Security Council: "Why did we not have a plan to protect this border, which everyone must understand is effectively Russia's, not Tajikistan's, border?"

The Kremlin is sending Russian workers to Tajikistan to be used as cannon fodder to defend the old Stalinist order. Tajikistan is not independent, no matter what proclamations have been made. It is still totally dependent on the Kremlin bureaucracy.

sheviks were able to apply the lessons learned by Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky and establish a genuine dictatorship of the proletariat for the first time in world history. *The revolution also had emblazoned on its banner the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities in the tsarist "prisonhouse of nations."*

This aspect of the Bolshevik program was a central motor force for mobilizing support for the revolution and even in winning its war against the counterrevolution. This is true despite the fact that the Bolsheviks throughout the Civil War were far from able to live up to their claims. Inexperience, a poor understanding of some revolutionary dynamics, the exigencies of the bloody military campaigns against imperialist and "White" terrorism and war, as well as outright cynicism — as in the case of the Red Army operations under Stalin and Ordzhonikidze in the Caucasus — all led to terrible results, some of which were never or only partially to be corrected even while Lenin was alive. Suffice it to say that some of the non-Russians — due to the wartime conditions and drastic departures by Bolshevik cadre from the Bolshevik program — never really experienced the euphoria of the revolution. The experience was quite the contrary in many regions of the Caucasus — Armenia and Georgia, for example.

(Of course, after Lenin's death in 1924, after the degeneration of the revolution and the suppression of workers and party democracy and of the Left Opposition, there was a full-blown revival of the Great Russian chauvinism that Lenin condemned. The results of this are obvious among Russians today.)

Lenin and Trotsky, and many of the Bolsheviks who joined the Left Opposition, did learn from the mistakes and tried to teach others the lessons. It is our duty to study and master these lessons as best we can.

Thus, what Lenin prescribed as the policy toward the non-Russian peoples in December 1922, after learning of the depth of the violations of non-Russians' rights by Great Russian bullies, reflects his highest and most developed thinking on this question, just as do the post-Paris Commune writings of Marx and Engels on the nature of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

After the Bolsheviks took power, they had to grapple with the real practical problems of the national question. Not only did Lenin distinguish between the nationalism of the oppressed and the nationalism of the oppressor and support the former against the latter. He advocated that revolutionists of the oppressor nation must bend over backwards, even — yes! — accept a degree of inequality for a time in order to win trust and support for the proletarian party among former victims of great power chauvinism.

Lenin said that if this did not work out in practice — if the proletarian party leading

the revolution did not live up to the expectations of the non-Russians — at the next party congress, it might be necessary to retreat from a centralized proletarian state and retain the USSR for military and diplomatic purposes only. Consider the implications of these ideas at a time when the new federation was just being formed out of the ruins of World War I and the civil war, with the economy in shambles and the imperialists imposing an economic blockade to try to destroy the new state.

Lenin's writings on this question, particularly in his "Testament," take up only a few pages. Yet it is vital that we study, understand, and apply these lessons. These few pages were so profound and subversive to the Stalinists and their drive to reimpose Russification that they were suppressed for nearly four decades!

Trotsky, after having witnessed and studied not only what Lenin witnessed and studied but, in addition, the continued development of relations with non-Russians as the Stalin terror intensified in the 1930s, developed these ideas of Lenin's still further.

In his article of July 1939, he wrote as not only a total supporter but as an advocate of total independence for the Ukrainians. Of course, his ideas would apply equally to all the peoples oppressed by Stalinism.

Here is how Trotsky viewed this question:

The right of national self-determination is, of course, a democratic and not a socialist principle. But genuinely democratic principles are supported and realized in our era only by the revolutionary proletariat; it is for this very reason that they [become interconnected] with socialist tasks. The resolute struggle of the Bolshevik Party for the right of self-determination for oppressed nationalities in Russia facilitated in the extreme the conquest of power by the proletariat. It was as if the proletarian revolution had sucked in [absorbed] the democratic [tasks], above all, the agrarian and national [tasks, and made them a part of itself], giving to the Russian Revolution a combined character....

Abstract agitation in favor of centralism does not of itself carry great weight. As has already been said, the federation was a necessary departure from centralism.... Politically it is not at all a question of whether it is advantageous 'in general' for various nationalities to live together within the framework of a single state, but rather it is a question of whether or not a particular nationality has, on the basis of [its] own experience, found it advantageous to adhere to a given state....

Do the broad masses of the Ukrainian people wish to separate from the USSR? It might at first sight appear difficult to answer this question, inasmuch as the Ukrainian people, like all other peoples of the USSR, are deprived of any opportunity to express their will. But the very genesis of the totalitarian regime and its ever more brutal intensification, especially in the Ukraine, are proof that the real will of the Ukrainian masses is irreconcilably hostile to the Soviet bureaucracy. There is no lack of evidence that one

of the primary sources of this hostility is the suppression of Ukrainian independence....

The slogan of an independent Ukraine advanced in time by the proletarian vanguard will lead to the unavoidable stratification of the petty bourgeoisie and render it easier for its lower tiers to ally themselves with the proletariat. Only thus is it possible to prepare for the proletarian revolution.... [From Leon Trotsky, "Independence of the Ukraine and Sectarian Muddleheads," in *Writings of Leon Trotsky, 1939-40*, New York: Pathfinder Press, 1977, pp. 45, 46, 48.]

When one examines the events transpiring in the former Soviet Union today among the non-Russians, several points become clear:

1. The struggles and wars causing such destruction and human suffering cannot be blamed on "age-old ethnic rivalries" even if some chauvinist elements are able through lies and threats to incite interethnic violence.
2. Nor can these conflicts be blamed on religious hostilities or the need to stem the threat of Islamic fundamentalism.
3. Nor is the cause some irrational blind nationalism, no matter how comfortable it may be to hold this view.

All these struggles have come about because nationally oppressed peoples suffering all the social, economic, and political consequences that national oppression entails, began to organize to assert their rights. The response of the powers that be — in this case the old Stalinist apparatus and its mafia-criminal (classical criminal) allies and mercenary armies — has been repression and brute force.

The war in Nagorno-Karabagh is not one of Armenians against Azeris or Christians against Muslims. It is the Azeri bureaucracy trying to retain control over the territory of Nagorno-Karabagh. The cast of characters is known and can be specifically identified.

The war against Abkhazia is not Georgian against Abkhazian as such. Georgians, Russians, and Armenians have been the victims too. It is an attempt by Georgian gangs of thugs — the old Stalinists and outright gangsters like Tengiz Kitovani — against the Abkhazian attempt to win self-determination. (Much is made of the fact that Abkhazians are only 17 percent of the population of Abkhazia. But it should be borne in mind that part of the Stalinist nationalities policy was to deliberately dilute a national population by transporting outsiders into a national region to fill new posts, leaving the natives with the worst jobs. In Nakhichevan, a previously Armenian region that was made part of the Azerbaijan Republic in the early 1920s, such bureaucratic policies had the result that now there are almost no Armenians left there.)

The horrible war that has destroyed southern Tajikistan — the Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube regions and other regions of that

Continued on page 34

Ethnic Organizing: A Double-Edged Sword

by Dan Georgakas

Following three articles are presentations given as part of a workshop sponsored by the Bulletin in Defense of Marxism at the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City, April 1993.

Among the various hidden histories of the American Left and American trade unions are how ethnically organized units have functioned within the wider movements to which they adhered. The history of such formations goes back to the early nineteenth century, but reached a period of greatest intensity with the Great Migration of 1880–1924. With some major exceptions, this phenomenon has largely been obscured behind language barriers or in broad brush labor histories that are relatively oblivious to ethnic groups other than simply naming them. At a time when the American Left again finds itself faced with formidable cultural and language diversity, vigorous ethnic studies directly focused on labor and the Left are more relevant than ever. Ethnic organizing will proceed whether or not organizers are aware of the successes and failures of their radical predecessors, but the experiences of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Socialist Party (SP), the American Labor Party (ALP), and the Communist Party (CP) regarding ethnic-based units are invaluable. They indicate that ethnic units are a double-edged sword to be handled with extreme care.

The Industrial Workers of the World

The IWW is rightly celebrated as the most indigenous of American radical movements. Nonetheless, during its 1905–1924 heyday there were many years in which the foreign-born and non-English speakers were in the majority. This was almost always true of the East Coast units. One of the major criticisms the IWW made of the American Federation of Labor was that the AFL held that the new immigrants were too undisciplined to be responsible and successful trade unionists. Typical of the early IWW challenge to that view was the 1909 McKee's Rock strike at U.S. Steel. Five thousand workers from sixteen nations took part in this successful action a few miles outside of Pittsburgh. Similar IWW initiatives took place throughout the East Coast and Midwest in the years that followed, culminating in the legendary Lawrence Textile strike of 1912, in which members of the strike committee represented 25,000 workers from twenty-four national groups speaking twenty-two different languages.

The gains resulting from the strike wave set off by the Lawrence success were significant. Direct and indirect settlements brought \$15 million in wage increases and lighter work loads to some 438,000 workers, the biggest gains going to the 275,000 textile

workers in New England. Despite this achievement, the IWW was not able to build or even maintain many of its locals once the strike wave ended. A debate has long raged on the reasons for this failure. Some of the problems clearly relate to the peculiarities of the IWW, but an examination of specific locales reveals that considerable problems arose from the very nature of ethnic-organized units.

Although the fervor of a massive strike against indifferent employers was enough to keep diverse groups united for the short haul, language and ethnic differences proved unmanageable for the more mundane routines of trade unionism. The Lawrence Strike Committee, for example, had been composed of 250–300 local workers advised by IWW organizers, many of whom spoke more than one language. No means was ever found to transform that unwieldy structure into an acceptable leaner form. Different groups, often concentrated in specific skill areas, broke off to pursue their own ends. Ethnic rivalries reflecting sequence of arrival in the United States or traditional disputes originating in Europe frequently asserted themselves. Individual members also were often more responsive to dynamics within their own ethnic federation than within the larger trade union movement. Thus religious disputes might affect union activism as much as workplace conditions.

The IWW proved more successful in handling class/ethnic dynamics in other venues. Positive experiences in Philadelphia, New York City, and the Upper Midwest flowed from three different approaches to similar problems. The Philadelphia story involved dock workers. From 1913 to 1924 the IWW controlled most of the Philadelphia piers, and thereafter, when the IWW imploded, its former Philadelphia unit moved intact into the mainstream labor movement. The peak membership in the unit while under IWW control was about 4,000, half of whom were African Americans. The other members were mainly Lithuanians and Poles. The chief organizer was Ben Fletcher, the most prominent Black leader in the IWW, but the local chairmanship was rotated monthly between Blacks and non-Blacks. This simple device proved sufficient to assuage racial feelings. The unit grew strong enough to support numerous IWW initiatives in the area, including significant work among Spanish-speaking workers.

Just as the welcome mat put out for Blacks provided a basis for success in Philadelphia, the full membership offered Spanish speak-

ers was key in organizing the Atlantic runs to Latin America. Over half of all the firemen on that run were Spanish speakers, often Puerto Ricans or Cubans. Having been repeatedly denied membership in AFL unions, large numbers of Spanish-speaking seamen joined the IWW in 1913 and 1914. The New York branch alone had nearly 5,000 Hispanic members. From this base of strength, the IWW was able to organize in all the major ports of South and Central America. There were even years in which anarcho-syndicalist literature for Chilean and other South American trade unions was printed in Chicago and shipped south via the IWW Spanish-speaking seamen. Spanish language publications also appeared in American ports with significant Hispanic concentrations. The only downside to this work was that it did not relate very strongly to other IWW actions. Its focus was on specific ports and the Spanish connection.

A more typical ethnic involvement of the IWW was through ethnic federations. These organizations were often the center of ethnic life. Their double mission was to preserve the old country culture while acclimating immigrants to the culture of the New World. To those ends federations sponsored plays, lectures, musical groups, health plans, sporting clubs, and other social services. Depending on time and place, the emphasis might be on preserving the old culture or on assimilating to the new. Whatever the circumstance, the IWW sought to find a niche in these federations. Its greatest successes came in the Finnish halls of the Upper Midwest.

Finnish immigrants brought a cooperative tradition with them that melded easily with the IWW's anarcho-syndicalism. Some of the Finnish ethnic halls actually housed the IWW local. Whether or not this was the case, if there was a labor problem, the hall was a place to gather naturally and be safe from the more obvious company spies. In quiet times the Finns were particularly responsive to the humor in IWW skits and songs. They also placed a high premium on working-class education and were the prime supporters of the IWW-connected Work Peoples College in Duluth. The most important aspect of these interactions was that the IWW radicals were seen as an integral part of the community rather than outsiders. This feeling was buoyed by the IWW disinclination to seek formal control of federations or clubs.

The IWW pattern with the Finns was replicated in many other nationality venues. The IWW song book and the IWW preamble, its principal mass education tools, were trans-

lated into virtually every language spoken by American workers. At its height the IWW published more than a dozen dailies in as many languages and issued its major pamphlets in more than a score of languages. Although its leadership was English-speaking, the IWW, always prone to intense ideological debates, was relatively free of internal ethnic disputes. This was mostly due to the overwhelming class orientation of the IWW, which honored all cultures but continually underscored class unity and solidarity. Also of relevance was the loose organizational structure which allowed considerable local autonomy and initiative. A less generous explanation may be that the IWW was decimated by government persecution during World War I and ethnic/class tensions never had time to assert themselves in a mature IWW structure.

The Socialist Party

Even more than the IWW, much of the agitation involving the SP, particularly in major cities, involved ethnic federations. It is unclear how strongly individual members of federations affiliated with the SP actually felt about socialism *per se*. What is certain is that the SP had many more foreign-language newspapers and publications than the IWW or any American radical organization before or since. Years ago James Weinstein observed that many of the SP publications in foreign languages had never been translated or studied, meaning that much of SP history is still unknown to most labor and radical historians. Although some efforts have been undertaken in that direction, considerable work remains to be done. Many ethnic groups still lack a major monograph, much less a book-length study, of their radical and labor history.¹

For our present purposes it is instructive to consider how much of the electoral successes of the SP had an ethnic component as vital as the class or ideological component.² An intriguing example is that of Victor Berger, first elected to Congress in 1910 from a German base in Milwaukee. Certainly the Germans there were consciously voting for socialism, but whether they would have voted for an Irish candidate with the same exact politics is unlikely. Over the long haul, however, the Milwaukee socialists seem to have forged a real fusion of ethnic and ideological concerns. This is evidenced by the fact that they controlled City Hall through to the 1950s, when broader electoral coalitions were needed for success.

A stronger ethnic component marked the Congressional races by Morris Hillquit and Meyer London, when New York City's Lower East Side was a Jewish enclave. Hillquit, a major socialist personality, ran unsuccessfully in 1906 and 1908. Running in the same district, Meyer London almost won in 1910, then was elected in 1914, and won twice again thereafter. Although an avowedly socialist as Hillquit, London placed considerab-

ly more emphasis on his Jewishness. At the time of his first electoral bid he stated, "I deem it a duty of the Jew everywhere to remain a Jew as long as in any corner of the world the Jew is being discriminated against."

Some historians suggest that London's stronger ethnic emphasis was the decisive factor in his successes, while others believe it took the Jewish community the four years between Hillquit's defeats and London's victories to get sufficient voters registered to insure electoral dominance. In both instances, however, voters were clearly voting for both ethnic and ideological reasons.

This was much less so in the campaigns of the most successful of all radical politicians, Vito Marcantonio, who represented East Harlem in Congress from 1934 to 1936 and from 1938 to 1950.

The American Labor Party

Marcantonio came to prominence as a campaign manager for Fiorello LaGuardia at a time when the Irish and German politicians who ran Tammany Hall would not allow Italians a share of the political pie. Marcantonio would run under five different political labels, but was most dedicated to building the American Labor Party. Most historians agree that the Italians of East Harlem, who always gave a majority of their votes to Marcantonio in all the campaigns he ran, were more impressed by his personal character, his ethnic sensibilities, and his exemplary work as a bread-and-butter congressman than by his radical ideas. Unlike the Germans who voted for Berger and the Jews who voted for Hillquit, the Italians seem to have voted for Marcantonio despite his ideology, not because of it.

Marcantonio, however, has the unique distinction among radicals of forging a second ethnic base. As Puerto Ricans began to move into East Harlem, Marcantonio became a fierce advocate of the civil rights of Puerto Ricans and their right to choose independence. Although occasionally challenged for these views by Italians in his district, Marcantonio was steadfast in his advocacy for Puerto Ricans. The Puerto Rican response to him was extremely enthusiastic. Some years the percentage of Puerto Ricans voting for him was even higher than his solid Italian base. Through the ALP, Marcantonio was also instrumental in getting the first Puerto Rican elected to public office in New York. His radical ideology had found its ethnic match. Puerto Ricans, in turn, were willing to have a person not of their own ethnic group act as their tribune. Cynics might argue that the Puerto Rican population had not grown large enough to field its own ethnic candidate. What is not disputable, however, is that at the time of Marcantonio's death, his standing in the Puerto Rican community was as high as it had ever been.³

Other aspects of ALP history beg for additional study. In a special election in early

1948, the ALP elected Leo Isaacson to Congress from the South Bronx. The Jewish ethnic vote would seem critical to that race, although no specific study has yet been made of the contest. More generally, the ALP areas of strength often overlapped with districts where the SP had been able to elect city and state officials, often from a Jewish ethnic base. This suggests that some of the ALP's strength derived from ideological support that transcended narrow ethnic identification.

The Communist Party

When the Communist Party began to form out of the left wing of the SP, one of the two major factions was led by the Russian Federation and was mainly supported by the other ethnic federations. These groups felt their ethnicity provided insights into what was happening in Russia and made them the logical leaders of an American movement. By the time the five major factions were united into one party, the leadership agreed to abandon language groups as too divisive. Nevertheless, many units were composed of a single ethnic group, and those units often published a foreign-language newspaper. Generally speaking, these units were among the most dependable dues-paying sections and loyally carried out the party line, but many of their most energetic initiatives had an autonomous aspect.

The Greek Communists provide a good example of this general ethnic phenomenon. From 1916 through 1953, a group of Greek radicals published a Greek-language newspaper on either a daily, weekly, or biweekly basis. This group also organized workers' clubs modeled on the Greek coffee house. These clubs did not so much seek to recruit members *en masse* as to provide a means of access to a broad spectrum of the Greek working class. Later the worker clubs would be used in the larger Communist effort to build the International Workers Order. Through these means some five hundred to a thousand Greek Communists enjoyed significant influence in major industrial areas with Greek concentrations.

For many years the Greek Communists had a Greek-language local in the Communist-led Fur & Leather Workers Union. This local functioned much as the Finnish Halls had for the IWW, sponsoring many social events for the broader Greek community and supplying organizers for specific strikes. Underscoring the complexity of ethnic organizing is the circumstance that the Greek furriers had been organized through the efforts of Jewish Communists. Led by Communist Ben Gold, most of the fur industry had been organized by the 1920s. Full union control, however, remained difficult because of 300 Greek shops that had never been approached because of language and cultural barriers. Gold hired Greek Communists who were able to organize the Greek shops in a rapid whirlwind campaign. The partnership of the

two ethnic groups remained constant throughout the time of Gold's long leadership.

Several aspects of the Greek story are typical of many other Communists operating from a strictly ethnic base. A hard-core group was able to sustain itself for decades and reach deeply into the working class. Greek-language publications and Greek-oriented cultural events were major components of that ethnic connection. Involvement in major trade unions allowed the ethnic group to bring its special ethnic issues to a wide labor audience, the effort on behalf of Greek War Relief being a specific example in the case of the Greeks.

Balancing these characteristics are negatives also shared by other groups. Many Greek activities were focused on events in the old country. At times it was unclear if the cause in Greece might not command more emotional fervor than the cause in America. Because of this orientation and the attempt to hold its immigrant base, the newspapers continued to publish in Greek even as second- and third-generation Greek workers came to maturity. These younger workers were not greatly interested in the old country, and they increasingly lacked Greek language skills. Consequently, the Greek-language Communists did not reproduce themselves as they grayed. The intense ethnic focus also tended to isolate adherents from broader American concerns. There was a marked tendency to be attracted to activities defending the revolution in Russia rather than those that might spread Communism in America. Thus, members barely able to speak English might study technical skills they hoped one day to take to the USSR, where they could help build "existing socialism."

This Old World focus often linked the fate of ethnically-based Communists to the fate of

Communism in their native lands. The Eastern European groups waxed and waned in relation to how the USSR was dealing with their native lands. The Ukrainian Communists in America never recovered from the controversies surrounding the Ukrainian famine of the early 1930s, and the Finns, among the most enthusiastic Soviet supporters in the mid-1930s, were devastated by the Soviet invasion of Finland in 1939. The Greeks did well during World War II because of general support for the anti-Nazi guerrilla movement in Greece, but were doubly hit in the McCarthy era because of the concurrent civil war in Greece.

Tentative Conclusions

These briefly considered examples indicate some of the negative aspects of the double-edged sword of ethnically-based labor and ideological units:

1. Much of ethnic organizing is based on the use of a language other than English during the first rush of immigration, when English is a problem for many workers. As time passes, this advantage becomes a weakness. Younger generations are not attracted, and older generations can become culturally insular.
2. Ethnic groups inevitably focus on the problems of the old country, and the fate of radical movements in that country are regarded as at least equally as important as what is happening in the actual world of work in America. Although the discourse has an ideological tone, the pulse of the organization is nationalistic.
3. Ethnic units consciously or unconsciously perpetuate Old World divisions by the very nature of their organizational form.

4. Ethnic units fit awkwardly into the larger context of an American movement, as class interests are blurred by an ethnic lens.

None of these problems is insurmountable. Sensitivity to their nature is the first step in seeking viable short-term and longer-term solutions. Cavalier dismissal of them as inappropriate to the new immigrant wave and to residual ethnic problems is simply foolish. Ethnic-based organizing is a natural impulse and will take place in one form or another. The task for radicals is to create means for such organizing to be an asset rather than an impediment to the fundamental struggle to reshape the American economic and social order. □

Footnotes

1. The general reader can consult some twenty ethnic histories with select bibliographies in Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle, and Dan Georgakas (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of the American Left* (New York: Garland, 1990). The first full-length studies of the Ukrainian and Greek ethnic Lefts are among the essays scheduled for Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas (eds.), *The Immigrant Left*, due from SUNY Press in 1994.
2. The individual careers of all prominent and many lesser-known socialists can be found with selected bibliographies in Bernard K. Johnpoll and Harvey Klehr (eds.), *Biographical Dictionary of the American Left* (New York: Greenwood, 1986). Despite the title, this work focuses primarily on the SP.
3. Considerable detail on the Puerto Rican and Italian bases are found in Gerald Meyer, *Vito Marcantonio* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989). Meyer is currently working on a history of the ALP, due from Garland in late 1994.

Two Riddles About Labor and the Left in the United States During the 1930s

by Paul Le Blanc

There are two riddles in U.S. labor history which I want to explore here. The answers have practical implications for us today.

The 1930s have been seen as *The Turbulent Years* and as the decade of *Labor's Giant Step*, in the words of Irving Bernstein and Art Preis. These are the titles of their classic histories about the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and the heroic struggles of working people that resulted in the creation of the big unions which formed the base of the CIO. But some statistics almost seem to suggest that this was an optical illusion. That's the first riddle.

It is irrefutable that enormous gains were made by U.S. workers, despite the effects of the devastating economic Depression and of corporate oppression. The growth of the CIO and the revival of the American Federation of Labor directly impacted on millions of people. The number of unionized employees more than tripled from 2.8 million in 1933 to 8.4 million in 1941, and the proportion of workers enjoying union rights jumped from 9 to 34 percent in manufacturing, 21 to 72 percent in mining, 23 to 48 percent in transportation, and 54 to 65 percent in construction. This yielded positive changes in wages, hours, working conditions, dignity on the job,

plus valuable social legislation and a deep transformation of the political climate, giving working people a greater measure of control over their world.

It is irrefutable that all this and more was accomplished. At the same time, another respected labor historian named Melvyn Dubofsky, combing through statistics on union organizing drives and strikes in the 1930s, observed that the overwhelming majority of working people during this period were simply *not involved* in these union struggles. He focuses attention on two years of the most intense struggles — 1934 and 1937.

The year 1934 saw general strikes in three cities: Toledo, Ohio; San Francisco, California; and Minneapolis, Minnesota. In Toledo, workers at the Auto-Lite Company and their allies in the militant Unemployed League battled the company and the National Guard, with the support of the city's central labor council and under the leadership of A.J. Muste's left-wing American Workers Party. In San Francisco, longshoremen and other workers, following a left-wing leadership — especially militants in and around the Communist Party — were also backed by the city's central labor council, fought company goons and local police, and here too confronted the National Guard. In Minneapolis and neighboring St. Paul, the radicals providing leadership to the workers' battles were members of the Communist League of America, followers of Leon Trotsky. Here the city's teamsters, supported by the central labor council and masses of unorganized and unemployed workers, and nearby small family farmers, faced down the city's powerful employers, fought police, and — here too — their struggles brought in the National Guard. The stunning union victories in these three cities generated the mass organizing drives of industrial workers and launched the CIO.

The year 1937 is described quite well by Dubofsky:

The year began with the famous Flint sit-down strike, in which the United Auto Workers conquered General Motors; saw United States Steel surrender to the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC)-CIO without a struggle less than three weeks after the General Motors strike ended; and culminated in the late spring with perhaps the most violent and bloodiest national strike of the decade: the Little Steel conflict that led to the Memorial Day "massacre" [by police against masses of peacefully protesting workers] outside Republic Steel's South Chicago plant. In between Flint and Little Steel, more than four hundred thousand workers participated in 477 sit-down strikes [involving the occupation and takeover of factories by strikers]. Twenty-five sit-downs erupted in January, forty-seven in February, and 170 in March. "Sitting down has replaced baseball as a national pastime," quipped *Time Magazine*.

The fact remains that in 1934 and in 1937 only about 7 percent of employed workers were involved in strikes. In 1937 their absence from work represented only 0.043 percent of all time worked — which means that less than five workdays in a thousand were lost due to strikes in that year. We have to ask what the other 93 percent of the labor force was doing during the great strike waves of 1934 and 1937, and throughout the decade.

Part of the explanation is suggested in a book *My America* (published in 1938) by the perceptive radical journalist Louis Adamic. He wrote:

I know, or have known, hundreds of unskilled workers, particularly in the smaller industries, whose apathy and resignation are some-

thing appalling. Where no union has appeared to rouse them, most of them are basically indifferent to the conditions they have to endure. Because certain conditions exist, they see no possibility of having them altered. There is a dead fatalism.

Contemptuous of left-wing cant, Adamic denied that capitalist oppression would naturally breed militant class consciousness. "The exploitation is outrageous, but the workers merely grumble," he wrote. "When unionization is suggested, they oppose it: it might lose them their jobs! Yet they hate their jobs. That hate expresses itself in subversive talk, sabotage, defeatism." Adamic added:

Most American workers have little or no conception of jobs outside their fields. They are unaware of the interdependence of the workers' functions, and so ignorant of their importance, the indispensability of their work. Many tend to deprecate their functions, if not orally, then to themselves and perform listlessly, as workers, as human beings...and the general public, as uninformed as they are concerning what makes the wheels go round, tends to agree with them.

I think it may be useful, also, to look at some of the findings of a social historian named John Bodnar, who has studied and interviewed some who come from what he calls "the masses of rank-and-file toilers who were reared in strong, family-based enclaves" of largely immigrant working-class communities. Particularly as mass-production techniques were being developed by employers in the early decades of the twentieth century — largely to eliminate the power of potentially radicalizing skilled workers — recently arrived unskilled immigrant laborers were absorbed as mass-production workers, and often they found jobs in their workplaces for needy friends and relatives as well. Family and ethnic ties became intertwined with occupational patterns, creating what Bodnar calls "kinship-occupational clusters" in which family concerns were strongly reinforced. This cut across the competing ideologies of capitalist-oriented upward mobility through "rugged individualism" on the one hand and a revolutionary proletarian class-consciousness on the other. "Clearly," Bodnar writes, "family obligations dominated working-class predilections and may have exerted a moderating influence on individual expectations and the formulation of social and economic goals."

In fact, he concludes (largely on the basis of in-depth interviews with working-class participants in 1930s union activity in Pennsylvania),

immigrants, blacks, and native-born toilers entered the mines and mills of Pennsylvania prior to 1940 not on their own behalf but because of the needs of their kin... Personal satisfaction, the control of production, equality and mobility were usually secondary concerns.

A "family-oriented culture continued to serve necessary functions and define the framework of individual lives" of most workers, according to Bodnar, leading to a preoccupation with survival strategies that focused on family welfare: "Families generally searched for ways to make ends meet, achieved little savings, sent their children to work early in life and valued steady employment," and this orientation "muted individual inclinations and idealism in favor of group survival." While people in this situation might respond to union organizing drives under certain conditions, more often than not they would *not* be in a position to initiate militant class struggles.

In a sense, the answer to the riddle we have posed is as obvious as the answer to the question of why the chicken crossed the road. A majority of workers did not engage in the big class battles of the 1930s because they did not feel able to. We can refer to the minority of workers who were actually involved in taking "labor's giant step" of the 1930s as a *vanguard layer* of the working class — those who, for a variety of reasons, were able to see themselves and their situation in a certain way, and were in a position to make certain life decisions, that enabled them to move forward before most of the others.

Within this vanguard layer, however, we find two different components. One has been a smaller network of working-class organizers identified by Staughton and Alice Lynd in their excellent book *Rank and File*. The Lynds write: "The rank and filers in this book felt...that there had to be basic social changes. They were both militant, in demanding changes within their unions and workplaces, and radical, in the sense that they tried to democratize the larger society. They imagined both a union and a society which were more just, more humane, more of a community." In fact, most of the veteran working-class activists the Lynds interviewed had been members of Socialist, Communist, or Trotskyist organizations.

John Bodnar has identified a different and larger component of the vanguard layer. He writes:

Our interviews with Pennsylvania workers do not specifically refute the assertion by Lynd and others that a tradition of working-class democracy aimed at humanizing society at large was operative or that strains of mobility and self-improvement pervaded the industrial working class.

But this tradition, Bodnar argues, was based "largely on articulate, working-class leaders and intellectuals," not the deeper and broader layers of the working class. Bodnar writes that "brief flirtations with larger social visions emerged [among those he studied], but they were seldom sustained among the rank and file." He argues that "the limits to the ground swell of union activity in the 1930s...may have been determined by family priorities, which continued to direct the objectives of most workers."

To the extent that the picture of the American working class presented by Louis Adamic and John Bodnar is accurate, how did it come to pass that hundreds of thousands of workers *did* throw themselves into the struggles of the 1930s which transformed U.S. society and politics? Dubofsky brings our attention to the dialectic between conscious working-class militants (the focus of Staughton and Alice Lynd's interviews) and the larger rank and file. He writes: "[More] often than not, action by militant minorities (what some scholars have characterized as 'spark-plug unionism') precipitated a subsequent collective response." His portrait of a multi-layered working class is worth presenting at length:

Even the most strike-torn cities and regions had a significantly internally differentiated working class. At the top were the local cadres, the sparkplug unionists, the men and women fully conscious of their roles in a marketplace society that extolled individualism and rewarded collective strength. These individuals, ranging the political spectrum from Social Democrats to Communists, provided the leadership, militancy, and ideology that fostered industrial conflict and the emergence of mass-production unionism. Beneath them lay a substantial proportion of workers who could be transformed, *by example*, into militant strikers and unionists, and, in turn, themselves act as militant minorities. Below them were many first- and second-generation immigrant workers, as well as recent migrants from the American countryside, who remained embedded in a culture defined by traditional ties to family, kinship, church, and neighborhood club or tavern. Accustomed to following the rituals of the past, heeding the advice of community leaders, and slow to act, such men and women rarely joined unions prior to a successful strike; once moved to act, [they] behaved with singular solidarity, yet rarely served as union or political activists and radicals....

The reality of the working class was even more complex than this, though this outline is useful. The piece of the analysis that I want to focus on, at this point, is the militant minority that we can subdivide into political radicals (people largely like ourselves) and militant but nonsocialist trade union activists, who together played an indispensable "vanguard" role. The political radicals were members of various Communist and Socialist groups and splinter groups, plus anarchists and old-time Wobblies, who all together represent a vital left-wing subculture which existed within the working class in the first half of the 20th century. The ideas, the vision, the confidence, the organizational know-how provided by these left-wing working-class organizations constituted an essential part of the chemistry for the great labor upsurge of the 1930s.

It is necessary to go beyond this, however, to emphasize the central importance of the

Communist Party. The conclusion of such seasoned commentators as Saul Alinsky and Bert Cochran — who themselves had considerable trade union and political experience — was that, given their decision to lead the newly formed CIO and build mass industrial unions, John L. Lewis and the nonradical union leaders grouped around him "had no choice but to accept the support of the Communists," as Alinsky put it, since "everyplace where new industrial unions were being formed, young and middle-aged Communists were working tirelessly," and since "it was the left-wingers who kept fighting against the disillusionment and cynicism that swept the workers [in the face of bureaucratic ineptness by the American Federation of Labor]. It was they who kept organizing and organizing and organizing." Cochran agrees that Lewis "could not do without the support of the radicals — and in the 1930s, radicals meant primarily the Communists. It was not that man-for-man Communists were necessarily superior organizers or agitators than non-Communist radicals. The contrary was demonstrated in the Minneapolis and Toledo strikes. But whatever their qualities, non-Communist radicals were few in number."

This is illustrated by a look at left-wing membership figures in the mid-1930s. The Trotskyists — even after they merged with Muste's American Workers Party — had about 700 members. The rightward-leaning Communist dissidents following Jay Lovestone had perhaps 1,000. Even the Socialist Party, fluctuating around 10,000, had only 1,300 trade union members — including in the garment and auto industries, some of whom were in the process of defecting from the Socialist Party. The Communist Party, on the other hand, had about 30,000 members, of whom 15,000 were in unions. In any event, the Left was essential for the workers' triumph of the 1930s.

This brings us to the second riddle: if the Left was so essential, how could it be smashed within a fairly short period?

Of course, it was not possible to bring about a communist or socialist or proletarian revolution in the United States during the 1930s — I'm not talking about that. I'm talking about *surviving* as an effective left-wing force in the labor movement. Some labor historians have argued that it was impossible for the Communist labor activists to do qualitatively better than they did, that the triumph of conservative anti-Communism in the unions was inevitable, that the Left could do little to prevent marginalization and elimination.

There are reasons to question this, however. In his memoirs entitled *Labor Radical*, former CIO publicity director Len DeCaux explained that the CIO was not simply a new labor federation but "a mass movement with a message, revivalistic in fervor, militant in

mood, joined together by class solidarity." DeCaux elaborated:

As it gained momentum, this movement brought with it new political attitudes — toward the corporations, toward police and troops, toward local, state, national government. Now we're a movement, many workers asked, why can't we move on to more and more? Today we've forced General Motors to terms by sitting down and defying all the powers at its command, why can't we go on tomorrow, with our numbers, our solidarity, our determination, to transform city and state, the Washington government itself? Why can't we go on to create a new society with the workers on top, to end age-old injustices, to banish poverty and war?

By the early 1950s the U.S. labor movement had been mostly deradicalized — with the vision indicated by DeCaux replaced by the notion that capitalists and workers are "partners in progress." Would it have been possible for a socialist left wing of the labor movement to survive as a significant force in the United States? Given the years of Cold War anti-Communism and capitalist prosperity, was the smashing of the Left inevitable?

I would suggest that it was not. It is conceivable that an organization of the size, and with the resources, of the American Communist Party in the 1930s could have followed a somewhat different political program than was in fact pursued. If this different program was applied intelligently, then it is possible that a stronger, more durable working-class left-wing movement would have emerged from the Depression decade. It is not possible to do more here than outline, very briefly and very schematically, what that more effective political program might have looked like.

What was needed was not only a flexible and energetic united front policy in building the new industrial unions, which the Communist Party *did* display, but also four other components: (1) a greater internal democracy and less sectarianism toward other left-wing groups; (2) a critical independence from the Stalin regime in the Soviet Union; (3) an independence from the Democratic Party and consistent support for the development of an independent labor party — while recognizing and living with a fact of life, that many friends and allies in the labor movement would be drawn into President Franklin D. Roosevelt's liberal New Deal coalition (at least for a while); and (4) persistent education and recruitment of newly unionized workers and others to an understanding of the class struggle and the need for workers' power and socialism.

Of course, this also happens to be consistent, I think, with a reasonable left-wing program regarding the labor movement of today. And that brings us to the final presentation in this panel. □

The Left and Labor Today

by Elaine Bernard

Our topic is the left and labor, and it is interesting to note that when we look at other countries, we usually use the single inclusive term “labor movement.” I think it’s important to recognize how the term is inappropriate in the United States. I’m not being sarcastic or facetious when I say that. What I mean is that what we have in this country is a left and a trade union movement, but we don’t really have what people from other countries recognize to be a labor movement.

In most other countries when we talk about a labor movement, we’re not just talking about trade unions. We’re talking about political parties that are based on trade unions, and social movements that are invigorated by and linked to the labor movement. In England, you’ll run into people who are not trade unionists, who do not carry a trade union card, but who still think of themselves as part of the labor movement. In the United States, that would be inappropriate.

The trade union movement in the United States is very arrogant, and foolishly so, in its attitude toward who is permitted to use the term trade unionist. I was at a conference a year ago where a couple of staff people from a trade union, as well as myself, were speaking, and at one point these full-time staff people chose to point out to a woman who is a trade unionist as well as an academic [me], that *they* were trade unionists and *she* was an academic. I went through the roof! I said, “You mean I’ve been paying dues since I was sixteen and I’m a second-class citizen in my own goddam movement? Are you telling me that because I choose to work on behalf of the labor movement in a university and have persuaded a university to pay my salary that I am a second-class citizen in my own movement? The fact that I pay your goddam salary makes you a better trade unionist than me, who doesn’t take the worker’s salary, but instead is exploiting Harvard University? Explain your logic to me!”

I did fly off the handle a little, but it occurred to me that it was a bizarre conversation: we had reconstructed the labor movement into a trade union movement. And then we moved that trade union movement from 16 million workers in America who pay union dues to about 100,000 workers in America who work full-time or are elected officers for unions. It was an extraordinary transformation. I think it’s an important part of this conversation.

The United States trade union movement has in fact been one of the most successful trade union movements in the world. Because it has won for its members a social wage that working people in other countries were in-

capable of winning through trade unionism alone. In other countries, the trade union movement had to engage in political action, mobilize the community, and form political parties in order to win these social wages. They were not able to win health benefits, paid vacations, pensions, etc., from their employers. Instead the trade union movement in other countries had to do it through political as well as industrial action.

The problem is, because the American trade union movement has in fact been so successful in its narrow agenda, it has been most unsuccessful as a movement. What it was able to win for its own members it was not able to extend. The cost of that success today is why the American labor movement is now down to 15.9 percent of the work force, 12 percent in the private sector. The cost of that success is that it only won these rights for its own membership and it was unable to extend them to the rest of the working class. That means that it was eventually further and further isolated.

Canada-U.S. Differences

When I talk to Americans they often say, “You have to appreciate that the difference between American and Canadian employers is that American employers resist trade unions.” As if Canadian employers are some sort of imbeciles that think, “Oh, we’re really in favor of trade unions.” No, they resist as much, but the difference is that the Canadian employer has to face a different structure and culture, which does not permit resistance to trade unions to the same extent as is permitted for the American employer. The other thing the Canadian employer faces is a very different trade union movement.

Finally, a Canadian employer doesn’t get the extra bonus for resisting trade unions that American employers do. For example, if you’re an employer in the United States today, and you smash a union, you can probably get rid of the employees health care package. In Canada they can get rid of the union, but they can’t get rid of paying for health care, because health care is part of the tax system, and it’s a national social benefit. In this country, in addition to the regular wage, about a third of the money paid by employers goes for these union-won social benefits.

So, from the employers perspective, smashing the unions is good business in the United States because you get rid of a lot of social wage instantly, not through transforming governments, etc. but specifically by smashing a union. All of a sudden vacation pay, pensions, health care, etc., are gone be-

cause they’re not part of a social wage package; they’re part of the individual wage package. This has also led to the isolation of the trade unions from the rest of the working class. In fact it has led to there being no sense of a working class, no sense of a movement, and most of all, no sense of responsibility for workers who are not trade unionists.

I’ve been in discussions with a lot of trade union national officers in the U.S. and privately some have said, “Off the record, don’t you think it would be a problem if we did get a health care system? Why would people join unions?” These are not unsophisticated people: they believe that people join trade unions the way people take out insurance; they purchase a benefit. I point out that in Canada, where there is a national health care system, 38 percent of the work force is organized and trade unionism isn’t about the floor, it’s about the ceiling!

We could win every social wage you could think of. And I trust working people to come up with a whole lot more that we could win. There will always be a need for workers to self-organize in their own interest in any democratic society. That is the essence of what trade unionism is about. It is not about winning this particular demand, that particular right, or adding to the social wage in a narrow sense. This drives and reinforces an ideology of individual versus collective action.

In America on the left we talk a lot about the politics of identity. If you think about trade unionism, it almost becomes like the politics of identity. It is not the politics of class, it’s the politics of “We are trade unionists; we’re different.” Before long, you’ll hear things like this: “Workers who do not organize have brought it upon themselves; it’s their own fault. If they don’t organize, then to hell with them.” You can see that aspect of the trade union movement. Part of the reason is because it’s a narrow trade union organization instead of a wider class movement. Ultimately, it depoliticizes the working class. Politics is about ideas, about discussion. Politics defines what can be done: what is in the realm of society as a whole and what is in the realm of the individual.

One of the interesting things about American politics has been the drive by the right, and to a certain degree the left as well, to try and convince people that in politics most things aren’t about society or social action, but that most things are ultimately individual problems. The ultimate version of that is health care. They try and convince people that health care is the problem of the individual ill person, that it is not a basic social right that any society would seek to open to

all of its residents. It's an individual type of problem, particularly difficult for sick people. The service model of the trade union, that it's like a business, it's like insurance, becomes more plausible. This model feeds into itself until it starts to reach a point when it becomes good for business, the business of selling memberships. The attitude that we in a union have significantly better rights than all the people who haven't purchased our "insurance," haven't bought a union card, begins to prevail and the movement becomes absolutely turned upside down.

Then we wonder why we are attacked, why the masses of workers don't rise up and defend the trade unionists. It's because they say, "Well, you do have all these things that none of the rest of us have, and you have been living high off the hog." A movement where trade unions are seen as part of the mobilizing, part of the group that wins victory for all people — first against their own employer and then by seeking to socialize that victory through a political process — makes it possible to see that we shouldn't have to win it from one employer: we should have it for all workers. This is a right. This kind of movement starts to transform the realm of what working people believe to be their rights.

Historically we've had this view that we've always known what our rights are. No, it's only when you start exercising and making gains that you start to believe that things are rights. I can talk individually about this because I was born in Canada, where there's a national health care program. My parents didn't think that health care was a right. I was not raised to believe it was a right. However, we won health care in 1971, and today people of all political stripes in Canada — not just socialists — have added to their consciousness the fact that health care is a right. Today, through a political process, we've won the entire population to a viewpoint that it's sort of a basic right of citizens and residents. And so you can see how the political process is a transformative one, and the trade union movement can play a major role in that.

In the United States there is isolation of the trade union organization from politics and from talking politics in its own name. That is done through forming a political party and recognizing that the labor movement organizes not only in the workplace but in the community as well. The voice of that organization, the structure of organization of the trade union movement in the community, has always been a labor-based political party. For example, in Germany and France. Sometimes the labor-based party has been an anarchist party, sometimes it's been Social Democrats, or even Christian Democrats, but it has always been part of the trade union tradition in those countries to extend beyond the workplace and into the families, into the homes and into the communities. That tradi-

tion creates a labor movement that isn't just about the workplace but is also about the community, and that's the real labor movement.

Today one of the divisions between the left and the trade union movement is this separation of the trade union movement and the community. As a Canadian leftist of the '60s, like an American leftist of the '60s, you could become a part of the labor movement, whether or not you joined a union, through activity in a labor party. Through activity in that party you became familiar with trade unionism, and so the trade union movement won new supporters: people who were familiar with the culture, familiar with the ideas of trade unionism far beyond its own narrow ranks. Then, when those people got jobs they had friends and neighbors who were trade unionists who they could talk to about organizing where they were working. It helped to transform the trade union movement and helped it to grow.

The flip side of this relationship is that inside the trade union movement, for the Canadian trade union movement at least, it meant that the radicals of the '60s and '70s didn't turn away from the trade union movement or view it as a narrow-minded body. They were part and parcel of that movement and brought it life, so that with each generation it grew forward with new organizers, new issues, new problems, and new life. For a dynamic trade union movement, that must be incorporated into the leadership.

By contrast, in the United States, Americans have just elected a 47-year-old president of the country, but they have a 73-year-old president of the trade union movement. This is extraordinary! The trade union movement has ceased to be a dynamic center and rooting inside the working class for all of the left.

The Unions and Politics

The crucial issue here is the separation of politics from the trade union movement. That delegitimizes politics. In the late '40s and '50s it started with the red-baiting of Communists: "Communists are illegitimate; Communists can't be inside the labor movement." Then it spread to people who associated with Communists, then to people who talk politics — a well-known tactic of the Communists. And then even people who spoke about ideas came to be viewed as dangerous. Before long there was no political life inside the trade union movement.

I've been at a number of international conferences, and one of the striking differences between the Canadian and U.S. trade union movements is the way people will talk politics. Having a labor party, you can't say to Canadian trade unionists, "No politics in the union." They'd say, "Wait a minute! We're affiliated to a goddamn party. What do you mean? Of course there's politics in the trade

union movement. Of course we have the right to talk about political life and ideas." Canadians know they can bring about change in their society not just as trade unionists at the collective bargaining table; they know that the rules by which they come to the table are determined in the wider society through politics. That linkage is there. It transforms the individual members within the trade union and helps to make them legitimize politics. It's a very interesting, dynamic process.

Regarding the situation in the United States today, I'm actually a bit of an optimist. I think that things are starting to change. Why I think they're changing is because of the weakness of the trade union movement at this time. Even business unionism in the United States can't deliver. Business isn't doing very well. There's recognition of the fact that if you want your membership to survive, you need new tactics. Most of the tactics that seem to be succeeding are ones that go back to the older strength of the labor movement.

Look at some of the interesting changes. There's now an organizing institute of the AFL-CIO. It's a very difficult thing for them to come up with. They realize that they've lost most of this generation and a future generation of young dynamic organizers. So what they're doing now is trying to recruit off the campuses people from the peace movement, people from any movement, anybody with life and heart and soul, and bring them into the trade union organizing institute and then send them out with unions to be organizers.

There are things like Jobs with Justice, which is an organization that seeks not only to organize people on the job, but to organize people around wider justice issues in the community. That starts to bring trade unionists in contact with the community. I would argue that the campaigning against NAFTA and on other issues are examples that the labor movement is starting to realize that groups which they have kept their distance from in the past have a lot of information, a lot of knowledge, and a lot of organizing ability. As that happens I think you can see the beginning of at least a hope of transformation.

The most vital step in that is recognizing the difference between a trade union movement and a labor movement. I think that the most important thing those of us who work both in the trade union movement and in the other left and social justice movements can do is try and bring politics back into the trade union movement. We need to try and bring a community perspective to the movement. We need to remind and work and organize around the idea and the vision of a trade union movement that isn't just about collective bargaining, but is about the self-organization of working people around the transformation of society for workers and for all of us. □

Racism and the Labor Movement

by Tom Barrett

Paul Le Blanc's "Notes on Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States" (serialized in issues #107 and #108) has been one of the most important contributions to the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* since it became an independent publication in 1992. Its fundamental arguments, defining what Leninism is and why it remains vital to the struggle for socialism today, are, in my opinion, valid. The second installment is especially important in clarifying not only why a revolutionary party is necessary but how it should be built. Nothing in what follows should be construed in any way as taking issue with Le Blanc's basic points on the necessity of a revolutionary party to lead the struggle for proletarian power and on the proper ways to go about building one.

However, the first installment of Le Blanc's "Notes" contains a serious omission in what might be called a secondary point. Though it does not invalidate the most important points which Le Blanc makes, it cannot be ignored. The problem arises on page 19. Le Blanc writes:

In the United States, as throughout much of the world, mass working-class movements developed from the 1860s through the 1930s, which included a mass left-wing workers' subculture, nourished by periodic radical upsurges, that gave relevance to this Leninist orientation....

Unfortunately, a fundamental shift took place in that objective reality. The Second World War, the corrosive effects of Stalinism, the class-collaborationist orientation of prominent labor reformists, the Cold War and accompanying anti-Communist hysteria, the U.S. economic prosperity and "consumerist" mass culture of the 1950s and '60s, along with other far-reaching social and cultural changes, were among the phenomena which combined to deradicalize the U.S. labor movement and to melt away most of the vibrant left-wing working-class subculture of which the U.S. Trotskyists of the Socialist Workers Party [SWP] were a part. When the SWP's ranks were replenished by radicalizing youth in the 1960s and '70s, the SWP was necessarily a qualitatively different organization, and it was not possible for the 1930s and '40s proletarian party-building orientation of Cannon to be implemented.

Le Blanc omits the overriding factor in the deradicalization of the U.S. labor movement in the post-World War II period, the central problem which has confounded the American working class for almost as long as there has been an American working class — the problem of white racism. Far from being a "social and cultural change" of the postwar period, racism has deep roots within the European American working class. To ignore its centrality in the conservatism of the organized labor movement in the post-World War II period can lead to a total misassessment of radical activity (including the Socialist Workers Party's activity) in the late '50s–early '70s period. To underestimate its pervasiveness among European American workers today can lead to the kinds of miscalculations made by the SWP in its ill-fated "turn to industry," beginning in the late 1970s.

The Problem of Racism

Though Le Blanc addresses the issue of racism in a general way on page 20, he does not address its historic role in the evolution of the U.S. labor movement, most especially in its deradicalization during the late 1940s and 1950s. If one is to understand (1) how the reactionary labor bureaucracy reimposed its stranglehold on organized labor after the 1946 strike wave, (2) why the radicalization of the 1955–75 period developed almost completely outside the structure of the organized trade-union movement, and (3) why the best hope for a Leninist party in the U.S., the Socialist Workers Party, degenerated into a wretched little sect, the problem of working-class racism *must* be analyzed and understood. If one is to have any hope of leading the working class to state power and beginning the process of building a socialist society, racist forces within the working class must be decisively defeated. This must be at the heart of any socialist activity, including the building of a Leninist party, today.

Insufficient recognition of the racist infection within the working class can lead to an overly positive assessment of pre-World War II periods of radicalization and — conversely — an overly negative assessment of the radicalization of the 1960s, as is hinted at by Le Blanc:

An attempt simply to rebuild the healthier SWP of Cannon is also doomed to failure because some of the essential conditions and realities which brought it into being and gave it relevance (not the least of which was a vibrant and deep-rooted labor-radical subculture stretching back to the post-Civil War era) no longer exist [p. 19].

Whereas it is undoubtedly true that one cannot simply recreate the SWP of the Cannon era — or of the early 1970s for that matter — because historical conditions have changed, that should not lead to the pessimistic conclusion that "[there] can be no Leninist party worthy of the name under present conditions. The attempt to create such a party in spite of the conditions will result in a *sect*." The reality is that the attempt to create a Leninist party by following commandments engraved in stone tablets will result in a sect regardless of what objective conditions prevail. And though an organization striving to build a Leninist party today might not fulfill all the definitions of a "party" nor organize itself in the way that a larger and more powerful formation would, such a radical — indeed *Leninist* — organization can accomplish a great deal, right now, toward building the kind of party which can lead the proletarian struggle for power in the future. Indeed, the only hope for the future of humankind on this planet is that revolutionists will be able to carry out constructive activity in whatever kind of period of radicalization or reaction exists, each period presenting its own opportunities and challenges.

Le Blanc, in my view, overrates the "vibrant and deep-rooted labor-radical subculture stretching back to the post-Civil War era." The class consciousness which existed prior to World War II

had not developed sufficiently to unite working people across the lines of race, religion, and nationality (the majority of industrial workers were immigrants prior to the Great Depression). No less a spokesman for the downtrodden than the novelist Jack London was quoted as saying, "I am a white man first and a working man second," and he personally participated in violent attacks against Chinese immigrant workers in the Pacific Northwest. The Socialist Party (SP) was strong enough to elect the city government in Milwaukee for decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, but its political program would be considered only vaguely liberal today. Victor Berger, the leader of the Milwaukee SP, held views on race which differed little from those of the Southern Democrats of his own day. Though African Americans never stopped fighting for their rights after Reconstruction ended, the labor and socialist movements did not support their struggle until the Third International educated the fledgling U.S. Communist Party on the question.

During the 1920s and 1930s the Communist Party and Trotskyist movement educated and fought to the best of their ability against racism, especially in the struggle to free the Scottsboro defendants and the campaign to stop lynching in the South. However, because of the objective character of the radicalization in progress at that time, not to mention regional demographics (the overwhelming majority of African Americans lived in the South), the militant labor movement was the first priority, and most radicals saw the struggle against racism — correctly — as a means of uniting the working class to fight for and win its rights. But few understood it any deeper than that. And though they valiantly attempted to educate their fellow rank-and-file workers to abandon their racist attitudes, the struggles that built the industrial unions did not and could not put an end to racist consciousness within the white working class.

One of the most positive aspects of the radicalization of the mid-1950s to mid-1970s period was its head-on assault on the oppression of African Americans and all people of color by an endemically racist capitalist power structure. The participants in radical activities during that period were not in any way morally superior nor even necessarily less racist than radicals of earlier periods; rather, a number of objective historical events converged to create the conditions for a mass-based African American liberation struggle. The postwar mechanization of Southern agriculture — leading to a migration of African Americans to the cities and to the North — and the granting of formal independence to the African colonies of the European imperialist powers were among the factors that undercut the economic and political foundations of the Jim Crow system in the southern U.S. and propelled African Americans to take their fight for freedom into the streets. The mass-action struggles by African Americans (as opposed to the litigation strategy which struck down school segregation in 1954) began when Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama, bus. Those struggles set the tone for all the social movements that arose over the succeeding twenty years, including the antiwar and antinuclear movements, the women's liberation and lesbian and gay rights movements, and the struggles of other oppressed people of color.

However, because of the radicalization's origin in the African American liberation struggle — which was a *strength* of the radicalization, not a weakness — it left no room for compromise with racism in the trade unions, on the campuses, or anywhere else for that matter. To participate in the struggles of the 1955–75 period required a conscious rejection of racism. Though many

European American activists did not understand what that meant and were slow to overcome paternalistic attitudes, their involvement in the battles for social justice had to begin with a realization that African Americans were genuinely oppressed and were fighting for legitimate objectives. Unfortunately, that realization was not shared by many trade unionists, both officials and rank-and-file members, despite the involvement of many in the great labor battles of the 1930s and '40s. It is important to understand why.

The Origins of Working-Class Racism

Racism as we know it today is a fairly recent social phenomenon. The Mediterranean civilizations of antiquity had considerable contact and trade with Black Africa, and one finds no notion of any superiority based on skin color in any of the literature surviving from that period. To the extent that Medieval Europeans had conflict with Africans it was caused by the religious strife between Christianity and Islam rather than race. The idea that Europeans were superior simply by virtue of pigmentation only came about as a justification for slavery after 1500, especially in the English colonies in North America.

The institution of slavery was in clear contradiction to the democratic and egalitarian principles which gained support during the English bourgeois revolutions of 1648 and 1688. Without an iron economic necessity for slave labor in the North American colonies slavery would surely have disappeared much earlier. However, the wildly profitable sugar plantations of the Caribbean islands and tobacco plantations of Virginia, Maryland, and other colonies required a source of cheap labor, and the African slave trade provided it. So the slave traders, planters, and clergymen of the English colonies developed elaborate justifications for the institution of slavery, citing Biblical passages to prove that (1) Europeans were doing the Africans a favor by enslaving them and (2) that whites were inherently superior to Blacks. The inherent immorality of slavery was recognized very early on, both in England and the colonies, and racism as a justification for slavery developed in response. As the economy of the North American colonies depended on slavery to grow and accumulate profits, so North American capitalism was built with racism as an integral part of its ideological foundation.

The American Revolution of 1776 inspired democratic and libertarian sentiments to a greater degree than many of its leaders intended, and many participants recognized that slavery was inherently contradictory to those democratic ideals. In the period after the revolutionary victory of 1781, there was a marked increase in manumission (freeing) of slaves. At the same time, the economies of Maryland and Virginia were becoming diversified, with grain farming — which was not conducive to the use of slave labor — replacing tobacco farming in many areas. Slavery might have died out completely at the end of the eighteenth century were it not for the invention of the cotton gin in 1790, which made large-scale cotton farming economical in the states of the Deep South. Cotton, like tobacco, required massive amounts of cheap labor, and the institution of slavery was given a new lease on life.

However, in the non-cotton producing slave states, especially Maryland and Delaware, several thousand free African Americans — who had been manumitted, bought their own freedom, or simply escaped from bondage — gravitated to the urban centers. These "Free People of Color," as they were known, found employment in skilled manufacturing, construction, transport, and service trades of the newly industrializing cities of Baltimore and Wilmington during the first half of the nineteenth century. Smaller

African American communities existed in some northern cities, especially New York and Philadelphia. In the Gulf port cities of New Orleans, Mobile, and Pensacola, significant communities of Free People of Color existed as well; however, they tended not to be manumitted slaves but children of white planters and Black mistresses or immigrants from the Caribbean, including many Creole refugees from the Haitian revolution. Though the Gulf port Free People of Color had a different origin, their social role was similar to the free Blacks in Baltimore, Wilmington, Richmond, Washington, and other cities on the edges of slave society.

When labor was scarce, free African Americans were able to find work, especially at trades which whites found less desirable. However, with the influx of Irish and German immigrants during the 1840s — a period of economic recession following the banking crisis of 1837 — competition for jobs became much more intense. Ira Berlin, in his book *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South*, writes:

The influx of Irish and German workers into Southern cities speeded the exclusion of Negro freemen from many occupations. The competition free Negro workers faced from newly arrived immigrants in Baltimore was a typical example of how white immigrant workers limited the free Negro's opportunities in every Southern city. During the 1830s, visitors to Baltimore first noted that "Irish and other foreigners are, to a considerable extent, taking the place of colored laborers and other domestic servants."... White businessmen frequently exercised the same preferences on the docks and in the warehouses and factories that they did in their homes. Immigrants replaced free Negroes as stevedores and hod carriers, moved into the coalyards, and even took over much of the farm labor in the surrounding countryside. Previously, free Negroes had controlled all of these jobs....

Free African Americans, in order to survive, often accepted work at lower wages than white workers would take. Of course, the employers' racial prejudices became unimportant when considerations of profit were involved. However, the white workers



Frances Harper (1825–1911), abolitionist poet, born free in Baltimore, Maryland

tended to respond by calling for the exclusion of Blacks from the trades rather than fighting together with the Blacks for higher wages. Berlin writes:

With increased frequency, militant white workingmen petitioned legislatures and organized workingmen's associations to exclude free Negroes from certain trades. Although a growing sense of class consciousness occasionally cut across racial lines, many unions were organized for the specific purpose of eliminating free Negro competition. Even the most class-conscious Southern workers seemed to believe the right to organize belonged to whites only. "Craftsmen and other laborers have an undoubted right to 'strike for higher wages,'" declared a prolabor St. Louis newspaper, "that is when they are white men. Color of course gives a different complexion to these rights." Occasionally, the festering hostility of white workers broke out in violent clashes with blacks.

Within the Irish immigrant communities especially, antipathy toward Blacks ran so high that it inspired sympathy for the Confederacy after the outbreak of the Civil War. The imposition of military conscription, the suspension of the right of *habeas corpus* (allowing imprisonment without charges of suspected pro-Confederate agitators), and the closing of proslavery newspapers led to anti-Lincoln riots in Baltimore and New York, which were put down with considerable bloodshed. Most of the rioters were Irish immigrant workers.

The Post-Reconstruction Democratic Party and the Urban Working Class

The antebellum Democratic Party was for all intents and purposes destroyed by the Union victory in the Civil War. In the South it was suppressed by the occupying Union forces and the Reconstruction state governments. In the North it was perceived to be pro-Confederate in light of George B. McClellan's antiwar candidacy in the 1864 presidential election. Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, a Tennessee Democrat who had opposed secession, survived the attempt to impeach him, but his party did not. The Democratic Party which began to emerge during the Counter-reconstruction was a fundamentally new and different political formation.

Much more than the Republican Party, the Democratic Party that emerged in the late 1870s was a *coalition* of basically three forces — the Southern Conservatives,* the political leadership of the Northern urban working-class communities (predominantly Irish American), and reform-minded politicians from the intellectual milieu or from the ruling class itself. The last group was considerably smaller in terms of political volunteers and voter turnout; however, it provided the Democrats with all their successful presidential candidates (with the exception of Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson, both of whom originally succeeded to the office upon the death of the previous president and ran for re-election as incumbents). It also stamped its program on the Democratic Party — political reform in the overall interests of American capitalism. However, in order to defeat the Republicans, whose corruption had become expensive for the business community, the "clean government" reformers needed allies. The only way to cement the alliance was to insure that there was something in it for each of the partners. For the urban political machines, there

*During Reconstruction, the political parties in the South were generally known as the Radicals, representing African Americans and their white allies, and the Conservatives, representing the old planter aristocracy as it adapted itself to the new social and political reality.

was acquiescence in continued “dirty politics” on the local level and legislation to curb some of the most flagrant abuses of the working class, such as child labor and unsafe working conditions. And for the Southern Conservatives there was the institution of Jim Crow segregation, which was gradually introduced during the last three decades of the nineteenth century. The Democratic Party’s political leadership, which met in its “smoke-filled rooms” at national conventions every four years, consisted of representatives of all three coalition partners, and all parties agreed to the conditions which held the Democratic Party together.

In the immigrant communities of the Northern cities, the officials of local Democratic Party clubs became, like it or not, genuine political leaders of the white working class. The local precinct captain could see to it that a man might get a job on the city payroll or that a family down on its luck might receive a basket of food. The precinct captain could arrange for a carter’s license or find employment for a relative just arrived from Europe. In return, all he asked was that people “vote right” on election day. And they did. Of course, those who organized the voter turnout for the Democrats would find themselves rewarded with employment in the city bureaucracy. The system of political patronage known since Jacksonian times as the “spoils system” (“to the victor go the spoils”) continued in the large cities — and continues to this day — long after the civil service reforms of the 1880s put an end to it on the national level.

Local Democratic leaders explained political issues to workers who had little education or knowledge of their new country. In the taverns — whose owners were frequently Democratic club officials — in the churches, and in other places where white working men gathered (women, of course, could not vote until 1920), the Democratic Party gained a fiercely loyal following. White workers supported it well before the trade unions became a significant force in U.S. society, and on the question of race there was no question about where the Democrats stood: they stood for white supremacy. This was the soil in which the American Federation of Labor (AFL) took root. Samuel Gompers, the founder and first president of the AFL, was an English-born Jew who was uncomfortable with bigotry. He originally opposed discrimination against African Americans and Asian immigrants, but he and his organization ultimately yielded to racist pressure. *The conservative job-trust unionism of the post-World War II period has roots in the white working-class communities going back to the early decades of the nineteenth century. It is as much a part of the “culture” of the white American working class as the “vibrant, left-wing working-class subculture” described by Le Blanc.* The struggle between these two contradictory forces in the working class has dominated the development of the American labor movement from its earliest days. The racist, right-wing attitudes which socialists find so appalling are *not* the creation of the bureaucracy or the employers, though the bosses and officials have certainly used them to their advantage. They are deeply ingrained within the rank and file, and they certainly did not originate in the late 1940s.

The Radical Labor Tradition

The best of the pre-World War I labor radicals accepted African Americans as fellow workers. The Knights of Labor encouraged Black workers to join. Charles H. Wesley writes in *The Quest for Equality: From Civil War to Civil Rights*:

The Knights’ constitution made no racial distinctions among its members, and, in fact, from the first they encouraged Negro mem-

bership. The movement’s slogan warned that “an injury to one is the concern of all.” The Richmond *Dispatch* also noted that the Knights recognized “no line of race, creed, politics, or color.” Negroes joined the order in large numbers....

Eugene Debs reflected this attitude within the Socialist Party, in sharp contrast to the racist views of right-wing leaders like Victor Berger. Revolutionists like Debs understood that African Americans suffered the worst of capitalist oppression and that white racism undermined unity within the working class. However, their understanding went no deeper than that. More importantly, they did not take into consideration what African Americans themselves were saying and doing through their own spokespeople and organizations. They did not understand that the struggle of African Americans for their human rights was a legitimate and important struggle *in its own right*.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 changed American labor radicalism from top to bottom. The best revolutionaries in the Socialist Party, the Socialist Labor Party, and the Industrial Workers of the World, as well as independent labor and intellectual activists, came together to form the Communist Party, and they looked to the leaders of the first successful workers revolution for education and guidance.

The journalist John Reed represented the CPUSA at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, shortly before his death. There is a story that during the agenda point on the colonial struggle he took the floor expressing the Debsian view that African Americans were simply the most oppressed of the working class in the United States and that Communists need only fight for proletarian unity regardless of race. Following his intervention every non-European delegate asked for the floor to respond to him. Regardless of the anecdote’s accuracy, it is a matter of historical record that the Bolshevik leaders undertook to educate the American Communists on the importance of African American self-determination. They achieved only limited success, as has been reflected even in the pages of this review since December 1992 (in articles by Peter Johnson and Roy Rollin).

During World War I and immediately afterward there was a migration of African Americans to the northern cities — much smaller than the post-World War II migration, to be sure, but significant nonetheless. In addition, during the 1920s African American intellectual life flowered in all areas — politics, literature, art, music, and the sciences. The Communist Party attempted to recruit African Americans, but it did *not* attempt to relate to the organized Black struggle or to African American political discussion on their own terms. Even before Joseph Stalin imposed his iron bureaucratic dictatorship on the Comintern, the CPUSA suffered from sectarianism, ultraleftism, and internal factionalism, which prevented it from relating in a positive way to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association, and other organizations fighting for Black rights during this period. Instead, the CP attempted to set up African American organizations under its own tight control, a strategy which proved counterproductive.

How poorly the CP understood the *essence* of African American self-determination is reflected in its support of the “Black Belt” theory during the 1928–35 period. The CP, which by this time had expelled all who did not uncritically accept Stalin’s dictates, issued its call for a separate Black state in the predominantly African American areas of the Deep South without any dialogue whatsoever with the African Americans’ own political leaders.

During the “People’s Front” period of the later 1930s and during World War II, the Communist Party equated the struggle against racism with the fight against fascism on a world scale. Though, to be sure, fascism represented the most extreme and brutal expression of racism and its defeat was absolutely vital, defeating fascism abroad was not the same as fighting for African American human rights at home. However, the CP, as directed by Stalin, supported the “democratic” imperialist governments of Britain and the United States as the only alternative to fascist victory and opposed all political activity, including activity for African American human rights, which could in any way be construed as being critical of either the Roosevelt or Churchill regime. They supported Roosevelt’s effort to convince A. Philip Randolph, president of the International Brotherhood of Pullman Porters (a trade union with an overwhelmingly African American membership), to postpone the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, which he had proposed take place in 1941. The March did not take place until 1963, at the height of the civil rights movement.

The question of African American nationalism and self-determination is relevant in that the Communist Party — which was far and away the largest and most influential radical tendency in the labor movement from the 1930s to the ’50s — decided that it knew best how to fight for Black rights and attempted to dictate to the African American people themselves what they should fight for and how they should fight for it. It never crossed their minds that whites had been telling Blacks what to do in this country ever since 1619 and that Blacks were tired of it, even if the European Americans were radicals with the best of intentions. When the African American struggle for human rights erupted in the 1950s it was inevitable that it would develop its own leadership and that any attempt by outside forces to dominate it would ultimately be rejected.

Labor and Civil Rights in the Postwar Period

Of course, Le Blanc is not wrong to cite the postwar prosperity and anti-Communist hysteria as factors in the defeat of the radical forces in the labor movement. The policies followed by the Communist Party during World War II, not the least of which was its encouragement of prowar chauvinism within the union rank and file, ultimately contributed to its own downfall when the Truman administration declared the Soviet Union the enemy in place of the German and Japanese empires. Non-Stalinist leaders in the CIO, such as the Reuther brothers in the United Auto Workers, joined with the AFL conservatives in purging the radicals from the union movement and reconsolidating the alliance with the Democrats.

Significantly, one of the first concessions made by the labor movement to the Democratic Party was the cancellation of “Operation Dixie,” the massive drive to unionize the Southern states, set to begin in 1946. Of course, within a year Taft-Hartley became law. Its infamous Section 14-B allowed states to outlaw the union shop — and nearly every Southern legislature proceeded to do just that.

Concurrently one of the greatest sociological shifts in American history was taking place. When the wartime demand for tanks sharply decreased, American industry began mass producing farm machinery at more affordable prices than ever before in history. Among their products was machinery for harvesting cotton. Within a remarkably short time, the cotton industry was no longer dependent on the cheap labor of landless tenants, bound to the soil

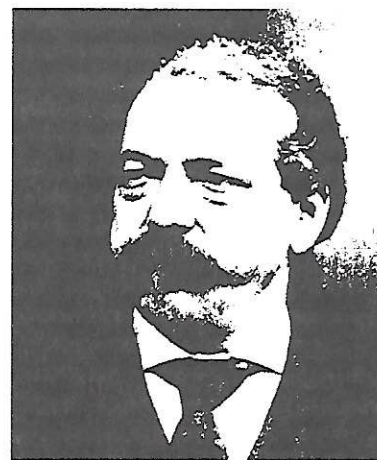
by debt. African Americans began a massive migration to the cities, especially Northern cities, whose industries were producing for the entire world economy and employing all who applied. However, while the labor shortage enabled Blacks to join the industrial workforce in the North, the skilled trades continued to discriminate as they had for generations. The rank and file and the bureaucracy saw eye to eye on the need to keep their unions lily-white. Furthermore, as cheap suburban housing became available for the better-paid — and white — workers to buy, the old city slums were trans-

formed within a few years into the Black ghettos so familiar to us today. Within most Northern cities, unofficial boundaries — enforced by landlords, real estate agents, and, if necessary, mob violence — kept African Americans in “their” neighborhoods. The violence in South Boston, Bensonhurst (Brooklyn, New York), and Howard Beach (Queens, New York), show clearly how little has changed.

Though during the early years of the civil rights movement, the union bureaucracy supported the campaign to end Jim Crow, it completely ignored the problems African Americans faced in the North, problems for which the union bureaucracy shared responsibility. When the struggle focused mainly on ending legally sanctioned racism in the Southern states, an alliance between the union movement and the Black struggle was possible. When African American activists in the mid-1960s turned their attention to economically rooted racist oppression in the Northern states, the alliance, which had not been strong to begin with, collapsed.

Whatever lip service the union leadership may have given to “brotherhood” of all races, its record was clear to African Americans: it did little to fight racism within the rank and file; it attempted to dictate to African American organizations what their goals should be and how they should achieve them; it subordinated African American goals to its own or — worse — the ruling class’s agenda; and it even subordinated its own goals — not to mention African American civil rights — to preserving the “Solid South,” that is, keeping the white supremacists in the Democratic Party coalition. Was it illogical for the African American people to look to their own educated middle class for leadership rather than to the labor movement? On the contrary, it was inevitable.

The youth radicalization, which revitalized the U.S. Left in the 1960s, began when young people of all races joined the civil rights struggle. The ruling class, which for its own reasons had no more interest in preserving Jim Crow, gave the struggle a certain legitimacy, which allowed students and other youth who had not yet come to espouse radical ideas to participate in it. This was intensified during the Kennedy administration. As many of us experienced first-hand, thousands of young people radicalized through their participation in civil rights and later struggles against the Vietnam War and for women’s liberation, even though they had



Samuel Gompers, founder of American Federation of Labor, reluctantly acquiesced to excluding African Americans from the trade unions.

Continued on page 32

Working Women and U.S. Unions

by Evelyn Sell

Over the past dozen years, leading unionists have declared that the shrinking organized labor movement can be enlarged and revitalized through an infusion of working women. In order to recruit female members, however, unions would have to design new strategies and discard longtime practices. In a 1984 *Los Angeles Times* "Viewpoint" article, Communications Workers of America President Glenn Watts wrote:

In addition to dealing with the effect of technology on the number and types of jobs available, unions are also recognizing that the needs and interests of the workforce are changing. For example, it is estimated that for the next 15 years, almost a million women will enter the workforce each year — meaning that they will account for two out of every three entrants.... These workers will be concerned with day care, flexitime, and equal pay for comparable jobs. They may want different types of health and insurance plans.

A special article for the 1989 Labor Day weekend, published in *The Seattle Times/Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, began: "The resurgence of organized labor depends on unions changing their tactics to appeal to women — especially white-collar women — many union leaders and analysts believe." Sar Levitan, director of the Center for Social Policy Studies at George Washington University, pointed out, "To have credibility with the new labor force, they [unions] have to be more responsive — especially to women.... They still haven't found a way to appeal to the new women-and-family labor force." According to James Dworkin, associate dean of Purdue University's Krannert School of Management, labor leaders have functioned on the basis of the false assumption that women workers are not interested in unions and have concentrated their organizing efforts on manufacturing industries where male workers predominate. With the loss of so many industrial jobs, Dworkin said, "unions have to get back to basics — organizing the unorganized. They have to rally around women's issues like child care and comparable worth, and move into other sectors — finance and banking, service jobs." Agreeing with him, Pat Ziska (International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Washington office) described successful organizing drives among office workers, nursing assistants, licensed practical nurses, and hospital nurses. AFL-CIO spokeswoman Lorri McHugh explained that the largest growth over the past decade had been in four unions: teaching, health care, public service, and communications (job areas with high percentages of women workers).

All of the above points were examined in a working paper by Susan C. Eaton entitled "Women Workers, Unions, and Industrial Sectors in North America." (October 1992; International Labour Office, Geneva) She surveyed and compared relationships between unions and women workers in the United States and Canada. The following information focuses on U.S. women.

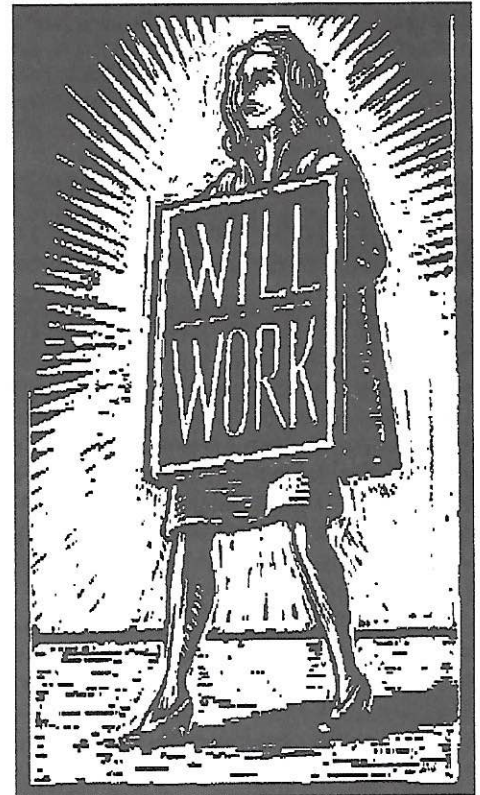
Women in the Labor Force and in Unions

In 1991, women made up 47 percent of the total workforce, and two-thirds of all part-time workers (the fastest growing employment category). Although the media has played up instances where women have broken through into "men's jobs," a very tiny percentage of females are actually employed in "nontraditional" jobs. Eighty percent of all women in the workforce are employed in ten occupational categories, which include traditional gender-segregated jobs. (For more information, see Evelyn Sell, "Working Women in the United States Today," *Bulletin IDOM*, March 1993.)

As of 1990, according to Eaton's figures, only eight unions out of over 100 accounted for 70 percent of female unionists (4.3 million women) [Source: Bureau of National Affairs]:

- National Education Association (NEA) with 1,200,000 women members — 65 percent of total membership;
- American Federation of Teachers (AFT, part of AFL-CIO) with 420,000 women members — 65 percent of the membership;
- Communications Workers of America (CWA) with 338,000 women members — 52 percent of the membership;
- United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) with 663,000 women members — 51 percent of the membership;
- Service Employees International Union (SEIU) with 500,000 women members — 50 percent of the membership;
- American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) with 600,000 women members — 50 percent of the membership;
- International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) with 400,000 women members — 30 percent of the membership;
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) with 240,000 women members — 30 percent of the membership.

Other unions with at least 200,000 women members in each, and with women as a high



percentage of total membership, are: Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), and Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union.

In terms of total numbers in the labor force, 14.8 percent of female and 21.3 percent of male workers hold union membership. This bare fact may give the impression that women are not as attracted to the organized labor movement as men — but additional information is needed to give a better insight into developments. The restructuring of capitalist enterprises tends to downsize employment in basic industries such as steel and auto, where the workforce is predominantly male; the greatest growth in employment has been taking place in the service sector, where women workers are concentrated. For every union machinist, there are two unionized retail clerks; for every union auto worker, there are two unionized teachers. Female membership in unions increased from 18.3 to 37 percent over the last 30 years. This shift in male-to-female proportions is partly due to job losses in male-dominated industries, which resulted in a drop of male union members. But the rise in women's share of total union membership is also due to the fact that women are currently more likely to vote for and join a union than men. In fact, two out of every three new union members are women.

While many labor bureaucrats still believe that women are "not organizable," the bare statistics prove otherwise. Eaton reports that "union elections held today with a majority of women or 'minority' workers are won more often than those in traditionally male —

or white — dominated workplaces.” Where women were a majority of the prospective bargaining unit, unions won 69 percent of the elections in 1982–83. Where women were less than half of the prospective union, only 33 percent of the elections were won in 1986–88.

Organizing Women Workers

Outmoded ideas about women workers and “business-as-usual” union practices are barriers to increasing the strength and social weight of the labor movement. Bringing women into the ranks and leaderships of unions has become a vital necessity — but too many union officials still think that women are not committed to long-term or full-time participation in the workforce and/or are not interested in unionization. Union staffs, leaders, and organizers remain male-dominated — reinforcing strategies and allocations of resources that are not in tune with developments within the workforce.

Although the absolute number of union members was increasing until recently, their *percentage* of the paid nonagricultural workforce has been declining since 1954, when over one-third of workers belonged to unions. In 1991, only 18 percent were covered by union contracts — and this figure includes fee-payers who are part of bargaining units but have not actually joined the union. The private sector workforce, which includes four-fifths of all workers, is only 12 percent unionized. In order simply to hold on to the same percentage of the workforce, unions need to organize about one million members each year — a goal which has not been reached.

Studies show that unions invest more resources in efforts to organize the fewer remaining workers in highly organized occupations than in attempting to organize nonunion workplaces. A comparison of union representation elections held during 1991 showed that the lowest win rate (40.1 percent) was obtained in the manufacturing sector, while the highest rates were almost all within sectors employing large numbers of female workers. Union elections among health care workers were won in 57.8 percent of 315 elections; among communications workers the win rate was 51.6 percent of 62 elections; and for service workers other than health care, unions won 56 percent of the 776 elections held. Eaton pointed out:

These figures not only demonstrate that woman-dominated bargaining units are being won by unions, but also suggest how unions are allocating their resources. Thus in 1991, it appears that 30.1% of the total 3,021 elections were held in manufacturing, where most male workers are concentrated — despite the low win rate in such elections. In male-dominated construction, another 11% of elections were held, making a total of 45% of elections held in two major male-dominated sectors. This compares with 92% of elections held in health services, 22.6% for

other services, 1.8% in communications, and 1.8% in finance — despite the fact that more than two-thirds of workers are employed in the service sector.

Six problems in organizing women workers were described by Eaton, and her commentaries on each indicate some solutions:

The first problem is a lack of sufficient skilled, trained organizers, particularly women and persons from visible minorities....AFL-CIO executive staff member Charles McDonald notes: “We have some organizers who have 75% to 80% win rates. They tend to be organizers who reflect the characteristics of the workers they are trying to organize.” Bricklayers union president Jack Joyce agreed in speaking of women coming into construction unions: “Those coming in appear to me to be more militant than most of our male members, and what’s more important, willing to do the nuts-and-bolts work needed to help organize and run the union.” An AFL-CIO organizing survey conducted in 1989 showed that women organizers’ success rates were 61% while male organizers won 41% of elections...“If you expect to organize women,” says organizer Richard Bensinger, “you need to use women. Women need to serve as leaders and role models.” Many women unionists agree, and in both countries [U.S. and Canada] women have been pressing for affirmative action hiring and training to diversify nearly all-male staffs.

One positive response of U.S. AFL-CIO leaders in 1990 was to establish the AFL-CIO Organizing Institute [which] trained 44 organizing “interns and apprentices” in its first year, 1990, of whom half were women and 25% were Black, Hispanic, or Asian...The 1991 class was 105, of whom slightly more than half were women.

A second problem encountered in organizing is a lack of proper targeting and intensity of resource allocation....[Figures suggest] that unions allocate less than 5% of their budgets to organizing. The growing unions are exceptions: SEIU devotes 25% to 30% of its national union budget to organizing, though this represents only about 20% of overall resources since most dues is retained by the locals. The UAW has earmarked interest on its massive strike fund to support new organizing...

SEIU Building Service organizing director Stephen Lerner argues persuasively that U.S. unions are spending time fine-tuning a failed strategy of site-by-site NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] organizing, and that they should take up a combined industry and regionally focused organizing strategy which involves mobilizing current members as well as the unorganized. This would require a sense of “movement” created by massive investment, risk, and focus to create a real dynamic of workers’ power in the targeted areas.

A third key to successful union organizing is an issue focus and membership involvement approach which will appeal to women workers. An AFL-CIO organizing survey in 1991 showed that “rank and file intensive campaigns” have the greatest success rates, more than twice as high as other styles. These are organizing campaigns with

high involvement of representative committees from the bargaining unit, small group meetings, individual house calls by workers, and solidarity demonstrations.

...Those who prefer [this] approach argue for the empowerment of members which results from “one-on-one” training and organizing strategy. Conscious feminists also believe this strategy reflects women’s preferences for connection, relationship, and low-key, friendly styles...The AFL-CIO survey, conducted by Kate Bronfenbrenner, showed that union campaigns focused on dignity in the workplace, fighting job discrimination, and product or service quality had a 56% win rate, compared to a 27% win rate where the focus was on the traditional issues of wages, hours, and job security alone.

A fourth issue in organizing women has to do with the specific work situations in which they usually find themselves. Clerical and service sector jobs often fall into small bargaining units or workplaces, and they can be isolating...The solutions lie in creative organizing strategies which are tailored to the particular job settings. HUCTWU [Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers/AFSCME] set up a “buddy system” for its member organizers and held dozens of weekly brown-bag lunch meetings to inform people all over the campus about the union. SEIU’s Justice for Janitors campaign arranges for organizers to visit workers on their evening lunch breaks, and before and after work. Many Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union, ILGWU, and SEIU drives have focused on immigrant women workers in part through working with community-based organizations and native speakers of the relevant language. Virtually no organizing setting is impossible, given the right individuals and appropriate resources. But the traditional approaches to organizing factory workers [for example, leafleting, mass mailings, videos] will not work with the “new workforce.”

A fifth challenge in organizing women workers is the persistent inequity in family responsibilities...which means that many women work the equivalent of two jobs, one at the workplace and one at home. Although men’s support of family activities is increasing, the “work gap” is still tremendous, with women working an average of one extra month a year on home and family duties compared to men. Unions have done very little to challenge this underlying “double day” problem of women workers through discussions with their men members, or political and contract activity. Successful organizing unions, however, have begun to accommodate the needs of women workers with children and family obligations. Many hold meetings near work or at lunch rather than in the evenings; others have begun to provide child care.

A sixth barrier to organizing women is sometimes described as their lack of prior union experience or discomfort with the “image” of unions. Some unions have tried to deal with this by extensive publicity campaigns and videos, featuring women members...Nine to Five, the National Association of Working Women (NAWW)...offers membership in a non-union association of secretaries and clerical workers in an effort to encourage them to associate with other

workers without taking the risk of joining a union. Nine to Five has about 10,000 members today, who are also "associate" or affiliated, non-bargaining members of District 925, SEIU. This strategy has not succeeded on any scale as a "pre-union" organization, although it benefits those members who have joined. Former SEIU local president Nancy Mills suggests that unions must form alliances with women's groups and those concerned with the social and political status of minorities in order to organize these workers.

Responding to Union Members' Needs

The information and suggestions presented in Susan Eaton's working paper correspond, in most respects, with my own experiences and thinking as a working mother, a union activist, a longtime feminist, and a socialist. Workers cannot be simply lumped together as an exploited class with no regard for special conditions of oppression. Gender awareness — along with consciousness of the special needs of people of color, immigrants, and youth — is a crucial question for those who are trying to raise unions' economic, political, and social clout. Women workers are a key component of the forces required to make unions respond to the needs of their memberships, organize the unorganized, democratize established unions, and create a labor party which can serve as an independent electoral vehicle for working people.

Here are three examples of unions addressing particular problems encountered by women in the workplace. These are worthwhile activities in and of themselves but, as can be seen, they have directly or ultimately benefited all workers.

A nine-year legal battle culminated in a 1991 court victory striking down a mandatory "fetal protection" policy established in 1982 by Johnson Controls, the largest manufacturer of car batteries in the U.S. The company demanded written proof of sterility or infertility from all women under 70 years of age who were working in high-lead-exposure jobs. In some cases, women had to undergo tubal ligations in order to prove their inability to bear children. In other cases, women were forced to accept demotion to lower-paying jobs or to quit. Outraged over this crass discriminatory policy toward women — although male workers were also harmed by the same hazardous working conditions — seven women and a potential father filed a suit with the help of their union and the Women's Rights Project of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). *UAW v. Johnson Controls, Inc.* struck a blow not only against the company's fourteen plants but against the similar "fetal protection" policies of about 15 major corporations, including General Motors, Gulf Oil, B.F. Goodrich, DuPont, Monsanto, and Union Carbide. The case finally ended up in the U.S. Supreme Court, which reversed lower court rulings and utilized the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to

prohibit such sex discrimination in the workplace.

This was not a narrow victory for women only but helped call attention to the very serious problem of unsafe working conditions, an issue affecting all employees regardless of gender.

"Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: a practical guide" was published by the AFL-CIO in early 1993. The brochure identifies what constitutes sexual harassment, describes existing laws, explains employers' responsibilities, counters myths about sexual harassment, outlines what unions can do, and informs workers what they can do when harassed. The AFL-CIO resolution on working women states:

Sexual harassment on the job continues to plague the workplace at high economic and emotional costs to the victims. Sexual harassment is illegal under Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and the AFL-CIO urges a major role by unions in combatting sexual harassment on the job through every legitimate means possible, including establishing policies, educating workers and managers, using the grievance procedure and, where necessary, legal action. We urge our affiliates to adopt contract language addressing the problem of sexual harassment and to engage in other appropriate action in concert with concerned groups such as women's and civil rights organizations.

The adoption of such a statement does not, of course, guarantee a substantial campaign nor an end to everyday harassment. But taking this position helps create a more favorable climate for female unionists within the organized labor movement, and is a step toward building mutual respect and confidence between female and male unionists. Without such gender solidarity, bosses can continue to pursue divide-and-conquer tactics which weaken and demoralize labor groups.

The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) has incorporated many clauses in contracts covering: affirmative action, equal rights, parental and child care leaves, sexual harassment, flexible work schedules, benefits for part-time employees, and other matters the union designated as "women's issues and family concerns." Provisions from contracts negotiated around the country were contained in a booklet published by the ACTWU Research Department in 1988. The introduction explained:

More and more frequently, ACTWU women are using the collective bargaining process to address their particular needs. They are negotiating for equal treatment and to try to resolve the conflicting demands of work life and family life. At the same time, men in ACTWU are more supportive of the struggles of their working mothers and daughters. They are also asserting their own right to time off from work to meet their family responsibilities.

It is increasingly evident that "women's issues and family concerns" — for example,

child care and parental leave — are vital issues for all working people. Although women continue to bear the major responsibility for children, economic necessity has created more and more families with two wage earners — making child care an issue for males as well as mothers. Efforts to win "maternity leave," to make sure that women would not lose their jobs because of pregnancy and childbirth, have evolved into campaigns for "parental" leaves — encompassing male as well as female workers. In recent years, the concept has been stretched to "family leave" in order to include care for elderly relatives.

Labor and the Women's Rights Movement

The organized labor movement has been prompted to pay attention to the concerns of women workers because of specific pressures: the demands of union members, the need to expand its dues-paying base, and the activities of feminists and women's rights groups.

In some cases, women's rights committees have been established within local unions. The Women's Caucus of the Oregon Public Employees Union played the crucial leadership and organizing role in winning the union's 1987 strike victory. In other cases, women have taken the lead in devising and carrying out strategies for successful union organizing drives; for example, the establishment of the AFSCME chapter at the University of Minnesota, and the breakthrough successes for Harvard University clerical and technical workers.

The Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW), established in 1974, offers policy recommendations to the AFL-CIO and affiliated locals, and provides training and networking for female unionists. My own experience as a CLUW member (and what I have been told by other women union members around the country) was not positive. CLUW chapters are, for the most part, not democratically organized and do not involve rank-and-file members in a significant fashion. However, some of CLUW's activities have helped call attention to important issues, for example, holding conferences such as the one in Los Angeles on "The Deepening Crisis: Child Care Needs of Working Parents," and the 1988 national rally in Washington, D.C. Useful materials have been published by CLUW, such as "Effective Contract Language for Union Women." The CLUW leadership usually serves as "yes-women" to the AFL-CIO bureaucrats but — in a striking departure — CLUW supported women's abortion rights despite the AFL-CIO leadership's refusal to adopt a policy favoring a woman's right to choose.

A number of organizations function independently of union structures but relate to the labor movement in various ways. What follows is not a complete survey of such groups

but indicates resources available for women workers.

The Women's Institute for Leadership Development (WILD) is held annually in Massachusetts to train rank-and-file women in union leadership skills. It is funded by grants from individual feminists, foundations, unions, and labor studies programs at universities. Female activists from over thirty unions have been helped by the three-day training sessions to run for union offices, develop public speaking skills, learn about contract bargaining, and increase their ability to function effectively within unions.

The National Committee on Pay Equity, which was formed in 1979, is a coalition of labor, women's, and civil rights organizations; religious, professional, and legal associations; state and local pay equity coalitions

and commissions on women; and individuals working to eliminate wage discrimination based on gender or race. It works closely with unions on a number of projects.

The National Organization for Women (NOW) has taken up working women's issues in a variety of ways. For example, at the 1987 NOW national conference, members were urged to participate in the Jobs with Justice campaign launched by a group of unions to demand job security and governmental policies based on a range of human needs (health care, parental leave, child care). Currently, NOW is campaigning for a number of issues directly impacting working people, including: pay equity and comparable worth, family and medical leave, and a guaranteed minimum income. Although criticisms can be made of NOW's internal func-

tioning and its continued reliance on Democratic Party politicians, it can be a powerful component of workers' struggles. Women, inside the labor movement and among the unorganized, need to utilize every possible vehicle in their dual fight against sexism and exploitation.

As labor activists and socialists have pointed out, unions need to take on the character of a broad social crusade in order to achieve their goals. This means building alliances and working relations between unions and movements for social change. For working women, a multifaceted approach has already proven fruitful and is increasingly necessary as the capitalist system lurches from crisis to crisis. □

July 7, 1993

No to U.S. Intervention in Bosnia or Anywhere!

Continued from page 3

lesser extent, France and the Netherlands) dominated the Pacific, and Japan wanted to share in the plunder. And after they had a share of the plunder the Japanese decided that they should do all the plundering themselves. This was not a conflict in whose outcome the working people of the industrialized countries or the peasants and urban masses of Asia had any interest. All they stood to gain was misery, both during the fighting and afterward, regardless of who won.

The starvation in China during that period was on a par with that in Somalia today. The military atrocities matched or surpassed the "ethnic cleansing" going on in the former Yugoslav republics. Militarily, the Chinese masses were no match for the formidable Japanese war machine, which the U.S.-armed Chiang Kai-shek refused to confront. Even after Pearl Harbor, neither Britain nor the United States committed serious forces to help the Chinese resist the Japanese occupation.

Nevertheless, the Chinese people *did* resist, and in so doing built one of the most powerful fighting forces in the history of Asia, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. Only through sheer heroism and effective military tactics did the PLA overcome its disadvantage in weaponry and the political weaknesses imposed on it by Stalinism. At the same time in Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito was leading a parallel guerrilla army, the Partisans, against the combined forces of Germany, Italy, the fascist Croatian Ustashi, and the Serb monarchists, known as Chetniks, some of whom are today carrying out "ethnic cleansing" in Croatia and Bosnia. Though they received a limited amount of military aid from Britain, the Partisans defeated the fascist forces virtually alone.

Could the Chinese people have defeated the Japanese on their own, without the Amer-

icans and British, without the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? To find the answer one need look no further than Vietnam.

To be sure, there are as many differences as parallels between Vietnam of 1964-75 and Bosnia today. That is not the point. The Vietnam experience demonstrates one universal truth: oppressed people, armed with courage and a winning strategy, and having the support of an international movement against imperialist intervention, can defeat the most powerful military force on earth. Though the Vietnamese fighters inflicted heavy losses on the U.S. forces on the battlefields, they are the first to acknowledge that they could never have defeated the Americans in an exclusively military conflict. In support of the fighting Vietnamese people, there grew up a powerful international campaign demanding the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam, and this massive antiwar movement convinced the American people that the war was wrong and that they had truly nothing to win. The combat soldiers could hardly feel that they were "fighting for their country" when their country's people opposed what they were doing. It is likely that the U.S. ruling class decided to abandon the war short of victory because of rapidly increasing antiwar sentiment within the ranks of the active-duty GIs.

Revolution — The Only Answer That Makes Sense

Experience shows that revolution, by the working class and its peasant and intellectual allies, is not unrealistic, but in fact is the *only* realistic answer for people facing domestic oppression and foreign domination. The Somalis, who at first welcomed the U.S. troops, are now seeing that foreign intervention is only making things worse, and they are demanding that the U.S. and UN withdraw from their country. History can demonstrate no instance in which oppressed people gained

self-determination or social and economic justice by relying on an imperialist "liberator."

The collapse of Stalinism should be no cause for demoralization. Revolutionary victories have been won in this century *in spite* of Stalinism, not because of it. To be sure, assembling a revolutionary leadership, especially in the heat of battle in the former Yugoslavia, is a formidable task, and, unfortunately, there is little that activists in this country can do to stop the slaughter in the short term. Bill Clinton will do whatever he perceives to be in the interests of the U.S. ruling class, regardless of what any of us think, say, or do, at this time. But even he recognizes that the American working people want nothing to do with fighting in the Balkans.

History demonstrates that building a revolutionary leadership, though a difficult task, is not only necessary but *possible*. Even in this disheartening world situation, there are opportunities to be seized, especially now that revolutionaries no longer carry the millstone of Stalinism around their necks.

This is no time to give lip service to the overthrow of imperialism while at the same time calling on imperialism to deploy its forces on the battlefield. If the reactionary Serb and Croat leaders continue their aggression, it is inevitable that resistance will increase. Socialists should do whatever they can to help a revolutionary leadership emerge from that resistance struggle and provide it with political weapons which have proved effective in other struggles. And should resistance turn in a revolutionary direction, one can be sure that Clinton, Major, Kohl, and Mitterrand will then see fit to send in the troops. The appropriate response will be to organize millions in the streets to demand "No U.S. Intervention in Bosnia or Anywhere!" □

August 5, 1993

Teamster Samizdat

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey and George Saunders

At the April 1993 Labor Notes Conference the most inspiring material that fell into our hands was a genuine, homegrown "samizdat" (i.e., self-published) newsletter originating from anonymous reform-minded rank-and-file members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT). They are in Teamster Local 722 and work for Consolidated Freightways (CF). So they call their publication *The CF-722 Newsletter*. The new president of Local 722, Mark Serafinn, is a leader of the reform movement within the IBT. Thus, in addition to the official publications of the International, the monthly publication of Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which is *Convoy Dispatch*, and industry-specific publications like the *UPS Contract Bulletin*, there are evidently also publications like this newsletter produced by the rank and file at the local level.

Just as the Russian-language samizdat in the former Soviet Union was put out by individuals or groupings who opposed the powers that be but faced persecution if they spoke out openly, the Teamsters at CF must hide their identity or face getting beaten up or fired.

An editorial note in each issue in 1992 said:

The CF-722 Newsletter is a non-profit labor inspired, labor supported newsletter dedicated to serving the membership of Teamsters Local 722.

The Editorial Staff will consider any member-submitted article for publication on these pages. Because of our local Officers' [past] inability to protect our members from retaliation from the company, NO BYLINES will be included with any submitted articles to be printed in this newsletter unless requested by the writer.

(The editorial note also states that articles and/or contributions can be sent to The Newsletter, P.O. Box 275, Dalzell, Illinois 61320, but that no employer contributions or articles will be accepted.)

Just as Russian samizdat was printed in one copy and distributed hand to hand, one copy of each issue of *The CF-722 Newsletter* is sent out to dozens of workers, who then make copies and distribute the publication even further. A note in the April issue has the heading: "MAKE COPIES OF THIS NEWSLETTER IF YOU LIKE." The note goes on to say,

This newsletter is being carried throughout the CF system by drivers and by mail. From the letters we are getting back from around the country, it appears to be a very popular newsletter indeed. Anyone can feel free to copy any of these newsletters at any time. You do not have to obtain permission from

the Editors here to reprint this newsletter. In addition to this, you may reprint any story that you read on these pages in a newsletter of your own if it will better labor in your area. HELP LABOR TO HELP ITSELF.

The CF-722 Newsletter comes out monthly, is four pages long, and contains "News You Can Use" about what the company is up to and how the workers are responding. Its features include original cartoons (by Chucky BumRapp) about current issues and an occasional "Remember Your Roots" column with dates of events important for the workers movement.

We are reprinting below some items of particular interest from the issues of July, October, and December 1992 and April 1993. They may provide ideas to our readers for their own on-the-job organizing. And they give a taste of the radical workers subculture that actually exists today in spite of all the years of procompany, antiunion laws and propaganda.

Probably the most important issue the newsletter focuses on is the "EXCEL" program. "EXCEL" is the name used for the company-dominated program of "labor-management cooperation" at Consolidated Freightways. This is CF's "team concept" or "quality of work life" (QWL) union-busting scheme.

Such programs are being more and more widely used by companies today as they feel the squeeze on their profits caused by the crisis of the capitalist economic system (as has been discussed in previous issues of *BIDOM* and elsewhere in this issue, in the article by David Zlatchin reprinted from the St. Paul, Minnesota, *Union Advocate*). With these programs the employers try to undermine unions by eliminating job categories, pitting workers against one another to reach production quotas, increasing workloads, forcing intensification of labor, and paving the way for layoffs, among other company-serving ends. These programs go by different names in different companies, but all have the same anti-worker and anti-union aims in mind. The roasting that *The CF-722 Newsletter* gives the "EXCEL" program in the following excerpts can serve as a model for exposing and discrediting similar programs at other companies.

In another connection, one article should be commented on — the item in the October 1992 newsletter entitled "What's Carey Doing?" It is of particular interest because it gives an idea of how the situation inside the New Teamsters looked last fall from the local level in the Midwest. It demonstrates both discontent over the slow pace of reform and an understanding of the difficulties facing the

reform leadership. Those who produce this newsletter are obviously eager for the reform process in the IBT to be carried through to completion; they are totally opposed to the "Old Guard" collaborate-with-the-company types who ran the IBT before the Carey victory; the newsletter describes the obstructions these elements create on the local level; it is these "Old Guard" elements who support Jack Yager, the head of the Midwest teamsters Central Conference whom Carey has now taken steps to remove. (See *Labor Notes* June 1993, "Carey Charges Old Guard Official With Obstructing Reform, Employer Collusion.")

Another point requiring comment is the uncritical attitude shown in the article about Carey in relation to the Democratic Party (as allegedly "pro-labor"). This unwarranted trust in the Democrats is one of the biggest weaknesses of the Teamster reformers. Perhaps as Clinton's true face against labor becomes evident, the Teamster reformers will come to see the wisdom of their brothers and sisters in the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union who have taken a position for a labor party independent of the employers.

The 1.4 million member IBT could make a tremendous difference if it were to add its support to Labor Party Advocates and to the general campaign for a labor party. Such a position would certainly be consistent with the fighting pro-labor spirit of *The CF-722 Newsletter*. Totally alien to that spirit is the placing of confidence in the slick and slippery Democratic politicians whose true loyalties, for all their posing as "friends of labor," is always to the corporations.

From the July 1992 CF-722 Newsletter

"EXCEL" Is Good for You — and Elvis is Jesus

"EXCEL" with its half truths, false endorsements, and outright lies has finally convinced me that this is the way of our future. Carefully orchestrated "EXCEL" meetings and CF "Road Network" tapes have turned my mind to mush and I am ready to accept this program. Repeat a lie long enough and it becomes the truth. It worked for "I'm no crook" Nixon and for "What's a Contra?" Reagan and is working for CF "EXCEL."

Using CF's ability to compare apples and oranges until they become the same fruit and CF's ability to repeat this line over and over again, I plan on showing you that "EXCEL" is good for you. I also plan to use the same technique to prove that Elvis is really Jesus. After all, if you can accept the "EXCEL" line, the Elvis line will be no problem for you. I've convinced myself that both are true.

Accept the notion that "EXCEL" is not aimed at productivity but at job satisfaction for the employees. Somehow this magic word "EXCEL" will make us feel better about working for CF and we should forget about all of CF's past failings towards us.

Jesus said, "Love thy neighbor" (Matthew 22:39). Elvis said, "Don't Be Cruel" (RCA, 1956).

CF Truck #1 is the pride of the fleet. Power, speed and chrome is what CF is all about. The best, right?

"(Jesus's) countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow" (Matthew 28:3). Elvis's trademarks were a lightning bolt and snow-white jumpsuits.

Consolidated Freightways [and its non-unionized subsidiaries] Con-Way, Conquest, and Con-Way Intermogal are all part of a big happy family because everything starts with Con. Or is it that everything about CF is a Con? "EXCEL" is aimed only at the Union part of the CF Companies. Could it be that "EXCEL" is meant to get us into the fold of the scab parts of the Company?

Jesus H. Christ has 12 letters. Elvis Presley has 12 letters.

"Management and unions share the same interests. At 'EXCEL' meetings, management and the rank and file are on equal footing." Those hundreds and hundreds of warning letters that are sent to our members as soon as these "EXCEL" sessions are over are really love letters and fan mail.

Jesus is a Capricorn (December 25th). Elvis is a Capricorn (January 8th).

The "CF Road Network" and "EXCEL" propaganda are meant to rewrite what our contract and workrules are really about. After all, management has instilled "Pride and Dignity" into us every time we get to take someone's work away from them. When our brother and sister Teamsters are on the unemployment line they can look back fondly at their time on the "Team."

Jesus's biography is by Matthew (Gospel according to Matthew). Elvis's biography is by Neal Matthews (Elvis: A Golden Tribute).

We are asked to sacrifice for the Company. To run your trip with a pencil. To make those impossible runs. To throw a few more boxes at the start of your break time. To not file a grievance when the paymaster robs you blind. Isn't the Company making sacrifices for you? None that I can see, but if you believe in "EXCEL" you are making the world better for someone. Fat Cat Stock Holders need love and understanding too.

Jesus fasted for 40 days and nights. Elvis too had irregular eating habits (e.g., five banana splits for breakfast).

CF needs "EXCEL" to be competitive in the future.

Never mind that CF wants us to compete with our own scab outfits. Never mind that CF is diverting high paying freight from CF Motor Freight to these scab outfits to show this "need" on paper. And never mind that CF Motor Freight, the Union carrier, always shows a profit in spite of all the bloodletting for the scab companies. With "EXCEL" we can rise above being one of the most successful trucking companies in the world...to what? That's never explained. We are already the best in spite of "EXCEL" and in spite of CF's poor quality management.

Jesus was resurrected. Elvis had a famous comeback special in 1966.

With "EXCEL" the sky is the limit (for stockholders).

Jesus walked on water (Matthew 14:25). Elvis surfed (Blue Hawaii, Paramount, 1965).

With the all-encompassing catch word "Empowerment" we can make our own decisions on the job and in effect be our own managers. Management can then have more time to pursue interests like golf and community service. If any of you now believe that CF will let you have a say in your own destiny, please call me at once! I have some prime real estate in Florida and a bridge in Brooklyn that you may want to purchase.

Jesus was a carpenter. Elvis majored in wood shop/industrial art in high school.

"EXCEL" uses your natural inclination to be part of a "Team." Humans are a social animal and to be part of a club, organization, community, etc., is what we do. Remember that you are already part of one of the greatest "Teams" that there is. It's called "The New Teamsters." If that isn't enough for you, it is understandable that you may want to join the likes of "The American Neo-Nazi Party," "EXCEL" or even the Manson Family. These last three all use brainwashing techniques to reach their goals and are right for some people.

Jesus's entourage, the Apostles, had 12 members. Elvis's entourage, the Memphis

Mafia, had 12 members. Jesus was part of a Trinity. Elvis's first band was a trio.

"EXCEL" will save our jobs. Or perhaps, the jobs not absorbed by dual qualification.

Jesus is the Lord's shepherd. Elvis dated Cybill Shepherd.

Just doing a good job at CF is not enough. The pride you feel for doing a good job will be enhanced if you join "EXCEL." "EXCEL" will show you how to do even more work so that you can feel even more "pride." How could anyone pass up such an opportunity?

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone" (Matthew 4:4). Elvis loved his sandwiches with peanut butter and bananas.

CF teaches the "EXCEL" members to scorn anyone that opposes this QWL program. Free thought and free speech have no place in CF's plans (as with Abel's brother).

"Then they took up stones to cast at (Jesus)" (John 8:59). Elvis was often stoned.

We must ignore the wisdom of the NMFA [National Master Freight Agreement, between the IBT and the trucking companies] and our workrules to accept "EXCEL." Isn't 60 years of Union teachings a small price to pay to accept "EXCEL?"

Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink" (John 7:37). Elvis said, "Drinks on me!" (Jailhouse Rock, MGM, 1957).

"CF has been good to me for twenty years. After all, aren't the CF scab companies here for my job security? So what if CF goes all scab when "EXCEL" is fully operational. I'll be retired by then, right?" Who is going to be left in the Union to pay for your retirement?

Jesus lived in a state of grace in a Near Eastern land and did work as the Son of God. Elvis lived in Graceland in a nearly eastern state and worked for Sun Studios.

In conclusion, this article should clear up any misunderstanding you may have had about "EXCEL." "EXCEL" is good for you and Elvis is Jesus....

From the October 1992 Issue What's Carey Doing?

What's Ron Carey been doing lately? This is a common question asked around the Peru [Illinois] Terminal. Out here in the corn fields we really can't see what the International has been doing for our Union except for what we can read in the Teamster Magazine. With decades of poor leadership in the IBT's past, changes that we expect from the Ron Carey leadership won't come fast but they will come steady.

Some of the things Carey has done so far are using smart union tactics to fight employers. He used a "corporate campaign" to stop Ryder Systems from using non-union drivers by informing the general public about Ryder's schemes. It worked and a good contract was won. The jet planes were sold as promised by Carey, and the money, some 34 million dollars, is now being used for organizing purposes. Mass picketing was used



Cartoon from the CF-722 Newsletter

in Pittsburgh, PA, to block a newspaper from using replacement workers. This was a bold move considering that this country doesn't have anti-scab legislation yet. He has also put International Trustees in charge of Locals that are in trouble and has barred some bad officers from holding office in the Teamsters. Carey is strapped with a debt-ridden treasury left over from the "Old Guard" and is making moves to get the IBT out of financial trouble.

Reform is also being hindered by the entrenched "Old Guard," especially in the mid-west, and by the government, which doesn't seem to want to let go of their control or our Union, so that Carey's reform policies can get under way.

Carey is working for us as fast as he can. Realize the opposition against this man and give him a chance. He has done a lot in the last ten months and still has at least four more years to reform our Union. You can help by voting for reform Teamsters whenever you get the chance (anyone come to mind?) and vote a pro-labor Democratic ticket next month.

Solidarity Picnic

The Rank & File Solidarity Picnic and Hog Roast on September 19th in Normandy, IL, was a big success. Over 375 people attended the get-together and managed to consume two hogs, 180 pounds of buns and chips, four kegs of beer and dozens of cases of pop. No one left hungry.

Most of the people attending were Teamsters from Local 722, Local 710 and Local 371, but there were others from the UAW Local 145 and different Labor Unions. Not nearly as many CF people were there as the picnic planners thought would be and in fact were a minority.

Ruth Kubberness brought her clown act (Patches and Harmony) from Peru [Illinois] to entertain the children and had just as many "grown-ups" in the audience, this author included. They were great!

Tony Mann and his band, Lone Wolf, transformed the picnic mood to a party mood in the late afternoon, and everyone had a good time until well after midnight.

For those that missed this event, it was truly your loss. For those that made it, LET'S DO IT AGAIN NEXT YEAR! Special thanks goes out to Bud Wilkinson and his staff in Normandy for putting the whole thing together.

From the December 1992 Issue "EXCEL" — Enter "Twilight Zone"

What has "EXCEL" done to you lately? As we examine "EXCEL" closely, as it transpires into the antiworker program it is designed for, we see that "EXCEL" means something different to everyone employed at CF. Every level of worker at CF is affected by this QWL ["Quality of Work Life"] pro-

gram and no one is smiling except the shareholders and the top management people.

Lean office production, modeled after the Toyota labor-saving methods, has caused a reduction in lower management personnel. The drivers are now doing paperwork that dispatchers did in the past and I believe that further cuts in management will take place. The management-by-stress method imposed on lower management is brutal. Look at the people on the other side of the glass and realize that we are next.

Cross training is being encouraged by CF as a way to de-skill the jobs we do and thereby making it much easier for our replacement if needed. This is how the UAW at CAT [Caterpillar] was weakened to the point of no return. Helping the company de-skill the jobs we do by showing them how we do our jobs is like digging our own graves. When our jobs are reduced to writing in an easy to follow format, we have in effect written a scab manual for easy transition of our jobs to a scab labor force.

Estimates as high as 30% of CF's LTL freight is being diverted to [the nonunionized CF subsidiary] Con-Way. In the last CF Quarterly Report it became clear just how determined FC is in using their "EXCEL" program to destroy our jobs. The loss-profit section showed that Con-Way's profits were up 28% while CFMF [CF Motor Freight] profits were down 28%. It doesn't take a high IQ to figure why that is. If I gave 30% of my salary to a stranger I couldn't pay my bills either. When CF comes around crying at contract time are we supposed to feel like giving back something to them? Knowing that the company is determined to undermine my job, I know that I won't feel a bit like an "EXCEL" team player. Will you?...

About the title, "EXCEL" — Enter "Twilight Zone." There was an old Twilight Zone episode named "To Serve Mankind," where aliens from another galaxy came to Earth. Their mission was to make life better for humans by doing away with disease and hunger, and their leader carried a manual titled "To Serve Mankind." They even had a paradise on another planet where humans could go on permanent vacation. Life was wonderful on Earth and many people took advantage of an even better life on the paradise planet and left on the shuttles. Some people were suspicious of these aliens and managed to get their hands on the leader's manual. After much work the code for the manual was broken. It turned out that the manual, "To Serve Mankind," was a cookbook. Brothers and Sister, "EXCEL" is that cookbook.

Remember Your Roots

- Dec. 1, 1956 — Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on an Alabama bus.
- Dec. 2, 1859 — Abolitionist John Brown hanged, Harpers Ferry, W. Va.

- Dec. 3, 1946 — General strike, Oakland, CA.
- Dec. 5, 1955 — AFL and CIO merge in New York City.
- Dec. 6, 1889 — Colored National Labor Union formed in Washington, D.C.
- Dec. 8, 1866 — AFL founded, Columbus, OH.
- Dec. 13, 1961 — Martial law declared in Poland, Solidarnosc banned.
- Dec. 14, 1955 — Trades and Labor volunteers restore Victory Hall gym in Normal, IL.
- Dec. 15, 1794 — Bill of Rights enacted.
- Dec. 24, 1913 — 72 miners children killed in a panic caused by a company thug during a strike in Calumet, MI.
- Dec. 29, 1890 — Wounded Knee Massacre, South Dakota.
- Dec. 29, 1970 — Occupational Safety & Health Act passed by Congress - Thank God.
- Dec. 30, 1936 — GM sit-down strike in Flint, MI, by UAW.

TEACH YOUR CHILDREN WELL.

From the April 1993 Issue The March General Meeting

The March 28th General Meeting at the LaSalle Hall saw over one hundred members attending!! I have never seen so many members attend a General Meeting in the past unless it was for a contract ratification. President Serafinn is opening up our meetings to our members and the members are responding by attending the meetings. This is a far cry from the old days when the meetings didn't have enough members in attendance to hold a quorum.

Dave Ekstein, an IBT organizer that was invited into our area by Serafinn, addressed the membership under Good and Welfare of the Union. Dave explained the importance of internal organizing by the rank and file members and what the International was doing to increase membership in general. Dave is organizing new members into Local 722 right now. Our new Principal Officer is making good on his promise to make every effort to organize new members and the fact that he has secured an International Organizer for our area is icing on the cake.

There was a photographer under contract from the IBT taking pictures at the end of the general meeting and of the three craft meetings that were going on at the same time after the meeting. I can remember in the recent past, under the "Old Guard," that to even get a craft meeting was like pulling teeth. Now there are three craft meetings going on at once! Perhaps the photographer was sent to our Local to document how to conduct a proper meeting. I never did find out why he was there.

Then there were the four members on the E-Board left over from the "Old Guard" that had to get ugly at the meeting. R. G. Lathrop,

Lorraine Hamilton, "Butch" Smith, and Doug Farster have banded together to trip-up Serafinn at every turn. Their latest folly is to try and block Serafinn's right as Principal Officer to appoint a fourth BA [Business Agent]. Serafinn wants to appoint a BA that will work for the members and someone that he can trust to get the job done. R.G. Lathrop wants one of his drinking buddies for the job.

We can expect the "Old Guard" to work against the membership, as they have always done in the past, but our Local By-Laws are clear in that the Principal Officer has the right to appoint who he thinks is the best qualified for any job in this Local. The left-over "Old Guard" is trying to block Serafinn's appointments by not approving them. The by-laws read as follows:

ARTICLE 8 — DUTIES OF THE PRINCIPAL EXECUTIVE OFFICER

(A) The President shall be the principal executive officer of this organization. He shall, in general, supervise, conduct and control all of the business and affairs of the Local Union, its officers and employees. He shall determine the number of clerical employees of the Local Union, subject to the approval of the Executive Board. He shall also select the attorneys, accountants or other special expert services to be retained by the Local, subject to the approval of the Executive Board. He shall have charge and supervision of all the officers and employees of the Local Union, including elected Business Agents. He shall have the power to appoint, suspend, or discharge all appointive organizers, appointive Business Agents, Assistant Business Agents and employees. The Principal Executive Officer shall also have charge of all labor controversies involving the Local Union.

Under the IBT Constitution, when the E-Board is deadlocked on an issue and have met to resolve the issue at least two times, the President can then bring the issue to the members at a general meeting to be resolved by the members.

At the next general meeting, on April 27th at 7:30 PM at the LaSalle Hall, the question will be put to the membership by President Serafinn. According to the IBT Constitution and our By-Laws, the question will be: Do we abide by the rules governing Teamsters Local Union No. 722 and approve of Serafinn's appointment or do we allow four misguided E-Board members to undermine this Local Union and leave us without a fourth BA?

Lorraine Hamilton, R.G. Lathrop, Butch Smith, and Doug Farster made it clear at the March 28th general meeting that they will fight against

the membership and against President Serafinn and will do whatever they can to keep us from moving forward towards a better Local Union. Those four are being controlled by the crooks down at Joint Council #65 and they do not have our welfare in mind. Let's all be at the general meeting on April 27th and let them know they will not get away with destroying our Local Union! Like Serafinn says, "This Local will be returned to the members." Let's be there to help him make good on that promise.

Points to Ponder

What the hell is going on with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters? Why can't Teamster officials listen to the rank and file members and do what is best for our Union?

We elected Ron Carey and his entire slate into office because we wanted reform and to clean up this great Union. General President Ron Carey has interpreted Art. 12 Sec. 6 of the IBT Constitution like all of his predecessors have to mean that he can appoint the chairs to all negotiation committees and grievance panels for all national contracts. Two conference heads, Jack Yager (Central) and Jerry Cook (Southern), are trying to block Carey's appointment of Charlie Lee to the Central-Southern carhaul grievance panel. Why does the "Old Guard" fight any and all reform? I am tired of poor contracts and corrupt grievance panels from the "Old Guard." Aren't you?

What is really sad is that we are stuck with four "Old Guard" cronies on the E-Board of Local 722. We elected Mark Serafinn as our President of this Local because we were tired of the old bullshit and want a change for the

better. We don't want to keep going backwards because of "Old Guard" politics.

I was at the March general meeting and I was amazed at how opposed Lathrop, Hamilton, Smith and Farster are to Serafinn. The minutes of the March E-Board were read and discussed for over an hour. I couldn't believe what I heard — Serafinn has been asking for a list of the stewards in this Local from Lorraine Hamilton since January and she still has not produced them. Our general fund is down to \$50,000 because of "Old Guard" excessive spending and Serafinn wants the E-Board to save money. Lorraine argued even that point!

I called the Hall last month to ask Serafinn a question about a grievance that I was writing and Lorraine answered the phone and told me that she didn't know where Serafinn was and that he never tells her where he goes. I later found out that Serafinn was at JAC in Rosemont, IL, attending meetings and that Lorraine knew exactly where he was. What kind of bullshit is she trying to pull?

We, as a Local, really handicapped ourselves by electing Lathrop, Hamilton, Smith, and Farster to office. Perhaps we can undo that mistake in the next election. For now, we have to attend the meetings and let our voice be heard. I believe we have a true leader in Mark Serafinn. Let's back him up at the meetings. It's important!!

CF Corporate Campaign

From the pages of "The Teamster Leader," an IBT publication dated March 11, 1993:

The International Union's Freight Division, conferences, and freight locals are planning a campaign against doublebreasting by Consolidated Freightways (CF).

CF has been closing unionized terminals while expanding operations of non-union subsidiaries.

More details will be available soon on how locals can help.

Could it be that the International has finally recognized that CF is doing everything it can to destroy CF Motor Freight? This newsletter has been saying that CF has been doing this for over two years now. By using "EXCEL" to destroy the workforce and by diverting freight at every opportunity to the rails, to Con-Way, Conquest, etc., CF is nearly in a position to shut out the unionized workforce and run everything scab.

This newsletter will keep you informed on what action the IBT will be taking to protect our jobs and futures at CF. It is not a minute too soon!! □



Back Again: Employee Involvement Plans Have Been Tried Before

by David Zlatchin

David Zlatchin is a student intern with the Union Advocate, biweekly publication of the St. Paul, Minnesota, Trades and Labor Assembly. This valuable historical study of labor-management cooperation schemes, based on research done for a class at Macalester College, first appeared in that publication. We are reprinting it here by permission of the author, with some minor changes for reasons of style.

Within the last 15 years, labor-management cooperation programs — frequently named Team Concept, Employee Involvement, Quality Circles, and Quality of Work Life plans — have become the norm in the majority of large manufacturing corporations. Advocates of these programs argue they are a “new” and innovative response to global competition.

On the contrary, study of American history suggests that these programs have been tried before. Both advocates and opponents of these programs would do well to examine this history.

The last quarter of the 1800s was marked by ferocious labor conflict — the Great Railroad strike of 1877, the Haymarket riot of 1886, the Homestead Steel strike of 1892, and the Pullman strike of 1894. From 1897, a wave of strikes culminated at a high point of 1903 — a level that surpassed even the two famous industrial wars of 1886 and 1892. In 1896, for example, there were 5,462 establishments involved in strikes; the figure more than doubled in 1899 and jumped to 20,248 in 1903.

Employers Respond

In response to increased labor activism, employers continually brainstormed for measures to smoothly introduce new economic reforms and suppress the advent of unionism and costly strikes. Such tactics as lockouts, federal intervention, and legal prosecutions against unions under conspiracy and restraint of trade laws were some measures employed. Other tactics included technological and organizational innovations that led to increased specialization of function and resulted in loosening the worker’s monopoly on specific jobs. Taylorism, or scientific management, also became a widely endorsed form of restructuring the workplace. This entailed breaking down jobs into a series of repetitive motions, adopting new work methods such as time study, incentive pay, and piecework, and separating the thinking jobs from the manual.

Lastly, management introduced cooperation with labor as another way to facilitate the acceptance of economic reforms and curb union strength. In 1901, management promised cooperation by “trade agreements” through a private organization called the National Civic Federation (NCF). In essence, the organization was a collaboration between labor leaders and corporate executives to ease

the transition to scientific management and to end as rapidly as possible any outbreak of industrial conflict.

The “trade agreement” appeared, on the surface, to be a collective bargaining contract between management and union, and not a corporate-dominated strategy. NCF sought, through private mediation and conciliation between labor and management, to eliminate sympathetic and other strikes that were harmful to economic prosperity. According to one member, it was designed to “obviate and prevent strikes and lockouts, and to aid in renewing industrial relations where a rupture has occurred.” Another member stated that the purpose of NCF was to increase the “harmony of interests” among social classes, so that the interests between labor and capital are “identical and mutual.”

For the National Civic Federation to work, though, management needed labor cooperation. This came more easily than expected. Shortly after the NCF’s inception in 1901, labor leaders such as John Mitchell, Daniel Keefe, and Samuel Gompers, head of the American Federation of Labor (AFL), cooperated. The labor organization most involved in the NCF was the AFL, a conservative labor federation that represented skilled laborers, in contrast to the open-arms policies of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), or “Wobblies,” which represented all types of rank-and-file workers regardless of race or gender. Reasons for joining the NCF varied for many labor leaders, from blocking the inroads of socialism into American democracy to maintaining their position in power. According to one member of the NCF, one of their goals was political: to be institutionally recognized. “My plan is to have organized union labor ‘Americanized’ in the best sense, and thoroughly educated to an understanding of its responsibilities, and in this way to make it the ally of the capitalist, rather than a foe with which to grapple.”

Cooperation and welfarism

Coupled with the trade agreement was a scheme proposed by the NCF in 1904 called “Welfarism.” Although these programs had several different variations, a certain degree of uniformity was apparent. Three main areas were targeted:

1. Improvement of working conditions through adding health and sanitation facilities, lunchrooms, cafeterias, etc.
2. Wage policies that made workers feel their wages were comparable if not better than what they could get elsewhere. These policies included profit-sharing and incentive schemes, based usually on productivity and merit.
3. The structuring and organization of worker’s free time, including cultural facilities such as libraries and reading rooms; training programs, such as courses in home economics for women; and entertainment facilities ranging from clubs to summer cottages to elaborate planning of tours, picnics and parties.

Although on the surface the trade agreement and welfarism appear humanitarian and philanthropic, management had cold business motives in advocating these programs.

As National Cash Register’s John Patterson candidly stated: “It pays.” Another business manager admitted there “is a cold business proposition behind it every time. If this was not the case I would not help in the work.”

The combined effects of the NCF trade agreements, scientific management, and welfarism proved too strong a blow for many unions, and it appeared that the employers had gained some success. By the end of 1904, the growth of unionization seemed checked and the following year, 1905, actually showed the first decrease since 1897. The percentage of strikes lost was the highest since 1894 and wage cuts were forced by nearly all employers in all sectors.

Moreover, the immediate effect of this process was internal warfare among craft unions. In fact, some unions, the Telegrapher’s Union for example, decided to terminate contracts with the AFL after 1904 as a way to recover some strength.

Welfarism negatively affected unions in another way. Since many of these small requests regarding sanitation, social functions, and other minor appeals were being answered, a union seemed unnecessary. In several cases, anti-union growth was facilitated by implementing worker committees. Under the pretext of worker participation in management, these bodies were utilized by employers as a means to exert more control over the workforce.

Fortunately, this scheme instituted by management did not permanently cloud workers' recognition of the harsh intensification of work required by this improved model of productivity. Beginning in 1905, in what historian David Montgomery calls the "beginning of a decade of strikes of unprecedented scale and continuity," commenced the re-adoption of unionism and strike tactics among the working classes.

Welfare Capitalism

In 1920 another form of employer-laborer cooperation came into existence — "welfare capitalism." This program was slicker than its predecessor of 1901, but employers made use of it for much the same reasons the National Civic Federation had.

In 1919, a massive strike wave hit the country. Clothing workers, textile workers, telephone operators, actors, and even Boston policemen went out. In late September, 365,000 steelworkers managed to create the biggest strike the nation had ever witnessed. In all, over 4 million workers went on strike during 1919 — an incredible 20 per cent of the labor force.

In many cases, the federal government intervened to suppress these strikes. President Wilson and even union leaders pleaded for labor peace. Finally, after the dust had cleared from the remnants of the employers' nightmare, industry heads across America agreed that something must change in employer-employee relations to obviate any more of these costly labor strikes. Employers, once again faced with a dilemma, looked to history and introduced a sweet-sounding approach called "welfare-capitalism."

Just as the NCF's main objective was promoting "harmony of interests" and "cooperation" between labor and management, that too was the mission of welfare capitalism.

Many employers felt that they might be on the verge of class warfare and that reforms were needed to appease the workers before it was too late. The leading advocate of welfarism at the Plymouth Cordage Company wrote, "With labor crying for democracy, capital must go partway or face revolution." In fact, these programs were instituted clearly to prevent the strengthening of unions and to break up any notions of class struggle or class consciousness. One labor economist noted that these programs are "some of the most ambitious social experiments of the age, because they aim...to counteract the effect of modern technique upon the mind of the worker, to prevent him from becoming class conscious and organizing trade unions."

According to historian Elizabeth Cohen, at the heart of welfare capitalism was the ultimate goal of a favorable atmosphere of labor relations. This would be reached when labor agitators and fiery foremen were disarmed, when businessmen's ideas were widely held, and when confidence in management ran deep. A company that would fit the model

of a successful welfare capitalist program would have several benefits to show: reduced labor turnover, improved productivity, increase in job applicants, and most importantly, smooth labor waters, untroubled by strikes and agitation.

Welfare capitalism programs, in general, consisted of two main categories: employee representation plans and welfarism.

Company Unions

"Employee representation plans," "industrial democracy," "work councils," or "company unions," as they were commonly referred to, were the main arsenal in the employer's push toward his goal of a successful welfare capitalist program. Proponents of these plans believed that labor and management had mutual and not antagonistic interests and that these plans would harmonize those interests.

Although structured in different ways, the idea was to bring worker and management together to set company policies and respond to employee grievances. Management told workers they would elect peers as representatives and the representatives would then meet with management in an environment in which both parties could sit down and rationally discuss issues. Gerard Swope lectured General Electric foremen that "the men must be dealt with as thinking men." Another labor expert concluded that this plan rested on the idea of the "citizenship theory of labor relations."

Welfarism — the second component of welfare capitalism — was not a novel idea, but had been in practice since the National Civic Federation in 1904. The idea was that such programs would facilitate the acceptance of the more employer-dominated aspects of welfare capitalism, such as scientific management.

The three main elements of the NCF's welfare programs (as outlined earlier) carried over to welfare capitalism. Added though, were important benefit programs that offered such perquisites as sickness pay, pensions, and paid vacations.

Like the National Civic Federation, welfare capitalism advocates professed that their programs were worker-oriented. But behind closed doors, the main objective of these programs was reiterated for employers. The National Industrial Conference Board, in a memo sent out to employers, listed the economic benefits of welfare capitalism as second in line only to the quelling of labor agitation. "It engenders greater interest in the job, which leads to offering suggestions as to short cuts and improvements that in the aggregate may mean considerable savings for the company."

Similar to the National Civic Federation's strategy, but to a greater degree, welfare capitalist programs struck back at labor radicalism and solidarity from all sides of life in the 1920s: production and employee repre-

sentation plans in the workplace, while in the community, the welfare programs.

Welfare capitalism continued to grow from the inception of the plan following the 1919 strikes. By the mid-'20s welfare capitalism had reached the height of its popularity. After surveying 1,500 of the largest companies in the U.S. in 1926, a researcher found that 80 percent had adopted at least one form of welfarism and half had comprehensive programs. Probably even more convincing were the massive expenditures devoted to these programs. For example, over a 12-year period ending in 1924, U.S. Steel spent more than \$126 million.

Workers Feel Repercussions

The aftereffects of this widespread endorsement by both labor and management of welfare capitalism created several of the same repercussions on workers and unions as the National Civic Federation's programs had created earlier.

In the iron, steel, and metal industries, where welfare programs were common, there were fewer than a fifth as many strikes in 1924 as there had been in 1916. Yet in the building trades, where little welfarism existed, there were two-thirds as many strikes in 1924 as there had been in 1916. According to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, the electrical industry, another big advocate of welfare capitalism, experienced as a whole only six strikes between 1927 and 1929; they involved a mere total of 1,800 of the industry's 300,000 production workers.

Workers began to switch loyalty from the union to the company, and regarded the company as the means to report grievances. As one union leader noted, the workers "began to wonder why they paid dues to an organization outside the plant, while the Plan of Representation, to which they contributed no money, actually did the bargaining with management."

These programs also created competition and tension between workers. For one thing there was no nationwide bargaining, so a large company with several mines or plants could transfer production to an alternate site when faced with heavy demands, thereby playing off one set of employees against another.

Welfare capitalism took a major turn for the worse at the end of the 1920s. Several factors have been cited as to why these programs ceased to function after World War II. Both economically and legislatively, welfare capitalism faced serious setbacks. The 1929 stock market crash and Great Depression hit the companies and eventually the programs unmercifully. Along with economic strife, the government no longer advocated these programs and began to crack down. The government issued new laws that negatively affected the programs, such as New Deal legislation and the Wagner Act.

These events and actions exposed the inherent contrast in welfare capitalism. But as historian Stuart D. Brandes points out, this weakness would have inevitably appeared. Even if the Depression hadn't occurred, or the government hadn't cracked down on these programs, welfare capitalism was still destined to fail for one major reason: these programs were the employers' and not the workers'.

John D. Rockefeller Jr., a leading advocate of welfare capitalism, even had one of his chief lieutenants admit during inspection of one plant's system that, "There is a psychological appeal in labor unionism which has not yet been analyzed. It seems, to give the men not only a sense of power but of dignity and self-respect. They feel that only through labor unions can they deal with employers on an equal plane. They seem to regard the representation plan as a sort of counterfeit, largely perhaps because the machinery of such plans is too often managed by employers. They want something which they themselves have created and not something which is handed down to them by those who pay their wages."

Lessons for Today

Employers and industry heads of today view employer-employee cooperation as a bold new social experiment. The Auto Workers West Coast Director, Bruce Lee, announced in the *New York Times* on Christmas Day 1988, "The worker's revolution has finally come to the shop floor."

Yet, through examining history, one realizes that no "revolution" has taken place. Rather, the team concept programs of today are strikingly similar to the National Civic Federation and welfare capitalism programs of the past.

"The same gimmicks of the team concept programs of today were being used during the turn of the century," remarked Greg Pofert, national business agent for American Postal Workers Union and skeptic of labor-management cooperation. "The concept is still the same, only they ('quality' programs) have been slickly repackaged to squeeze more productivity from the employee." Spurred by the recession of the early 1980s, declining profit margins, and growing foreign competition, industry heads looked to reduce costs by cheapening labor. Companies directed their energy at contract concessions, such as wage and benefit changes, new economic and production reforms such as the "Just-In-Time" method, and restyling labor relations, notably team concept or Quality of Work Life (QWL) programs.

In the auto industry, for example, one of the first advocates of team concept, management recognized that the United Auto Work-

ers were on the defensive. Management discovered that QWL programs were an effective means to undermine the union, get cooperation from the union, or simply avoid the union altogether.

According to proponents of team concept, it begins with the assumption that workers must be interchangeable. Classifications are scratched and all members of a team learn every member's job responsibilities. Gradually the supervisor's role would change to more of a resource person or adviser, and increased responsibilities would be handed to the workers. The group would become a "semi-autonomous work group." Shortly thereafter, workers would take on "new responsibilities such as planning, plant-wide problem solving, interfunctional coordination..."

Team concept can sound appealing, but the actual results for many workers have been another matter. As these programs gain popularity, criticism from unions and labor activists has increased. Management has been accused of instituting these programs for self-serving interests under the rhetoric of a "worker's say," or "dignity." Echoes of John Patterson's exclamation of "It pays," could be heard 70 years later when General Motors ran a series of ads in *Business Week* with the theme: "The vision is paying off."

The negative effect of these programs on worker and union solidarity has been substantial. "These programs have successfully dismantled the American labor movement," charges Tom Laney, an officer of United Auto Workers Local 879 and member of the New Directions Movement, an organization which opposes team concept. Jerry Tucker, head of the New Directions Movement, added, "Since we entered into the first so-called partnership in 1982, forming union-management efficiency committees, we have lost over 50 percent of the jobs that we were supposed to be saving."

Worker Against Worker

As in the past, cooperation with management often turns into competition with one's fellow workers. "These types of programs pit worker against worker, they weaken the union if not in its entirety, at least the image of the union," stated Bruce Glover, chairman of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees at the Burlington Northern rail line.

Like the programs of the 1920s, the "quality" discussions usually generate ideas for improving the work environment, such as a new water fountain, better ventilation, or ways to improve product quality. These discussions, though, would often be ineffective. As one Swift employee noted during the welfare capitalism regime: "You come up to him (the representative) with a case. He wouldn't take you to the foreman. He would go up an'

talk to the foreman and come back an' say: 'Well, there ain't much we can do about it, but the next time come up...'" Similarly, Glover pointed out that in the quality programs of today, "management would agree wholeheartedly to small things, but once we asked for bigger things they would turn their backs."

According to Jane Slaughter, *Labor Notes* writer and national expert on employee involvement, other results from the team concept programs are the elimination of jobs, speed-up of work, and "ways for workers to do more work in less time, subcontracting to other cheaper, often non-union companies," as well as other cost-cutting measures.

As the threat of global competition gains momentum, companies often leave workers with no choice but to accept team concept or face plant closure. Whereas workers might see through the "boss is a nice guy" act, they are often worried about international competition. Even so, when workers acquiesced to team concept, as in the case of the Fiero plant in 1988, GM announced it was discontinuing the model and closed the plant permanently.

The similarities of present-day "team concept" to the National Civic Federation and the welfare capitalism programs are too evident to go unnoticed. Management has introduced the programs of today for many of the same reasons as in the past and has hidden its motives with the same flowery rhetoric. Even the framework of the programs has remained virtually intact. The harmful consequences for workers and unions have also been nearly identical. The crucial difference is that the programs of the past are gone while team concept still remains.

Throughout the labor movement's proud history, threats from corporate America have continually surfaced to jeopardize the gains that workers have achieved. Some unions and union officials have recognized team concept and similar programs as one of these threats. More than 400 people attended a Twin Cities conference in January on how to fight labor-management cooperation, and similar conferences have been held in other areas of the country.

These events emphasize the need for solidarity among all unions and workers, especially in the face of the challenges posed by a new global economy. As journalist Jane Slaughter stated, "When unions abandon their historic role and jump onto the competitiveness bandwagon, they leave not only their members but all working people rudderless." □

Dan Rosenshine (1943–1992)

Dan Rosenshine — a dedicated revolutionary socialist, a gentle and thoughtful friend, a longtime reader and supporter of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* — has died. Born and raised in Detroit, Dan was influenced by the left-wing values and ideas of his parents, and also by the civil rights, antiwar, and radical youth movements of the early 1960s. Active in the Student Peace Union, the Congress on Racial Equality, and the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, he came into contact with the Young Socialist Alliance and Socialist Workers Party, joining the Trotskyist movement in 1962 and remaining part of it for the rest of his life. He was active in SWP branches in Detroit, Cleveland, New York City, San Francisco, and Washington, DC.

Dan's political interests were far-ranging. At the age of 17, not long after the revolutionary triumph, he visited Cuba and saw firsthand the popular enthusiasm generated by the radicalism of Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. Traveling through Europe with George Saunders in the early 1960s, he made contact with left-minded and oppositionist Soviet young people, including the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko (with whom he and Saunders stayed up late one night in Moscow, drinking vodka and discussing the problems of the world). A militant opponent of racism, Dan also had the opportunity to chair one of the SWP's Militant Labor Forums where the speaker was Malcolm X. Dan himself assumed national responsibilities in the 1960s and early 1970s in the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the Student Mobilization Committee, and the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC). In 1972 he toured Europe to establish relations

between NPAC and antiwar groups there, also having the opportunity to have discussions with representatives of the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. This energetic, thoughtful, and deeply committed young revolutionary was also a leading activist in the SWP and YSA, working with prominent leaders in the U.S. Trotskyist movement.

In 1972 several terrible experiences converged to place Dan in an impossible situation. First of all, he had exhausted himself in the intense political work in which he had great responsibilities and was subjected to many pressures. Related to this, there was the break-up of an important personal relationship with a comrade who had similarly exhausted herself. In addition, his mother — with whom he was quite close and who had also joined the SWP — was found to have inoperable brain cancer and died. A few months later, his father died of a heart attack. As his mother was dying, and in the period leading up to his father's death, a prominent comrade, for whom Dan had too much respect, irresponsibly pressured him around inheritance money that might be donated to the SWP. All of this led to a shattering nervous breakdown. He never fully recovered from the damage that was done.

Years of therapy helped Dan to deal with a persistent psychosis in which he was haunted by terrible anxieties. He developed a significant support network in New York during the 1970s and Pittsburgh in the 1980s and early '90s, befriending many different kinds of people — in college courses that he sat in on, in chess clubs, and among numerous political activists. He touched the lives of

many people who formed a close bond with him. When he was able, he participated in the antinuclear movement, the Central America solidarity movement, the movement for peace and justice in the Middle East (including opposition to the U.S. war in the Persian Gulf), the unemployed movement, socialist discussion groups, etc. As a political thinker, Dan remained alert and engaged, continuing to identify with the revolutionary socialist tradition symbolized by such people as Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Eugene V. Debs, Vladimir Lenin, Leon Trotsky, C.L.R. James, James P. Cannon, and others. Not surprisingly, he opposed the undemocratic and sectarian practices that developed in the SWP. Not only was he critical of the expulsion of Trotskyists in the early 1980s, but also in the late 1970s he fought against what struck him as a bureaucratic expulsion and slanderous characterization of SWP oppositionist Hedda Garza, who was a close friend of his. At this point, Dan himself left the SWP, although he maintained friendship with and respect for some who remained in the party's ranks.

In his final years, Dan was a formal sympathizer of Solidarity and an at-large member of that organization's Fourth International Caucus. He was also sympathetic to the Fourth Internationalist Tendency and had attended FIT national gatherings. He had long been an advocate of merger of the two organizations and expressed satisfaction when this was finally accomplished.

Dan moved to Paris in 1992 and kept in close touch with many friends and comrades in the U.S. However, by the end of last year nothing was heard from him. This spring in the Seine river a body was found which has since been identified as that of our comrade. Modest memorial meetings have been held in Pittsburgh and New York. □

— Paul Le Blanc

Racism and the Labor Movement

Continued from page 20

not been radical-minded when they first took action against the very real injustices of capitalist society.

Organized labor, for the most part, not only stood outside the struggle but *opposed* it. When activists and theoreticians of the New Left developed false theories about the end of the working class as a force for progressive social change, they were only reacting empirically to the labor movement's own practice. In fact, their error was similar to Le Blanc's: they had *overestimated* white working-class radicalism in previous generations. They had not paid sufficient attention to the serious problems, most especially the problem of racism, which existed within the white working class even during its most militant periods. They had, as well, *underestimated* the role that forces outside organized labor, and even outside the working class, had played in previous radicalizations. The role of students and intellectuals in the radicalization of the late 1950s – early 1970s period

was in no way historically unprecedented. What was different, however, was the central role of the African American oppressed nationality, which left no room for equivocation on the problem of racism.

Of course, some unions and labor officials rejected AFL-CIO President George Meany's racist and reactionary policies. The United Farm Workers combined a struggle for Chicano rights with a campaign to organize some of the most oppressed workers in the working class. Drives to unionize majority African American work forces, such as hospital workers and sanitation workers, contained a strong civil rights component. Martin Luther King was assassinated while he was participating in a drive to organize sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee. Though these unions were exceptional, they were nevertheless important, for they pointed the way forward for the entire labor movement. However, they did not succeed in reversing organized labor's reactionary course.

They *pointed* the way, but they were unable to *lead* the way.

The role of the organized labor movement during the 1955–75 period has naturally created special theoretical problems for Marxists, who recognize the working class's unique power to do away with the thoroughly rotten capitalist system. Marxists recognize that the working class's power originates in its position in the productive process and not in whatever moral commitment working people may have (or lack) to social justice. However, even that understanding is strained by the spectacle of white rank-and-file workers throwing rocks at African Americans and voting for labor-hating politicians like Ronald Reagan because he is perceived to be in favor of "getting rid of the niggers." How socialists should combat working-class racism has been and continues to be a subject of intense debate, as such a vital issue should be. However, it will need to be addressed in a subsequent discussion. □

July 3, 1993

The Left and Labor in Chicago

Lizabeth Cohen, *Making A New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919–1939*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Reviewed by William A. Pelz

This is a work of extraordinary research and stimulating analysis which enriches our understanding of industrial labor during the interwar period. Combining primary sources with oral histories, Cohen probes deep into the varied social experiences of Chicago industrial workers. This volume is particularly strong when it demonstrates how mass culture was more than an alien assault on indigenous proletarian cultures. It was that, but at the same time, it provided a common culture which enabled workers to bridge their ethnic and cultural differences. The book also does an excellent job of integrating work experiences with the encounters that took place in particular ethnic communities. Even those who take issue with some of this work's interpretations will profit from the insights it contains.

Cohen sets herself the task of discovering "how it was possible and what it meant for industrial workers to become effective as national political participants in the mid-1930s" (p. 5). To accomplish this goal, the author chose to focus on Chicago since it "was the second largest industrial area in the nation... [and its] multiethnic and interracial work force also proved to be an analytical advantage" (p. 7). In addition, Chicago had the advantage of being the best documented city during the interwar period.

When Cohen delves into the life of workers during the period under study, she stresses the way ethnic community helped mold proletarian responses to both work and larger societal change. While ethnic support networks, ranging from the corner grocer to ethnically-owned banks, combined with "welfare capitalism" to allow industrial workers to survive in the 1920s, the Depression forced workers "to look beyond their ethnic networks and bosses for help" (p. 364). Workers began to fight to form CIO unions and demand that the Democratic Party promote state action to redress their complaints.

Making A New Deal argues that anticapitalist action was never really on the agenda because the working class saw the combination of CIO unionism and Democratic Party-sponsored reform as sufficient to address their most pressing concerns. This rather modest appetite for change is explained, according to Cohen, by the workers' belief in "moral capitalism." That is, the author argues, proletarians maintained a conservative belief in the American economic system which "circumscribed the political alternatives they could imagine supporting" (p. 366). They chose to fight oppression through

established (Democratic Party) or reformist (CIO) channels rather than creating new radical or revolutionary institutions, while setting limits on what even the radicals among them could promote without losing working class approval. At first glance, Cohen's thesis looks compelling and the evidence apparently overwhelming in support. Still, some complexities elude the author. Most notably, the role of the left would seem to be undervalued or at least confused. Readers could logically come to any number of conflicting interpretations about the influence of leftists during this period.

First, one could easily come away from reading this work thinking that there was virtually no active left movement. Second, although Cohen concedes the presence of radicals within the working class, they always appear to be standing in the wings awaiting a curtain call which never comes. Thirdly, one could assume that leftists merely followed their less radical peers and supported their demand for a "moral capitalism." While there are certainly elements of truth in all three of these conclusions, they each ignore or underemphasize important elements of social and political reality.

For instance, Cohen gives scant attention to any existing left tradition within the working class of Chicago. Many of the anticlerical Italian workers she discusses were also either committed socialists or anarchists. The enormous crowds that attended "Free Sacco and Vanzetti" rallies are but one example showing that this current existed within the Italian community. Likewise, African American workers often brought indigenous radical traditions from their Southern past. Also, the Socialist Party had not been without members and supporters in Chicago before 1919 — and even after. Yet, the idea that workers may at least have been aware of, if not influenced by, these pre-existing traditions is never really explored. Further, the importance of a radical left which gave the CIO so many organizers and militants is acknowledged yet underplayed. There seems to be little understanding that without this radical core, the unions which Chicago's industrial workers embraced may have not been successfully built. That this leadership made numerous mistakes and often functioned on the basis of faulty projections is doubtless true. Yet, had there been a different set of historical circumstances during and after World War II, they may have succeeded in converting their co-workers to a more radical stance. In fact, could there have been either a New Deal or a CIO if American business did not fear the spreading influence of (what they, at least, saw as) revolutionary organizations?

If there were no reason for workers to turn

to socialist organizations during this period, why did some of them do so? If Cohen could argue that the left was an entirely alienated fringe, this question would not arise, but she concedes the existence of radicals in the working class. The author does not explore what led some Chicago laborers to the Communist Party, many others merely to the Democratic Party, and some to a lack of interest in politics of any sort.

This may well be a methodological problem, as the author relies on vote totals as a major gauge of influence. On the left vote in Chicago in the 1932 presidential election (31,133 — Socialist Party; 11,879 — Communist Party; 1,592 — Socialist Labor Party) she comments: "These numbers are four times the Socialist vote of 1928, six-and-a-half times the Communist, and two-and-a-half the Socialist Labor. Still, however, they together only total 3 percent of the vote for president, whereas 97 percent of the vote went for candidates of the two major parties" (p.478).

There are problems with using these figures as a measure of left influence. First, there is the assumption that this is a true account of votes cast. As anyone familiar with Chicago's history of political corruption will attest, this is a somewhat doubtful presumption. Even if we accept these figures as largely accurate, something no Chicagoan I have ever met (regardless of politics) would agree to, this viewpoint remains suspect because of America's winner-take-all electoral system based on single-member districts and two massive bourgeois parties. Thus, supporters of the left had to be motivated to vote — yet "throw away their vote" for a party which had no chance of victory. Looked at differently, it is a sign of the strength of the Left that it could get 3 percent of the vote in a city like Chicago. After all, in certain Chicago wards the Republican Party has had difficulty obtaining such results, while the voters are so loyal to the Democratic Party that they continue to vote after their death.

More fruitful than election results would be to investigate how many workers the left could mobilize or influence during periods of struggle. The left can no more be reduced to its vote totals or membership than Chicago's Democratic Party could be reduced to the number of its patronage workers. How many workers voted for FDR in 1932 while thinking of themselves as some brand of socialist?

Vital questions remain to be answered. Were Chicago's workers wedded to working within the system? Or was an anticapitalist agenda a possibility under certain conditions? Was it the workers' inherent belief in "moral capitalism" or the left's failure to create truly democratic and radicalizing institutions that deflected workers from going beyond the New Deal? Differences notwithstanding, this book certainly should be read by all who seek a better understanding of the working class during the interwar period. □

Marxism and the National Question in the Former Soviet Union

Continued from page 8

republic — a war that continues today, is not against some alleged Islamic fundamentalists nor does it involve some insane interethnic rivalries. It was a vicious campaign by the old apparatus of Nabiyev and his gang against a newly developed movement for democratization which included Muslim and non-Muslim alike. The opposition began as a secular movement for democratic rights.

It is necessary to take sides in these struggles and support the Armenians in Nagorno-Karabagh, the Abkhazians in Abkhazia, the South Ossetians, and the democratic opposition in Tajikistan. Of particular importance is the attitude of socialists, especially Russian socialists toward these events, whose attitude Trotsky explained should be to say:

Of importance to me is your attitude towards your national destiny and not the "socialist" sophistries of the Kremlin police; I will support your struggle for independence with all my might! [Ibid., p. 28.]

Unfortunately, there has been a marked tendency among Russian and other socialists to abstain from supporting the national-democratic struggles of the non-Russians rather than to support them. Lip service of "support of the right to self-determination" is not enough. Nor is it sufficient to remain neutral or agnostic or to take a pacifist position. Such a simplistic notion is no substitute for hard

investigation, more of which is obviously needed.

A blithe dismissal of these crises, dismissing them as some sort of irrational nationalist rivalry, blinds one to the real economic and political forces at work and fails to distinguish between the nationalism of the oppressed and that of the oppressor. It fails to recognize the progressive and revolutionary potential of the national independence struggles: "The barb of the slogan of an independent Ukraine is aimed directly against the Moscow bureaucracy and enables the proletarian vanguard to rally the peasant masses." That the Moscow bureaucracy, or its local counterparts, appear in changed attire does not negate the essence of this conclusion that Trotsky drew.

As Marxists know well from examinations of history, the so-called "nationalist" wars of Europe and elsewhere had deepgoing economic roots. If we can understand this when it comes to Western European history, why do we refuse to understand the economic and social roots of the current conflicts in Eastern Europe and Central Asia? Now, as then, it is necessary to distinguish between the nationalism of the oppressed and the nationalism of the oppressor.

What Trotsky wrote about Ukraine in 1939 applies with equal weight today:

When the Ukrainian problem became aggravated earlier this year, the voices of Marx-

ists and socialists were not heard at all: but the voices of the clerics and nationalist reactionaries were loud enough. *This means that the proletarian vanguard has let the national movement slip out of its hands.* [Ibid. p. 47. Emphasis added.]

This should be a warning to all of us to reexamine our assessment of these crises of today's class struggle and learn what we may do to try to reverse the descent into barbarism. How can we best defend these nationally oppressed peoples who are finally rebelling?

Where is the proletarian leadership in Tajikistan or Armenia, among the Georgians, Azeris, or Ossetians, as these regions are plundered for the benefit of a few? Who knows the answers to these questions? In some regions the population is predominantly peasant, but they in effect constitute an agricultural proletariat. Are we to condemn these workers to the mercies of clerics, bigots, hustlers, or imperialist assassins like Hekhmattyar — a CIA-funded warlord in Afghanistan, who is apparently involved in sales of CIA-donated arms to all sides?

This is impermissible.

Among our tasks today, in these as in other struggles of the oppressed, is to try to learn about them, establish links with them, and support them. This is the new international task of workers solidarity that confronts us. □

Single-Payer Health Care and Independent Political Action

Continued from page 4

and the figure is steadily increasing... Workers who haven't seen a real wage increase since the early 1980s are being asked by employers to take reduced health care packages, pay more for their health care or agree with employers to make cuts in retiree health care.

Union members aren't buying into the employers' plans, focusing their energies instead on taking care of their members at the bargaining table while continuing the fight for health care reforms at the national level.

But in the same article union negotiators admit they are *unable to hold on to health care benefits and wages at the bargaining table.* "We've had to trade off wages," one teachers union president said, "but the membership has let us know in no uncertain terms that insurance coverage is on the same level as salaries." [Emphasis added.]

AFL-CIO Divided

At the national level at least ten international union affiliates have gone on record in support of the single-payer American Health Security Act of 1993. But the AFL-CIO committed itself to a \$4 million campaign "to sell Clinton's health care overhaul plan to

their members and the public," according to the June 3 *Wall Street Journal*.

Bob Wages, president of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW), reportedly stated in response to the AFL-CIO's decision: "If the AFL-CIO negotiated with industry as they have for health care, we'd all be working buck naked for a nickel an hour."

Members of OCAW, the first union to support the Canadian-style single-payer legislation in Congress (and the first to support Labor Party Advocates), have been among the most active builders of grass roots labor/community health care coalitions.

Glen Boatman, Ohio state legislative representative for OCAW, founded the Northwest Ohio Coalition for National Health Care and is coordinator of the Toledo Town Hall Meeting on National Health Care to be held this fall. His conclusion, writing in the August 1993 issue of *Labor Notes*, is this: "After having organized for a single-payer national health care plan for four years, it is apparent to me that what is holding the labor movement and its allies in the citizen action movement back from being able to win the fundamental reform necessary is reliance on the Democratic Party. This is why they compromise instead of mobilize working people

to fight for single payer national health care [emphasis added]."

Another union that remains firm in its support for universal health care is the Communications Workers of America. Its *CWA News* for July-August 1993 reported:

The Communications Workers of America believe in a few simple principles for health reform. The new plan must cover every American and preserve consumer choice. And every employer should contribute, based on payroll size.

Starting June 28, a 30-second radio spot promoting these principles, paid for by CWA, began airing on the American Health Report, broadcast at least once each weekday by more than 450 radio stations... The CWA spots, updated periodically, will air through Sept. 24.

The CWA critique of the White House health reform plan made an important point that shows why a fight for a single-payer plan on the state level could be crucial at this point. It observed that the administration "will allow states to implement single-payer programs" and that large employers with 5,000 or more workers "will be able to 'opt out' of health alliances, but not in single-payer states." *Continued on page 36*

Letters

Response to "How Free Are We?"

In an otherwise good article on women's liberation in your March issue, Lisa Landphair makes a statement with disturbing implications when she condemns the use of abortion to favor male births in India.

While this practice reflects deplorably sexist attitudes and traditions, the use of a provocative phrase like "gender genocide" cannot alter the fact that no actual people, as distinct from potential people, are harmed by it. And if Landphair's concern is that some of these abortions may be against the woman's will, she should say so clearly. Otherwise, she gives the appearance of endorsing a restriction on women's reproductive freedom.

Eric Hamell
Philadelphia

Revolutionary Socialists and the Labor Movement

Marilyn Vogt-Downey's review of Thomas Geoghegan's *Which Side Are You On?* calls attention to valuable information about the way "the U.S. government with its laws and courts has been able to crush working-class organizing..." (See the June issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*.)

It's not clear to me if Geoghegan presented the same conclusions and criticisms of the revolutionary movement as those contained in Vogt-Downey's review. I want to note some disagreements I have with comments by Vogt-Downey.

I do not agree with her assertion, "It has been a given, accepted in the revolutionary movement as almost an act of nature, as if nothing can be done about it [that is, about the decline in the organized trade-union movement]." On what grounds does Vogt-Downey make this sweeping evaluation? The revolutionary movement in this country encompasses a multitude of parties, organizations, groups, tendencies, currents, alliances, leagues, etc. It has been my experience, through active participation in organizations and through reading the literature published by U.S. socialists, that most revolutionaries *reject* the idea that nothing can be done to reverse the decline in the organized labor movement. In fact, there are almost as many proposed solutions as there are radical groups.

Although I have differences with strategies and tactics employed by socialists involved in the trade-union movement, I know that revolutionary socialists have been and continue to be active in campaigns to organize the unorganized as well as to build and democratize existing unions. A serious look at the activities of U.S. revolutionary socialists will show there have been and are a variety of activities aimed at doing something about the decline in size and economic/political/social

weight of the union movement in this country. The expansion of union organizing involving women, immigrant workers, and Southern Blacks are recent examples of interactions between the revolutionary and labor movements.

Assessing her own political activities, Vogt-Downey noted: "During these decades of what appeared to be a decline in labor militancy, many of us on the left turned our attention elsewhere [than the trade union movement] in search of productive political work — the struggles of students, women's movements, African Americans, and other people of color for their rights, support to revolutions in the neocolonial world, environmental protection, etc."

I can't argue with Vogt-Downey's statement that she turned *her* attention away from the labor movement "in search of productive political work." But I will dispute the idea that being part of the movements for social/political change means turning away from the labor movement in search of greener pastures "elsewhere." On the contrary, during the last two to three decades, many revolutionaries were simultaneously involved in the labor movement and in the struggles of African Americans, youth, women, people of color, and solidarity with revolutions in other countries (Cuba and Nicaragua, for example). In addition, revolutionary socialists combined their activities within the movement against the Vietnam War — and most recently against the Gulf War — with involvement in the labor movement.

A letter does not allow space to substantiate what I write, but I offer myself, my comrades, and socialists in other groups as examples of revolutionaries who did *not* "turn away" from the labor movement. We understood the interconnections between our union involvement and our participation in movements for social/political changes. We helped develop linkages between the various struggles and the labor movement. We did not, as Vogt-Downey does, separate and counterpose union activities with "productive political work" involving people of color, women, youth, etc.

Union activities are a crucial part of the broader working-class struggle against exploitation and oppression. At the same time, helping the protest movements win victories strengthens unions. One obvious example: these struggles undercut boss-fostered racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, anti-immigrant, and other prejudices, which weaken unions.

Members of the working class have been and are involved in movements and struggles which are not specifically union efforts. This participation in non-union movements is basically motivated by the nature of the exploitation and oppression in

capitalist society which doubly and triply victimizes people of color, females, young people, lesbians and gay men, and so on. I find it difficult to believe that a Marxist would even hint at a separation between activity in the labor movement and "elsewhere," for example: a civil rights struggle for equal seating in bus systems and lunch counters and/or community control of schools and/or voting rights and/or other goals of African Americans; the fight to legalize abortions and incorporate an Equal Rights Amendment in the U.S. Constitution, and the current campaigns to safeguard and extend reproductive rights; student battles for free speech and the current fight against fee hikes at colleges and universities; and efforts to pressure the U.S. government to lift its blockade against Cuba and end its interventionist policies around the globe. Victories in any of these struggles would — in a very primary and direct way — aid working-class people of color, women, and youth. Why this is so has been spelled out in numerous articles published in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* as well as other revolutionary publications.

The various forms of the class struggle do not develop simultaneously — as if they were cars on a train leaving the station on a set schedule. Should African Americans time their struggles to match the level of labor militancy? Should the degree of labor militancy determine the timetable of women's pursuit of liberation goals? Should socialists participate in the legitimate struggles of students and people of color and solidarize with revolutionaries in the neocolonial world? These questions are raised by Vogt-Downey's separation of "elsewhere" from "labor militancy."

Vogt-Downey writes: "There can be no real party of labor; there can be no thought of an effective women's movement to guarantee reproductive choice; there can be no end to police brutality or reversal of imperialism's foreign policy as long as the organized labor movement continues to dwindle.

"This means a sharp reassessment of our past political work."

The implication here (bolstered by other comments in the review) is that a reassessment should produce strong criticism of "our [who and what groups are being called upon here?] past political work." Was it *wrong* to call for a Labor Party and *wrong* to join Labor Party Advocates, *wrong* to fight for abortion rights and *wrong* to engage in defense of women's health clinics, *wrong* to campaign for civilian review boards in order to exert community control over police departments, *wrong* to organize demonstrations against the Gulf War *as long as the organized labor movement continued to dwindle*? Should all or most of our efforts have gone directly into fighting against the labor legislation Geoghegan details in his book? Should we *now* focus all or most of our energies on fighting anti-labor legislation?

Near the end of her review, Vogt-Downey

maintains that antilabor laws are so critical that they must be placed "at 'center stage' where they belong. To the organized left, 'labor' has usually meant only the unionized sector of the working class, whose shrinkage and retreats over the past few decades served as a background to this book. It is not, therefore, surprising that broad sectors of the left over the past decade or more have become disoriented and demoralized, and begun retreating, too."

Once more, there is a sweeping assertion about the "organized left" as a whole. Once more, the historical record of real activities by revolutionaries is ignored. Vogt-Downey's overgeneralized critique leads her to an oversimplified conclusion about the current state of the radical movement in the U.S. today. Certainly, what has happened to and within the working class has had profound effects upon socialists. There are also the blows landed by failures in countries perceived to be "socialist," the crushing of revolutions, and the deterioration of prerevolutionary situations. The organized left is particularly sensitive to such disappointments — but workers, too, are negatively affected when there are no positive examples to point out as counterweights to capitalist arguments and propaganda.

A letter cannot take up everything that could be said about the matters raised by Vogt-Downey. I refer readers to articles in past and future issues of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, where these questions have been/will be examined, past political work has been/will be evaluated, and information has been/will be provided about what revolutionaries are doing within the labor movement as well as within the movements for social/political change.

Evelyn Sell
Los Angeles

Response to Evelyn Sell

Evelyn has correctly detected in my review of Thomas Geoghegan's *Which Wide Are You On?* some initial, critical observations about the political activity of our movement, that is, of the Socialist Workers Party from the 1960s — when I first became a supporter and then a member — through its degeneration, as well as of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency until it dissolved itself. Reading the book brought to my attention facts and situations in this country as nothing else I have ever read on the contemporary U.S. labor movement — that is the post-World War II period. I repeat, reading the book brought to my attention these facts and considerations and in a particular way which have led me to believe that Marxists — that is we who were in the Socialist Workers Party and the FIT — may have made some very serious mistakes — yes, mistakes! — or at least serious omissions in our overall orientation for a prolonged period and need to examine critically the very nature and direction of the political work of our movement over the past three and a half decades.

This is no easy or short-term task. However, I believe that this critical reexamination is a precondition for understanding not only the degeneration of the Socialist Workers Party but the political developments on every front in this country since the 1950s.

Unfortunately, however, Evelyn's response was just the response that I did not want to elicit and which will produce nothing particularly useful. She simply repeats all the very, very familiar litany of important social struggles that have developed and which were and should have been supported. I in no way intended to belittle them or imply that they should have been ignored, if that is what she wants to imply.

I only wanted to cast light on broader issues which might help explain why our work may have had inherent weaknesses.

Worse than that, she felt compelled to resort to a personal attack on me: "I can't argue with Vogt-Downey's statement that she turned her attention away from the labor movement 'in search of productive political work.'" This is a cheap shot that is normally beneath Evelyn. Throughout my political career, I functioned only as a disciplined cadre in either the SWP or the FIT — carrying out the same work that Evelyn was, with minor differences in focus as were required by the normal considerations of division of labor. There are no gains to be made, Evelyn, approaching the discussion on this level. The answers are not to be found there.

Throughout my political career, I have been reading essentially the same SWP, FIT, and other Fourth International, socialist, and radical publications you have. The issue is not what Vogt-Downey or Sell were doing individually, but what our movements and organizations as a whole were doing and not doing. This is the issue that I intend to reexamine and I advise others to do likewise.

As I said in my review, the sure way to find no answers to the questions I am raising is not to ask the questions at all.

Evelyn's self-righteous indignation, political breast-beating for our movement, and repetition of the same old phrases and arguments means that she is not prepared to ask such questions — except in a rhetorical way. Considering the crisis our movement and the working class in this country faces, this approach seems to me not only counterproductive but bankrupt.

Marilyn Vogt-Downey
Brooklyn

Single-Payer Health Care and Independent Political Action

Continued from page 34

On the state level, an Ohio workers compensation bill, passed July 20 by the legislature and signed into law the next day by Governor George Voinovich, was such a vicious attack on workers compensation, a reform measure that labor won as long ago as 1911, that it shook up even Ohio AFL-CIO President John Hodges, the lone labor representative on a recently appointed 15-member Ohio Health Care Board dominated by representatives of employers, health-care-for-profit providers, and "managed competition" supporters.

Hodges called the new workers compensation bill "the worst defeat for working people in the history of workers compensation in Ohio." It will result in a private system in which the insurance companies will prosper while working people watch their benefits disappear. "We have returned to the [time] when there were company stores," Hodges warned. "Now we will have company doctors, and injured workers will go where the company tells them to go."

The detailed and devastating analysis of the bill published July 30 in the Ohio AFL-CIO's *News & Views* makes this observation, among others: "Free choice of doctors is eliminated effective July 1, 1993, when managed care systems are to be in place [emphasis added]."

"The Ohio Chamber of Commerce has called this bill 'a good first step,'" said Hodges, "and I have little doubt that for them this is an important victory in their ongoing efforts to privatize the [workers compensation] system."

Hodges added, "The Chamber of Commerce, Ohio Manufacturers' Association, the Ohio Business Roundtable and the insurance industry are circling like buzzards over this system and they are going to pick it apart a piece at a time."

Benefit reductions sought by Voinovich and business supporters were placed in a study committee instead of being enacted immediately only because of a statehouse rally by a thousand union members and in-

jured workers, Hodges said. "I think that opened some eyes, and made some key players understand that workers compensation is a gut issue with us."

The bill passed with overwhelming majorities as both Democrats and Republican voted for it.

Workers and their families are going to need more than militant rhetoric to deal with the state and national health care crisis, and they know it. A September 11 Northeast Ohio Conference focusing on the need for a Labor Party and the strategies for creating one is being jointly sponsored by Cleveland Labor Party Advocates and the Youngstown Workers Solidarity Club. Health Care is one of the justice issues in the August 28 March on Washington for Jobs, Justice, and Peace.

Grass roots coalitions continue to grow around the country. Their activities are reported in *ACTION for Universal Health Care*, published at 1800 Euclid Ave., #318, Cleveland, OH 44115. □

August 6, 1993

Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin In Defense of Marxism

- 1 year — \$24** Plus, your choice of one of the following:
- American Elections and Issues Facing Working People*
 - The Transitional Program—Forging a Revolutionary Agenda for the U.S.*
 - A Year of Decision for U.S. Labor—The Hormel Strike and Beyond*
- 6 months — \$15** **3-month introductory — \$5**

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail and make checks payable to: Bulletin IDOM, 27 Union Square West, 2nd Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003

International Viewpoint

A unique monthly magazine with news and analysis of the international class struggle from a revolutionary Marxist perspective, published in Europe.

- Single trial issue: \$4.50.**
- 1 year: \$48 surface mail — or \$60 airmail.** Plus, your choice of one of the following:
- Fifty Years of the Fourth International* (a \$10 value).
 - A Tribute to George Breitman: Writer, Organizer, Revolutionary*

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail and make checks out to: *International Viewpoint*, P.O. Box 1824, New York, NY 10009

BOOKS & PAMPHLETS

Pamphlets, \$1.00 Each

Our Bodies! Our Choice! Winning the Fight for Reproductive Rights, by Evelyn Sell

The Marxist Case for Revolution Today, by Ernest Mandel

Revolutionary Internationalism and the Struggle for Socialism in the United States

The Actuality of Socialism, by Ernest Mandel

Vanguard Parties, by Ernest Mandel

Two Essays on Leninism and Trotskyism, by Ernest Mandel

Materials for a History of Trotskyism in the United States

Trotskyism in America, the First Fifty Years, by Paul Le Blanc \$3.50

Organizational Principles and Practices, Edited with an introduction by Evelyn Sell \$3.50

Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism, Edited with an introduction by Paul Le Blanc

\$5.00

Full Set of All Three: \$10.00

Books and Other Literature

The Fourth International: Fifty Years, Talks given at the New York City celebration, October 1988, plus other relevant contributions \$10.00

Trends in the Economy — Marxist Analysis of Capitalism in the Late 1980s, by Carol McAllister, Steve Bloom, and Ernest Mandel \$3.00

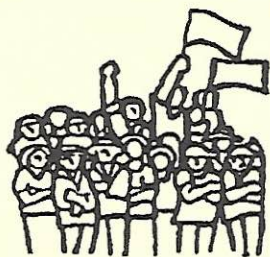
The Transitional Program — Forging a Revolutionary Agenda for the United States, by Evelyn Sell, Steve Bloom, and Frank Lovell; Introduction by Paul Le Blanc \$4.00

Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua, by Paul Le Blanc \$3.00

Order from and make checks payable to:
Bulletin IDOM, 27 Union Square West, 2nd Floor Room 208, New York, NY 10003

☞ SPECIAL DISCOUNT FOR BULK ORDERS ☞

Write to Bulletin IDOM or call (212) 633-2007



The Manifesto of the Fourth International

Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century

This document was adopted by a meeting of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (FI) in 1992. It is the product of months of discussion within that world organization and an extensive process of rewriting and revision from an original draft proposed before the FI's World Congress in 1991.

The FI is an international organization of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups from dozens of countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, dedicated to a consistent and forthright struggle for the common interests of working people and the oppressed in all nations — to their mobilization in struggle against capitalist exploitation, colonialism, and bureaucratic dictatorship, and against all forms of racial and sexual discrimination.

It should be clear, from the perspectives presented here, that the FI remains true to that purpose today. This, in itself, stands as a major accomplishment in a world where many former leftists and radical activists are rushing to embrace the "new realism" of a capitalism that has supposedly "triumphed over socialism" during the cold war.

But reality is a far cry from the "new world order" proclaimed by U.S. President George Bush after his victory against Iraq in 1991. It is, as the Manifesto points out, a world of increasing disorder — of insecurity, crisis, preventable hunger, poverty, and disease. These things are more the rule than the exception for most of the billions of people on this planet.

In short, we are living in a world that cries out for a renewed commitment to the fight for social change, for a more just and humane political and economic system. Just such a commitment, and a perspective on how those needed changes can be brought about, will be found in the pages of this pamphlet.

Price \$1.00 plus 50¢ shipping costs (order bundles from *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*).

Order from:
International Viewpoint
P.O. Box 1824
New York, NY 10009

Or from:
Bulletin In Defense of Marxism
27 Union Square West, Second Floor Room 208
New York, NY 10003

Complete Three-Volume Series — ONLY \$25.00

In Defense of American Trotskyism

Volume One:

The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party 1979-1983

edited by Sarah Lovell, 328 pages (1992) — \$10.00

This book consists of selected documents mostly produced by a political tendency that was organized in the Socialist Workers Party to defend and advance the revolutionary perspectives of Trotskyism. This tendency, which began to develop in the party in 1979, waged a struggle inside the Socialist Workers Party until the expulsion of its adherents in 1984, when they established a new group called the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Also represented here are oppositionists who became prominent in other groups — Socialist Action and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity. Included are materials produced by two of the oldest and most prestigious veterans in the SWP, Tom Kerry and George Breitman. A substantial introductory essay by Frank Lovell, "The Meaning of the Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party," provides valuable background informa-

tion and places the volume in a larger historical perspective.

Volume Two:

Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy

edited by Paul Le Blanc, 412 pages (1992) — \$12.00

This book focuses on the waves of expulsions which hit the Socialist Workers Party from 1981 through 1984. It provides an inspiring record — and reaffirmation — of the revolutionary ideas and commitments of those who were being forced out of the organization to which many had given "the whole of their lives." also included are: substantial pieces by SWP leaders Jack Barnes and Larry Seigle defending the expulsions; a critique by representatives of the Fourth International; letters and a talk by pioneer Trotskyist James P. Cannon, originally published under the title *Don't Strangle the Party*. A substantial introductory essay by Paul Le Blanc, "Leninism in the United States and the Decline of the Socialist Workers Party," relates the 1981-84 experience to broader questions

of "the vanguard party" and Leninism, the history and character of American Trotskyism, the development of the U.S. working class, and the realities of world politics in the 20th century.

Volume Three:

Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party

edited by Paul Le Blanc, 148 pages (1990) — \$9.00

This book consists of eight documents. The longest, written in 1983 by Paul Le Blanc and Dianne Feeley, is entitled "In Defense of Revolutionary Continuity" — a response to SWP leader Jack Barnes's attack on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. Also included is the founding platform of the Fourth Internationalist Tendency, a lengthy 1988 analysis of the SWP by Frank Lovell and Paul Le Blanc, and two major documents produced by the FIT when the Socialist Workers Party formally broke from the Fourth International in 1990. The volume concludes with three documents dealing with the need for unity among revolutionary socialists in the United States.