

In Defense of Marxism

\$3.00

Ten Years Later

The Struggle of Packinghouse Local P-9

by David Riehle

SOLIDARITY WITH P-9

Also: Nationwide
Teamsters Strike
by Charles Walker

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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.

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New Teamsters Two-Front Battle Continues

The Freight Strike Settlement and Teamster Reform

by Charles Walker

There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things.

— Niccolò Machiavelli, 1469–1527

The Old-Guard Front

Teamster General President Ron Carey announced on March 21 that he was asking the General Executive Board of the IBT (International Brotherhood of Teamsters) to hold a hearing April 19 on whether to exercise its authority under the union's constitution to revoke the charters of the four U.S. area conferences. (See my article on the Teamster conferences on pages 4–5 of this issue.) Later Carey postponed the hearing until a settlement was reached in the national freight negotiations and strike.

Disbanding the four regional conferences would easily be the most startling democratic reform of Carey's two-year administration. But more than that. It's a reform that's absolutely necessary if Carey is to have a freer hand to marshal the members' strength and bargaining power

under the most difficult economic circumstances for workers since the Great Depression.

The Freight Front

In the national freight negotiations in February the employers sought to obtain the same kind of aid and comfort from the old-guard Teamster bureaucrats as they had bestowed on the UPS bosses. At crucial points the old guard did oblige the freight bosses, thus crippling the Teamsters' bargaining power and blocking Carey in his attempt to reverse decades of American labor's concessionary retreats and defeats and inspire a substantial fight-back movement based primarily on the power of the strike.

On April 11, five days after 70,000 freight strikers hit the bricks, the freight companies' bargaining arm, Trucking Management, Inc. (TMI), quoted Eastern Conference Chair Bill Hogan, Jr., as advising Teamsters to go along with TMI's demand for part-time workers, which was targeted as the number-one issue for the Teamsters.

A "Freight Bulletin" issued by Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) reported that TMI spokesman Robert A. Young III had said there are "people inside the Teamsters leadership" who are the employers' kind of union officials. He was referring to the conference chairs and their friends, who were in bed with TMI and working to undermine our strike and union. Young attacked Carey, using the exact same words the old guard does! In the midst of the most important contract struggle in decades the employers were openly endorsing the old guard against Carey.

On April 22, defeated IBT presidential candidate R. V. Durham, still an Eastern Conference official, attempted to sucker-punch Carey by filing internal union charges against him and the General Executive Board. Durham included charges brought against the IBT by United Parcel Service (UPS) in its attempt to strip \$50 million from the Teamster general fund. Like UPS, Durham argues that the February 7 strike against UPS was a "breach of contract." Dur-

Continued on page 52

Editor's Note

Since *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* began publishing on a new basis as an independent revolutionary Marxist journal with issue #100, we have offered what we call a "focus" in each issue — several articles concentrating on a particular topic. To an extent, there has been a pendulum-like quality to the shifts in focus: dealing variously with struggles bound up with class, race, gender, then back to the central reality of class; from international issues to domestic issues and back again; from present-day realities to historical perspectives and back again. And frequently, there is sustained attention on the issue of how workers, oppressed groups, and revolutionary socialists might better organize themselves in the struggle for a better future.

The importance and interrelationship of these various questions are central to revolutionary Marxism itself. Thus the April issue dealt with U.S. class-struggle traditions, our next issue will focus on problems of world revolution, and this double issue of the magazine presents a number of important articles on U.S. labor struggles today. A centerpiece by David Riehle reviews lessons to be learned from the recent struggle of meatpacking workers in Minnesota, and George Saunders provides a related survey of ferment in the U.S. labor movement throughout the country. The nationwide strike of the

Teamsters discussed by Charles Walker is complemented by insights related to the need for the working class to build its own political party to be found in a report by Marilyn Vogt-Downey and a probing analysis by Jerry Gordon on Labor Party Advocates.

As we untiringly emphasize, the struggles of the U.S. working class must be seen in relationship to the struggles of working people and the oppressed throughout the world. Jeff Jones and Margaret Gutshall offer views on struggles in the former Soviet Union. Mfanafuthi Prof' Ndlovo, along with Jim Miles and Vera Wigglesworth, discuss recent developments in South Africa. Raghu Krishnan reports on the student upsurge in France, and the volatile realities in Mexico are illuminated by Rosendo Mendoza and Manuel Aguilar Mora.

Rich examples of the serious, creative utilization and development of revolutionary theory — to which this magazine is devoted — can be found in the writings of the well-known Belgian Marxist and militant Ernest Mandel. We are proud to offer a substantial discussion by Sean Flynn on one of Mandel's most important and most recent works, *Power and Money: A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy*. There are, of course, others — less well known — who have also enriched Marxism through their absorption and utilization of its principles in their own lives

and work. One of these is a recently departed Canadian comrade, Ruth Bullock, who is movingly described here by several who knew her.

As part of the discussion initiated by Paul Le Blanc's "Notes on Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States," we are immensely pleased to publish the views of Chris Brooks, a British cothinker who — while not pretending to be well acquainted with U.S. realities — offers interesting comments on the general question of party building. We encourage contributions by more activists from Britain and other countries — although since, as Lenin said, "truth is concrete," we will especially value serious discussions of how comrades actually build revolutionary organizations in their own countries. There is much to be learned by those of us who seek to create an organization capable of bringing socialism to the United States.

While some of you are reading these pages, a national conference of U.S. supporters of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* will be meeting to assess the work of this publication and to make decisions regarding its future. If you reread the "Who We Are" statement printed in every issue of this magazine since issue #100, you will be reminded of what we have been striving to accomplish. With your support, we will be even more successful in advancing toward our goals in the future.

As National Freight Strike Begins

Big Business Press Fires Warning Shot at Carey

by Charles Walker

When you talk about the enemies out there, it's not just about the good ol' boys. It's about the big corporations. They don't want me to succeed. — Ron Carey

It was easily predictable. An American labor leader stood up on his hind legs, in defiance of the corporate agenda, and the bosses' press began the process of manufacturing "public opinion," so that later a "democratic government" would have to "listen to" public opinion and move against the errant leader. To date, the stories don't amount to much. What's worrisome is that they are a warning shot across the bow. One can't help recall the trial by press and government that the longshoremen's union leader Harry Bridges was subjected to in the 1950s.

The labor leader now under attack is Ron Carey, the only general president of the Teamsters union to be elected by the rank and file. The morally indignant defenders of blue-collar faith, hope, and dues dollars are *Time* magazine and *Business Week*, two leading weekly mouthpieces for big business.

The Freight Strike: Carey Says "No Way!"

After four months of negotiations, Trucking Management, Inc. (TMI), the industry's major national employer-bargaining group, handed Carey their "last, best, and final" offer: replace full-time loading jobs with part-time jobs; reduce the number of drivers' jobs by shipping more trailers on railroads within established line-haul areas; lower wages for new hires to 70 percent; freeze casuals' wages for four years; and accept a general money package increase inferior to that gained from United Parcel Service (UPS). Also, strip from the contract the right to strike over grievances, a rare contract provision left over from a better time.

If accepted, the offer would also give owners a freer hand to impose on-the-job discipline, but most importantly, the proposed contract, by the time it expired, would leave the union with qualitatively reduced bargaining power. Carey is reported to have leaned across the bargaining

table and told the red-faced bosses, "No fucking way is this going to happen!"

So at midnight April 6 the giants of the freight industry were shut down. All freight locals, totalling 80,000 drivers and loaders, went out solid. This differed from the UPS experience, when Carey daringly struck UPS on February 7 and won in less than 24 hours, with 75,000 Teamsters striking, while 90,000 others were held back and forced to scab on their union brothers and sisters by the old-guard officials, Carey's diehard opponents. (See *BIDOM*, April 1994, "New Teamsters Battle on Two Fronts: UPS and Strikebreakers.")

Press Attacks Carey's Flanks

On the eve of this second nationwide Teamster strike to occur within sixty days, *Time* magazine (in its issue dated April 11) ran a sleazy, supermarket tabloid type "exposé" of real estate transactions Carey has engaged in since 1958, when he was 37 years old. That year, according to *Time*, Carey bought a \$16,000 duplex in

Boston-Area Rally Spotlights Fight for Full-Time Jobs

Ron Carey took up the central issue in the freight strike at a rally of several hundred striking Teamsters at the Consolidated Freightways terminal in Woburn, a suburb of Boston, on the second day of the strike.

"This is not just a Teamster fight. This is a fight about working people in this country." The issue this time, Carey warned, is the plan by trucking companies to hire part-timers to replace full-time workers. This would be a blow to all working men and women, not just truckers.

"All over the country, craft unions, working people are rooting for us," Carey said. "I assure you, what we went out to fight for, we are going to win."

Also speaking at the rally was George Cashman, president of the Boston-area Teamsters Local 25. Cashman was a supporter of Carey's reform slate in 1991 and was elected in place of McCarthy, who besides heading Local 25 had been president of the IBT and a leader of the Old Guard element who dominated the Teamsters before the 1991 election. McCarthy's ouster by Cashman, occurring a month or so before the Teamster-wide election, prefigured the change that was coming in this country's largest industrial union.

At the rally, Cashman said that underpaid part-timers would be "frozen out of the American dream, left without pensions, health insurance, or the money needed to buy a home and

raise a family," according to an April 8 Associated Press dispatch.

Commenting on the strike's first days, Cashman said, "I have seen solidarity over the last day and a half like I've never seen before."

Strikers at the rally expressed strong support for Carey's firm stand against the trucking companies. "Shouts of 'We're with you, Ronnie,' and 'You've got it' greeted his arrival at the terminal," according to the AP.

An indication of the toughness of the fight could be seen in corporate and police actions at the Roadway terminal in North Reading, also a Boston suburb. Seven strikers on the picket line at that terminal were arrested on disorderly conduct charges. They were protesting the company's moving a scab truck through the picket line. This was clearly a professional strikebreaking operation: the tractor-trailer being used bore no company markings.

The police making the arrests were members of a special Northeast Tactical Force, drawn from 24 communities around Boston. This was the first time this force, formed in 1968 against protesting students, was used against a workers picket line. They roughed up picketers and used police dogs against them in making the arrests.

Protests should be sent to Massachusetts Governor Weld, demanding charges be dropped against the Local 25 Teamsters, who were only trying to defend their livelihoods.

The Stakes in This Fight

In the fight to protect full-time jobs a lot is at stake for all workers, not just Teamsters. The trucking companies are proposing to increase the use of part-time workers from 15 to 24 percent by 1995. If the strike were to fail, companies throughout the U.S. economy would be encouraged to use even more part-time workers.

Usually part-timers are not entitled to any benefits, as Cashman indicated. Employers can hire them, pay them next to nothing, then fire them. Part-timers already working for the trucking companies are paid only \$9 per hour, compared to \$22 per hour for full-time work.

"Americans are sick and tired of seeing corporations slashing good jobs and replacing them with low-paying, part-time jobs," Teamsters President Carey said in a statement issued when the strike began.

"With more and more jobs going part-time, people are worried. How will they provide for their families? How will they educate their children? This fight is not just a union fight. It's a fight for the future of every working American."

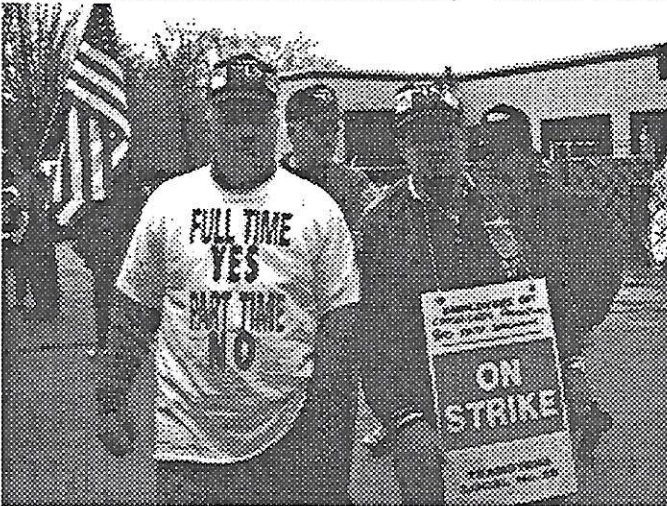
According to official government figures, part-time employment has grown 6.4 percent in the last 3 years, while full-time payrolls have increased only 1.7 percent. An estimated 456,000 new jobs were filled in March. Of that number, 349,000 went to part-timers.

Queens, NY, then another in 1979, then some New Jersey "acreage" in 1982. In 1984 he and a partner "began a series of condominium deals involving two units (total cost: \$181,000) in the Palms of Islamorada, an elegant complex in the Florida Keys."

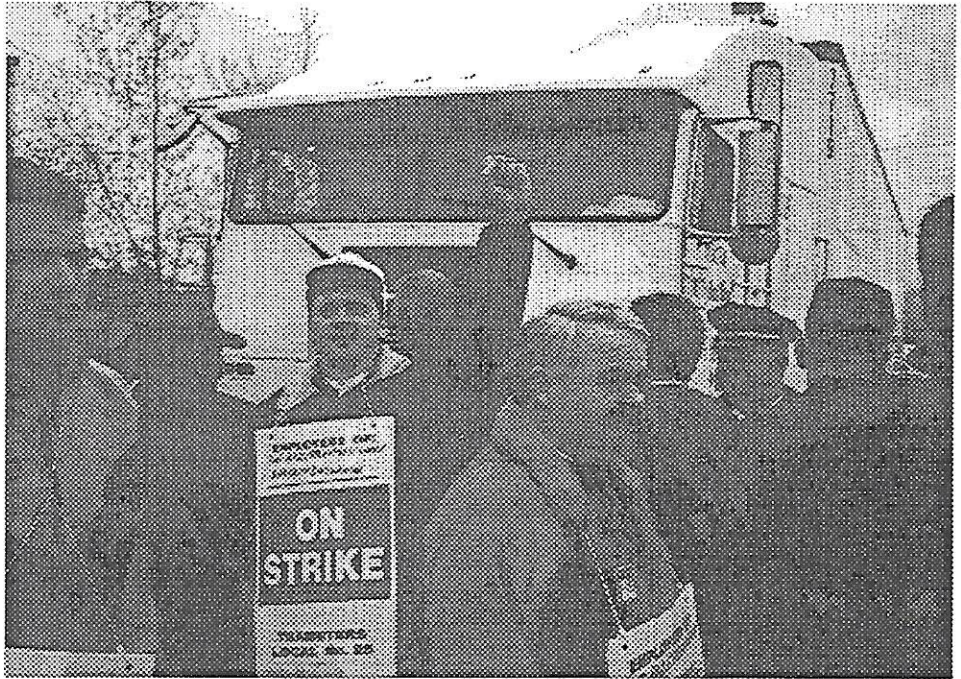
Also in 1984, *Time* reported, Carey bought a Scottsdale, Arizona, condo, and in 1986, a house in Rockland County, New York, which he later sold. In 1992, Carey bought with a \$125,000 down payment a \$340,000 "posh beachfront property on Lower Matecumbe Key, Florida." Lastly, Carey bought an apartment in Virginia last December. Left unsaid is that Carey now works in Washington, D.C.; hence the Virginia apartment. The Carey family uses the Arizona residence when visiting Carey's in-laws.

Time is careful not to accuse Carey of any crime, but it does repeat its November 1993 story that an FBI report disclosed, "Carey may have ties to a former Mafia boss." *Time* continues to quote the alleged testimony of a man they call a "Mafia rat," despite the fact that there is "absolutely no credible evidence supporting any allegations" linking Carey to the Mob, according to the Independent Review Board. That board exercises federal oversight over the Teamsters as a result of a 1991 settlement of racketeering charges agreed to by Carey's old-guard predecessors.

Business Week's article had more financial detail than *Time's* and, in fact, acknowledged the innocent nature of Carey's property buys. What *Time* called New Jersey "acreage" was a plot of land costing \$3500, according to *Business Week*. Further, Carey's first duplex was bought with his father, who retired as a Teamster driver with UPS. And before buying the Virginia apartment, Carey sold his son one of the Florida condos; the other had been sold previously. In summary, today Carey apparently owns two duplexes in Queens, including the one he bought with his father, an Arizona condo near his in-laws, his Florida retirement home,



Pickers outside the Consolidated Freightways terminal in Woburn, Massachusetts, just prior to rally with IBT President Ron Carey. Striker's tee shirt highlights a key issue in the negotiations.



Picket line at TNT Redstar in Billerica, Massachusetts, on the first day of the nationwide Teamster strike.

the Virginia apartment near his job, and the New Jersey "acreage."

Business Week, like *Time*, is careful not to accuse Carey of any crime, but lamely concludes that "Carey's downpayments alone required at least \$80,000 that he hasn't clearly accounted for," then asks: "Does Carey own any other real estate?"

After all that, one is tempted to ask, "Where's the story?" Why bother printing such a non-story, and how is it that two weekly rivals reported the same non-story the very same week and were copied by national wire services?

Carey says, "My principal residence has been paid off since 1973, and therefore I have been able to make investments with the money

I would otherwise be spending on housing. I have invested it in real estate, including a home in Florida to which I planned to retire. Investing savings in real estate in order to have a secure retirement is a normal and respected practice in America, and is my own personal business. None of the money I invested came from an employer, the Mob, a pension fund, a union treasury, or any source that was illegal or would create a conflict with my job as Teamster president."

Of course raising suspicions about how Carey, a prudent investor of fam-

ily savings over a lifetime of constant employment, could rise to his level of middle-class affluence is not the point. The point is to let Carey know, at precisely the time when he seeks to demonstrate the power of a truckers' strike, the power of the kept press. A communications power that's more than a couple of weekly magazine, but includes the nation's wire services, big city and small town dailies, radio, and television. All with the power to dignify false witnesses, ensure the endless repetition of innuendo, and call the result "public opinion."

What's Next?

If the press fails to persuade Carey to act the part of a "responsible labor statesman," then the government can be trusted to take its turn at bat, as it has done so often and so recently: Carter against the railworkers; Reagan against the air traffic controllers; Bush and Congress against the railworkers. Clinton, petulant and angry with the unions for their "roughshod" and "musclebound" opposition to NAFTA, is currently arguing in the courts, through his "Justice" Department, that the mineworkers should be forced to pay onerous fines that the mine owners themselves had agreed not to press for.

Carey knows why he is the subject of press attacks and refuses to run or hide. "As long as I continue to take strong actions to challenge employers and reform this union, I will continue to face a long series of false charges, one after another. In each case, I will offer my full cooperation to the Independent Review Board and any other appropriate investigative agency, as I have done in the past, and let the chips fall where they may." □

April 8, 1994

Teamster Turmoil

Carey Ups the Ante Against the Old Guard

by Charles Walker

One of the major factors preventing effective struggle against economic and social deterioration has been accelerated degeneration of the labor officialdom since World War II.

— Farrell Dobbs

A Perspective

Sixty years after the Minneapolis Teamster Rebellion presaged a workers' upsurge and the rise of the CIO, New Teamster reformers and the old-guard bureaucracy are locked in a bitter daily struggle for control of the largest North American private sector union, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT). Arrayed against Carey and his allies, who include the reform caucus Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), is the bulk of the middle and lower level IBT officialdom, led by an elite upper stratum of union millionaires.

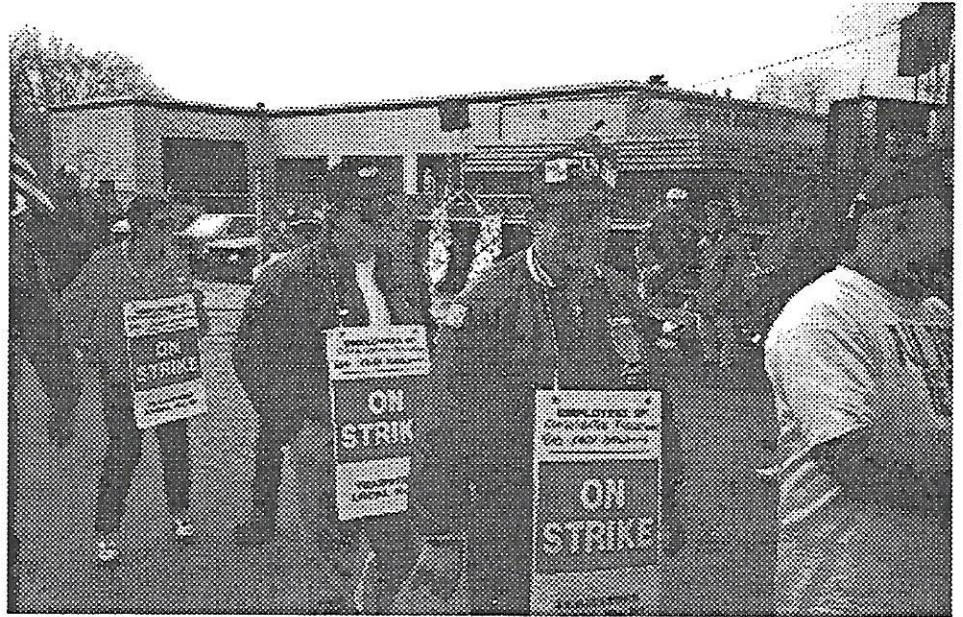
If Carey calls on the ranks to take on the old guard, and they respond to his call, that might signal a fresh workers upsurge in the making, after four restive decades. Should Carey win with a mobilized membership, the consequences might well reach far beyond the Teamsters to all of organized labor, recalling the promise of workers' militancy after 1934.

Should the ranks not respond, or should Carey limit himself mainly to the courts, where the old guard has yet to win a single point, Carey's opponents will enter the 1996 union elections stripped of some of their present posts, but essentially intact and reunited, unlike 1991, when they fielded two major competing slates, allowing Carey to win with a plurality. If unity holds among the old-guard elements, given the potential size of their war chest, the size of their cadre (Carey had only 15 percent of the 1991 convention delegates), and the fact that they are learning from their defeats, then it could be that their return to the top is more likely than not.

Background

After the New Teamsters slate made its stunning electoral capture of the International's highest posts in 1991, in the first-ever rank and file election of IBT officers, a power struggle began. Now, in March 1994, the focus of that struggle has shifted to the four American Teamster geographical conferences — East, Central, South, and West. Each area conference is controlled by a "policy committee" chaired by a man who, oddly enough, was *defeated* as a candidate for International office in the 1991 election.

The area conferences occupy an intermediate level between the International and the joint councils, which are organizations of the special-



Office workers join drivers on the Consolidated Freightways picket line in Woburn, Massachusetts. At this "freight barn," office workers are organized in the IBT.

ized local unions and are similar to local labor councils in purpose and function.

Dinosaurs from a Bygone Era

In 1992, Mike Riley, chair of the Western Conference of Teamsters (WCT), received more than \$320,000 in salary and expenses, including a WCT salary of \$160,000. An extra officers' pension drains off 25 percent of the more than \$4 million in dues that the WCT receives yearly.

Walter Shea, chair of the Eastern Conference of Teamsters (ECT), who ran against Carey in 1991, collected over \$1 million from Teamster officers' pension plans after his 1991 defeat, received a 1992 salary of \$107,440, plus an expense account, and additional pension contributions. Shea, like Riley of the WCT, was a defendant in the racketeering lawsuit which led to government intervention in the IBT.

William Hogan, Jr., chair of the Central Conference of Teamsters (CCT), is reported to have said, "I'm living proof that nepotism works." Hogan, his brother, and his son were paid a total of \$500,000 in salaries and expenses in 1992, which understates their total compensation from the union's dues-payers. Hogan followed his father into office after his father retired, as did Jackie Presser, the deceased general president who fronted for the mob while snitching for the FBI.

Jerry Cook, chair of the Southern Conference (SCT), was paid \$196,000 in salaries and expenses for 1992, including \$119,000 from the SCT.

The quintessential arrogance of the bureaucracy that rules the conferences was captured in a photograph taken at the time of the 1986 Teamsters convention in Las Vegas. It showed Jackie Presser making a grand entrance (at a \$647,960 soiree financed by the dues-paying members of the ECT), riding in a sedan chair supported by the bulging muscles of four body-builders.

Olive Branch Policy

While campaigning for the presidency, Ron Carey repeatedly stated that he believed that most Teamster officials were hard-working, honest leaders and, if given a chance, would do right by the membership. At his February 1992 inauguration, newly elected General President Carey extended an olive branch to all Teamster officials.

Apparently Carey believed that the self-reform of the officialdom would take place with the democratic removal of the old guard from atop the International union. To date, relatively few officials have joined with Carey's reformers to bring in democratic practices, reduce bloated salaries, or confront aggressive employers. In the main they continue to use their offices to fatten their bank accounts and sweeten their

pension benefits, while conducting business as usual with their members' employers.

Carey now says, "I've tried to work real hard to build relationships with local union officers, whether they were with my team or not. I want them to know that Ron Carey represents all Teamsters. But the reality is that the olive branch approach is not working."

Behind the Dues Referendum

Nevertheless, Carey made attempts to gain agreement from the old-guard leadership on a financial plan that would maintain the new higher strike benefits and the International Union General Fund. Otherwise the strike fund would be empty by June of this year, and the General Fund empty in 1995. They insisted that Carey call a special convention, which would be dominated by them and where they could adopt constitutional amendments reducing Carey to a figurehead. They would agree to a membership referendum providing for a \$2-3 monthly dues increase, forcing Carey to cut back on his new organizing initiatives, membership education, and aggressive handling of concessions-seeking corporations.

Carey has reversed the old guard policy of stifling and preventing strikes. Under Carey, strike fund payments have jumped to a yearly average of \$34 million, up from \$4 million under the old guard administration. Part of the increase is due to higher weekly strike benefits of \$200, up from \$55. Under Carey there have been more and longer strikes. Carey has supported a 3-year strike against Diamond Walnut, a California agribusiness, being waged by a 500-member, mainly Latino workforce, whom the old guard would have deserted long ago.

Blunt Talk from Carey

In a February 1994 letter, Carey denounced the conference chairs' united opposition to his dues increase referendum. He saw it as no coincidence that the president of Consolidated Freightways also opposes the dues increase and uses the same arguments as the conference heads, lauding the "more responsible leaders within the union" who share the corporation's view.

"Apparently you and your allies in top corporate management," Carey wrote, addressing the conference chairs, "don't want members to have stable, secure funding for their \$200 per week strike benefits. Neither you nor the captains of industry want members to have long-term funding for the International Union so we can continue to help win and enforce strong national and local contracts."

Carey continued:

You state that the Teamsters Union needs Area Conferences in order to remain strong. I'm not sure that I share your view, and neither do the rank-and-file members who often ask me questions about this. They ask why Teamster members spend \$15 million each year for

Conferences that they see as an additional layer of unnecessary bureaucracy. They ask how four people who all ran for International Union office in 1991 and all were rejected by the membership can now be serving as policy chairs of our Area Conferences. They ask how someone can be a Conference policy chair without ever working a day in a Teamster craft — without ever driving a truck, loading boxes, serving the public, or doing any of the other jobs that hard-working rank-and-file members do.

Carey pinned the responsibility for the union's financial problems on the past top leadership, whose spending for ten years was greater than the dues income, with \$34 million taken from the strike fund to cover up their deficits, and whose settlement of federal racketeering charges has cost the union more than \$40 million.

Carey ordered a membership referendum on a monthly dues increase proposal that would raise the basic dues rate from the current 2 times a member's hourly wage to 2½ times. Before the mail ballots were due back Carey was forced to strike UPS, in order to force that company to negotiate in good faith its decision to unilaterally impose a package weight increase from a maximum of 70 pounds to 150. Just hours after the strike's start it was over, when the trucking giant caved in. The victory was won without the help of the old guard, who sided with UPS and acted as strikebreakers, preventing 95,000 members from joining the 70,000 strikers on the picket lines. (See last month's *BIDOM* for more on the UPS strike.)

On the day the vote count began on the dues referendum, Carey took the first step toward dismantling the area conferences, as foreshadowed in his February letter. Carey sent representatives to each conference headquarters to watch over the bank accounts and prevent "looting," pending further action by the International General Executive Board on April 19, 1994.

As this is being written, Carey's representatives have been denied access to the four conference headquarters, and the referendum results have not been officially released. (It

seems to be losing by a 3-1 margin.) The old-guard conference heads have scheduled mass meetings of local officials to try to solidify their support and test the waters for their next steps.

There's talk on the street that Carey's opponents intend to split the union along the lines of their "baronies and fiefdoms." In the American labor movement, however, dual unionism is a most heinous crime, so that union bureaucrats outside the Teamsters may not be supportive of the old guard, despite their brothers-under-the-skin sympathies. The courts, too, might find it difficult, if not impossible, to support break-away elements — if only because breaking away is prohibited by the careful wording of the union's constitution, overseen by the likes of Dan Tobin and Dave Beck.

What Next?

The olive branch period of the Carey administration is over. Anyone who could be won over by persuasion and patience has joined Carey; they are valuable, sure, but not numerous. The fence-sitters are numerous, but they tend to lean more toward the old guard than Carey, as they did during the UPS strike.

Carey must know that he cannot fulfill his mission of honestly serving the ordinary, individual members and aggressively confronting the bosses without also stripping the old guard of their power. He must chase the dues-harvesters from the conferences to the joint councils, seek them out in the local unions, and campaign for their defeat at the hands of the rank-and-file voters. Given Carey's amply demonstrated concern for the welfare of the union's membership, there seems to be no room for anything short of total defeat of the old guard gang. In 1996, the rank and file will again vote for International officers. Hopefully they will not wait until then to render their judgment on the recent past and demonstrate their outlook for a democratic union ready to fight for its members' interests in the future. □

March 29, 1994



Strikers at TNT Redstar, Billerica, Massachusetts.

The Situation in Russia and the International Context

by Jeff Jones

The author, recently returned from Russia, is a graduate student at the University of North Carolina and a supporter of Black Workers for Justice. This article was the basis for a presentation by the author at the Socialist Scholars Conference in New York City April 3, at a workshop sponsored by the U.S.-Soviet Workers Information Committee and the U.S. Committee for Democratic and Human Rights in Russia.

Developments in Russia and the former Soviet bloc over the past several years have been widely interpreted as the “collapse of communism” and triumph of a “New World Order,” but recent events and the current economic and political situation in Russia do not bear out such a view. Russia is undergoing a very dramatic transformation, and it is unclear where the process may end. Two and a half years ago, a failed coup attempt signalled Mikhail Gorbachev’s demise and the breakup of the Soviet Union; at the same time, Boris Yeltsin emerged to lead Russia on a policy of “shock therapy.” In 1993 Yeltsin had to stifle a great deal of opposition to market reforms, resorting to unconstitutional measures and sheer force to do so. The events of early October and the December elections show that the primary economic and political questions facing Russia remain unresolved.

As a graduate student in Soviet history, I have had the opportunity to travel to Russia three times in the past three years and watch the transformation unfold. I am doing research on Rostov-on-the-Don, a city in the south of Russia near the Sea of Azov. I was there from February to June 1991, in what would prove to be the final days of the Soviet Union, and again last fall, late August to December 23, 1993. I was also in Moscow for six weeks during the early summer of 1992. My observation of the economic and political situation and my understanding of the international context of the changes in Russia are what lead me to question the standard view of the “collapse of communism” and victory of a “New World Order.”

Russia’s economy has changed dramatically between my visits of the last three years, and it is difficult to grasp, on the basis of Western media reports alone, the full depth of the economic problems facing the country. In the waning days of the Soviet Union, the stores were empty and people had to buy everything on the “illegal” but highly tolerated black market. Now that a “market economy” is in the fore, the stores are full, but there are fewer and fewer people who can afford to buy anything. There is a tiny elite — composed mostly of former party bureaucrats and black marketeers — which is doing well, but the overwhelming ma-

jority of Russia’s population is suffering greatly from “the triumph of capitalism.”

The process dubbed by the US media as “the transition to a market economy” is filled with numerous snares, pitfalls, and contradictions that usually go unacknowledged in brief and superficial coverage. Russia seems to be caught in a vicious cycle it cannot get out of, with such problems as inflation, low production, a huge budget deficit, unemployment, the need to convert the military sector of the economy to consumer production, crime/corruption, and the conflicts and problems in the non-Russian republics all feeding on and contributing to each other to create an increasingly chaotic scenario. It is a complex situation best comprehended in an international context, which the U.S. media also tend to omit.

Inflation is the most visible economic problem, and the most devastating so far, having long ago devoured most people’s life savings. Examples of the terrible inflationary situation in Russia are endless, and the problem affects all levels of the economy. Civil wars in the oil-producing areas of the Caucasus disrupt the flow of oil throughout the former Soviet Union (FSU), pushing up prices throughout the economy. Price hikes, which come with the beginning of each month, tend to be sudden and dramatic. The price of a train ticket from Moscow to Rostov in September cost 3,000 rubles, but as of October 1 the same ticket cost 12,000 rubles. The price of bread tripled at the beginning of December, and the cost of a pound of meat rose steadily throughout the autumn.

Inflation, simply stated, is out of control with no end in sight in this era of reform and marketization. Fueling the inflationary flames are problems with production, which for a number of reasons has all but ground to a halt. For one thing, the breakup of the former Soviet Union created economic barriers where there had been none before. Large enterprises now find it difficult to receive necessary parts from suppliers located in other republics, especially those where conflicts rage. Monopolization of the economy is another factor lowering production and increasing prices. Soviet planners built huge factories that produced almost all of a certain item, such as the plant in one part of the country that made all of the USSR’s elevators.

Another example is the factory Rostsel’mash in Rostov, which produced 90 percent of the country’s combines and harvesters. In a market economy, these large firms enjoy a monopoly, and their managers have quickly learned that the best way to maximize profits is to keep production low and prices high.

Also, while inflation is due in part to low production, the problems in production are, in turn, partly due to inflation, which makes it very difficult to accumulate enough investment capital to increase production. Production is also hampered and inflation fueled by a huge and ever-growing government debt, a familiar problem for the U.S. as well. Contrary to the advice of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, the Russian government continues to subsidize unprofitable businesses. In addition, it spends millions buying up hard currency on the international exchange in an attempt to stabilize the sinking ruble vis-à-vis the dollar (and the ruble is strong compared to the various currencies introduced in the other republics), causing Russia’s budget deficit to balloon with each passing day. Inflation, which, again, is due in part to the budget deficit, in turn makes the deficit much worse by eating away at the value of the ruble. The government has tried to lower the deficit through taxation (there is, for example, a 40 percent tax on all hard currency transactions that go through a bank), but this further hinders production, which raises prices and devalues the ruble, ultimately pushing the government’s debt still higher.

Yet another economic problem facing Russia that could become much worse is unemployment. Russia has successfully staved off mass unemployment so far, but jobs are slowly being lost, and there is little doubt that continuing along the path of “market reforms” will eventually throw millions out of work. Unemployment is the one thing that people in Russia fear most. They receive housing, child care, health care, access to recreational facilities, and other basic necessities through their place of employment, so losing a job is devastating. Fearing the social consequences of mass unemployment, the Russia government, as indicated earlier, has continued to subsidize failing factories, despite IMF objections.

However, the economy is gradually being "privatized," a process that involves handing out profitable enterprises to political cronies and dumping unprofitable ones off onto the workers (reminiscent of the S&L "bailout" in this country). This increases unemployment, because the new managers of the profitable firms trim their work forces, and because the unprofitable ones taken over by the workers usually fail. For example, the factory Rostsel'mash in Rostov was bought by its workers early in 1993, and after operating much of the summer without enough money to pay salaries, the factory, which employed an estimated one out of fifteen Rostovians, closed down for good in November, a severe blow to the local economy.

Still another pothole on Russia's road to capitalism is the challenge of converting the military sector of the economy to consumer production. The importance of this problem cannot be over-emphasized, especially since it has significant political ramifications. The issues involved — the power of the military, and the dilemma of jobs vs. government spending — are the same ones faced here, although in Russia they are on a much larger scale. Russia's military industrial complex is huge, and generals and factory managers are no happier about budget cutbacks there than they are here.

Since the early days of perestroika, Gorbachev and then Yeltsin have tried to convert the military sector of the economy to consumer production, failing for three main reasons: the power of the military, the refusal of factory managers to convert their enterprises, and the lack of capital to carry out the task. The conflicts raging in the FSU make it all the more difficult because they provide a ready market for continued weapons production. The military sector benefits greatly from government subsidies, and the defense industry employs a huge workforce, so all of the major economic problems facing the country — inflation, low production, the budget deficit, and unemployment — are linked to the conversion question, which, as we shall see, is also an extremely important political issue.

As if these problems and challenges were not debilitating enough to Russia's economy, corruption and organized crime also contribute to economic instability. The "mafia," an amorphous, all-encompassing term used by Russians to describe corrupt politicians and organized crime, is ubiquitous. There is no one unified mafia organization, but rather competing groups with varied interests. For example, the military leaders and factory managers dependent on government subsidies, along with members of the former KGB apparatus, constitute one powerful wing of the "mafia" said to be involved in high-level corruption. Yeltsin's administration is itself tinged with corruption in a way that Russians would associate with "mafia" influence. While no concrete proof was ever given, several people told me it was "common knowledge" that Yegor Gaidar, formerly Yeltsin's right-hand man in the cabinet, smuggled millions of dollars into a personal Swiss bank account. Also, several people close to

Yeltsin have been accused of selling off natural resources to the West and stashing the proceeds in European banks.

The reason Russians do not distinguish between high-level government corruption and organized crime is because the two are so closely linked. There are countless pockets of organized crime, usually differentiated by ethnic identity, working with different political groups and operating at all levels of the economy. The Russians and Chechens, a nationality in the Northern Caucasus, are said to have powerful mafia organizations, as are the Georgians and Armenians. It is simply an accepted fact that large-scale business cannot be carried out unless the proper people are paid off in advance.

A colleague who lived in Moscow for two years told me of the trials and tribulations of her friend, an American businessman who tried to bypass organized crime. After months of lobbying unsuccessfully for a license to import sugar from Cuba and sell it in the Caucasus, he was contacted by someone who promised him the license if he agreed to ship the sugar through a certain freight company. He took the license, but then decided to ship the sugar south from St. Petersburg through his own contacts, because the freight company suggested by the person who got him the license was asking twice as much. It was the wrong decision: the train transporting his sugar to the Caucasus blew up en route.

Horror stories of corruption and organized crime are endless, and, while it is impossible to measure the full impact of such activities on the economy, there is no doubt that they are a major cause of the economic morass that grips Russia.

Civil wars in four republics (and occasional trouble in a fifth) contribute further to Russia's woes. Most news broadcasts this fall began with an update of the four ongoing wars in the FSU.

These conflicts have sent a wave of refugees into Russia and the other republics, further taxing their economies and contributing to economic destabilization throughout the FSU. The republics not at war are also suffering. As bad as things are in Russia, the situation is markedly worse in neighboring Ukraine. Western economists attribute this to the fact that Ukraine and the other republics have failed to embrace and carry out market reform as enthusiastically as Russia. In fact, the problems of the other republics are largely due to the one major reform each of them *has* carried out: the rejection of the ruble and adoption of their own currencies.

The Ukrainian "coupon," introduced in 1992 and recently replaced by a new currency, was very weak relative to the ruble. Rostov is only a couple of hours from Ukraine, and the market for agricultural products in the city was dominated by Ukrainians who drove there to sell their produce because for them rubles are worth a great deal back home. This type of ruble black market exists in the other republics as well, creating a major drain on the economy of the entire FSU.

The problems and challenges obscured by what the Western media calls "the transition to a market economy" in Russia are tremendous.

The reforms seem to present Russia and the other republics with a Catch-22 at every step, and no matter what the economic question at hand, they're damned if they do and damned if they don't. In the face of these trying times, a lot of people are resorting to "business" focusing on purely short-term gain: buying Western-produced goods abroad (mostly in Turkey, China, and Eastern Europe) and selling them at great profit on the street corner, a process that has been dubbed the "Snickersization" of Russia. Consequently, there are a lot more goods available than two years ago, especially Western products, but at extremely high prices. In addition, there is a growing gap between rich and poor, and the long lines for consumer goods in the former Soviet economy have been replaced in the new "market" economy by long lines of people selling anything and everything they can to stay ahead.

For all its complexity, Russia's economic plight becomes clearer when considered in a broad, international context. Russia is becoming a full-fledged capitalist country at the level of a Third World country, which is why citizens are expected to accept such a drastic drop in living standards. Both here and in Russia the rhetoric of the "free marketeers" sounds the same: the next five or ten years of transition will be extremely difficult, but after that things will turn around and the economy will boom. It is unclear, however, what will suddenly change everything for the better after a period of hardship.

It is unlikely that the U.S. and other major capitalist countries really want Russia to succeed and become another competitor on the international market. While the reformers in Russia tend to measure their economic future against the U.S. and Western Europe, a highly industrialized Third World country like Brazil offers a better comparison. In the early 1970s Brazil was heralded as the up-and-coming capitalist country, but twenty years later the promise has not been realized. Much as with Brazil then, economic publications in the West now tout Russia's potential as a supplier of raw materials and cheap labor, the typical role of a Third World country in which living standards are usually well below those of Russia and the FSU.

Russia is also fully merging with international capitalism at a time when the major capitalist countries are drowning in debt. There will be no equivalent of the postwar Marshall Plan for the countries of the Soviet bloc because the money is not available. The problem of capital accumulation, moreover, is not confined to Russia. Since reunification, Germany has had difficulty coming up with the necessary capital to rebuild the economy in the East.

The U.S. is knee-deep in debt, Europe is in the midst of a recession, much of the Third World has been heavily indebted to Western banks for over a decade, and even Japan is showing the signs of overinvestment in a shaky U.S. economy during the 1980s. Media coverage treats the common economic woes of Russia and these countries as separate, isolated, "national" phenomena, when in fact they are

closely interrelated and stem from the shortcomings and limitations of international capitalism. Russia's economic woes are primarily due to its entry into the ranks of the debt-ridden capitalist countries at the level of a Third World country, which is why market reforms have created such chaos.

The economic and political realms are closely intertwined and affect each other very much, so it is not surprising that political turmoil has accompanied Russia's economic decline. The conflict in Moscow in early October, which people there referred to as "the little war," and the results of the mid-December parliamentary elections are the political dividends of nearly two years of economic decline. These events reveal a great deal about the political and social situation in Russia, such as the lack of a labor-oriented socialist alternative, a shift toward fascism in the Russian political spectrum, and a tendency toward dictatorship on Yeltsin's part. Also, as with the economic situation, Russian politics must be understood in an international context.

The greatest tragedy of the political struggle in Russia is that most of the possibilities are bad. There are some groups that call for the empowerment of the working class and introduction of genuine socialism, as opposed to the market reformers, the "communists" of the Stalinist bureaucracy, and the extreme nationalists. But the few labor-oriented socialist organizations are hardly heard; they are small and on the defensive, largely because labor is in disarray. There have been countless strikes in Russia, but they concentrate on short-term economic gains, and have so far remained very isolated.

Aleksandr Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov, the "Communist" leaders of the opposition last October (both originally handpicked by Yeltsin for their positions, respectively, as vice-president and chairman of the Supreme Soviet), called for a general strike in their showdown with Yeltsin last fall, but workers did not heed their call. The isolated strikes that do occur tend to end quickly with debtor(s) (usually including the government) agreeing to pay workers the several months' salary they earned but never received.

The process of "privatization" discussed earlier further weakens labor, because the new managers of profitable firms can hire from the growing ranks of the unemployed if workers strike, and because "workers' ownership" of the unprofitable ones means they can only strike against themselves. The lack of a strong, unified labor movement (despite the potential for one) and a labor-oriented socialist alternative in the current struggle means that Russia's immediate political future may be bleak.

With labor in disarray, Russia's political fortunes move closer and closer to dictatorship and fascism. All the talk about Russia's "democracy" by the Western press and the Clinton administration can, of course, be taken with a grain of salt. It is impossible to construct Western "democracy" in a setting of economic and social chaos, and ultimately the only difference between Yeltsin and Vladimir Zhirinovskiy —

his newest, scariest opponent — is a matter of degree. October revealed a dictatorial streak in the "democrat" Yeltsin, and the December elections shifted the whole political spectrum toward fascism. After unconstitutionally closing and then attacking the parliament, Yeltsin shut down all opposition press, banned demonstrations, and disallowed opposition parties to take part in the upcoming elections. He later relented, allowing several opposition papers to print under self-censorship and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation to participate in the December elections.

In the elections, Zhirinovskiy's extreme nationalist Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won the most seats in the new parliament, largely by playing on the strong racist sentiments of Russians and a growing anti-Westernism. Zhirinovskiy, among other things, vowed to rid the streets of minorities, who he deemed to be criminals and drug addicts (rhetoric that Americans are certainly familiar with), and promised to ban Snickers and English-language signs in Russia.

In the face of Zhirinovskiy's electoral success, Yeltsin, like Gorbachev before him, is moving toward political dictatorship and conservative economics. Yeltsin and others played the race card even before Zhirinovskiy. Immediately after the October coup, the mayor of Moscow resurrected a residency law that had not been enforced since the early Gorbachev period to indiscriminately rid Moscow of around 14,000 minorities, mostly from the Caucasus region and Central Asia. Politically, the Yeltsin constitution, which barely passed a national referendum, gives great power to the executive, and was warmly welcomed by Zhirinovskiy, who has his eye on the presidency for 1996. Economically, since the election, in which the LDP and pro-Communist parties together received over 40 percent of the popular vote and Gaidar's pro-Yeltsin group (Russia's Choice) only 14 percent, there has been a shift in Yeltsin's cabinet toward a more conservative approach to market reform.

No sooner had Clinton departed from his summit with Yeltsin in Moscow earlier this year, than Yeltsin and his reshuffled cabinet announced a slowdown along the market path, much to the chagrin of Clinton and the IMF. The new cabinet members have stressed Russia's cultural uniqueness and its need for an independent path to a market economy. Unfortunately, however, an "independent" and slower course of market reforms does not free Yeltsin and his more conservative comrades from a Catch-22 type of economic crisis. Even as the cabinet reshuffling was underway, the ruble fell markedly vis-à-vis the dollar, setting off a new round of high inflation. Thus the conditions compelling Yeltsin and the whole political spectrum toward dictatorship and fascism are worsening at every turn, and it is difficult to say where it may end.

Two things do seem clear: the military and the extreme nationalists are very powerful. The strength of the Russian military is why the issue of converting the military sector of the economy

has such important political implications. Generals and factory managers in the armaments industry have more power and autonomy in the Russian political realm than their Soviet counterparts ever did, and it is still uncertain where they will ultimately place their allegiance. There was one prominent question asked after the fighting in October: why wasn't the military in Moscow? Troops had to be called in from the outlying regions, which is why the opposition nearly succeeded initially in an attempt to take control of the main television station and the mayor's office. The obvious answer to the question was that Yeltsin was not sure whose side the army would fight on. As it was, there were no significant military defections, but around 200 policemen sent out to surround parliament did defect to the side of the opposition, and Yeltsin was clearly not sure whether or not he had the military's allegiance.

In November another event showed Yeltsin's lack of control of the military. The papers reported that 2,000 tanks scheduled for destruction according to disarmament treaties with the U.S. mysteriously disappeared. This could not have happened without the complicity of someone high up in the military apparatus; it indicates opposition to Yeltsin's disarmament policy and shows the degree of power and autonomy the military wields in Russian politics.

The events of this autumn also show the degree to which extreme nationalism is on the rise. The most frightening sight of October was the swastika-bearing fascists leading the way for the "Communist" opposition of Rutskoi and Khasbulatov. The "Communists" of the old order cling to a Stalinist sense of Russian nationalism, which allies them with the ultra-nationalist fascists, at least for now, when they are both in opposition. This alliance has thus far held up in the newly elected parliament, where Zhirinovskiy's LDP forms a solid majority bloc with the Communist Party and the Communist-leaning Agrarian Party. Recently, for example, one day before Yeltsin was scheduled to give his first speech to the new parliament, a majority of its members defiantly voted to pardon the leaders of the October coup attempt. (Rutskoi and Khasbulatov were released in early March.)

The alliance between the "Communists" and fascists sets a very dangerous precedent, and may facilitate the rise to power of the extreme nationalist Zhirinovskiy, or someone like him. Zhirinovskiy's fortunes are further heightened by the fact that, as his campaign and the elections revealed, he has friends in high places. In his campaign he spent millions, and the source of his funds is still being debated. Except for Russia's Choice, the LDP had far more commercials and TV time than any other party or bloc, leading Yeltsin to fire the head of central TV. Zhirinovskiy's success in the December elections shows that extreme nationalism is growing in Russia and that there are people in positions of power who have some sympathy with it.

The flames of Russian nationalism are fanned by a contentious international situation, and Yeltsin is increasingly caught between na-

tionalism and his ties with the West. In the conflict raging in the former Yugoslavia, Russians are overwhelmingly on the side of the Serbs, as they have been historically in other Balkan conflicts, but Yeltsin has largely gone along with the anti-Serbian U.S. and NATO policies in the Bosnian war (although he did protest Clinton's late February call to bomb Serb positions).

In contrast, Zhirinovskiy traveled to Serbia after the elections, proclaiming the Russian missionary soldiers fighting with the Serbs to be heroes. Also, prior to his recent cabinet shakeup, Yeltsin was increasingly coming under criticism for following the dictates of the IMF and World Bank. The opposition last autumn called Russia under Yeltsin's leadership a "U.S. colony" and accused the U.S. and West Europeans of buying up their country. In the face of rising nationalism, Yeltsin's image grows weaker and weaker as the economic mess and the conflict in Bosnia deepen. Prior to Yeltsin, Gorbachev unleashed reforms that eventually swept him away because he stuck with the party, a large part of the problem, till the bitter end. Similarly, Yeltsin introduced rapid marketization and is sticking with the West, a large part of the problem, and may well be swept away in the storm unleashed by his own reforms.

Observing the economic and political situation in Russia in an international context leads me to question the widely promoted view that we are witnessing the "collapse of communism" and establishment of a "New World Order," an interpretation based largely on ideological baggage carried over from the Cold War era. It assumes that the Cold War was a battle between two separate economic and political systems, "democracy" and "communism," a point of view which obscures the ties and similarities between the two "systems." From its very inception, the USSR (like every "communist" country since) was involuntarily tied to an international economic system dominated by capitalism, because it desperately needed capital and technology from the West and because of the pressures of the world capitalist market, to which it was always vulnerable. [This situation arose of course because the working class did not succeed in gaining power in any of the advanced capitalist countries; instead the workers' revolution was isolated for decades in one or several relatively backward countries. — Eds.]

One of the major reasons for the eventual collapse of the Soviet economy was the drop in oil prices on the world market in the early 1980s, which shows the extent to which the fate

of the USSR was tied to international capitalism. Similarly, a major contributing factor in the economic woes of Poland and Hungary (as with "capitalist" countries throughout the Third World) is the huge debt accumulated with Western banks in the early 1970s.

Rather than two separate and conflicting "systems," U.S. "democracy" and Soviet "communism" of the Cold War era are better described as the opposite poles of a *single hybridized but integrated international system* dominated by the forces of capital.

Thus, what we are witnessing is not the "collapse of communism" and establishment of a "New World Order," but rather the continuing collapse of the old world order. Russia and the former Soviet bloc are in the forefront of that collapse, but their fates are closely linked (now more than ever) to those of the major Western capitalist countries. In short, on the eve of the 21st century, we face the same two possible paths that revolutionary Marxists articulated early in the 20th century: socialism or barbarism. Unfortunately, for now the forces of barbarism seem to have the upper hand, and not just in Russia. □

March 21, 1994

Call of SMOT of Byelorussia to Workers in the West

Recent changes in the government of the republic... have not failed to bring sad consequences: the worsening of living conditions for all workers and the persecution and dismissal of leaders and activists of the free unions.

Throughout the entire winter the majority of enterprises and factories in the country were in a situation of conflict. An important point in this process was the mobilization carried out on February 15, called by the free unions, which brought together in the center of the city 7,000 workers to demand an end to the government and the calling of general elections.

The government responded with the dismissal of important leaders and indictments against dozens of activists.

- In the Belvar enterprise, in the city of Minsk, for participating in the mobilization on February 15, the president of the free union was dismissed: Anatoli Matvienko.*
- In the Integral factory, in the city of Minsk, the president of the free union was dismissed, and other leaders and activists were accused and threatened with dismissal, for organizing a one-hour work stoppage during the month of January, for organizing an

assembly during working hours, and for distributing the periodical *Enough*. They are: (1) Nikolai Grinchik, president of the free union; (2) Igor Azarka; (3) Vladimir Strelenko; (4) Mijil Kolesien; (5) Vladimir Dmitovich; (6) Sergei Skamelko; (7) Vladimir Jojlova; (8) Nikolai Kazakevich.

- In the Zenit factory, in the city of Vileika, the president of the factory committee and 13 activists in the factory are being indicted for carrying out a strike during the month of January. They are: (1) Dimitri Obrazstov, president of the factory committee; (2) Vladimir Krivospitski; (3) Sergei Kusin; (4) Arkadi Tatarchuk; (5) Igor Moroz; (6) Vladimir Shliapo; (7) Vladimir Dolguij; (8) Liudmila Petroshevich; (9) Larisa Kushel; (10) Vladimir Kezik; (11) Alexander Grasev; (12) Sergei Blashko; (13) Zina Baslik; (14) Vera Jojonina.

The free unions in Byelorussia, grouped in the union current SMOT, denounce all these arbitrary actions, and we have begun a campaign to confront them. We absolutely must have the solidarity of all the organizations in the West that can help us. As we have said other times, solidarity is our strength.

Many thanks in advance.

The telegrams must be directed to the Attorney General, Byelorussia. And to each one of the enterprises. They must have the names of the workers. Republic of Byelorussia, 220049 Minsk. International Street 22. Attorney General Basilio Shalodonov. Republic of Byelorussia, 220600 Minsk. Kasina Avenue. NPO INTEGRAL. General Director Victor Emelianov. Republic of Byelorussia, 220600 Minsk. F. Skarini Avenue 58 B.P.O. Belvar General Director Nikolai Erohov.

We ask you to send a copy of these telegrams to the following fax: 70172 481781 between 18 and 22 hours.

Byelorussia 220049 Minsk International Street 22 Attorney General Vasili Shalodonov Respect workers rights! Rehire! Stop persecution! Anatoli Matvienko of Belvar. Nikolai Grinchik 7 co-workers of Integral-Minsk. Dimitri Obrazstov 13 co-workers of Zenit-Vileika! Signed: M. Guttsall, F. Russo (Members of United Auto Workers Local 1981 and of Labor Party Advocates)

*Anatoli Matvienko was one of the leaders of the strike committee of Byelorussia during the general strike against the price increases that paralyzed this country for a month in April of 1991.

Colosio Assassination: RIP for the PRI?

by Rosendo Mendoza

The flag was ordered at half mast for two days of official mourning. The National Confederation of Chambers of Commerce (Concanaco) instructed its members to extend the nationwide period of lamentation for a third day by closing down their businesses the morning of Monday, March 28. Expressions of condolences from heads of state throughout the world poured into the presidential residence of Los Pinos. The March 23 assassination of Luis Donaldo Colosio, the candidate of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), was clearly understood by all to mark more than the passing of a prominent national politician. Dead was the heir-designate to serve a six-year term as undisputed ruler of Mexico, the man who even before being handpicked by Salinas de Gortari had clearly enjoyed the support of the Clinton White House. Shattered were the hopes for a relatively peaceful passing of the presidential scepter.

It is somewhat futile to speculate on who is behind the assassination, since it appears to have been a very professional job, backed by powerful figures within ruling circles who carefully prepared a series of false leads and mountains of disinformation. Secrecy surrounds the investigation, which is tightly controlled by the man whom Salinas designated special prosecutor, Miguel Montes, who boasts the dubious distinction of serving on Mexico's infamously subservient Supreme Court.

But it is significant that initial efforts to pin the blame on an Oswaldian scapegoat failed almost immediately. The apparent gunman, Mario Aburto, was alternatively described as a religious fanatic, political dissident, union activist, pacifist, and someone with ties to L.A. street gangs and the EZLN, characterizations that have proven as lacking in credibility as they are irrelevant to the case.

Even before such false leads were made public, the regime's stable of court intellectuals and paid journalists went to work. Only moments after Colosio's death was announced, Nobel laureate Octavio Paz led the charge with a letter read over nationwide television, blaming the killing on a loss of "public morality" and on those who have in any way "defended violence" since the January 1 uprising of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN). Business leaders charged "hidden," "obscure," and "outside" forces bent on destabilizing the economy, and also hinted at a Chiapas connection.

But efforts to turn the killing into a pretext for cracking down on the opposition fizzled miserably. In a clear sign of the regime's widespread loss of credibility, it immediately became clear that most people suspected the

assassination was part of a plot orchestrated from above.

Even within the PRI such suspicions were obvious. When Salinas briefly stood guard over Colosio's coffin at the PRI's national headquarters, party loyalists irreverently shouted, "Who did it?" The government's "peace commissioner" in Chiapas, former Colosio rival Manuel Camacho, was met by shouts of "murderer" when he showed up to pay his respects. Videotapes from the scene of the killing later demonstrated that municipal PRI officials and campaign security guards had actively participated in the assassination, forcing investigators and officials to reverse themselves and admit there had been a plot.

Confronted by an outburst of dissent within the ruling party, Salinas moved quickly to personally appoint his new successor: Ernesto Zedillo, a politically inexperienced member of Salinas's tight-knit inner circle of technocrats, who was little known to the public and distrusted by much of the PRI hierarchy and the military. A PRI legislator went so far as to publicly announce that the army was displeased, but added, "There won't be any problems, because the army is also *PRI-ista*."

Running on Empty?

The assassination marked a major change in the political landscape and a challenge to Salinas's plans to extend his economic and governmental project into the next century. Prior to March 23, officials appeared increasingly confident. Colosio's campaign had finally achieved some momentum, and discontent within the army and PRI had largely been squelched. The government had maneuvered the opposition into accepting a series of limited electoral reforms, and the PRI's chief rival, Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) candidate Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, had yet to generate the groundswell of support he had enjoyed in 1988. Counterinsurgency efforts and the prolongation of the Chiapas "peace process" reduced the likelihood of a resumption of fighting.

The loss of the PRI's standard-bearer changed all that. Despite Zedillo's efforts to wrap himself in his former colleague's mantle, his candidacy appears so weak as to fuel widespread speculation that he will be incapable of even the semblance of an electoral victory in August, despite the government's expertise in high-tech electoral fraud and the likelihood that Washington will dispatch complacent observers for the August vote. Even in far left circles, illusions abound that this time a Cárdenas victory might be recognized by Washington, clearing the way for an electoral transfer of power.

Concerns among the PRI's old guard that Salinas was leading the party down the path to

extinction were refueled, leading many to break one of the system's most sacred rules against any public questioning of the president's authority to name his successor. They floated the names of alternative candidates in the days before Zedillo's anointment.

Though Salinas's room for maneuver is clearly limited, his deft political skills may still allow him to parlay the current crisis into a new, albeit tenuous, lease on life for the regime.

As was the case during the PRI's 1988 electoral debacle, one key source of official optimism comes in the form of the country's parliamentary and electoral opposition, which Salinas has consistently manipulated to his advantage.

Democratic Transition

For the past six years, opposition leaders have been fixated on the idea that neoliberal economic reforms are inexorably pushing the system toward a process of democratic transition — a sort of "Velvet Revolution *à la Mexicana*," in which PRI officials would gradually turn over, or at least share, the reins of power.

Based on such expectations and their broad consensus regarding major policy issues, the conservative National Action Party (PAN) has maintained a *de facto* alliance with the regime during the past six years, backing bogus electoral reforms and forming a united front against the left-of-center PRD. In exchange, the PRI undermined its own followers in a number of states and municipalities, where PAN electoral victories were recognized. But there has been a political price to pay for the party's close ties to the regime, and the PAN's presidential candidate has attracted relatively little support so far.

The regime's current crisis is much more likely to favor the candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, which has begun to attract new declarations of support. Much will depend on the extent to which the Cárdenas campaign helps to mobilize those sectors of society most brutally affected by the regime. The possibility of a significant revival of mobilizations by working people for democracy and against the economic and social policies of the current regime offer the greatest hope that the current crisis can lead to the defeat of the PRI and open the way for a serious democratic opening and the possibility that the vast majority of Mexicans will be able to exert a direct influence on the decisions that affect their lives, combating not only the anti-democratic aspects of the current regime but also the unchecked power and greed of the barons of finance, agribusiness, and industry, whose interests the PRI has so loyally fostered.

But, true to form, it appears that PRD leaders have their sights set more on the prospect of winning over sections of the PRI and of reassur-

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Peace With Justice and Democracy in Chiapas: Declaration of the Sonora Committee in Support of the Struggle of the People of Chiapas

This statement by a committee in the state of Sonora in northern Mexico, bordering on Arizona, was translated for BIDOM by Lee Denoyer, who lives nearby. It illustrates the widespread solidarity with the Chiapas rebellion expressed in the rest of Mexico, which has helped to stay the hand of repression. The declaration was sent to us by Manuel Aguilar Mora of the Mexican Revolutionary Workers Party (Spanish initials, PRT), which is active in the work of the Sonora committee.

The peasant rebellion of the Indians of Chiapas has caused a convulsion in Mexico and shaken all its political structures. It is the obligation of all of us, men and women of this country, to collaborate with our brothers and sisters in Chiapas in order to find conditions that will permit the most rapid and just peace for its people. In Sonora, together with sectors of the population conscious of this obligation, we unite to organize the Sonora Committee in Support of the Struggle of the People of Chiapas, whose objectives coincide with those of other compatriots of our the republic, who likewise seek peace with freedom and justice for the people of Chiapas and for all Mexicans.

We invite all people of Hermosillo [the capital] and the state of Sonora to participate in the Committee, without distinction as to party, ideology, or religion, all those who simply want to contribute with action and resources of different types to accomplish the objectives that we have in common. The Committee has a nonexclusionary character that allows for collaboration or participation in the Committee by all the different political, economic, trade union, religious, and academic organizations, on the sole condition that they accept its objectives.

The conditions that permitted the explosion of violence in Chiapas are not new. They date back many years and are directly tied to a specific social and economic structure that has kept the majority of the Chiapas population, composed mostly of peasants, at levels of extreme poverty and marginal conditions of existence. These conditions of exploitation are particularly harsh among the Indians of the area, the poorest of the poor, the indigenous peoples who have constituted and supported the EZLN: the Tzotzil, Tzeltal, Tojolobal, Mam, Zoque, and others.

Conditions of extreme misery and social and cultural abandonment have always coincided with a political, economic, and social system that is extremely antidemocratic, despotic, and racist. The insurrection of the EZLN represents the sharpest expression of resistance by oppressed sectors who have been driven to desperation by the previous closing off of all other alternatives, and who have been corrupted by fraud, cooptation, and pure and simple repression.

Thus the urgent need of the people of Chia-

pas is not simply to obtain peace at whatever cost, leaving untouched the causes that have produced the current explosion. Still less would they favor a peace based solely on military measures, which would be the peace of the grave. The demands raised by the people of Chiapas are directed to the resolution of the situation of social injustice, lack of democracy, and recurring repression that has characterized life in Chiapas for centuries.

But the situation in Chiapas is not an exception in our country. Although it is true that the degree of oppression and repression there reached such heights that social stability was blown apart, nevertheless throughout the country there exist regions where the limits of the population's tolerance are likewise being strained. In southern and central Mexico, in the states of Oaxaca and Yucatán, Guerrero and Michoacán, conditions comparable to those in Chiapas are to be found. In the north, the most stable region of the country, there are vast sectors that suffer the same pangs of hunger and misery that bear down on almost half the people of Mexico. In our state in particular, the difficult conditions of the Yaqui, the Mayo, the Papago, the Seri, the Guarijio, and the Pima remind us that we need not go to the extreme south of the country to encounter discrimination, racism, and neglect in regard to the indigenous peoples.

The Zapatista insurrection in Chiapas constitutes the refutation of a false idea that the ruling group wants to sell to the Mexican people — the idea that we are living on the threshold of an idyllic era in which we will be transformed into the direct and equal partners of the U.S. and Canada, arriving at a level of "modernization" that will bury "traditional" Mexico. This idea is deceitful, misleading, and profoundly anti-popular.

The shots fired in the mountains of Chiapas awakened Mexico on the first day of the new year and demonstrated what kind of country ours has really been turned into during the last twelve years. A country in which the ruling camarilla has imposed its program of "social neoliberalism": in which starvation wages prevail, if they exist at all; in which almost half of the work force, of the economically active population, finds itself unemployed or in danger of becoming so; on sale to foreign capital, especially gringo capital; with our backs turned to our Latin American brothers

and sisters, although we share with them the same destiny; and last of all, at a point where not only are we being turned into a country dependent on the U.S., as we always have been, but also, with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), we are being integrated formally and directly into the imperialist designs of the powerful country next door.

The response of the people, which made its presence felt everywhere in Mexico and whose aim was to stop the warlike course the government chose in the first days of the conflict, is for us a source of inspiration. Demonstrations, rallies, meetings, conferences, actions of the most varied kind took place throughout the country with the aim of changing the militaristic course the government had chosen and of pressing for a negotiated solution to the conflict. We identify with this civic and democratic mobilization that occurred on a nationwide scale, the only means of exerting the necessary force to stay the cruel hand of military repression from being employed as an alleged solution to the conflict. This broad, democratic, all-inclusive popular mobilization was the most effective way of preventing a bloodbath in Chiapas and in all of Mexico.

In view of the above considerations, our Committee holds the view that its actions of solidarity with, and in support of, the just demands of the people of Chiapas represent just as much a struggle to eliminate similar conditions found in the whole of our republic, varying with the particular conditions in each state.

Therefore, the objectives of the Committee are:

1. To argue before the court of public opinion, using various methods (demonstrations, rallies, meetings, conferences, presentations in the mass media), to promote the most rapid possible just resolution of the Chiapas conflict.
2. To take up the most important immediate demands, which are respectively the following:
 - a. Withdrawal of the Mexican army from the highlands of Chiapas, where nearly a third of its effective forces are presently concentrated.
 - b. Recognition of the EZLN as a belligerent force, which signifies that it is a legitimate organization of the people of Chiapas and must be a primary party to

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The South African Elections and the Military

by Vera Wigglesworth and Jim Miles

The overthrow of the Bophuthatswana government by insurgent masses on March 10 has been paralleled by the occupation of the Zulu Bantustan, KwaZulu, on March 31 by 3,000 South African Defense Force (SADF) troops. When President F.W. de Klerk declared a state of emergency in the Natal province and KwaZulu, both the African National Congress (ANC) and the Transitional Executive Council supported the decree as a necessary measure to "save lives." Buthelezi's post of minister of police was abolished and the KwaZulu police were confined to barracks. Three other so-called Black "homelands," puppet states set up by apartheid, have also been occupied by the South African military since February.

The overthrow of the governments of these apartheid Bantustans will allow the people there to participate in the historic one-person, one-vote national April elections, which Nelson Mandela of the ANC is almost guaranteed to win.

But the Zulu King, Goodwill Zwelethini, a puppet of Buthelezi and his Inkatha Freedom Party, has declared that the Zulu people will be satisfied by nothing less than a sovereign Zulu state, presumably one in which he will remain king and Buthelezi leader. Despite the virtual deposing of the Buthelezi government by the SADF occupation, there is no doubt that the demand for a separate Zulu state has real support among many Zulus. On April 5, 20,000 Inkatha supporters, armed with ceremonial weapons, demonstrated in support of the King and the demand for a separate Zulu homeland.

Zulu Royalists and White Afrikaner Fascists

The nationalism of the oppressed majority of Blacks and nonwhites in South Africa is politically expressed by their support for the ANC's program of a nonracial, democratic South Africa. However, Zulu royalism, within the context of the struggle for a nonracial democratic South Africa, continues to play a reactionary role. The official leadership of the royalist Zulus under Buthelezi are fighting to maintain both their own privileges and wealth and the dubious "privileges" of the Zulus relative to other Blacks under apartheid. The unremitting campaign of terrorist warfare against ANC supporters, resulting in the death of thousands of Blacks, has been the main method of demonstrating royalist loyalty to the old apartheid state apparatus. While the capitalist press has attempted to label these attacks as "tribal warfare" between the Zulu-based Inkatha and the supposedly Xhosa-based ANC, the reality is that many Zulus are ANC supporters and that Zulus form part of the ANC leadership.

Buthelezi's war against the ANC has placed his Inkatha Freedom Party in an open alliance

with the police and white Afrikaner fascists, both of whom have supplied arms to Inkatha. As the elections approach, the overt nature of fascist support to Inkatha became increasingly public. The April 11 issue of *The Nation* cited one such instance.

Leonard Venendal, a notoriously trigger-happy Afrikaner nationalist, publicly boasts that since last May he has trained more than 1,000 Zulus to "fight the ANC."

The "Collapse of Communism" and the Freedom Charter

Despite Inkatha's massive terror campaign against ANC supporters and despite the threat of the fascists, the majority of the South African masses continue to support the ANC and its original program, the Freedom Charter. But for a number of years the ANC leadership has been increasingly pursuing the "good will" of South African capitalists and their government, rather than relying on mobilization of the people.

In an address to South African business executives four years ago, Nelson Mandela declared, contradicting the Freedom Charter, that on the issue of nationalizing industry the

ANC has no blueprint that decrees that these or other assets will be nationalized... We are very conscious of the critical importance of such matters as the confidence in the future of both the national and the international business communities and investors. We accept that both these sectors are very important to the process of the further development of our economy.

We can therefore, have no desire to go out of our way to bash them and to undermine or weaken their confidence in the safety of their property and the assurance of a fair return on their investment. (*Nelson Mandela Speeches 1990*, p. 63, Pathfinder.)

While Mandela did caution the businessmen that they would have to be prepared to tolerate discussion on nationalization and a certain limited redistribution of wealth by an ANC government, his reassurances to these executives made clear they have nothing to fear from such a discussion.

The negotiations and ensuing concord between Mandela and de Klerk were results of two parallel but related events, the first of which had a decisive influence on the second: the political collapse of the bureaucratized workers' states in Russia and Eastern Europe, on the one hand, and the ANC's retreat from the land reform and nationalization programs of the Freedom Charter on the other.

The so-called "fall of communism," having eliminated the state powers that were the main suppliers of diplomatic and military support to the ANC, gave the South African government the political initiative to open negotiations with the ANC. The ANC's programmatic retreat,

having eliminated the threat of expropriation of the capitalists, likewise passed the initiative to the South African ruling class. From de Klerk's point of view, the "fall of communism" eliminated the external threat while the ANC programmatic retreat eliminated the internal threat.

The election will undoubtedly produce an ANC government. The South African ruling class could not have consented to such a government without two guarantees. The first guarantee required a pledge from the ANC to leave private property intact in the mines, banks, major industries, and the land. The second guarantee, ensuring the first, remains securely in the hands of the ruling class: the South African army.

The Army and an ANC Government

The elections will leave the army relatively intact. It is an overwhelmingly white army. While there are 65,000 full-time soldiers in the military, 54,000 of whom are nonwhite, there are 250,000 reservists, all of whom, like the command structure itself, are white. These veteran reservists outnumber the regular army by better than three-to-one. The projected fusion of 16,000 former ANC guerrillas into the South African army will not only fail to alter the racial and class character of this army, it will finally liquidate the armed defense wing of the revolutionary movement and the possible future core of a revolutionary army.

Currently, the interests of the ruling class require a "reform" of the state to modernize South African capitalism and avert revolution. For now, an ANC government seems to be the best means of achieving these goals.

However, this coincidence of interests between the ANC bureaucracy and the South African ruling class will inevitably collide with the masses' desires for land reform and an end to their own impoverishment. Because maintenance of the profit margins for ruling class families like de Beers necessitates the continued exploitation and oppression of the mass of Black toilers, it is these profit margins, not the Freedom Charter, that will determine the boundaries of democratic reforms for the new capitalist government.

The stability of the new government will thus necessarily rely on the quiescence of the masses. But an ANC electoral victory and a taste of freedom may give rise to a renewed self-confidence of the masses and a new offensive from below. In that case the government will be challenged not only from the left but from the far right — white Afrikaner fascists and Zulu royalists.

While it is occupying KwaZulu, the South African military, by ensuring "peaceful elections," may for now appear to be defending the victories of the Black masses who overthrew the

Bantustans. However SADF generals have already warned de Klerk and his cabinet "that the loyalty of the military could be severely strained if, for example, it was called on to put down violence by white separatists" (*New York Times*, April 11).

In other words, it is one thing for the white South African army to move against Black Bantustans and quite another for it to fight white separatists.

The candor of these generals is in stark contrast to the self-deceptions of the ANC leadership as to the loyalties of the officer caste. Siphewe Nyanda, former chief of staff of the ANC's guerrilla force, *Spear of the Nation*,

now co-chairing a committee watching the military, was quoted by the April 11 *New York Times* as saying: "[SADF career officers] have come to accept that it is possible to serve the ANC government, to revert back to what a soldier should be, to defend a constitution."

But as early as last July, Dr. Neville Alexander, imprisoned for 11 years on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela and currently national chair of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action (WOSA) in South Africa, warned that

electioneering attempts by both NP [National Party] and ANC politicians to trivialize the right-wing threat could turn out to be the most treacherous aspect of the present transition. Re-

member Hitler in the Weimar Republic. People who should have known better ignored his bluster and genocidal ravings until it was too late. It is the depth of folly to disarm our people by projecting [a] tough-guy image of the "democratic forces." (*South Africa Today and Tomorrow*, p. 4, Walnut Publishers.)

Neville Alexander was referring to the leadership of the German Social Democratic Party who in 1933, along with downplaying the Nazi threat, proclaimed their faith in the loyalty of the capitalist army to defend the "democratic constitution." The result was a historic defeat in which Hitler and the Nazis came to power not

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The Bophuthatswana Debacle — Signals of a Revolution?

by Mfanafuthi Prof' Ndlovu

The small "homeland" of Bophuthatswana, South Africa, will not be remembered as the only region in South Africa where trade unions were not allowed to organize. Where union federations like the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the National Council of Trade Unions (NACTU) were declared "illegal, Communist organizations."

Bophuthatswana will, however, be remembered as the first "homeland" where the people in their thousands successfully used their mass power to depose a ruthless dictator and surrogate of the de Klerk apartheid regime, President Lucas Manyane Mangope.

On March 10, 1994, Lucas Mangope was hounded by the masses and forced to flee his Mmabatho headquarters on a private airplane. On March 11, Mangope, whose Black soldiers and police had defected to the side of the masses, bowed to the will of the people and agreed to take part in the April 1994 multiracial elections. Earlier Mangope had announced that he was going to defy the first multiracial elections because elections were, according to him, "going to cede the control of the country over to the Communists."

On March 11, groups of about 5,000 white vigilantes arrived in the "homeland," with the intention of helping Mangope and his army suppress a "revolution by the African National Congress [ANC] and the South African Communist Party [SACP]." These white supremacists were unaware that Mangope's Black soldiers and police, who are largely from the working class, had already defected over to the protesters and that Mangope was already negotiating the terms of his surrender. The white vigilante groups vented their anger on the Black protesters. More than 50 people were killed by the vigilantes before 3 of the right-wing members were shot and killed by Bophuthatswana's Black soldiers.

The Loss of Fear

For years Mangope, with the help of the de Klerk government, ruled Bophuthatswana by repression. Those who complained or protested were arrested, beaten, shot, or banished from this "banana republic." Mass organizations like the ANC, SACP, Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), Workers' Organisation for Socialist Action (WOSA), and union organizations like COSATU and NACTU were not allowed to organize and recruit members in Bophuthatswana.

The people of Bophuthatswana were terrified of Mangope. The people were frequently forced to listen to his hours-long boring and threatening speeches. An attempt to overthrow him through military means, around 1989, was crushed by the de Klerk government.

On March 10, 1994, the chickens came home to roost. The workers and the youth lost their fear of the regime and placed their lives on the line. Many of them died during this insurrection; some are now crippled for life. For the Bophuthatswana masses "enough was enough," and Mangope's military might was rendered useless.

Warning to the Incoming South African Multiracial Government of National Unity

What happened in Bophuthatswana recently should serve as a warning to the incoming multiracial government of national unity. Studies show that more than 8 million people are unemployed in South Africa today. Over 6 million live in squatter camps; 53 percent of Blacks live below the official poverty line.

The South African working class has suffered for too long; it is angry, impatient, and its chronic conditions have highly politicized it. It is desperately looking forward to the April 1994 elections with high expectations for the much

needed socio-economic benefits such as jobs, free or affordable education and health care, housing, etc.

Will the Government of National Unity Live Up to the Expectations of the Masses?

The overwhelming majority of Black people in South Africa support the ANC. Its resounding victory in the coming first multiracial elections in April 1994 is almost certain. When Mr. Tito Mboweni, the ANC's deputy economic coordinator, addressed a meeting in Warmbaths last year, he promised the masses that an ANC government will build them houses "with taps and clean water." Most Black people in South Africa believe that through the tried and tested leadership of the nationalist movement they will get what they want.

Conclusion

I would argue that the decision to withdraw the demand for transitional programs like the nationalization of strategic industries like mining and redistribution of the land will make it impossible for the incoming multiracial government of national unity to finance programs that will bring about the necessary meaningful structural changes. The failure to introduce the much expected socio-economic reforms will compel the masses to pursue the tradition and practice of mass action. This may result in a transitional process that may have very strong military features.

Unless and until the regime replaces the current economic policy, which is based on individuals' profits, with an economic policy based on human needs, what happened in Bophuthatswana recently is bound to happen again on a much wider scale. □

March 16, 1994

Social Explosion in France

by Raghu Krishnan

There is much talk of “social explosion” these days in France. In the last three weeks, several hundred thousand post-secondary and high school students, unemployed and semi-employed youth, teachers, trade unionists, and social movement activists have taken to the streets in protest. Coinciding with all the international fanfare around the G-7 “employment summit” in Detroit, the protests reveal growing anger with government measures that intensify problems of unemployment and social insecurity, especially among youth. They also reveal that the right-wing government and the country’s elites have no qualms about turning to the police to shore up their increasingly discredited order.

“*On préfère descendre dans la rue qu’y finir.*” (“We’d rather take to the streets than end up on the street.”) With this slogan, the first wave of student demonstrations last fall set the tone for the current round of student and youth protest in the country.

The current right-wing government is haunted by images of May 1968, when student protests led to a month-long general strike of 10 million workers and created a situation that sent De Gaulle scampering over to Germany to see if he had the support of French troops stationed there. More recently, it was student protests that eventually led to the fall of the 1986–1988 right-wing government of the current mayor of Paris, Jacques Chirac.

The government of Prime Minister Edouard Balladur is all the more edgy because this is the latest and most widespread in a series of challenges that began last fall. It all got started with the strike at the public sector airline, Air France, where technical and service personnel went as far as occupying runways at the Charles De Gaulle and Orly airports in Paris to demonstrate their opposition to job and salary-cutting measures. The government was forced to back down, and the head of Air France resigned. Nationwide polls taken at the time showed majority support for the strikers’ militant tactics.

At the same time, the first signs of student unrest emerged in opposition to plans to cut back student housing grants, against underfunding of the education system and hiring cuts in the public service.

The next wave of protest arose in opposition to government plans to devote more public funds to the private (and largely church-run) school system. On January 16, the largest demonstration since the late 1960s brought some 750,000 people from across the country to Paris in defense of fully-funded universally accessible and secular public schools. Once again, Prime Minister Balladur was forced to do an about-face.

In February, it was the turn of the Atlantic fishing communities to rise up against a bad situation made worse by the collapse of prices and government support that have accompanied the “free trade” unleashed by the process of European unification and the recently concluded GATT negotiations. In the violent confrontations that ensued, the old parliament building in the provincial capital of Rennes was burned down by a stray flare or an exploding police tear gas canister.

And finally, just before the latest round of protests, violent clashes continued over several days in the suburbs of Paris, largely pitting the teenage children of Arab and Black immigrants against local police forces.

Cut-Rate Wages

The object of the latest unrest is a package of government labor reforms — known as the “CIP,” the French initials for “contract for professional integration” — making it cheaper for employers to hire youth in all categories, including university and technical school graduates.

Although promoted by government spokespeople as a plan to fight unemployment, there is every reason to believe that the proposed reforms would do nothing of the sort. A young person hired at the lower wage would often be merely replacing an older worker, who would be neatly disposed of through an early retirement package or simply dismissed.

In other cases, many youth who would have been hired anyway at the full wage will now be hired — after six months of unemployment for degree-holders — at a wage anywhere between 20 percent and 70 percent lower than before, according to age and the level of post-secondary education.

A job “created” in this way can last for a maximum of two years, after which time the employer can take the person on at full wage or hire another cut-rate youngster. It isn’t difficult to figure out that the employer will usually go for the latter option — if the position is filled at all, that is. And to make matters worse, the reform would further reduce the purchasing power of the general public in an already depressed economy.

An article in the daily *Le Monde* put it best:

The CIP does not so much create as it does generalize the [youth minimum wage], with a 20 percent cut in the professional minimum wage for degree-holders. More generally, employment policy over the last 15 years has had hardly any effect on youth hiring, in spite of all the [tax and social security] exemptions offered to employers. At the same time, the over-50 age group has been massively oriented toward early retirement schemes. The result: access to employment is *de facto* reserved in the main for those between 30 and 50 years old.

The CIP blow has been hardest for the very students that bought all the arguments about the need for people with a technical education. Since the 1980s, middle-class youth in all the Western industrialized countries have been told that this is the way to a secure future — and the way to lead their countries out of recession.

Now government and employers are telling them that the economic and professional value of their degrees isn’t so great after all. And these technical graduates have seen their employment rate rise to 10 percent, a fivefold increase in the last four years.

No surprise, then, that it is the sons and daughters of “*La France profonde*” — white, middle-class families in cities and towns outside Paris — that now find themselves in the front lines of a showdown with the government and its police.

The Necessary Spark

But unemployment and insecurity run rampant through all categories of French youth. Nearly one quarter of France’s 4 million unemployed are under 25. Those with jobs find themselves increasingly in a part-time, unstable situation. The situation for the children of Arab and Black immigrants is even worse, and further aggravated by constant police harassment and the growing xenophobic climate in the country.

In a society that considers sexual activity and experimentation as a natural and healthy part of growing up and of life itself, the inability of authorities to deal with the AIDS epidemic in anything but a moralistic, authoritarian, and stopgap manner has been cited as another major source of insecurity and frustration.

A clear sign of this growing “sexual discontent” among youth appeared just before the recent outbreak of student protest, after the government’s radio and television authority announced it would be taking a popular youth phone-in sex and relationships counseling radio show off the air if it did not censor the language of people calling in.

The show, called “Lovin’ Fun” on the FM station “Fun Radio,” has a nightly audience of several million, making it the most popular radio show in the country. Following the government announcement, there was an outpouring of support — calls, letters, faxes, spontaneous demonstrations — from thousands upon thousands of the program’s listeners. As a result, “Lovin’ Fun” is still on the air — live and uncensored.

Suffice it to say that a youth revolt was brewing in the country, and the CIP legislation provided the necessary spark.

The dynamism and inventiveness of this movement would enliven even the dullest of spirits. Many high schools and colleges are on strike, some universities are occupied, and there are general assemblies to organize the movement and give everyone their say.

The demonstrations — which have taken place in even the smallest of communities — are peppered with colorful banners and placards,

Continued on page 35

A New Wave of Militancy?

Stirrings in the Working Class

by George Saunders

Today there is a painful disparity between the constant erosion of working class living standards and disregard for workers' needs, on the one hand, and, on the other, the glittering, high-riding lifestyle of the owners, managers, and servitors of the corporations that dominate this society through the two-party system. This deepening contrast is producing discontent and an underlying anger that was indirectly reflected in the millions of votes received by Jesse Jackson in 1988 and in the erratic 19 percent vote for Perot in 1992. A more direct reflection was the fact that despite the bipartisan stranglehold on politics a groundswell of opposition led by the unions nearly defeated NAFTA in November 1993.

The Aftermath of NAFTA

The anger among working people (especially in the organized labor movement) against the way the Fortune 500 corporate powers rammed through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), with their Democratic chief executive leading the pack, has been reflected in a rise in militancy. One example was Teamsters Local 25 (publicly outspoken in opposition to NAFTA in the Boston area before the vote) which during the American Airlines flight attendants' strike on the eve of Thanksgiving 1993, tied up the tunnel leading to the Boston airport to protest unfair labor practices by a jet fuel firm at the airport that employs members of Local 25.

Before the flight attendants' strike was ended and sent to arbitration, the Boston Teamsters were planning to take part in a strike support rally with a number of other unions. But the rally was called off. That was too bad, because a leader of striking airport workers in France was due to fly in and address the rally with solidarity greetings. The French strikers had successfully occupied two airports in Paris, forcing the ouster of the head of the public firm Air France and an end to planned job cuts. (American Fourth Internationalists, in Socialist Action, played a key role in helping to arrange for the French strike leader's participation.) The voice of rising labor militancy in Europe, expressed in a series of mass strikes and demonstrations since the victorious French airline workers sit-in strike in October, would have been welcome on these shores. Maybe another time. Maybe soon.

In the weeks after the NAFTA vote, not only was traffic tied up in the heart of Boston by protesting workers, but in Memphis, Tennessee, not far from Clinton's home state of Arkansas,

members of the Teamsters union and of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) blocked the main east-west highway (Route 40) between Memphis and Little Rock, the capital of Arkansas. They were protesting the anti-union atmosphere they felt the Clinton administration was creating. Clinton had lashed out against organized labor in a speech a week or two before the vote on NAFTA, accusing the unions of using "muscle-bound" and "roughshod" tactics in its opposition to the job-threatening treaty.

More recently in Seattle, unionists rallied to protest a banquet scheduled to celebrate NAFTA. The militancy of their anger led them to occupy the banquet hall, and the fancy meal to honor this inglorious treaty was called off.

In Michigan, all present at a January 4 meeting of Michigan Labor Party Advocates signed a statement declaring:

solidarity with rebellious peasants, indigenous peoples, and workers of Chiapas state in Mexico, against the repression by the armed forces of Mexico and against the U.S., Canadian, and Mexican governments' imposition of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which the rebels have called a "death sentence" for poor Mexicans, choosing to begin the rebellion on the day of the implementation of NAFTA, partly in the hopes of international support.

This statement also received substantial support at UAW Local 600 Tool and Die Unit shift meetings in January at the Ford Rouge plant near Detroit.

"[The] anti-NAFTA grass-roots wildfire movement is the first real grass-roots movement that labor has started in the last 15 or 20 years," Thomas Geoghegan was quoted in a November 19 *Los Angeles Times* article entitled "Unions Expect Gains for Labor Movement Despite NAFTA Loss." Geoghegan, a Chicago labor lawyer, is the author of the 1992 book *Which Side Are You On? Trying to Be for Labor When It's Flat on Its Back*. (See the review of his book by Marilyn Vogt-Downey in *BIDOM*, July-August 1993.)

Alliances with Social Movements

The *LA Times* article commented further on the fight against NAFTA:

[The union] movement may have learned a valuable lesson in the NAFTA struggle. Unions are far more influential when they link themselves to broad social causes than when they pursue what appear to be narrow, self-serving special interests.

For instance, unions cast their fight as a bid to protect the environment along with workers'

rights and wages. Unionists joined local anti-NAFTA networks that included environmentalists and consumer groups.

Teamsters President Ron Carey, in a statement issued November 17, the night NAFTA was voted in by the House of Representatives, declared:

We must continue to strengthen labor's alliances with environmental, civil rights, women's, consumer, community, and religious organizations. Working side by side in this campaign, we have developed stronger relationships which will form the foundation of long-term alliances at both the local and national levels.

The reality of this continuing alliance was reflected in one locality on March 12 of this year in the Labor and Community Conference for Environmental Justice held in New Haven, Connecticut. Organized by Linda Thompson, president of ECHO (Ecological Health Organization) and a faculty member at Southern Connecticut State University, the conference was supported by the New Haven Central Labor Council, whose president Warren Gould spoke on "NAFTA and Its Potential Impact on Jobs and the Environment." The keynote speakers at the conference told about "A Success Story from the New York State Labor and Environmental Coalition." They were Bill Towne, assistant manager of the New York-New Jersey Regional Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, and Sandra Fonda, of the Rainbow Alliance for a Clean Environment. Other labor speakers included Dan Perez, director of organization for the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, Gretchen Vaughn of Painters Union Local 186, and labor historian Jeremy Brecker.

Cross-Border Organizing

In an important article entitled "Seeds of a Labor Resurgency" (in *The Nation*, February 21) labor historian Peter Rachleff confirms that

the popular education, outreach and organization that marked the anti-NAFTA campaign is continuing. The Teamsters, along with the United Electrical Workers (UE), the United Automobile Workers and the Communication Workers, have developed relationships with Canadian and Mexican unions, usually to tackle employers who operate in all three countries.

Rachleff reports the organization of the North American Worker-to-Worker Network (NAWWN), based in Rocky Mount, North Carolina:

NAWWN's very name grows out of its commitment to rank-and-file involvement as a basis for international solidarity. Last December, members of twelve organizations met under its auspices in San Francisco and set an agenda for this year. Their priorities will be to support and expand the "Adopt an Organizer" program initiated by the UE and the Mexican Authentic Workers Front [Spanish initials, FAT]. The aim: to bring democratic organization to the Mexican factories opened by U.S. multinationals; to bring Mexican activists to the United States to speak to local union meetings and community

gatherings; and to develop an emergency network able to mobilize support in all three countries for workers facing a particular crisis.

The first test of this network, Rachleff reports, came with the firings of union organizers at the Honeywell and GE plants in Chihuahua and Juarez just after NAFTA was voted in by Congress. The UE, the Teamsters, and the Canadian Auto Workers "sprang into action with shop-floor leaflets, petitions and protest campaigns aimed at the companies and President Clinton. More activities are being organized with the assistance of NAWWN and 'Labor Notes.'"

Labor Notes has scheduled a "Cross-Border Organizing School" for May 19-22 in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico. The January issue of *Labor Notes* gives a detailed account, with photos, of the firings of the Mexican workers by GE and Honeywell and the response by unions in the U.S. and Canada to defend their Mexican brothers and sisters. The February issue carries several stories about cross-border organizing. One tells about UAW Local 879 at St. Paul's Ford assembly plant, which has signed an "adopt an organizer" agreement with workers at Ford's Cuautitlan assembly plant in Mexico, providing \$300 a month to support one organizer in Cuautitlan. Two other stories tell about the activities of a Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers organized by U.S. unionists and other activists in San Diego.

The February *Labor Notes* also reported the founding in October 1993 of a Maquiladora Health and Safety Support Network in Berkeley, California. (For more information, contact Garrett Brown, 2520 Hilgard Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709. Phone 510/845-0215.)

Anti-NAFTA Internationalism — Driven by Objective Need

If the fight against NAFTA has introduced an important element of internationalism into present-day union activity, it is mainly because global capitalism is forcing upon workers a growing awareness of the objective need for

international labor cooperation and solidarity. As the November 19 *LA Times* article put it, "Stronger unions in Mexico could lead to higher wages and better working conditions [there], which in turn could raise business costs and slow the expected flight of capital and jobs from this country."

The article gave more details on the extent of international cooperation already at work:

When U.S. union leaders organized a caravan last fall to visit 50 California cities to drum up opposition to NAFTA, they invited Raúl Marquez, a leader of Mexico's Authentic Workers Front, a 25,000-member independent federation.

Marquez became a major attraction as he talked about poor working conditions and miserly wages in U.S.-owned factories in Mexico. The Mexican union activists became such an integral part of the anti-NAFTA campaign that Teamster President Ron Carey, in his statement after passage of the agreement, pledged to expand efforts to support them.

Carey's November 17 statement declared in part:

- In today's world, American jobs and living standards cannot be secure and trade cannot truly expand until wages and conditions are improved for workers in other countries. ...[Emphasis added.]
- We will expand our effort to support organizing by independent, democratic unions in Mexico. We have worked closely with them to oppose NAFTA. For the good of working people on both sides of the border, we must strongly support their efforts to win better living standards, decent working conditions, and democratic rights.

On this point the reform leadership of the Teamsters has been as good as its word, launching the protests described above. The April 4 *Business Week* reports that the Teamsters have filed a complaint against Honeywell with the National Administrative Office, set up by the U.S. Labor Department under a NAFTA side accord dealing with labor.

Ofelia Medrano, 22, who was fired with 20 others from the Honeywell plant in Chihuahua, Mexico, because of union activity, is now earning \$258 a month as a union organizer "thanks to donations from American members of the Teamsters and the United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America (UE), and from U.S. nonunion support groups," said the report in *Business Week*. The report quoted Medrano: "We're determined to get a union here." She was referring to Honeywell's *maquiladora* plant in Chihuahua, "where 493 workers earn an average of \$1 an hour making thermostats and other products."

Business Week also quoted Priscilla Wardlow, a Honeywell vice-president of manu-

facturing for building controls, on the company's reason for firing Medrano: "She was bothering other workers and being disruptive." After being exploited in factories since the age of 14, Medrano decided it was union time. That certainly is "disruptive" of the corporation's profit-gouging of superexploited Mexican labor.

"What Medrano represents," said *Business Week*, "is a growing network of ties between U.S. and Canadian labor unions and Mexican workers."

The UE has been particularly active in its cross-border organizing. Two years ago it formed an alliance with the FAT, which it supplied "with a list of U.S. companies where the UE had locals" and provided financial aid, also promising "solidarity in case of repression," as Amy Newell, the UE general secretary treasurer, was quoted by the business magazine. The UE, reported *Business Week*, has filed a complaint with the National Administrative Office against General Electric for firing workers engaged in union organizing activity at the GE electric motor plant employing 950 workers in Ciudad Juarez.

Robert Valerio, 31, an 11-year veteran at the GE plant earning near-top wages of \$14 a day, says he was fired with 29 others who attended a meeting on forming a union. "Every single person who attended was laid off," Valerio says. Co-worker Fernando Castro, 27, says he was fired after talking with a U.S. public television crew during a visit by a delegation from UE locals in California...and Pennsylvania.

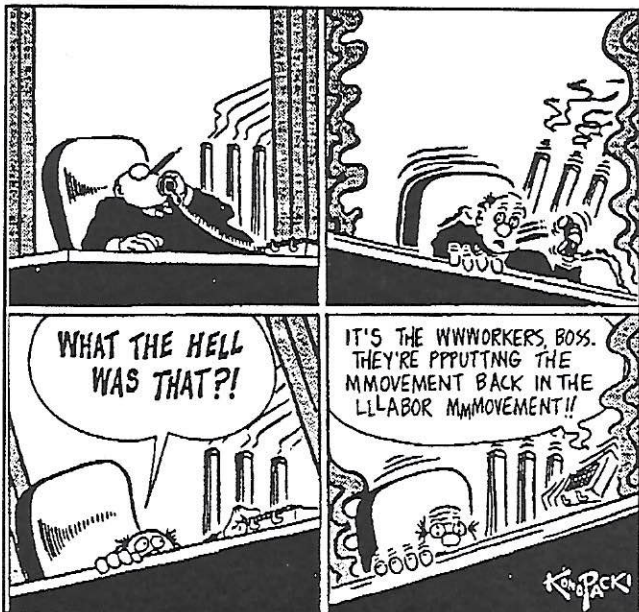
The *LA Times* quoted Victor M. Muñoz, a cross-border union representative for the AFL-CIO in Los Angeles: "We'll see stronger calls for U.S. labor participation from independent [Mexican] unions. That's been going on for five or 10 years, but with NAFTA the need will increase, very much so." Muñoz said that while about 25 percent of the Mexican work force is unionized, "unionization rates are far lower at U.S. companies operating in Mexico."

The International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) is also giving help to Mexican unions. Jeff Hermanson, ILGWU organizing director, was quoted by *Business Week*: "As companies become global, unions must become global... We are late starting, but we are going to put a lot of effort into this area." The ILGWU helped set up the Coalition for Justice in Maquiladoras, which includes environmental, religious, and community groups, according to the magazine, which reported:

One target has been health and safety conditions at Zenith Electronics Corp.'s border plants. But the ILGWU also pursues lower-profile efforts in the garment industry, where many U.S. companies operate through small contractors abroad. Says Hermanson: "We often follow the work from U.S. companies into Mexico and talk with workers about organizing."

The *LA Times* also described a cross-border effort by farm workers:

The Ohio-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee [FLOC] has already successfully coordinated with its counterparts in the northern



Mexican state of Sinaloa in contract negotiations with Campbell Soup Co. Campbell's U.S. and Mexican contracts are both up or renegotiation next year, and union leaders on both sides of the border are already in contact to develop a common strategy, said Baldemar Velasquez, president of the [FLOC]....

He plans to visit central Mexico in February to meet with Mexican workers who pick cucumbers for Vlasic pickles, which also employees FLOC members.

Deepening Labor Party Sentiment and Action

Another reflection of deepening anger and disillusionment among workers regarding the Clinton leadership of corporate America came from John P. Morris, head of the mid-Atlantic Joint Council of the Teamsters. He is also the "sole member of the policy-making General Executive Board of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters to remain after reformers took over in January 1992," according to the *New York Times* of December 12, 1993.

"Corporations do what they want," said Morris, "and there's nothing the people can do about it. Corporations can move, shut their plants down, dump their people like trash. *The Republican Party is controlled by the rich. The Democratic Party is almost as controlled by the rich as the Republican Party.*" (Emphasis added.)

Morris, like all of the labor leadership, had campaigned for Clinton in '92. He headed up the AFL-CIO's pro-Clinton effort in Pennsylvania, a state whose workers are 35 percent unionized, in contrast to the nationwide average of around 16 percent. Morris said he had never done so much for a presidential candidate and felt betrayed by Clinton's signing of NAFTA, which he predicted would mean "eventual pink slips for tens of thousands."

Morris also commented on the present anti-labor political climate, according to the *Times*: "Working people are not going to get decent pay anymore...I think there'll be social unrest. I think there'll be something like the civil rights movement. It's my hope it will turn into a third party."

The December 1993 *Labor Party Advocate*, the six-times-yearly newsletter of LPA, had

something more significant to report about Morris.

The idea of a labor party got a big boost here [in Pennsylvania] in September when the official magazine of the Pennsylvania Conference of Teamsters published an interview with LPA organizer Tony Mazzocchi under a banner headline, A PARTY OF OUR OWN! Leading the piece was a supporting statement from John P. Morris, President of the 140,000-member Conference, and a Vice President of the [IBT].

Morris's statement in the Pennsylvania Teamster magazine was this:

Employers, insurance companies, manufacturers — they own the Democrats. And the rich own the Republicans, no ifs ands or buts about it. Employers and the rich have two parties while the middle class workers and their families don't even have one! We should have our own party to protect our interests.

The December *Labor Party Advocate* ran a photo of Mazzocchi at the rostrum in front of delegates to Teamster Joint Council 53's annual meeting in Atlantic City on September 15. The photo caption said: "Pennsylvania Teamster leader John P. Morris thinks it's time to organize a labor party in America and invited LPA organizer Tony Mazzocchi to talk about the idea... Mazzocchi presented the IBT Vice-President with an LPA T-shirt." The newsletter reported that the delegates, representing about 85,000 Teamster members, "appeared generally responsive to the idea of a labor party."

Both the December and the March LPA newsletters are filled with illustrations of how the fight against NAFTA has given a big push to the effort to form a labor party. For example, the March issue reports that LPA's membership has increased 20 percent since January 1 of this year. LPA organizer Tony Mazzocchi predicted that, judging from continued inquiries about LPA's work, "more chapters will be organized over the next several months and...membership will grow even at a faster rate."

The December issue described pro-labor party activity at the time of the AFL-CIO's biennial convention, held in San Francisco in early October last year. A meeting on the question of a labor party was held, sponsored by Labor Party Advocates, by the San Francisco

Labor Council, which has endorsed LPA and established a 10-member committee to campaign for a labor party, and by the San Francisco Building and Construction Trades Council, which also calls for a labor party. The speakers were OCAW President Bob Wages, who said he had left an AFL-CIO reception to take part in the LPA meeting, and Teamsters Vice President Diane Kilmury, who works in Canada and who "described the history of the New Democratic Party [the union-based party in Canada]." She urged the 75 LPA members and supporters in attendance to work hard to make sure labor develops its own party in the United States. The meeting was chaired by LPA member Carl Finamore, who heads the 1,000-member stewards' council of Machinists Local 1781 in the Bay Area.

Teamsters Call for Political Alternatives

The March issue of *Labor Party Advocate* reports that the Teamsters General Executive Board has passed a resolution, stating in part:

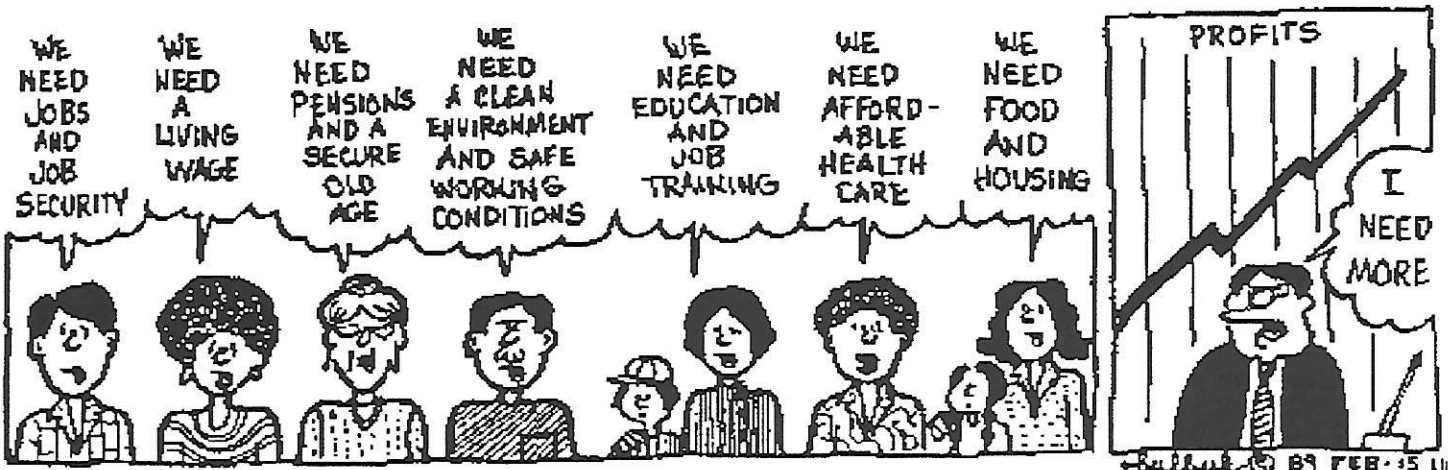
"Working people need alternatives in politics. We must make sure that we are no longer taken for granted."

The Teamster Executive Board resolved "to help locals work with other organizations in their communities to build independent political coalitions that can support alternative third party programs and candidates," adding:

These alternative coalitions sometimes may be able to elect better candidates to office. In any case, independent parties, coalitions, and candidates can affect the policies and actions of the other political parties.

The Teamster leadership concluded: "In our political and legislative battles with Corporate America, the future of working people is at stake. We owe it to our families, and to the future generations, to continue the fight with new strategies, new energy and more determination than ever."

The LPA newsletter reports that Teamster Vice-President John P. Morris "was a strong supporter of this recent resolution to develop political alternatives including working with independent formations striving to organize



around a working class agenda." It quotes Morris as follows:

Labor Party Advocates and its goal of organizing a Labor Party as a first step towards building a genuine, grassroots-based political party around our issues and not the bosses'...fits the spirit of the resolution. That's why I will continue to support LPA's work.

(To join Labor Party Advocates and receive the LPA newsletter, send \$20 for a year's membership to LPA, P.O. Box 53177, Washington, D.C. 20009-3117.)

"Seeds of a Labor Resurgency"

Of course the new militancy in the ranks of labor is not limited to the fight against NAFTA and its aftermath. Peter Rachleff's valuable article in the February 21 *Nation* describes a number of developments over the past decade or so that in his view represent the "Seeds of a Labor Resurgency." Rachleff is the author of an extremely important book about the P-9 strike of 1985-86, which is discussed at length by *BIDOM* author David Riehle elsewhere in this issue. (See *Hard-Pressed in the Heartland: The Hormel Strike and the Future of the Labor Movement*, Boston: South End Press, 1993).

In the *Nation* article, Rachleff takes up a number of recent developments, "some as yet discernible only in faint outline," which, as he puts it, "are changing the culture of the labor movement."

Efforts to organize the unorganized, to give greater voice to workers who have traditionally been silent, and to redefine the objectives of the already organized point not merely to a labor "revival" but to a future movement that is as markedly different from the one that exists now as the C.I.O. of the 1930s was from the A.F.L. of the 1920s.

This new activist unionism has developed vehicles for communication, such as videos and computer bulletin boards, and organizational networks for mutual support. These include local centers such as the Youngstown Workers' Solidarity Club, the Twin Cities Meeting the Challenge Committee, and the Mid-State Central Labor Council in New York; ad hoc labor solidarity committees, which have sprung up around particular struggles like the Hormel strike of 1985-86 or the ongoing Staley lockout in Illinois; new regional bodies, like the Western Nebraska Central Labor Council and the Eastern Montana Central Labor Council; [and] national umbrellas such as Labor Party Advocates...

Rachleff sees as the "most exciting" organizing campaigns "those that resemble social movements more than conventional trade unionism." Among these he focuses on Black Workers for Justice, the Mexican American dry-wall workers in Southern California, the Justice for Janitors movement, and organizing among immigrant workers.

For more than ten years, Black Workers for Justice (B.W.F.J.) has insisted that the organization of the South, broadly speaking, is vital to the future of labor. Based in North Carolina — which has led the country in both attracting and losing manufacturing jobs while remaining the least unionized state — the group has promoted

community and workplace organizing, fighting police brutality and Congressional redistricting as well as workplace inequities. Signing up with an established union is rarely the first step. Rather, B.W.F.J. relies on techniques like speak-outs and union elections held outside the formal auspices of the National Labor Relations Board, that help build power in communities and rally public support for workplace grievances.

The Mexican American drywall workers, many of whom are undocumented immigrants, Rachleff reports, "have established roving pickets who disperse to job sites and recruit workers." Last summer they spread their successful organizing efforts from Los Angeles to San Diego, "attracting not only thousands of new members but also the attention of the larger labor movement."

Rachleff continues:

Also in Southern California, and a few cities elsewhere, the Service Employees International Union's "Justice for Janitors" campaign has similar elements. The workers — most of them immigrants, some undocumented — have been exploited through a network of subcontracting. The S.E.I.U. campaign targets building owners and contract cleaners alike, using mass protests to aim at a large part of the local industry rather than at particular employers. These protests involve workers; family members and neighbors, are solidly grounded in specific ethnic cultures and make dramatic arguments for justice that have captured the imagination of nonimmigrants. Since 1991 the union has signed unprecedented contracts with major cleaning companies in Los Angeles and Washington.

In other cities, self-organization among immigrant workers has also emerged. The A.F.L.-C.I.O. has encouraged the organization of Asian Pacific American Labor Alliances in San Francisco, Oakland, Seattle, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York and Washington. In Boston, a network of progressive local unions has helped set up an Immigrant Worker Resource Center, which offers legal aid and English classes, while also organizing picnics celebrating ethnic cultures and disseminating labor news in Spanish and in Haitian creole. In New York City, the longstanding Chinese Staff and Workers' Association has promoted independent unionization in the garment, construction and restaurant industries, while organizing protests in support of nonunion workers as well.

Much of this organizing "prefigures new union structures," in Rachleff's opinion, "link-

ing workplaces and communities...and breaking from some of the standard forms of union activity." Activists in La Mujer Obrera and Fuerza Unida in El Paso and San Antonio, he reports, call their community-based labor organizations "worker centers." Within the more traditional labor movement, he says, progressives "have seized on these efforts as sources of inspiration and education for their own union brothers and sisters."

Feminism a Factor

The women's liberation movement has also been a factor in growing union militancy. Among the most significant union victories in the past decade, Rachleff reports, have been those "on college campuses, where mostly female clerical and technical workers have drawn heavily on feminist ideas."

While different unions have formally organized in different places — the Hotel and Restaurant workers at Yale, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees at Harvard and the University of Minnesota — a common thread and common organizers have connected these campaigns, sometimes to the chagrin of their respective internationals, which see their centralized control challenged by an independent network of independent organizers.

In 1960, women accounted for 18.3 percent of union membership. By 1990, it was 37 percent. In new organizations that are overwhelmingly female, it is not just a question of more women or more members but of altered approaches, form the time of day they meet and the expanded role of small group meetings to the kind of literature they produce and the issues they address.

Even the Building Trades

There are new stirring even in the traditionally conservative "hard hat" building trades. Fifteen of these unions, Rachleff reports, "inspired by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, have developed the Construction Organizing Membership Education Training [COMET] program, through which thousands of rank-and-filers have been trained as job-site organizers." Usually these unions forbid members to work on nonunion jobs, but under COMET there is a different approach:

Required Reading

Labor's Giant Step by Art Preis. A history of the CIO from its origins in the working class radicalization of the early '30s to its merger with the AFL in the mid-'50s.

Farrell Dobbs's four-part series on the Teamster union.

Teamster Rebellion

Teamster Power

Teamster Politics

Teamster Bureaucracy

(All available from Pathfinder Press,

410 West Street, New York NY 10014.)

My Brother, My Comrade: Remembering Jake Cooper. A collection of articles and reminiscences on the life of an American socialist, who was a participant in the historic Minneapolis Teamster strikes of 1934 and a leader, in the mid-1980s, of the support movement for the P-9 strike against Hormel in Austin, Minnesota. (Available from Socialist Action, 3425 Army St., San Francisco, CA 94110.)

[Union members] are encouraged to "salt" non-union sites to draw members. Some even wear union jackets on the job, daring contractors to discharge them and threatening discrimination lawsuits.

From Business Unionism to Social Unionism

Rachleff calls attention to "the efforts afoot... to shift from a culture of business unionism to what activists are calling an 'organizing model' and 'social unionism.'" During the decades of Cold War, witch hunt, and prosperity after 1946, a kind of "social contract" arose between the corporations and the unions. Officers and staff carried the responsibility for the union, "while rank-and-file members were expected to do little more than allow dues to be deducted from their paychecks." Within the unions, "Bureaucracy and apathy became two sides of the same coin." That was possible as long as "[economic] growth and employer tolerance provided union members with a rising standard of living."

But of course over the past two decades workers' living standards have steadily deteriorated, and in this changed historical context business unionism is becoming discredited.

The most dramatic example of this shift to a "new model" of unionism is of course "the transformation of the Teamsters, still incomplete but guided by the grass-roots reform movement Teamsters for a Democratic Union." But it is not the only example:

Among rail workers over the past three years, a movement for cross-union solidarity has developed from the bottom up that would make Eugene Debs proud. It grew in the face of deregulation and employer-government collusion to unravel generations of union gains and protections. National union leaders are only beginning to discuss such basics as coordinated bargaining and pledges of mutual solidarity. But at a grass-roots level, from Glendive, Montana, and Alliance, Nebraska, to the Twin Cities, Chicago and Philadelphia, rail workers have been coming together regardless of specific union affiliation to call for a united front against both their employers and the government. In small rail towns across the country, workers and their families have reached out to other workers, and to farmers and small business owners, to build a movement to withstand the greed of today's robber barons.

An expression of the growing militancy in rail labor was the sudden strike on March 1 by the United Transportation Union (UTU) against the second largest U.S. rail company, the Union Pacific. The company was trying to have trains moved by the engineer only, with no other union employee on board, a terrible threat to occupational safety as well as to jobs. The strike was quickly ended by a court order after four and a half hours, but even in that time it stopped about 300 trains and snarled rail traffic so badly it took a week or more to straighten things out. The

court ordered the company to stop running engineer-only trains for the time being, and it is understood the issue would be referred to mediation.

It is possible that the UTU leadership may have been affected by the example, a few weeks earlier, of the one-day Teamster strike against United Parcel Service (UPS), which forced the company to back off from attempts to make a single worker handle up to 150 pounds. (The federal government's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommends that workers not lift more than 51 pounds, under the best of conditions.)

Newly Energized Rank and File

What rail workers and the Teamsters have in common, Rachleff writes, pointing to less visible struggles in dozens of other unions — particularly "those of the autoworkers, the postal workers, the paper workers" — is a "newly energized rank and file and a shift of greater information, responsibility and power to it."

In some unions, leadership at different levels has consciously introduced elements of this new organizing model. In most, however, there has been significant opposition [from the leadership]. Yet the thrust from below, from the ranks, has been unmistakable, and with it has come a new quality to the union, from the meeting hall to the workplace.

Rachleff concludes that these

are the seeds of the labor movement of the future: the introduction of new forces into the movement, the development of structures that link workplace and community, the evolution of new union cultures on the job and in the union hall, an energized rank and file in more and more unions, the building of coalitions with social movements outside the "house of labor," a rebirth of solidarity and the emergence of cross-border organizing.

Rachleff does not overlook the fact that "significant forces seek to halt the growth of these seeds." The employers, operating on a global arena, seek a union-free environment. The courts, the Labor Department, the NLRB, the regulatory agencies are filled with friends of the corporations. The Clinton administration is pushing "labor reform" that in effect would reform unions out of existence. And last but not least there is the old bureaucratic union leadership, still comfortable with sweetheart deals with the employers.

The situation is summed up this way in Rachleff's article:

So the seeds of a new labor movement have a long way to go to bear fruit. They must resist inclement forces. They must connect with one another in ways that strengthen each — and all — of them. They must inspire the complacent, defy the cynical, make their own history.

This is a tall order, but as a historian [in light of the successful industrial union organizing in the Depression of the 1930s] I can tell my

friends in the labor movement in all honesty that it's possible. Hell, it's been done before.

Assessing all this, readers of *BIDOM* will surely see the great importance of the present struggle against the old guard bureaucrats in the Teamsters and the great urgency of labor and community solidarity with the Teamsters' freight strike. (On the freight strike, see the articles on pages 1 and 2.)

There could be no better time to read or reread Farrell Dobbs's books on the transformation of the Teamster union into an industrial union, beginning with the 1934 strike (whose sixtieth anniversary will be celebrated this summer in the Twin Cities).

The Question of Class Consciousness

The problem of how the working class as a whole (or dominant sectors or groups within it) acquires a consciousness of its position in society and its power to change society is one we have been addressing in the pages of this magazine. How do substantial numbers of working people arrive at the awareness that a fundamental change is needed, that they themselves have the capacity to carry out that change, to begin the construction of a society free of oppression and the exploitation of some by others, moreover, that it is in their interest to do that, and in the interest of all humanity that that task be accomplished?

And what is the role of radicals in this process? Of revolutionary Marxists who have worked out a scientific understanding of the conditions and class relations of society, who embody the experience of the working class in its centuries of struggle against the domination of the exploiting class.

Trotsky pointed out that the consciousness of the working class as a whole will inevitably lag behind the real development of events, but when it catches up, it can do so very quickly. And those with a radical understanding of what is wrong and what is needed have an indispensable contribution to make to that process.

We see the potential for a sharp radicalization of the working class today, and the role of conscious revolutionary cadres in that process takes on greatly increased importance.

The potential role of radicals in organized labor is greater now than at any time since the late 1940s. In recent union elections, some radicals have been placed in union office. This indicates a shift, that workers are looking to more radical solutions to the deepening problems of this economic system.

(We hope to have more information about these developments in future issues, and to discuss further the crucial role of radicals in the process of workers' arriving at class consciousness.) □

Ten Years Later

The Struggle of Packinghouse Local P-9

by David Riehle

It is now ten years since the George A. Hormel Company announced its intention in mid-1984 to seek a 23 percent wage cut from its workers represented by the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW). The struggle that ensued seized the enthusiasm and solidarity of (literally) millions of workers across the United States as an uncompromising fight against the concessions and take-backs of the 1980s exploded across front pages and nightly newscasts.

The Hormel workers' struggle, against a wealthy and ruthless employer, federal courts, National Guard troops, and their own union hierarchy, is now part of the long and harsh history of American labor. The harshness of this struggle is distorted by those who view its history through the prism of the relatively stable era of relations between the unions and the employers from the close of World War II to the beginning of the 1980s. But the objective record of American labor history is much different — a history of brutal and violent struggle, of crushing repression by the forces of the employers and the state, and of extralegal violence. This is the history of American labor struggle up through the era of the 1930s and the formation of the mass industrial unions.

American labor history is the history of Homestead, of Coeur D'Alène, of the Pullman strike, of the Bisbee, Arizona, deportations, and the Ludlow massacre, of Haymarket, of the killings at Everett and Centralia, Washington, Bloody Friday, 1934, in Minneapolis and Memorial Day, 1937, in Chicago, and of countless largely unknown massacres and savage fights. Taken in this context, the 1985–86 Hormel strike and its unhesitating and relentless repression by all the forces of order and privilege was not an aberration, but an affirmation of the real and historic content of class relations in this country.

Austin, Minnesota, for decades had the third or fourth highest per capita income in the state of Minnesota, because of the high proportion of well-paid unionized packinghouse workers who lived in the small city of about 25,000. All the other communities which ranked at Austin's income level were affluent suburban corporate enclaves. In search of ever higher profits the Hormel Company, the most profitable U.S. meatpacker, didn't hesitate to lay waste to this prosperous community where the family's fortune had been made. A few years after the strike's defeat Austin was a shabby city of boarded up stores on Main Street and a shifting and itinerant population of packinghouse workers who largely replaced the second, third, and fourth generation workers who had lived in Austin and worked for most of the company's existence.

Drawing the Balance Sheet

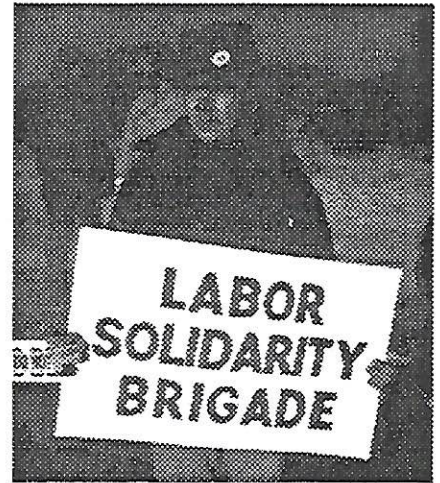
Now as the immediate events of the struggle have receded the balance sheet on this struggle is being drawn. This is, among other things, an affirmation of the importance of the P-9 strike, and how the issues posed by it refuse to be put to rest. There are conflicting assessments, but the dominant conclusion is that it was a struggle "at the wrong place, at the wrong time." Almost all the commentators who have access to a wide public audience have weighed in

with some variation on this theme, as they did during the course of the strike itself, on behalf of their various patrons — corporations, capitalist politicians, union bureaucrats, academic labor experts, Stalinists, and faint-hearted radicals. Most prominent of all, documentary film maker Barbara Koppel won an Academy award in 1991 for her film on the strike, "American Dream," depicting the strikers as hapless incompetents.

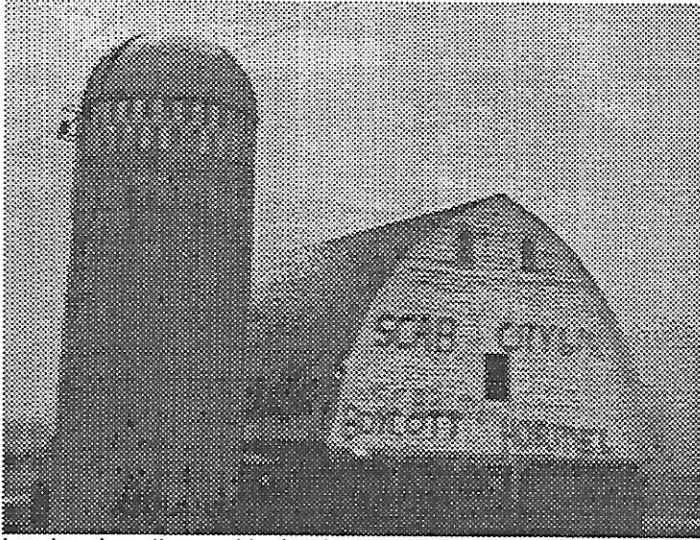
Books on the Strike

The only clear and uncompromising statement in support of the strikers and their struggle, and the only one which clearly places it in the continuity of the American class struggle, is Peter Rachleff's account, *Hard-Pressed in the Heartland: The Hormel Strike and the Future of the Labor Movement* (South End Press, 1993). This is at least the fourth book to be published on this subject. There have been several pamphlets written about the Hormel strike as well. Hardy Green, an ace scribe and penman for Ray Rogers' Corporate Campaign, and author of many P-9 leaflets, has written a good book on the strike, drawing on thousands of pages of Austin police files and exposing the pretense that the intervention by the cops and National Guard was "neutral" (*On Strike at Hormel*, Temple University Press, 1990). Dave Hage and Paul Klauda, reporters for the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, wrote a book on the Austin events; the book provides a reliable chronology (*No Retreat, No Surrender*). One of the scabs wrote a book, published under somewhat murky circumstances, and going to elaborate lengths to conceal its parentage. Also, it was announced on August 14, 1990, Charles Nyberg, a Hormel Company vice-president, had plans to write a book.

Rachleff was not only a sympathizer but a key participant in helping to mobilize defense and support for the Hormel workers in 1985–86 as chairperson of the Twin Cities (Minnesota) P-9 Support Committee, located in the closest metropolitan area to Austin, some 100 miles away. Rachleff, as a labor historian, relished his good fortune in being present both as a participant and a historian. Rachleff is also the only commentator on the strike to present to a wide audience the real meaning of the strike as a down payment on the future.



The author, participating in a predawn picket line in Austin, Minnesota, in January 1986



Landmark on the road to Austin, Minnesota

P-9 a Special Case

The antilabor offensive of the 1980s, following almost four decades of relatively stable relations between capital and organized labor in the U.S., saw a number of strikes with similarities to the P-9 strike: open union busting, hiring of strikebreakers, episodic mass picket lines, National Guard troops, “corporate campaigns,” organized civil disobedience, imaginative publicity, marches, rallies, and widespread solidarity from other unions. The strikes by bus drivers at Greyhound, copper miners at Phelps Dodge, coal miners at Pittston, and machinists at Eastern Airlines are some of the most prominent, but certainly not the only ones with those characteristics.

Yet if only measured by the number of books written about it, P-9 might seem to be a special case. I think this is an accurate perception. To begin with, the P-9 strike was a three-cornered fight: the local union, the Hormel Company, and the international, especially in the persons of United Food and Commercial Workers Union International President William Wynn, and Packinghouse Division Director Lewie Anderson.

The National Guard was sent to Austin by a governor who belonged to a party that called itself the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, but Democratic governors sent troops out to disperse mass picket lines on numerous occasions in the 1980s, including the Phelps Dodge copper miners strike in Arizona and the Iowa Beef Processors strike in Dakota City, Nebraska.

Still, it was one of the features of the Hormel strike that the usual expectations about who ought to stand where were frequently violated. The UFCW, as is well known, opposed the strike, helped to herd the scabs into the plant, and eventually put P-9 in receivership, suspended the officers, kicked the members out of their union hall, sandblasted their mural celebrating the solidarity of the workers

of the world, and changed the name of the union to “Local 9.” Every U.S.-based “international” union except the United Electrical Workers and the National Union of Hospital and Health Care Workers opposed the strike. The Communist Party and their mouthpieces attacked the strikers as splitters and as “enterprise unionists,” and Bill Denison took a leave from writing for the CP’s *People’s Daily World* in order to write for Local P-9’s weekly paper, *The Unionist*, after the courts took it away from the workers, a job he got through the intercession of Lewie Anderson, the UFCW’s Packinghouse Division director. The chairman of the Minnesota Committee to Protect the First Amendment, who happened to be Senior U.S. District Court Judge Edward Devitt, directed that Local P-9 not distribute any literature attacking the connection between Hormel and First Bank within 20 miles of any branch of First Bank. This injunction was requested by the National Labor Relations Board, another key player in the assault on P-9.

Yet over 3,000 local unions contributed over \$1,000,000 to the strikers, and sent thousands of delegates to solidarity demonstrations in Austin, in spite of the fact that even at the regional and district level almost every union presented a united face in opposition to P-9.

A Fundamental Division

When you step back and look at it from the perspective of time and distance, the forces seem to array themselves into two distinct groups — on the one hand, the union rank and file and many local officers directly elected by the rank and file, and on the other hand, nearly the entire apparatus of social power and control — the corporations, the courts, the media, the politicians, and the union bureaucracy. There was something fundamental about this division, something that went far beyond Austin in its implications. And within the framework of these circumstances an entirely independent working class organization was re-forming itself, answering to no one but its own members, and beginning to inspire the active solidarity of thousands of workers. The logic of the further development of this division could be the unraveling of a carefully knit fabric of 40 years of social stability, and its resolution into two opposed camps, with deep and possibly irreconcilable differences.

This explosive logic was grasped clearly enough by the employers and their institutions, as their actions show, as they proceeded on many fronts to defeat and demobilize this struggle, dismantle and disperse the democratic and honest union that was leading the fight, and as far as possible eradicate the experience from the consciousness of the working class, and consign it to the outer darkness occupied by academic labor history. It is to the special credit of Peter Rachleff, an academic labor historian himself, that he was determined not to allow this to happen.

An Attempt to Erase History

The attempt to begin the process of erasing history, even while it was still fresh, began on July 15, 1986, when Volume 51, No. 31

of *The Unionist*, the weekly voice of Local P-9, was delivered to subscribers in Austin, Minnesota. The paper had been for 50 years the voice of the workers at the George A. Hormel meat-packing plant. No. 31 was the first issue after U.S. District Court Judge Edward Devitt ordered all P-9 assets to be turned over to trustees designated by the UFCW International Union. For the first time since the workers at the Hormel plant established their union, as Local 1 of the Independent Union of All Workers (IUAW) in 1933 through a strike and occupation of the giant packinghouse, *The Unionist* was issued without authorization by, or even consultation with, the union membership.

The front page of Volume 51, No. 31, is taken up with an "Open Letter to Local P-9 Members and Supporters" from Joseph Hansen, director of Region 13 of the UFCW, the trustee appointed to run the local. Under the heading "One Union, One Voice, One Contract" Hansen says: "You are to be commended for your dedication, militance, and courage exhibited during your long struggle. Our priority, as it has always been, is to end your months of misery and suffering. To prevent all your efforts from being for naught, *we had to take the necessary steps to save your jobs, to save your union, and to attain an honorable contract*" (emphasis in the original).

Hansen expressed somewhat different sentiments on Thursday, July 17, at a closed session of the Association of Labor Relations Agencies in St. Paul. Hansen appeared on a panel with Dave Larson, Hormel vice-president for labor relations. Apparently feeling he was among friends and colleagues at this gathering of arbitrators, mediators, and other parasites who prey on the labor movement, Hansen spoke freely. What he had to say was clearly intended to be off the record. However, an enterprising reporter from the University of Minnesota student newspaper had found a place in the audience.

As reported in the University of Minnesota *Daily* the following day, Hansen confided that "when Guyette [Jim Guyette, suspended president of Local P-9] talks about this solidarity shit, it makes me want to puke."

"Hansen added that the UFCW didn't think a year before the strike that they could win it."

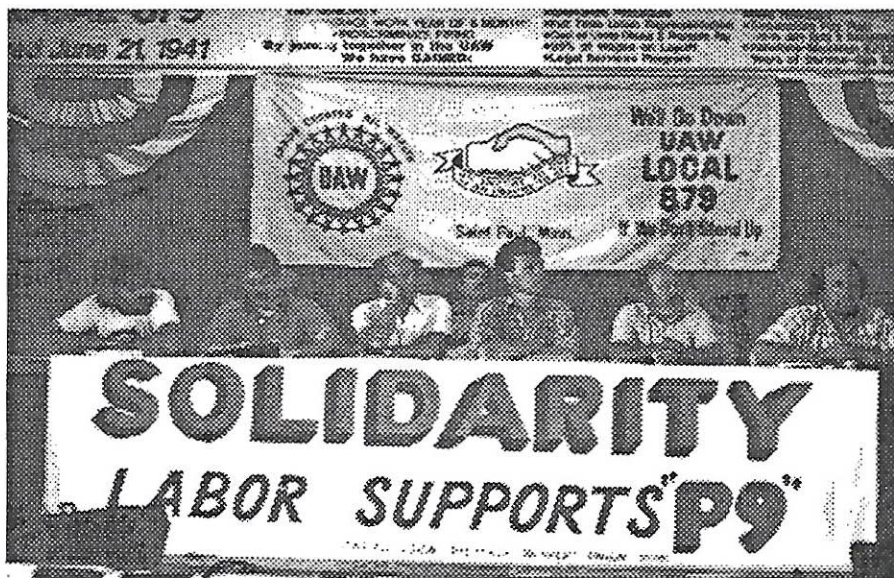
Hormel VP Larson didn't seem offended that Hansen had left him with little to say. He offered the opinion that he "still supports the concept of collective bargaining. It's a concept that works," Larson said. "I am," he continued, "probably one of the all-time great compromisers."

It was hardly surprising that Larson endorsed the concept of collective bargaining as practiced by the UFCW. Without their aid in attacking the Hormel workers from the rear, the outcome of the strike would have been much different.

What about Hansen's promise "to save your jobs, to save your union, and to attain an honorable contract"?

City Pages, a Twin Cities newsweekly, reported in its March 14, 1990, issue: "Now, on the cusp of the '90's, Austin stands as a monument to corporate piggishness."

The paper reported that 50 percent of Hormel's Austin payroll now went to out-of-towners, many of whom live in Iowa. Only a handful of the original P-9 strikers were ever rehired. Hormel was employing about 950 workers at its Austin plant. There had been 1500 workers when the strike began in August 1985.



Solidarity rally at headquarters of UAW Local 879 in St. Paul, Minnesota

Under the trusteeship, the UFCW kicked the workers out of the union hall, which three generations of Hormel workers had paid, for and turned it over to the scabs. They changed the name of the union to Local 9, hoping to efface the memory of the strike as easily as they sandblasted the mural off the side of the union hall.

Shortly after the strike was officially over, the Hormel Company subcontracted the slaughter operation, some 300 jobs, to a so-called independent operator, Quality Pork Products. Local 9, officered by scabs, signed a sweetheart agreement for \$6.50 an hour. Nevertheless, in 1993 candidates from the relative handful of former strikers still in the plant won a majority on the local's executive board, and a former worker at Hormel's Ottumwa, Iowa, plant, who had helped to lead a solidarity walkout of 500 workers in January 1986, was elected Local 9 secretary.

A Scab's Account

Packing It In — A Personal Perspective is the title of the book written by a scab who reportedly got a quick promotion to the Hormel Company publicity department after crossing the P-9 picket line on February 24, 1986. However, the author, Michael T. Fahey, assures the skeptical: "There is no financial or editorial arrangement between me and any of the involved parties. This effort is mine, and mine alone." I was given a copy of the book by two members of my union who met the author at a bar in St. Paul. Learning that they were union men, he went out to his car and got the book, which he generously inscribed and gave to his new friends. They didn't know he was a scab until I told them.

Fahey's publisher is identified as "Kirwin and Sons, Inc.," with a St. Paul address listed in the book. However, there is no publisher located at the address, just a small storefront housing an accountant's office

"Kirwin and Sons, Inc." is registered as a corporation with the Minnesota Secretary of State's Office; it was incorporated in 1989, with Michael T. Fahey as sole director. However, a corporate office address in a major downtown St. Paul bank building is also listed. This turns out to be the office of a major Twin Cities law firm which represents many labor organizations, especially union pension and trust funds. One prominent client is the United Food and Commercial Workers Union.

The media liked to refer to the UFCW International as P-9's "parent union," as part of their campaign to belittle the local as

something less than all grown up. Whether “Kirwin and Sons” is one of the UFCW’s unacknowledged bastard children, possibly coparented with the Hormel Company, makes interesting speculation. However, Fahey credits a prominent University of Minnesota journalism professor, the director of a media institute funded by the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, with editorship of this trashy, National Enquirer-style book, and gives special thanks to a Republican state legislator. Fahey’s junk journalism seems to have found a wide range of prominent friends, in any case. At the end of the book, Fahey registers his complaint that Jim Guyette was the only participant in the events of 1985–86 that refused to talk to him. “Guyette’s refusal,” Fahey says, “stems from his opinion that I am a scab.” Fahey apparently felt this was an offensive and unwarranted epithet, unlike the more polite euphemism favored by the media, “replacement worker.”

The Media Against P-9

The corporate media, which saw something of far more significance than a local labor dispute in the P-9 strike, weighed in all across the country with editorial opinion.

“The sad and highly publicized failure of a strike by Minnesota meatpackers against Hormel is costing most of the workers their jobs,” editorialized the *New York Times* on February 14, 1986. The editors went on to explain that the company stood firm, the “parent” union advised against the course of the local union, and the town of Austin was “rent by bitterness.”

“It was a costly lesson,” the *Times* concluded, “for the workers and their community and, because of the national publicity, another blow to the labor movement.”

Why did the *Times*, the premier capitalist daily in the U.S., feel “sad” that the labor movement had received “another blow”? Does this mean that they are in favor of warding off blows to the labor movement? There were no epiphanal conversions here. The *Times* editors were merely writing a homily for the labor lieutenants of capitalism to absorb and repeat as they gathered in Bal Harbour, Florida, the site of the annual winter meeting of the AFL-CIO Executive Council.

The labor bureaucrats did not fail to respond on cue, and issued a statement disassociating themselves from the struggle in Austin.

The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* got closer to the heart of the matter when it editorialized on Labor Day 1986:

The Hormel strike should provide a salutary lesson for militants about ends and means. It should also be used as a case study to help international [union] leaders head off headstrong factions before they can hijack [!!!] union locals and hold them hostage to their extreme demands. (Emphasis added.)

The *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*’s Labor Day epistle in 1986 regretfully observed: “Union members rejected wise counsel that this was the wrong time and wrong place for a crusade.” The outcome of all this foolishness was that “sadly the community of Austin and the families of the Hormel workers must pay the price of an ill-conceived war.” (When Terrence Powderly of the Knights of Labor condemned the strike by steelworkers at the Edgar Thompson Works in 1888, Andrew Carnegie praised him as “one of the wisest counselors that labor ever had.”)

These lamentations are presented as though they were the product of sober and objective deliberations on where the best interests of the working people really lie. However, when the Hormel workers attempted to defend their jobs and their community on the picket line in January 1986, they were not met at the plant gate by hand-wringing editorialists from the *Star-Tribune*, but by the Minnesota National Guard and state and local police.

From their lofty position of omniscient neutrality, the media reinforced their theme of immature behavior with the totally unsupportable designation of the UFCW International as P-9’s “parent union.” The union created by the Hormel workers in 1933 predated the formation of the UFCW by 40 years, and it was formed ten years before the first constitutional convention of the United Packinghouse Workers of America, the original international union the Hormel workers affiliated to, as Rachleff explains in his chapter on the Independent Union of All Workers.

Judges and Guard Officers: The Continuity of Capitalist Leadership

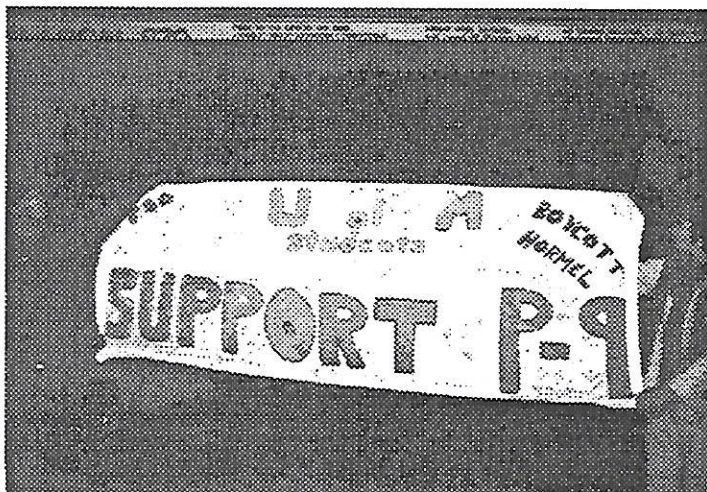
Although the July 15, 1986, *Unionist* was issued, according to the masthead, under the authority of “Joseph Hansen,” putatively acting on behalf of the membership, the real authority the UFCW bureaucrats based their action on was indicated on the back page:

“The following is being printed as a result of an Order issued by U.S. District Court Judge Edward Devitt on April 23, 1986. The trustee of Local P-9 urges all members to comply with the terms of the Order.”

What followed was one of many “Orders” issued by Judge Devitt over the course of the previous year, this one demanding a cessation of all strike and picket activities. The trustees were apparently too modest to reprint the Order from Devitt installing them as the legal authorities over P-9 and its assets, and upholding their right to suspend the elected leadership and take custody of the Austin Labor Center. In spite of the millions of dollars in dues money the employers collect for the UFCW leaders, their hundreds of paid staff, buildings, publications, and other resources, the William Wynn/Lewie Anderson leadership of the UFCW was incapable of expropriating the Hormel workers except with the authority of the capitalist courts. The union bureaucrats can issue orders, but only a Federal Judge can issue an *Order*.

At the time of the Hormel strike Edward Devitt was the senior judge in the U.S. 8th District Court, located in St. Paul. Appointed to the Federal bench in 1954, and chief judge since 1957, Devitt was in essence commander in chief of all the forces directed against Local P-9, and authority for all action taken against the local ultimately derived from his almost unlimited power as a federal judge.

Although it was Democratic-Farmer-Labor (DFL) Party Governor Rudy Perpich who called out the National Guard against P-9, it was well established that the federal judiciary took precedence over mere governors. In 1959 Governor Orville Freeman called



Student activists on the picket line with P-9 strikers

out the Minnesota National Guard and sent them to Albert Lea, Minnesota, the site of a strike by the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA), predecessor of the UFCW. Mass picketing by the union, UPWA Local 6, had successfully shut down the Wilson Meatpacking Co. plant there. Under pressure from a powerful and unified labor movement, DFLer Freeman had ordered the Guard to keep the plant closed. Within seven days a three-judge panel of the U.S. 8th District Court had been convened and ordered the plant reopened, explicitly affirming that, as Freeman said bitterly, "property and its sanctity in private use must stand above the emergency action which I directed to protect human lives."

The three Federal judges who issued the December 24, 1959, order from St. Paul were John H. Sanborn, Gunnar Nordbye — and Edward Devitt, the youngest of the three, but appointed only two years earlier as chief judge. Only once before had a Minnesota Governor ordered out the National Guard during a strike and directed them to keep the struck plant closed — in 1935 Farmer Labor Party Governor Floyd B. Olson had done so during a strike at a knitting mill in Minneapolis. That order was promptly overturned by a panel of three Federal Judges. Two of the judges were Gunnar Nordbye and John H. Sanborn. (Sanborn's uncle, Walter Sanborn, who preceded him on the 8th District Court, in fact issued one of the earliest anti-strike injunctions, in April 1894, against the American Railway Union's strike against the Great Northern Railroad's 10 percent reduction of wages. Although the injunction had no effect on the outcome of the strike, which was successful, it served as a model and precedent for the draconian federal court injunction issued in July 1894 against the ARU and strike leader Eugene Debs in their struggle against the Pullman Company.)

The National Guard

The Minnesota National Guard has been used on five separate occasions in strikes by packinghouse workers, more than any other industry in the state's history. In 1921 and 1948, during national packinghouse strikes, the Guard was used in South St. Paul, site of giant Armour and Swift plants. The Guard also went to the Wilson plant in Albert Lea during the 1948 strike, as well in 1959, and of course in 1986 the Guard went to Austin.

The origins of the Minnesota National Guard go back to the last century, when it was used to back up the railroads and others in their drive to take the land away from the indigenous peoples — the Dakota, Chippewa, and others.

As industry and labor developed, so did struggles by workers, and the employers used their control of state government to create new means of defeating strikes and unions. They turned to the Minnesota National Guard, an organized, massive military force that could be brought into local situations where union power was too strong for local authorities. The governor, ex officio commander in chief of the Guard, appoints an adjutant general as commander. The adjutant general, who can then only be removed for cause, is in effect appointed for life. When a crisis arises, such as a strike, this continuity and overlap of leadership assures top officers who know how to handle strikes, and have long-standing relations with other key political, judicial, and corporate figures.

In 1916, troops from Minnesota's National Guard, recently returned from the Mexican campaign against Pancho Villa, attacked numerous halls belonging to militant Finnish workers on the Mesabi Iron Range, including the Hibbing Workers Hall and the Virginia Socialist Opera House. After vandalizing the premises, they replaced the workers' banner with the Yankee flag. The offices of the IWW were wrecked by these same troops.

In 1917, the Minnesota Home Guard was sent to the Twin Cities by Republican Governor J.A.A. Burnquist to be used against a streetcar strike.

W.A. Rhinow, the adjutant general during the 1921 South St. Paul strike, had been military secretary to Burnquist during World War I. Rhinow's assistant adjutant was E.A. Walsh. Walsh then served as adjutant general during the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes, the 1935 Strutwear Knitting strike, and the 1948 South St. Paul packinghouse strike. Walsh's assistant, Joseph E. Nelson, was appointed adjutant general in 1949 to succeed Walsh, and commanded the Guard during its incursion into Albert Lea during the 1959 Wilson strike.

An Identical Sequence of Events

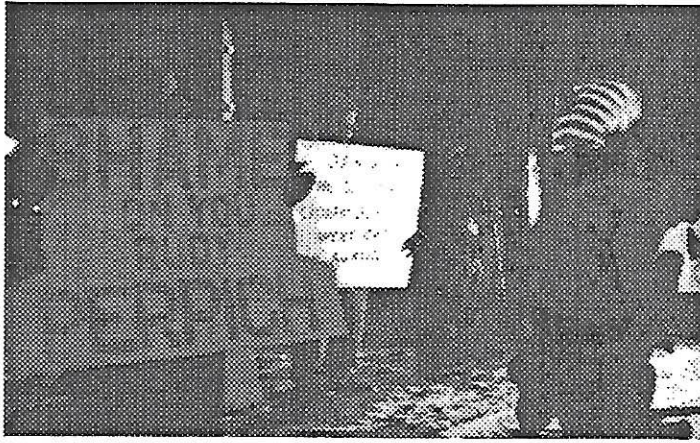
In each of the five packinghouse workers strikes discussed above the sequence of events was almost identical, even though occurring over a 65-year period, from 1921 to 1986. The meatpacking corporations, failing to get the agreement of the workers to company demands, hire strikebreakers. The strikebreakers are met by mass picket lines, successfully closing the plant, and the workers are temporarily in command of the situation. The relationship of class forces shifts significantly. The plant manager and the county sheriff, working closely together, issue a plea to the governor, declaring that "law and order" has broken down and calling for intervention by troops. The governor responds; the troops are sent in, placed under the *de facto* direction of the sheriff and the plant manager, and directed to disperse the mass picket lines.

This is what happened in Minnesota meatpacking strikes in 1921, 1948, 1959, and 1986, with only minor variations, almost as if there was some secret handbook available to direct each step on the part of the participants arrayed against the union. If there is such a handbook it has not come to light. More probably, this accumulated experience is transmitted by the personal continuity of leadership in the various key institutions, as is demonstrated in the case of the federal court, as discussed above.

How the Ruling Class Grooms Its Personnel

Devitt's career demonstrates this continuity, and shows how carefully, and early, the ruling class selects its key personnel and grooms them for their tasks. Devitt caught the eye of the powers that be early on. In 1939 he was appointed, at the age of 29, an assistant attorney general in the administration of Republican Governor Harold Stassen, who had defeated Farmer Labor Governor Elmer Benson in the 1938 elections. Stassen himself had been a lawyer in a South St. Paul law firm with close ties to the meatpacking companies, and in 1933, as a young county attorney, had prosecuted leaders of a failed strike at the Armour plant (one which followed by three weeks the successful strike at Hormel in Austin).

When Devitt returned from World War II, where he served in naval intelligence, he entered one of the oldest corporate law firms in St. Paul — Morgan, Chase, Headley, and Hoshour. This firm had sent one partner, Cushman Davis, on to become governor in 1874, and another, Frank Kellogg, to be a U.S. senator and later U.S. secretary of state under Calvin Coolidge. Cleon Headley, a senior partner, represented the Armour Company, playing a key role in the 1948 strike. Devitt, from his position in this prestigious firm, was selected by the Republican Party to run for U.S. Congress from St. Paul in 1946 and was elected. Defeated by Eugene McCarthy in 1948, largely as a result of his vote in support of the Taft-Hartley amendments to the National Labor Relations Act, Devitt was appointed a county probate judge, and in 1954 was appointed by President Eisenhower to the federal bench.



Protesters attacking the Governor of Minnesota for sending the National Guard into Austin.

Devitt was spontaneously, and unfairly, accused by some union supporters of senility. Nothing could have been farther from the truth. He knew exactly what he was doing. The suppression of the Austin Commune was made to order for him.

The authority of a federal judge, backed up by armed force — National Guard troops, state police, the 100 U.S. Marshals who were sent into Austin to guarantee the expropriation of the Austin Labor Center — is immense, arbitrary, and immediate. In periods of social crisis, where the rule of capital and the prerogatives of private property are directly challenged by working class mobilization, the constitutional charade is shunted aside and more or less direct class rule is instituted. The federal judge becomes, pro tem, the man on the white horse.

The Role of Injunctions: Granting the Form, Outlawing the Substance

Since the legal right to organize and strike is already established, when a mass strike struggle occurs and the workers gain the upper hand, the problem is presented for the employers of conceding the legality of trade unionism while outlawing the actual substance. Ever since the rise of workers struggles in the newly developed mass production industries and the railroads in the late nineteenth century this problem has been met in part through the use of the judicial injunction.

Labor injunctions were first used extensively in the 1890s, notably in the 1894 Pullman strike. The injunction issued against Eugene Debs and the American Railway Union outlawed “any person whomsoever from compelling or inducing, or attempting to compel or induce by threats, intimidation, *persuasion* [my emphasis — D.R.], force or violence, any of the employees” to refuse to perform their duties as employees. In other words *any* attempt to support the strike through word or deed was forbidden, and the order was backed up by federal troops. The strike was crushed and Debs went to Woodstock Prison for sixteen months.

Not so different were the felony riot charges brought against Jim Guyette and Ray Rogers in April 1986, which Rachleff describes in his chapter “Repression.” Guyette and Rogers were charged with, among other things, “holding news conferences and making speeches urging people to come to Austin to demonstrate against the Hormel Company.”

The injunction which Attorney General Daugherty obtained in 1922 against the railway shopmen’s strike was the most sweeping injunction ever issued up to that time, absolutely outlawing the strike. In effect, the intervention by injunction, especially with the power of the federal judiciary backed up by the full force of the

repressive apparatus of the state, suspends all constitutional rights in that time and place. These judicial *coups d’état* give some indication of the “commitment to democratic processes” on the part of the judiciary, the public officials, and the employers who select them when their basic economic interests are challenged.

Not A Neutral Force

Hardy Green’s book, *On Strike At Hormel*, gives a vivid description of how the National Guard saw itself as an opponent of the union, not as some neutral force, there simply to “keep the peace, not keep the plant open” as Minnesota Public Safety Commissioner Paul Tschida claimed it was. Tschida, a former FBI agent, in reality functioned as field commander of the forces arrayed against P-9, especially the state police, who handled most of the rough stuff, as the massive presence of the Guard mainly secured the area immediately around the plant and allowed free access by the scabs.

When the meatpacking corporations have used their sweeping and arbitrary economic power to shut down plants, put thousands out of work, and devastate communities — none of that has ever been considered a breakdown of “law and order.” On the contrary, that is simply the normal functioning of a healthy economic system, based on, as Orville Freeman said in 1959, “property and its sanctity in private use.” Only when striking workers are able to use their power and numbers to close a plant does “law and order,” as defined by public and corporate officials and the mass media, “break down.” Formally, then, all that is required to bring in the National Guard is a request in writing from the county sheriff that he cannot maintain order — that is, disperse the mass picket lines.

In response to the 1948 packinghouse workers strike Republican Governor Luther Youngdahl said, “I am calling in the two sheriffs of Dakota and Washington counties [the packinghouse district straddled the county line], and if they say to me that law is broken down in their respective counties and they can’t handle the situation, and if they request to me in writing to call the National Guard, I am prepared to do so.”

In 1986 Democratic Governor Rudy Perpich stated that “the situation exceeded the capacity of local officials” and the Guard was ordered into Austin. In response to protests against his union-busting action Perpich claimed that he had no choice under state law once the request had been filed by local officials. This was simply subterfuge to obscure the assertion of direct class rule under the cover of constitutional authority.

During the 1948 packinghouse strike, workers at the Wilson plant in Albert Lea shut down the plant with mass picketing, at the same time that troops were being sent to South St. Paul. The Freeborn County sheriff resisted signing a request for troops. The Wilson company attorney, working in tandem with the mayor, demanded the sheriff’s removal. Although the sheriff remained in office, within hours the troops were on their way to Albert Lea. Once they arrived, the adjutant general decided which local official he would collaborate with. It wasn’t the sheriff.

The Role of Austin’s Mayor

In Austin in 1986, the mayor, a P-9er, a supporter of the Guyette leadership, and a solid citizen was put under unbearable pressure to put his signature on the appeal for troops. Closeted for hours with company officials and the county sheriff with the felicitous name of Wayne Goodnature (a recent graduate of the FBI’s training academy for local law enforcement officers), he was confronted with demands on his still strong sense of civic responsibility of a kind he had never conceived. He gave in and

signed. When the Guard arrived, its commander decided which local official he would collaborate with. It wasn't the mayor. That was the last time the mayor was consulted about anything to do with the National Guard by the powers that be.

To his eternal credit, the mayor then went to the local union meeting and presented himself for judgment to his fellow workers. I happened to be present at this meeting and it was a powerful and moving example of the generosity and humanity of real working class democracy. The erring brother was allowed to remain within the fold, and he stayed loyal to the union right to the end, lost his job with the rest, and left town to become the caretaker of an apartment building in Minneapolis.

What the Files Reveal: No Impartial Rule of Law

Hardy Green was able to gain access to thousands of pages of files from the Guard, state officials, and Austin police under the Minnesota Government Data Fair Practices Act. What the files revealed, as Green reports in his book, was that "the enemy was not simply disorder, but United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9." As Green says, the Guard kept a log of union morale, resources, support, tactical options, and so on. "No similar assessments were made of company executives' morale, base of support, or financial health. No record was kept of their daily activities — nor did the Guard receive reports from informants on discussion in Hormel's executive offices" (article by Hardy Green in *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, January 23, 1990). The Guard's log asserted, Green reports, that union members worked "to deceive the public into thinking they are a peaceful, nonviolent group." There is, Green concludes, "no impartial rule of law."

Postwar Decline of Working Class Consciousness

This conclusion used to be axiomatic to the class-conscious labor movement. However, this consciousness has been almost entirely removed from the American labor movement, especially in the four decades following the last great U.S. labor upsurge, the 1945–46 strike wave. In that period, more workers were on strike at one time than at any time before or since. Much of the struggle was given leadership by radicals and class-conscious workers still present in the unions in significant numbers. But the close of that, labor's last general offensive, brought a coordinated, prolonged, uninterrupted, and many-fronted counter-offensive.

The passage of the Taft-Hartley law in 1947 began the decades-long process of legislation reversing and undermining labor's gains won through the great class rebellion of the 1930s, especially its use of class solidarity through so-called "secondary picketing," "hot cargoe-ing," etc. Anti-Communist hysteria, McCarthyism, and prolonged prosperity began to recast the unions into self-enforcers of patriotic capitalist ideology. Union leaderships consolidated themselves into monolithic privileged bureaucracies, virtually independent of any rank-and-file control.

The uninterrupted intervention by the employers and their ideology into the schools, press, and politics, as well as the internal life of the labor movement, almost entirely eliminated any expression of class consciousness from working class life in the United States. Almost every form of independent working class activity has disappeared, except the trade unions themselves, whose active participants are only a tiny fraction of those from whom union dues are collected by the employers. There are no independent labor politics, virtually no labor-based social, cultural, or educational institutions. Workers belong to the VFW and the American Legion, not to workers social clubs.

I once heard a May Day speech by a German-born Twin Cities trade union leader in which he compared Labor Day to the medieval holiday where the village idiot was permitted to sit on the throne one day each year and pretend he was king. Even union-sponsored Labor Day activities have almost disappeared, although they are beginning to be very tentatively revived in some cities, with union-sponsored picnics and parades. Workers schools do not exist, except as training centers for the union bureaucracy. The Labor Lyceums, and similar institutions, which once existed in every major city and taught history, sociology, and other subjects from a working class perspective, are gone.

After the successful 1934 truckers strikes in Minneapolis, the Teamsters Union instituted an annual summer festival, participated in by tens of thousands. During this period a typewritten document came into the possession of Robley Cramer, editor of the *Minneapolis Labor Review*. The document called for the formation of a special Emergency Citizens Committee, made up of members of various business organizations, including the Law and Order League and the Citizen's Alliance. The first purpose listed was: "Take a strong position with reference to [Minneapolis Teamsters Local] 544." Among other measures, the document proposed the organization of "an activity which would serve to take the minds of Minneapolis citizens off past troubles and focus all minds throughout the state on some pleasant event occurring in Minneapolis."

Shortly after that the Minneapolis Aquatennial was inaugurated as a respectable bourgeois summer festival. While the Aquatennial still takes place every summer, the giant working class picnics organized by the Teamsters Union were ended when its socialist leadership was deposed and sent to Federal prison at the onset of World War II.

Similar mass working class social activities took place in Austin during the early years.

"The IUAW also built a rich, active culture for its members, especially in Austin," Rachleff says.

There was *The Unionist*, delivered free on Friday mornings to every household in Austin. It was edited by Carl Nilson, a Trotskyist from the Twin Cities who had come to Austin under the auspices of the state Bureau of Workers Education [an institution created by the governing Farmer-Labor party — D.R.]... In addition to editing *The Unionist*, Nilson taught classes in public speaking, parliamentary law, labor history, economics, and current events. He also organized classes in band, chorus, and dramatics that played an important part in the culture of the IUAW. The union and its women's auxiliary organized a lively drum and bugle corps, which led many parades, and a drama troupe which performed several plays.... The IUAW also established a library in the union hall, which featured books by Edward Bellamy, John Reed, and Upton Sinclair.

Such activities withered away gradually over the decades. Rachleff quotes Guyette as describing how, by the time that Guyette became active in the union in the 1970s, even local meetings only had a handful in attendance.

The Social Soil of Working Class Leadership

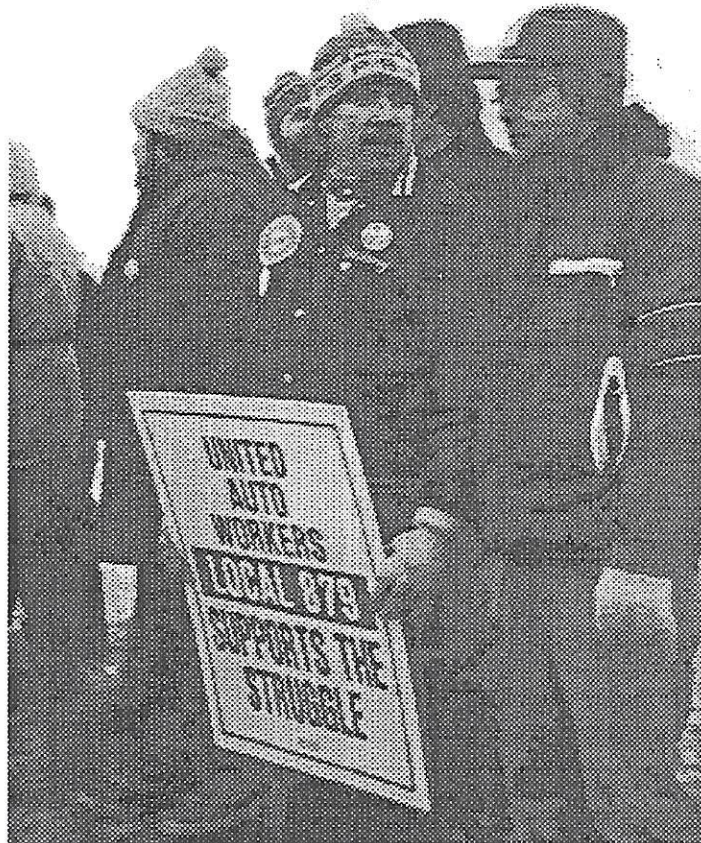
All the foregoing is simply evidence attesting to the unquestionable fact that at one time in U.S. history, class consciousness was a mass phenomena. At some points hundreds of thousands of workers were conscious of their identity as a distinct class, with interests apart from, and generally opposed to, those of the employers. This was the soil on which the great struggles of the 1930s flourished, and it was from this social layer that the rank-and-file leaders stepped forward and assumed leadership in innumerable

struggles that were the foundation for the construction of the industrial unions.

As Rachleff explains, Frank Ellis was one of those, a packing-house worker from age 7 (!) and a lifelong member of the IWW. Without such class-conscious workers, the industrial unions would never have been built. While it is well known that the various political parties and organizations proposing a radical transformation of society enjoyed relatively greater success at that time than at any time since, it is perhaps less well understood that this was just one expression of the class consciousness of a significant number of workers. Although far from a majority, class-conscious workers clearly numbered in the tens of thousands, or even more, and their existence was far from a simple equivalent to the membership of the radical political parties. The great struggles of the 1930s were prepared, shaped, and led by these people, like Frank Ellis, whose outlook had been formed in the great period of socialist and labor agitation before World War I.

Clearly this is one major aspect of the difference between Austin, Minnesota, and the Hormel workers union in the 1930s and in the 1980s. The special and unique contribution of Peter Rachleff's book is that, in approaching the Hormel workers struggle from the dual aspect of a labor historian and a committed labor activist, he relates these separate chapters, and presents them as an integrated whole.

That this synthesis had to be made by a professional historian, shows clearly, I believe, and in very concrete terms, a crucial aspect of the specific historic juncture occupied by the present U.S. labor movement, and the American working class.



UAW Local 879 President Tom Laney on the P-9 picket line.

Capitalists and Workers: The Contrast in Class Continuity

As I attempted to indicate above, and as Rachleff does more fully in his narrative, the employers had no problem understanding exactly where their class interests lay, nor utilizing the instruments of the state apparatus to enforce their goals. There was no historic disjuncture for them as their key institutions functioned smoothly, and uninterruptedly, on the basis of personal continuity and long experience, in imposing their solution on this temporary upsurge of independent working class activity. Their historic lessons had been fully assimilated by their key institutions and personnel. This is, of course, an inherent advantage in being the ruling class.

No such similar advantage accrued to the workers in Austin, when they entered into their struggle with the Hormel Company, beginning in 1984 when the Guyette leadership took over the union. Their historic lessons had not been assimilated, had in fact been dissipated for the most part, as Rachleff shows. And there were rich traditions and experiences that could have stood them in good stead, in dealing with courts, labor boards, political "friends of labor," corporations, and so on.

Rich Working Class Traditions Had Faded

Volume 1, No. 1 of the Austin *Unionist*, dated October 24, 1935, headlined its first issue: "Peace Meeting Planned." The article explained that the union would observe Armistice Day as a demonstration against war and fascism. Invited to speak was Farmer Labor Party Congressman Ernest Lundeen, who, as the paper explained, "was one of the few who voted against the United States entering World War I." Further on page one, the "Purpose of the Unionist" was outlined:

"In line with the history and tradition of this Union this paper will be radical, militant and dynamic. We are in support of all unions and especially industrial unions. We will fight for farmers and workers, and will aid representatives of them in times of trouble and strife. We will promote workers education, forums, discussion and other activities. We recognize that we are under a system which perpetuates wage slavery and [we seek] to emancipate the wealth producers. We will defend the right of free press, free speech and lawful assemblage."

In the 1940s Frank Schultz, president of what by then was Local 9 of the United Packinghouse Workers of America, had a weekly radio program on station KAUS in Austin. In those talks he addressed a wide range of topics, in the tradition of Austin unionism. He spoke in 1948 against reimposition of the draft and against using U.S. troops against the Chinese revolution.

The Hormel workers militant solidarity made the Austin local a potent weapon in the class struggle in southern Minnesota. Intervention of hundreds of Hormel workers in bitter strike struggles often made a decisive difference.

When in 1959 the Wilson strike in Albert Lea, twenty miles from Austin, erupted into mass picket lines, they were augmented by hundreds of Local 9 members who caravanned by auto to the plant. After the National Guard had been called in and a prolonged stalemate ensued, Local 9 mobilized its members to send in massive amounts of food.

"Yes, Johnnie, There Is a Capitalist Class"

Frank Ellis, the founder of the local union, was called out of retirement to write a series of articles in the *Unionist*, explaining the issues in the strike. Some of them were written in the form of imaginary dialogues between Ellis and a worker named

"Johnnie." One of them begins: "Frank, I have heard you mention the class struggle several times. We have no class distinctions in the United States. We all have equal opportunity and equal rights. We are living in a democracy."

"Johnnie, let me point out to you that we, the working people, have nothing in common with the big money power, because the corporations plan the destiny of the working class. The money power controls the markets, they tell us what we are to pay for the necessities of life, and again they tell us what we are to receive in the way of wages. In other words, Johnnie, the capitalist class are always striving to keep wages down and prices up so that they can make a profit."

"On the other hand, Johnnie, we, the workers are always striving to get higher wages and to keep prices down, so that we can make a living. One class pulling in one direction and the other class pulling in the other direction. This brings about a direct separation of the people and lays the foundation for the class struggle."

"Yes, Johnnie, I Believe in Revolution"

In another article the dialogue continued:

"Frank, I heard you talk the other night at the union meeting in Albert Lea and I did not like it."

"Well, Johnnie, you have a perfect right to disagree with me. Perhaps you can prove to me that I am wrong?"

"Well, Frank, you asked for it, and here is what I say was wrong with your talk. You sounded just like a revolutionist."

"Johnnie, you have told me what I sounded like, now tell me what I said that was wrong."

Further on: "Frank, do you believe in revolution?"

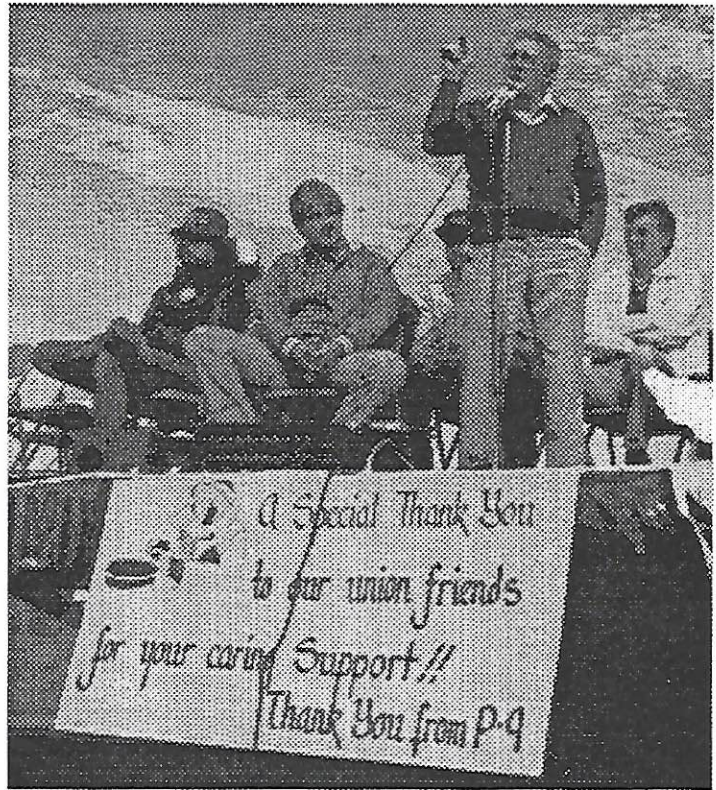
"Well, yes, Johnnie, I do believe in a revolution, and I also believe you will have to fight to get the changes in our system I mentioned in my talk."

Mechanism Needed for Transmitting Workers' Historic Experience

In 1985 there were two existing institutions which could have been the repository and continuation of the accumulated historic experience of the Hormel workers, and which could have passed on the lessons of the past — the local union, and the various families with two or three generations of Hormel workers embodying the entire previous history. The record of the 1985–86 struggle shows that neither of those institutions were capable of doing so. It was a dimly recalled past, not talked about much in families, even a family like the Winkels family, which had provided a member, Peter Winkels, who was the local's business agent under the Guyette leadership, and whose uncle, John Winkels, had been a founder of the union in 1933 and a key leader for decades, as well as a fervent supporter of the new leadership.

The local itself had some memorabilia of the original, insurgent Independent Union of All Workers displayed in the union hall, as Rachleff notes, but no one he talked to knew much about it.

What this suggests to me is that another institution was needed, one that could have been a repository of accumulated historic experience and class consciousness, and one that could have continuously integrated that into the ongoing struggles of the workers basing itself on the most committed and militant individuals. Organizations aspiring to fulfill that role did in fact play central roles in the formation and organization of the Hormel workers' union in the 1930s. As Rachleff shows, Wobblies, Socialists, Communists, and their groups were all present, composed of Austin packinghouse workers, and attempted to give leadership and direction, based, in varying proportions, on their under-



Jake Cooper speaking at a P-9 Solidarity rally. To his right is P-9 president Jim Guyette.

standing of the immediate needs of the workers and on the larger objectives of the various organizations they were loyal to.

None of these organizations, nor any others which were based on an exclusively working class outlook and perspective, survived in Austin much beyond World War II. As national groups, to the extent that they existed at all in 1985–86, they were shrunken, fossilized remnants of what they had been, no longer primarily composed of workers, nor expressing in any direct way the struggles of the working class. The social soil on which they had arisen had been dry and barren for decades. Insofar as they played any part in the Austin struggle, good, bad, or indifferent, they were consigned to the footnotes. Whether this was a good or a bad thing is something on which there are many points of view, not to say newspapers, as anyone who was present in Austin can testify.

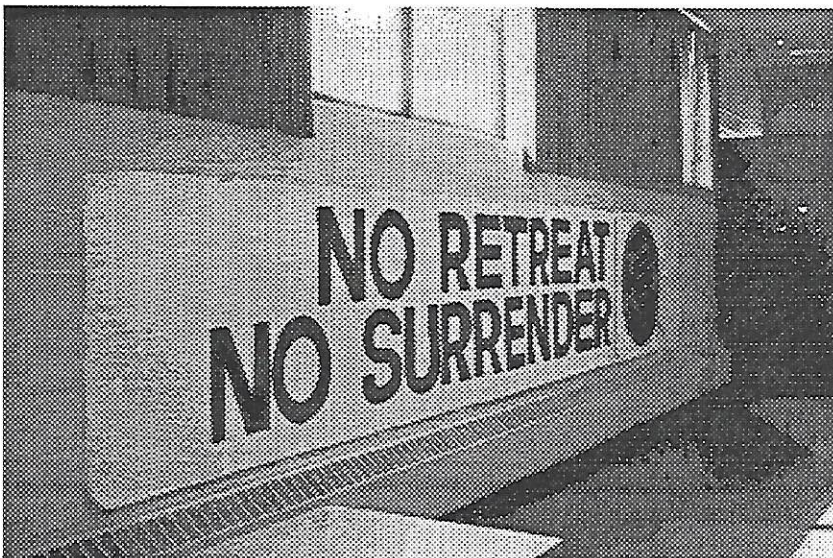
The fact remains, however, that there was a vacuum where there needed to be some mechanism for transmitting the worker's accumulated historic experience. To the extent to which this need could be met, or even addressed, it had to be done in an *ad hoc* and improvised way. More than anyone else, it was Peter Rachleff, who tried to find a solution to this. In fact, Rachleff's special and informed appreciation of the need for this continuity, and even its submerged presence, is indicated by his dedication of his book "to the Memory of Jake Cooper, Harry DeBoer and Floyd Lench." Cooper and DeBoer, both veterans of the heroic period of the Minneapolis Teamsters in the 1930s, and lifelong Trotskyists, had deepgoing ties to the Austin union and its original leadership, and were active supporters of the 1986 strike. Lench was the senior leader of Local P-9, who allied himself with the Guyette leadership and broke with his former associates in the regional and national leadership of the union over the strike. The day after the Hormel Company announced that the strike leaders were fired for not agreeing to end the strike as directed by the UFCW and Devitt, Lench died of a stroke.

John Winkels and Jake Cooper: the Thin Thread of Continuity

From the beginning Rachleff threw himself wholeheartedly into the fight, accepting the assignment of chairperson of the Twin Cities-based Metro P-9 Support Committee in early 1985, while at the same time attempting to collect and integrate the whole history of the Austin workers movement into the ongoing struggle. Heading up the Twin Cities P-9 Support Committee not only placed him in opposition to the corporate power structure, but to almost all union officials above the local level, who were unified in their hostility to P-9's struggle. For someone who held a full-time teaching position at a local college and had not even attained tenure, this took some real courage. Rachleff did not hedge his bets, and forthrightly denounced the P-9 haters as the rats, finks, and union busters they were. For this he ended up in the position that Carl Skoglund, a leader of the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes once described, in relation to their own struggle, as having "no friends but the workers."

Rachleff's somewhat intemperate nature did not cost him any friends among the rank-and-file supporters of P-9, not to mention the members and leaders of the union itself. If there was any other outside person, other than Ray Rogers, held in higher esteem in Local P-9, it was the 70-year-old Jake Cooper, a veteran of the great Teamster and packinghouse struggles and the originator and primary organizer of the successive labor food caravans from the Twin Cities to Austin, financed with contributions from local unions.

I once watched Jake, intent on communicating some strategic idea to the Hormel workers, proceed without an invitation into a closed meeting of 1,000 strikers. I was curious about what would happen next, and was impressed but not greatly surprised when, as soon as the intruder was recognized, he was lifted up on the shoulders of the workers and carried onto the stage to a prolonged standing ovation and thunderous chants of "Jake, Jake," and seated there for the remainder of the meeting. With his athletic build, broken nose, and undiminished militancy, Jake embodied to the P-9ers the heroic past of the labor movement reaching out to the present. It was gratifying to see, through the persons of a few rare individuals like Jake Cooper and John Winkels, that the living continuity of the militant and class-conscious labor movement, though stretched to only a few strands, had not been broken.



Banner on the wall of P-9 headquarters in Austin, Minnesota.

Rachleff did not conform to the stereotype of academics who come to a labor struggle to visit, but not to stay. He stayed with it all the way through, disregarding threats to his job, and working tirelessly to bring together the most effective support organization possible in the Twin Cities. At the same time, as he describes in his book, he gradually became aware of the special, and inspiring history of the Hormel workers union, and the movement of packinghouse workers that they spearheaded throughout the Midwest in the 1930s, and set out to write its history.

The completion of that book, I believe, will be an important contribution to the further understanding of the working class rebellion of the '30s and its eventual organizational expression, primarily through the CIO. This is not simply a matter of recording yet another local or regional chapter of these events, but of understanding the inner dynamic and interplay of social and political forces that shaped the outcome. The insights into this process arose necessarily both out of Rachleff's participation in the ongoing struggle of the present day and the oral and archival research undertaken at the same time to uncover the past.

P-9ers Won Right to Decide

P-9 was different from the other strikes of the 1980s because the P-9ers demanded, and conquered, for a time, *the right to decide*. Without that, democracy and independence don't mean very much. In conquering that right, P-9, in spite of the fragmentary and incomplete continuity with their great past, made the full circle.

It would be misleading and inaccurate to imply that the Austin union remained an island of militant, class-conscious democratic unionism for 50 years, immune to the immense social and political pressures that bore down on the labor movement.

The union leadership degenerated to the point where it began to freely relinquish to the Hormel Company the gains in wages, working conditions, dignity, self-respect, and militant solidarity won over the years.

But when they did, the Hormel workers eventually threw them out and reached into their ranks, and into their past, and brought forward an incorruptible, militant, and democratic new leadership that unflinchingly carried through their struggle to the end, and retains their loyalty and support to this day.

All those who opposed the P-9 struggle, openly or covertly, including those in the labor movement and on the left, made it evident they had no fundamental commitment to the right of workers to decide for themselves. The problem was not that the leadership of P-9 had the wrong policy, made mistakes, or any other of the miserable rationalizations of their enemies and fainthearted friends — the problem was that the overwhelming majority of the P-9 workers could not be convinced to abandon their course and their leadership. And failing that they had to be forcibly prevented from carrying out their clearly expressed will. As it turned out, only the capitalist state had the clout to impose that.

Not a Failure

P-9 was not a failure, anymore than Homestead, Paterson, Pullman, or a hundred other workers struggles that were crushed by the preponderant power of the employers. Like them, it was a necessary step on the road to the emancipation of the working class. Like them it created a powerful testimony to the capacity of the workers for struggle, self-sacrifice, organization, and human solidarity, and a glimpse of the future, for those who want to see it. □

Labor Party Advocates: Interim Steering Committee Meets

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

The Labor Party Advocates Interim Steering Committee held its second meeting March 2 in New York City. The first one was held in Chicago on October 9. The New York meeting was the first of a series of meetings of the Interim Steering Committee that will be held over the upcoming months in various locations across the United States to foster local participation in preparation for the projected 1995 founding convention.

Fifteen people attended from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Washington D.C. The reports from the participants indicated that considerable work is being done, with some inspiring results both inside trade unions like the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, among local Labor Councils, as in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and even on a statewide basis, as in Connecticut, where a conference on the need for a labor party is planned for May. Interest in LPA appears to have been considerably heightened after the defeat for labor registered when Congress approved the North American Free Trade Union Agreement.

An official of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) in Washington, D.C., reported some manifestations of this new development. IBT Local 922 President Eddie Komegay, Jr., announced that all the members of his local's Executive Board had joined LPA, and he handed over a check from the local for \$500 for LPA. The LPA newsletter reports that "Local 922 represents about 1,200 mostly minority workers in a variety of service industries" in the D.C. area.

In addition to receiving area reports, the key items on the agenda were LPA leadership structure and organizing for the 1995 convention.

Interim Leadership

Many members present expressed concern that a formal leadership structure that operates democratically needed to be put in place for efficient and effective organizing. With no such mechanism in place, it is difficult to build any significant momentum and the danger persists that local campaigns will exhaust themselves.

Tony Mazzocchi, who is devoting full time to building LPA with the support of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union, reiterated his belief that any such formal leadership body is premature. Tony, in defending his belief that any leadership body must be temporary and less than formal, explained that this is the first time in the post-World War II period that a serious union-based effort had been undertaken

to form a labor-based party rooted in and financed by the trade unions. He feels strongly that for the initiative to succeed, it must sink roots deep into the unions and maximize their participation. For this to happen, it is critical that there be a very loose structure that allows for considerable local initiative and leadership. Although his union has thrown its full support into the initiative — as have the United Electrical Workers and the San Francisco Labor Council (AFL-CIO) — this initiative must not be seen as simply a project of Tony Mazzocchi or these two organizations, but must get much broader trade union participation and support. He feels that the formation of a formal structure or the designation of national officials at this stage would undermine this goal.

Nevertheless, it was agreed that an Executive Committee that is as broad as possible would be appointed to oversee the organizing up to the convention.

The meeting took several key steps toward facilitating the organization of the 1995 convention.

Building for the Convention

A leader of a CWA local in New York City motivated with considerable passion that a place and date for the convention needed to be announced within a few weeks if the convention call were to continue to be taken seriously. It was agreed that such a decision would be taken and announced soon.

To build the convention, following up on a decision of the Interim Steering Committee in Chicago in October 1993, hearings are projected at the local level. Tony reported on the progress in organizing these, three of which are already being projected. The first one is scheduled for the Bay Area in May with the support of the San Francisco Labor Council and hopefully the statewide AFL-CIO, the second is to be in San Antonio, and the third one is to be on the East Coast. These hearings are aimed at deepening support for the LPA initiative and developing the elements of the LPA program which will be discussed at the convention. It is at these hearings that issues of pressing concern to workers, like jobs, the impact of NAFTA, obstacles to labor organizing efforts, health care, etc., will be reported, discussed, and analyzed.

Raising the Funds

Financing the convention is the challenge. It has been reported that the AFL-CIO spent at least \$10 million, mostly on lobbying, in the unsuccessful attempt to defeat NAFTA and \$20 million has been pledged by unions to try to

promote Clinton's health care plan. Although trade union membership continues to drop, the amount of money in the Political Action Committee (PAC) funds of the unions has never been greater.

It will cost approximately \$500,000 to successfully organize the 1995 convention. In addition to all the obvious expenses of securing facilities and preparing and distributing publicity, there needs to be a full-time staff.

To finance all this, there will be an appeal to unions for some of their PAC money for this purpose. To do so, several decisions were taken:

- An attempt will be made to find 500 union locals who will agree to contribute \$1000 each. This will mean that LPA members will need to name union locals in their area who might be interested in contributing. Tony has pledged that he will be available if necessary to meet with as many of these union locals as possible to explain the LPA initiative and solicit their support. This campaign will be outlined in upcoming announcements to members.
- To successfully receive funds and ensure integrity in the handling of contributions, a National Finance Committee will be formed, headed by OCAW Secretary-Treasurer Ernest Russell. It will consist of union officials from across the nation who will be asked to volunteer to serve as trustees to oversee this fund. Teamster official Eddie Komegay, Jr., right then and there became the first volunteer.

The final item on the agenda was a report from the committee formulating rules for representation at the convention, i.e., for determining who will get to vote and on what basis. While there was general agreement that anyone seated as a delegate must represent groups of workers, yet to be decided is the basis for choosing delegates or the relative weight of the votes of large versus small locals and unions and of LPA chapters inside and outside the unions and how to determine the number of delegates for groups of vastly different sizes. All such matters are now being discussed.

The 15 attending included one African American and three women, indicating considerable work needs to be done to reach out to the work force in the U.S. in all its diversity. This will need to be a major focus of LPA activity over the next months. □

April 9, 1994

On Democratic Decision-Making in the Labor Party Movement

by Jerry Gordon

For years prior to last October's national elections in Canada, proponents of a labor party in the U.S. cited the New Democratic Party (NDP) as an example to be emulated here. The NDP, after all, was a labor-based party; it had successfully led the fight for Canada's universal health care program; it had won power in three of Canada's ten provinces: Ontario, British Columbia, and Saskatchewan; and it had become a formidable force nationally, with a 40 percent rating in the polls just three years prior to the elections.

Yet, with all this, the NDP was practically wiped out in the voting. Its share of the overall popular vote fell from 20.4 percent to 6.9 percent. The party lost all its seats in central Canada, falling short of the margin necessary to ensure official party status for the first time since it began contesting national elections. The NDP's support in Ontario plummeted to just 6 percent. In Quebec, it received less than 2 percent of the vote, as compared to 14 percent in the previous election.

Why did this happen? Many analysts give an explanation like the one given by Doug Saunders and Carl Wilson (in *The Nation*, November 29, 1993): "A big part of the answer is the global economic crisis and the limitations on social democracy when governments everywhere are unable to stand up to highly mobile capital."

But Saunders and Wilson are not oblivious to the NDP's abandonment of its working class base and its turn to fiscal austerity policies at the expense of workers' living standards. In Ontario, which contains one-third of Canada's population, Premier Bob Rae's government proposed "the so-called social contract, a euphemism for \$2 billion in forced wage cuts and unpaid days off for the province's 950,000 public employees ... The effects were explosive. The legislation was called the most anti-labor in recent Canadian history. Unions said they were being blackmailed into abrogating their own contracts, violating the right of free collective bargaining."

Instead of putting the burden of the economic crisis on the corporations, the NDP in Ottawa put it squarely on the backs of the workers. The result was mass defections. Several local unions disaffiliated from the NDP; others cut back funding to the party; thousands of members left it; and many of those who remained refused to campaign for it.

In British Columbia, the NDP also focused on balancing the budget. It raised taxes on working people, while cutting back on education and health care. It also capitulated to the lumber big business interests, becoming the largest shareholder in the logging corporation responsible for devastation of the rain forests.

In Saskatchewan, the NDP imposed user fees on the health care system. Yet this was the very province where the NDP had inaugurated public health care in Canada, financed by a graduated income tax, not by regressive user fees.

How is it that these provincial governments, which purported to represent the interests of Canadian workers, implemented anti-working class policies? The phenomenon is not peculiar to Canada or to regional politics. It has occurred in New Zealand, where the country's traditional labor party has been discredited because of its reactionary policies and where the New Labour Party now competes with it, and in Great Britain, where Labour Party positions, particularly in foreign affairs, are often indistinguishable from the Tories.

In France the Socialists, who took power with massive labor support a dozen years ago, were thoroughly repudiated by workers at the polls in the last elections because of the party's austerity program, with the right wing winning 80 percent of the seats in the French National Assembly. In Australia a union-based labor party similarly oversaw the decline of workers' living standards during its time in office.

Two things are common to all of these experiences. First, the labor parties involved, forced to choose between moving decisively against big business through steep taxes, nationalizations, and support for workers' struggles, or moving decisively against the working class through wage cuts, takeaways, slashes in social programs, perpetuation of imperialist foreign policies, etc., have chosen the latter. Second, the party institutions were so bureaucratized that left-leaning progressive working class forces were unable to reverse the anti-worker tide.

On this second point, it is important to note that when Canadian NDP leader Bob Rae introduced his "social contract" legislation in Ontario, an emergency conference of the NDP was called in an effort to get him to retract it. But Rae refused to listen to anyone outside the NDP's narrow leading circle, and so he continued his calamitous course.

The NDP has a tradition of discouraging dissent. As Saunders and Wilson note, "The party became a centralized electoral machine in the 1960s, dominated by labor brass rather than rank-and-file workers and social activists." A faction of the party active in the 1970s, known as the "Waffles," attempted to institute grass roots democracy and a focus on workplace democracy, but the group was no match for the controlling labor bureaucracy.

Lessons for the U.S.

The labor party movement in the U.S., while it has a number of precedents to draw on historically in terms of the American experience, is still in an embryonic state. As such, it needs to assess developments in other countries today to learn not only what might be usefully replicated here, but also what must be avoided.

The establishment of a party in the U.S. based squarely on the working class would obviously be a huge step forward toward the ultimate goal of workers winning power at all levels of society. Such a party would warrant the support of class-conscious forces, even if the party's program initially contained weaknesses and inadequacies. Program is indisputably crucial. But an incorrect program can be corrected if the party is controlled by the rank and file and if democratic decision-making is firmly established as the party's guiding organizational principle.

We talk about a "labor party based on the unions." But there is a legitimate fear that if the bureaucratically run trade unions create a labor party, their methods could easily be transplanted into the new party's structure. This is what has happened elsewhere and it could happen here.

To counter such a development, it is essential that forces within the workers' movement that advocate a labor party and are committed to rank-and-file democracy band together and constitute themselves an organized tendency to educate on this point. That basically is the outlook of the Workers Unity Network (WUN).

But there is more to it than that. The problem is not only to work out the mechanics to ensure democratic voting in settling policy and organizational questions but also to settle *who* shall do the voting.

On this matter our Network has two concerns which are related. The first is to ensure inclusiveness in relation to working class formations which may exist independently of the union structure but which have a genuine base among a sector of workers. The second is to ensure a central leadership role for African American workers, other oppressed nationalities, and women. These two concerns are discussed below and it is important that they be addressed now, in view of Labor Party Advocates' announced plans to hold a convention in 1995 to establish a labor party.

For a Labor Party That Unites Organized and Unorganized Workers

Because of the failure, for whatever reasons, of the trade union movement to adequately defend the living standards of its members, mobilize

Continued on page 49

Police Murders in U.S. Prisons and the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

"Since 1987, 47 Mississippi prison inmates have been found hanged in their cells," according to a U.S. government investigation in 1993 reported in the *Washington Post* (April 15, 1993). The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) and the National Lawyers Guild (NLG) are joining forces to send lawyers, law students, and legal workers to investigate the circumstances of these deaths and other prison abuses. Their initiative is called the Mississippi Freedom Summer, Parchman Farm Project. It will focus on the particularly notorious Parchman Farm Prison.

Parchman Farm is a maximum security prison in Mississippi, housing about 650 prisoners, where several inmates have died under questionable circumstances over the past two years, four since July 1993 alone, according to NLG materials. Eighty percent of the inmates incarcerated at Parchman Farm are African Americans.

Marking the 30th anniversary of the murder of three civil rights workers — Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney — by Mississippi police and their cohorts in the Ku Klux Klan, the project will probe the extent to which Mississippi police today are still getting away with murder.

Deputy Sheriffs Blow the Whistle

The Mississippi Freedom Summer Project was described at a fund-raising evening in New York April 4, where one of the speakers was Andrea Gibbs, a former deputy sheriff from Mississippi who "blew the whistle on the prison conditions in Mississippi." She and three other deputies in 1989 joined together to publicly accuse their supervisor, Lieutenant Homer McKnight, Jr., of abusing prisoners. They could no longer bear to witness the brutality.

Andrea Gibbs, who was born in Cincinnati, moved to Mississippi with her mother in 1981. There she and her mother got their high-school equivalency degrees (GEDs), and Andrea went on to get a college degree in criminal justice, because she wanted to help young people. When the Family Court where she worked was taken over by the Harrison County sheriff's department, she was made a deputy sheriff and assigned to the County Youth Detention Center.

"Three hours into her first shift...she saw a deputy repeatedly bash the head of a 16-year-old black girl against a wall, while she crawled — handcuffed and shackled — begging and screaming."

"I felt sick to my stomach, and speechless," Andrea said. "Soon after it happened I was called into [Lieutenant McKnight's] office, and he said, 'Beating an inmate in a Mississippi jail

is against the law. So what you just saw never happened.'"

In the year she worked there, she saw 12 beatings. To protest these conditions, she and three other deputies went public with their accusations. They thought their example would be followed by other deputies who they knew were witnessing similar cases of brutality on a daily basis in other such centers. They were wrong. And as a result of their protests, they were fired.

Andrea then became the victim of a terror campaign. She began to be followed by men in unmarked cars, received all types of death threats, and was harassed in numerous ways to the point that she began to "worry about dying all the time." "I've lived for four years waiting for somebody to come kill me," Andrea told the *Atlanta Constitution* (February 19, 1994).

Since she was fired, she has founded Victim's Voice Inc., a community-based organization to assist victims of police brutality and push for criminal investigations into the jail "suicides."

Legacy of the 1960s

Also supporting the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project is Ben Chaney of the James L. Chaney Foundation, named for the murdered civil rights activist who was his brother. Ben Chaney, who also spoke at the fundraiser, sponsored — along with Andrea Gibbs and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference — three days of hearings in Jackson, Mississippi, on the deaths in Mississippi jails.

Ben has been investigating prison deaths. Ben and his organization feel they are already in a position to prove who killed three of the prisoners whose cases they have examined. They were all Black men who had dated white women. As was true 30 years ago, the jailers and police work closely with and are members of white racist groups.

Public hearings have presented detailed testimony about the horrendous conditions in many Mississippi jails and the suspicious circumstances surrounding jail "suicides." In response to the publicity surrounding these cases, U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno sent nine U.S. investigators to Mississippi to examine prison conditions. The Justice Department found serious problems with more than a dozen prisons and closed down four that were declared "unfit for human habitation." (Considering the inhuman conditions in most U.S. prisons, some of which were described by prisoners on death row in Indiana in an article in *BIDOM* last month, it is no small victory that the Justice Department was finally forced to conduct an investigation and confirm at least some of the charges.)

The Death of Andre Jones

The protests took on added strength following the death of 18-year-old Andre Jones in August 1993 in the Simpson County jail. The authorities' decision to term his death a suicide caused widespread outrage. While most of the victims are poor and deprived, Andre's parents were prominent public figures and active in the Mississippi NAACP; Andre was hardly suicidal, having just received a college scholarship he had wanted in Engineering. Arrested and charged with four misdemeanors, he was found shortly afterward hanging from a shower stall.

While investigations by the Justice Department may be forced to reveal part of the brutality, it will take independent, social mobilization by civil liberties organizations like those described above and the CCR and the NLG to truly investigate and expose the crimes of the authorities and hopefully begin to help organize more massive protests against them.

Ron Daniels, an African-American journalist who ran as an independent candidate for president of the United States in the 1993 elections and who calls for a break with the Republican and Democratic parties and the corporate interests they represent, is the new president of the Center for Constitutional Rights. He brings considerable political energy and drive to the position.

Ron Daniels and the other speakers at the fundraiser indicated the difficult conditions the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project will confront. The state of Mississippi has no legal assistance services for poor defendants and no prisoners' rights services, nor is there any history of successful prisoner resistance to the all-powerful prison and police authorities.

Not Only in Mississippi

Of course, even in New York State, where a number of prisoners' rights groups consistently function, prison authorities inflict savage punishments on prisoners. CBS's "60 Minutes" some months back documented the practice of New York State prison authorities of punishing prisoners deemed "uncooperative" by suspending their bodies from shackled hands and feet for days at a time causing loss of circulation in the hands and feet and immense and painful suffering.

Despite the national publicity this practice received through the CBS report and a lawsuit against the prison by victims of this torture, it is apparently being allowed to continue — even though it is a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which bans "cruel and unusual punishment." Of course, brutal and inhuman treatment of prisoners in brutal and inhuman capitalist societies is

no surprise. The rulers rely on such measures to try to intimidate and control us.

To Reignite the Flame

If the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, along with the work of Ben Chaney and his organization, Andrea Gibbs and her group, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the NAACP can combine their forces to widely publicize the prison lynchings in Mississippi, they may be able to help reinspire the kind of mass social forces that began to challenge the racist power structure in the 1960s in the South and in the North, and which the FBI with pro-

grams like Cointelpro so effectively "neutralized" with its campaigns of lies, frame-ups, and assassinations.

As Andrea Gibbs stated: "In 30 years, Mississippi hasn't changed. The only difference is that people aren't hanging outside when they die; now they are being hung inside the jails. These guys down here can do any damn thing under the sun and nobody even questions it. What comes first: the good ol' boys or the laws of the United States?"

History has shown that only mass pressure can force the U.S. government and its police forces to respect the laws and the Bill of Rights.

The CCR and the NLG and the others who are fighting back are helping to dramatize the depth of the crisis.

What comes of this will be determined by how much support they receive from the broader labor movement and its allies.

To help support this campaign, write and send contributions to: National Lawyers Guild, 55 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10213-0089, marked for the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. Make checks payable to the National Lawyers Guild Foundation. □

April 10, 1994

The Singapore Caning and the Crime Bill

As we go to press, considerable attention is being focused on the barbaric punishment of caning employed by the neo-colonial government of Singapore to try to enforce its totalitarian rule. (It is a practice first instituted by the British colonial rulers.) Caning is a prescribed punishment which allows a bull-like creature trained in the martial arts to physically strike repeatedly the bare buttocks of the victim with a long, dampened whip made of rattan. The first blow usually rips open the skin. The pain from this first blow often sends victims into a state of shock. Repeated blows cause long-term injuries.

While Amnesty International can document 1,218 such floggings in 1987 and 1988 alone, it wasn't until a young American, 18-year-old Michael P. Fay, received caning — six blows — as part of a sentence for vandalism that this form of punishment received widespread publicity. Michael, a native of Ohio, moved to Singapore to live with his mother and his stepfather, who works for Federal Express. Foreign corporations dominate the Singapore economy; one-sixth of the work force, or some 95,000 Singaporeans, are employed by such firms (*New York Times*, March 16, 1994).

A brutal regime is required to keep the workers of Singapore in line; undocumented workers receive the same brutal punishment, according to a Singapore legal experts, as do those accused of other relatively minor offenses. The Singapore police are no less brutal than those in Mississippi. Michael wrote to his

father in Ohio that he is innocent but that he confessed to having spray-painted a number of cars and caused other similar damage because he was slapped by his interrogators, who also threatened to whip him.

President Bill Clinton and Congressional Representative Tony P. Hall of Ohio have appealed to the Singapore government to suspend the punishment, but at press time, that government had still refused to change its course in the Fay case, and there was no question of its giving up the barbaric practice in general.

After weeks of negative publicity received over this case by the Singapore government — a longtime and devoted servant of U.S. and other foreign corporate interests — there began a sudden and very suspicious display of public enthusiasm for the imposition of the punishment.

All the major media began reporting this with barely veiled enthusiasm. For example, the *New York Times* on April 5 reported that "Chin Hock Seng, first secretary at the Singapore Embassy [would he tell a lie?] told The Associated Press that more than 100 letters and 200 phone calls had been received from Americans and that 'the vast majority express very strong support for Singapore.'"

Sheryl McCarthy, an African American columnist for *New York Newsday*, in her April 4 column entitled "Why Many Won't Shed Tears Over Flogging," shamelessly reinforced the prevailing rumors of this mysterious upsurge in barbarism in the American public. "The

majority of those who wrote to the Singapore authorities and to the congressman took the position: Go Ahead and beat the kid."

Same Publicity Techniques Used by Haiti Regime

Of course, it doesn't take much imagination to realize that the Singapore government and its corporate backers have enough money to fund public relations firms that can quite effectively guarantee not only the receipt of 300 letters and phone calls from "the public" by the Singapore Embassy (they really don't have to send them, just report they were "received"). They can also guarantee that the press will carry the report about these "public responses." This method has been used very effectively in regard to Haiti by U.S. and domestic capitalists in that country, as well as Haitian landowners, drug dealers, and military bosses to try to discredit President Aristide while they themselves carry out a bloody campaign of terror and assassination against all human rights activists in Haiti.

Moreover, whipping up a bloodthirsty atmosphere is in the interests of U.S. corporate interests here at home. It is a conducive backdrop to allow for Congressional approval of the draconian "anti-crime" bill now under consideration. This bill drastically increases the number of crimes which are punishable by the death penalty and is a powerful tool at the government's disposal for controlling popular unrest.

Oliver North for Senate?!

by Hayden Perry

Colonel Oliver North, key figure in the Iran-Contra scandal, is running for senator from the state of Virginia, and there is a good chance he will win, barring unexpected circumstances. Many will support him despite Iran-Contra, but the ultraconservative Virginian Republican leaders are selecting him precisely because he led the Iran-Contra scam.

North is attractive to conservatives as a war hero, but there are already a number of veterans serving in Congress: one who left an arm on the battlefield. What especially appeals to the ultra conservatives about North is that he is also a veteran of a more shadowy army that operates in secrecy, out of control by Congress or the people.

Spies and spy organizations have been part of governments since antiquity. It took World War II to expand America's covert operations beyond anything seen before.

The authors of a book, *The Iran-Contra Connection*, ask "whether covert operations are not, by their very nature, inherently inimical to the public interest, likely to transgress statutory authority, and hostile to public accountability." (See *The Iran-Contra Connection: Secret Teams and Covert Operations in the Reagan Era*, by Jonathan Marshall et al., Boston: South End Press, 1987.) "From their inception to the present," the authors say, "many CIA operations have been covert, not just to deceive foreign populations, but at least partly because they were designed to violate U.S. statutes and Congressional will." They point to the so-called "Defection Program," which illegally brought Nazi war criminals to America to join covert operations against the Soviet Union.

From time to time Congress and some presidents have cut some of the thousands of agents and organizations spying and conniving around the world. This has led to the "disposal problem." Like spent nuclear fuel rods, experienced saboteurs and assassins, as well as other highly skilled operatives, are a dangerous element when uncontrolled and unemployed.

They also form a valuable reserve army from which to recruit experienced operatives for projects that must be concealed. Who may recruit such forces? Obviously the president and his delegated staff in the White House.

But you don't have to be an officeholder, if you have the right connections. Ronald Reagan found that out when he ran against President Jimmy Carter in 1980. The Reagan-Bush team used a covert operation to deliver a devastating blow to Carter's campaign.

According to Gary Sick, author of *October Surprise*, the 52 American hostages seized by the Iranians threatened Carter's re-election so long as they were not free. A bungled rescue attempt did not help Carter's image.

He then tried another tack: offering to release frozen Iranian funds and deliver certain military goods that the Iranians had already paid for. Negotiations were going along smoothly, and it

appeared Carter could offer an "October Surprise": the release of the hostages just before election day.

Then the negotiations mysteriously bogged down. Countervailing forces seemed to be pressing the Iranians. They started stalling and delaying as election day neared. What had happened?

Reagan-Bush forces had sent their own delegation to offer more arms to the Iranians if they would delay release of the hostages till after Reagan's inauguration. The Iranians preferred a Reagan victory, expecting better relations with the new president. The hostages were released five minutes after Reagan was sworn in.

Who were the Iranians talking to when they made this deal? Certainly not to Carter's emissaries. William Casey, head of the CIA, Robert McFarlane, former executive assistant to the National Security Council, and Admiral John Poindexter were among 16 Americans at a key meeting with the Iranians in Paris on October 14.

These were government officials negotiating with a foreign power on behalf of private citizens, behind the back of their president. Gary Sick is sure of his facts, but admits that the enormity of the charges will be hard to prove in court.

What is certain is that the October Surprise scam paved the way for the much bigger Iran-Contra caper eight years later. Some of the participants, Robert McFarlane and John Poindexter, already had good Iranian connections. They needed a sort of executive secretary to do all the legwork and keep the conspiracy running smoothly. Marine Colonel Oliver North was the candidate.

It was a heady assignment for a young Marine colonel situated in the seat of power, the White House, even if in a basement room.

The assignment was almost a repeat of the operation eight years earlier: persuading Iran to free another set of hostages in exchange for more military supplies.

There was a new twist in this scheme, however, and that was to charge the Iranians enough for the military supplies so that the Nicaraguan Contras could be financed without letting Congress know about it.

"A neat idea," thought North, who considered Congress a bunch of rabble who could not be trusted to run the country. Their prohibition on aid to the Contras proved it.

His loyalty was to his commander in chief, the president, who had the God-given right and duty to ignore Congress when it was wrong. North, who always carried a Bible with him, claimed to have knelt down with the president to seek divine guidance. His reputation for prevarication, however, casts doubt on his story.

Now Reagan denies he ever approved siphoning off money for the Contras. Whichever way the truth lies, the Republic is in danger. Either we have had a president who approved illegal operations and lied about it. Or a president who allowed a shadow army to operate

under his nose in the White House without knowing about it.

North defends lying as a legitimate strategy when confronting the enemy. But who is the enemy in this case? Obviously the American people and their elected representatives.

North and his aids and superiors bungled much of their God-given assignment. Arms were delivered and no hostages were released. Iranians got mad when they realized they were being ripped off on the price. Then a Mideast newspaper exposed the scandal and Congress woke up.

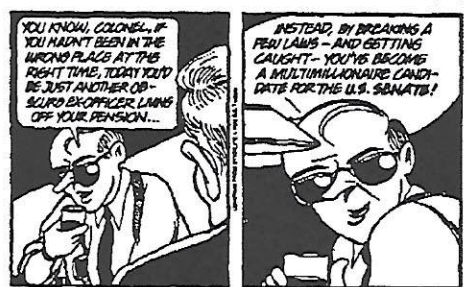
Despite the heavy charges, North was presented to the public as "Ollie," a friendly guy who was anxious to do the right thing. Ann Wroe, in her book *Lives and Lies in the Iran-Contra Affair*, says "The nickname 'Ollie' in itself had much to do with the way the scandal was treated. Could anything be serious that had at its center this lovable, roguish, bumbling figure... Ollie is essentially fictional."

Even after conviction and sentencing North was still "Ollie." Wroe writes that to ask, "Should Ollie go to jail?" seemed automatically to suggest the answer, No. North did not go to jail, but this was mainly because his conviction was based partly on testimony obtained under protection of immunity.

Instead of going to jail, North became a millionaire. According to Jeffrey Toobin in a *New Yorker* magazine article (December 27, 1993), "Oliver North today is rather grand. He flies in a private plane and often travels with bodyguards. He is the author of a best-selling book about his ordeal... He lives in a house... for which he paid \$1,175,000." Further, Toobin writes, "Money — millions upon millions of dollars — has been the leitmotif of North's life since Iran-Contra."

With the aid of Duane Ward, a former public-relations director for Jerry Falwell, North set up, first the North Legal Defense and Family Safety Trust, and later the Freedom Alliance,

DOONESBURY By Garry Trudeau



which carries much of the message of the Religious Right.

Mainly through direct mail the Trust raised \$13 million. Basically the same people, later, gave the Alliance between \$2 and \$3 million a year.

Most of this money has been used to boost Oliver North. A "patriotic" calendar carried no less than 35 pictures of the hero. Thousands of dollars were spent on two rented railroad cars for a round trip journey from Washington to a private box at the Army-Navy football game in Philadelphia.

North's personal take from this bonanza is estimated at between \$2,329,000 and \$4,760,000. If Iran-Contra was a crime, it certainly paid off for this convicted felon.

Social Explosion in France

Continued from page 14

with irreverent chants and songs filling the air. They have often headed to local high-speed train stations and highways — those symbols of the glorious "modernization" that has left them out — to hold up traffic or gently march in front of it to their next destination.

Demonstrations in some of the bigger cities — Paris, Lyon, Toulouse, Lille, Nantes — have been joined by large contingents of high school youth and unemployed teenagers from the working-class suburbs. These are often the largest and most militant contingents and are certainly the most diverse in terms of their ethnic and gender composition.

Enter "les Beurs" and "les Blacks"

The participation of these youth from the working class and heavily immigrant "banlieues" (suburbs) has increased the stakes of the standoff and touched the French right-wing's rawest nerve. It seems there is nothing the country's rulers fear and hate more than the children of Arab and Black immigrants, all the more if they are joined by their white classmates and workmates.

From the early to mid-1980s, it was these children of immigrant workers that were at the cutting edge of struggles for democracy and social justice. They have played a decisive role in each wave of mass youth protest that has followed their cross-country *Marche des Beurs* (*Beurs* is slang for the children of Arab immigrants) and the *Marche pour l'égalité*. The fact that their movement was betrayed and co-opted by the Socialist Party government at the time — and then frontally attacked by the right wing — has been a significant contributing factor to the current despair and disorientation in their ranks.

The response of the authorities to this new turn in the movement has been as predictable as it has been unfortunate. In reply to some isolated incidents of looting and stone throwing, the government — in the shape of the arch-reactionary Interior Minister Charles Pasqua — attempted to justify its stepped-up repression of the whole movement by decrying the presence of those who were allegedly trying to use it to further their own violent and criminal ends.

The racial overtones have been barely hidden. To drive the point home, two teenage stu-

dent

Meanwhile the serious business of politics goes on. An important section of the power elite want North nominated as Senator. They don't want to risk being turned down by rank-and-file Virginia Republicans, so the nomination will be made in an easily manipulated state convention.

There are some counter-forces to worry about: Lawrence Walsh, the special prosecutor, has finally released his report. It must contain plenty of anti-North ammunition. But it comes out years after the events, which were too complicated for the public to follow at the time. They are not likely now to buy a document of 900 pages costing \$30.

Ex-President Reagan might be a greater threat. His disapproval carries weight. He formerly called North a "national hero." Now he

disowns him. But can he afford the close scrutiny that a Reagan-North feud would engender? The Republicans must see the danger to all of them if it gets out of hand. Would they drop North to avoid this?

The American people must realize how seriously the development of shadow armies threatens all of us. It is not a farfetched possibility that, in a period of social crisis, such covert forces could pave the way for a military coup.

The Democrats proved spineless as Congressional prerogatives were trampled on. No one can rely on them. It will take an aroused working class and its middle class allies, organized in their own party, to turn back this threat to our liberties. □

dents of Algerian origin, Mouloud Madaci and Abdelhakim Youbi — both in France for several years — were arrested after one of the demonstrations in Lyon and, without even a proper trial, expelled on a ship to Algeria.

The response of the protest movement, progressive lawyers, and immigrant rights activists in Lyon was swift and inspiring, although thus far inadequate. Banners at the 30,000-strong March 25 demonstration against the CIP read "*Libérez nos camarades*" (Free our comrades) and had the names Abdel and Mouloud decorated with flowers and peace signs. Some 1,500 protesters camped out in front of court buildings and were there when the order came down from a national legal body: Mouloud and Abdel's expulsion was illegal; they were to be returned to French soil at once.

For the moment, however, the Lyon police have challenged the ruling, and the two teenagers are awaiting their return to France in the transit zone of the port of Algiers.

The State's Violent Antics

For now, at least, attempts such as this to divide and break the movement have been ineffective.

It certainly hasn't been for lack of trying. There can be no getting over the lengths to which the police will go to break up demonstrations — water cannons, tear gas, plastic bullets, and charges of truncheon-swinging and helmeted police.

It is clear that the government wants the demonstrations to degenerate into a free-for-all, all the better to discredit the movement. The daily *Libération* reports eyewitness accounts of bystanders at the March 25 Paris demonstration who said it was plainclothes policemen that initially smashed shop windows in order to justify another indiscriminate round of truncheon-swinging by their uniformed colleagues. On several occasions, uniformed and plainclothes police alike have injured media photographers and cameramen in order to prevent them from capturing police antics on film.

What kind of society does the government hope to build if it responds to the most vibrant and critical-minded segments of its youth in such a manner?

Campaign for Shorter Workweek with No Cut in Pay

There will be another national day of student and youth demonstrations on March 31, with the possibility that everyone will head into Paris, as is the custom when people want their message to be heard. [The Balladur government withdrew the proposed CIP on the eve of those demonstrations. — Eds.]

It is clear that the role of the labor movement is decisive if the government is to be stopped. Seeing the CIP as a clear attack on their members and on workers' rights generally, the country's trade union federations staged their first united action since 1962, a nationwide demonstration of some 200,000 people on March 12. Hopes are that this spirit of unity can be translated into some strike action — there is talk of a general strike in early April, to coincide with a national day of student demonstrations.

The role played by university arts and science students will also be a decisive factor. In May 1968 it was these students that played the leading role. Thus far, they have largely remained on the sidelines, with the idea that the CIP will not affect them. There have been some signs of movement, however. Late last week, for example, 600 students occupied university buildings at the Tolbiac campus of the University of Paris.

On April 6 a cross-country trek by the new *Agir contre le chômage!* (Act against unemployment!) campaign will begin. It is scheduled to end with a huge march on Paris at the end of May. The campaign involves trade unionists, unemployed activists, housing rights activists, and people from the women's and other social and democratic movements.

The campaign calls for a radical reduction in the working week with no reduction in pay — alongside increased taxes on corporations and speculation — as the only feasible and socially just way to massively reduce unemployment.

So the stage is set for at least another few weeks of struggle in the country. Whether a "social explosion" is in the offing remains to be seen. Whatever happens, the protest movement has certainly provided a much needed breath of fresh air. □

March 27, 1994

Feminine, Independent, and Capable

Recipes for Reproductive Rights in the “Dirty Thirties”

by Heather McLeod

The following article on the Canadian revolutionary socialist Ruth Bullock (1909–1994) originally appeared in the June 1993 issue of New Directions.

In matters of conduct and dress, Ruth’s mother, herself dainty and genteel, raised her daughters to be “feminine.” However, where physical work was concerned, she wished her daughters to be both independent and capable and had always been impressed with the ideas of the British Suffragists, if not with their militant action. But her progressive views had their limits: she gave Ruth virtually no information about birth control and seemed to create situations of intimacy between Ruth and male family friends so that marriage would be likely.

In 1926, when she was 17, Ruth decided to leave home to work for Mrs. Waterfall, who owned a raspberry farm in Hatzic, near Mission City, and needed live-in help with her children. The position also included doing laundry, cleaning the house, and cooking for the berry pickers. At the end of the berry season, her employer recommended her to another family in the area.

The second job lasted longer and was even more demanding. An older woman, Mrs. Hobson, was managing a huge farm for her son and needed a housekeeper. Ruth was to do all the cooking, including meals for harvest and pig-killing gangs, all the washing and indoor work, as well as helping in the large English flower garden and giving Mrs. Hobson personal care for a recurrent bowel disorder. She stayed with her for two years: “I washed out on the scrubbing board and wrung with my hands, without a mangle, her big linen sheets, which were edged in crochet work.”

Despite being on duty 24 hours a day, Ruth enjoyed the responsibility. She felt she was earning magnificent wages at \$20 a month, and for the first time in her life she had a treasured bedroom of her own.

In 1927, Ruth met Ed Matthews, a friend of her first employer. Matthews, a mechanic, was 17 years older but shared with Ruth an interest in music, books, and outdoor activities, such as horseback riding, hiking, and fishing. Against her family’s advice, Ruth married Matthews in November 1929 and began work at his garage in Mission pumping gas, cleaning, answering the telephone, and helping with other odd jobs.

With the news of Ruth’s pregnancy three months later, however, their relationship began to deteriorate. Both prospective parents were upset. Ed said Ruth had let him down by becoming pregnant, and the baby would be totally her

responsibility. Ruth was also surprised and angered by the pregnancy, since she had no knowledge of birth control, but she had always viewed herself as very independent:

I had felt that I was rather an exceptional woman, that I could do so many things that other women didn’t do. I had a very arrogant and unsisterly attitude to many, many of the women that I met. Not that I was unkind to them or anything, but I’d surely felt superior.

Well, I was going to bear this child quite by myself.

Ruth avoided seeing a doctor until she began losing fluid following a rough horseback ride 6 weeks before the birth, which proved to be difficult, emotionally and physically. Ruth had arranged to stay in the home of a friend who was a midwife, but the doctor miscalculated the time of delivery and did not respond to the midwife’s advice on the matter. When labor began “unexpectedly,” Ed refused to take his car out into the snow. He encouraged his wife to walk (with assistance) to the midwife’s house. Finally, after several hours’ labor, Ruth was given ether, and Mary Frances Matthews was born.

Ruth was typically ignorant of how newborns should appear. She did not know they often had “fur” and misshapen heads, and hers had a collapsed ankle that was kept hidden from her for the first few days. All these factors greatly increased her anxiety that something was “awfully wrong.” The fact that the baby was a girl did help the bonding process, however:

I had hated carrying her. I had just detested the idea. I didn’t like a thing about it, ‘til I realized I’d borne a little woman, and believe me, what a flood of feeling when you look down at this little woman. You realize that she’s not going to go through the sort of thing you’ve gone through.

Ruth struggled to manage the expanded household on \$20 a month. Isolated and knowing that she had made a mistake in marrying Matthews, Ruth could not find support for her predicament. Her mother, while recognizing the right of women to divorce in extreme cases, said, “Well, we didn’t really want you to marry someone 17 years older than yourself, but you made your bed now, don’t you think you’d better lie in it?”

Ruth continued to work at home and in her husband’s garage. With the worsening economic

conditions in the 1930s, Ruth needed more cash. She added home gardening, berry picking, wool carding, quilt making, and knitting to her work load. She also completed a bookkeeping course and then took in typing and bookkeeping.

Despite full workdays, Ruth worked for the fledgling Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and began helping women gain access to birth control and abortion. The midwife who delivered her child had given her a few facts, but advised Ruth to talk to her physician. Dr. Eacrett was extremely reluctant to give out any information. He said she only had one child and was a strong healthy young woman and had a duty to produce at least four more, but she finally convinced him to fit her with a pessary for \$16.50.

Eventually, Ruth became known within a limited working-class social circle for her practical knowledge of birth control. Ruth also knew a few middle-class women who were open to discussions, notably women teachers who may have been sympathetic because they knew that if they became pregnant they would be fired.

Ruth belonged to the Francis Willard prohibitionist group and the Women’s Institute, and in the early 1930s, women in both associations were open to discussing familiar birth control methods like “peeing hard,” vinegar and sponges, vinegar and soda douches, a sliver of soap in the vagina, and withdrawal. The “calendar watchers” she knew were active in working to control their reproduction, and Ruth spread the word in living-room meetings.

Ruth came to believe that churches, together with the medical profession, were dominated by males who conspired against the dissemination of birth control information. She drew no distinctions between the various religious denominations:

Most women were very much held by the rules of the United Church, and the Church of England, and the Catholic Church, you know. Because all these Judeo-Christian outfits were totally opposed to women having any information. They didn’t mind the men knowing about French safes, but the information was not supposed to get through to women!

She believed that doctors generally acted in a paternal manner and wanted to retain control over women as well as maintain a good source of income. They were in a “godlike” position. However, it was not uncommon for a doctor to decide that a woman’s “womb needed scraping.”

Ruth also followed the activities of Dorothea Palmer in Ontario, and through the CCF she met Vivian Dowding, who brought with her the birth control ideas of Margaret Sanger and the knowledge of the Kaufmann Rubber Company in Kitchener, Ontario. Ruth made sure interested women in her groups had the price list and address for such items as foam and diaphragm at \$1.50, pessary cap, rubber sponge and spermicide, and condoms at 50¢ each.

[Dowding] was run out of towns by the doctors and the police for talking with married women — not with single women, not with high school girls, but with married women — about

Ruth Bullock, 1909–1994

by Ken Hiebert

Ruth Bullock, for decades a pillar of the Canadian Trotskyist movement, died April 8, 1994. Early in life she was exposed to hard work on her family's farm and to the socialist ideas in her family's collection of books.

Personal experience brought her up against societal and legal obstacles which denied women access to abortion and even to birth control. And it was this question that first drew her into organized activity. For her, the informal networking among women seeking access to birth control and abortion led to semi-clandestine activity arranging for abortions for women referred to her.

In 1934, she joined the recently founded Co-operative Commonwealth Federation. Although a social democratic party, it had the stated goal of eradicating capitalism. Ruth did not fail to notice the number of independent women who were prominent in the CCF.

During World War II Ruth rejected the policies of the CCF and the Communist Party, both of which fell in behind the war effort of the Canadian government. When she was first accused of being a "Trotskyite," she wasn't sure what this term meant. At the end of the war, she and her husband Reg joined the branch of the Canadian Trotskyist movement in Vancouver. She remained an active member until 1985, when the branch was disbanded by a leadership in sympathy with the Barnes leadership of the Socialist Workers Party in the U.S. The SWP and its sympathizers were at this time headed toward a split with the Fourth International. When Socialist Challenge/ Gauche socialiste was recognized by the Fourth International as its section in the Canadian state, Ruth declared her support and remained an active supporter until her death.

Although our movement was far in advance of the rest of society in its understanding of what was then called "the woman question," Ruth nevertheless ran into obstacles and lack of understanding among male comrades. But over

time she emerged as a central leader of the organization. In 1959 she became the organizer of the Vancouver branch, and in 1961 hers was one of three signatures on the founding statement of the League for Socialist Action, which brought the far-flung organization into closer collaboration.

Ruth was very demanding of herself and demanding of others. More than one young man in the organization was stung by her rebuke. But she could also be very warm and encouraging. Numerous women remember meeting Ruth when they joined the movement and her encouragement of their personal and political growth. For many it was Ruth who led them into their first study of the situation of women.

When the women's liberation movement emerged in the late 1960s, our organization was ready to embrace it, in large part due to Ruth's preparatory work.

Ruth's steadfastness and determination set a high standard for younger members. Together with Reg and a few others, she was living proof that revolutionary activity need not be a passing youthful fancy. And she did not cut back activity because of advancing age. In October of 1970, when the Canadian government invoked the War Measures Act, suspending civil liberties across the country, Ruth and Reg abandoned their vacation, headed back to Vancouver, and reported in to our headquarters, ready for action.

Ruth contributed thousands of hours to the Vanguard Bookstore, making it a prominent distributor of radical literature. And she was a formidable presence at Canada Customs when they were tempted to intercept certain periodicals.

The challenge before our organization is to win new militants like Ruth. If we cannot do this, we have no future. If we can raise up another generation of determined fighters such as Ruth, our future is assured. □

the control of their reproductive lives! And it was really shocking!

When in Vancouver, Ruth was taken to luncheon meetings by women such as Mildred Osterhout Farhni and Evelyn Lessor, whom she met through women's groups associated with the CCF:

They were interested in me and I liked them, and Laura Jamieson also. And I would be invited to the University Women's Club lunches, and of course, there, one has a much broader perspective, could talk with so many women...about the condition of women, about how certain things are done.

The University Women's Club tended to be dominated by "progressives," women who were members, or close to, either the CCF or the Communist Party. It was here that Ruth got some of her information and made connections with sympathetic doctors. Ruth remembers that many women in the CCF quietly spread information on birth control and abortion, and resolutions in the CCF called for birth control clinics and information but shied away from the issue of abortion.

Ruth thinks the economic circumstances of the 1930s created a demand for birth control. And then, during World War II, she found that women wanted to control their fertility just as

Greetings from Ruth Bullock to the May 1991 Convention of Socialist Challenge/ Gauche socialiste:

Dear Comrades,

Greetings and good wishes to you from this old comrade who joined the Trotskyist movement in 1945. Your participation in building the needed revolutionary organization in this part of North America is profoundly important, and not an easy task.

However, I can assure you that I have never regretted making this decision despite the ups and downs and factional struggles which are a part of building a political organization like this. We Trotskyists consider both abstract theory and the practical application of theory very seriously, and it is often difficult to find the balance. With the unmasking of Stalinism you no longer face the huge barrier which confronted us. The letdown, cynicism, and skepticism which has followed this is real; however, the social pressures of this capitalist system are constant and require answers which our Transitional Program gives.

Dear comrades, also recall Trotsky's admonition that the program of the Fourth International may not be the complete answer but only the closest approximation to the truth (reality) at any given time as we can make it. In closing I wish to assure you that the building of this revolutionary movement will bring purpose and growth to your individual lives as it has to mine.

much or more because they now worked outside the home. Birth control devices became more available during the war and postwar period when Ruth continued to act as an advocate for birth-control education. She also became more active making connections to procure abortions, though she feared the possible legal repercussions, and the poor relationship with her husband meant custody of her child was at risk were there any problems.

To obtain abortions for friends and acquaintances in the 1940s, Ruth contacted nurses that she knew who operated in their own homes. Most of her work was with these women, who charged from \$120 to \$150. However, she

thought that some contacts were dangerous. For instance, there was a doctor in Vancouver at the corner of Georgia and Granville above the old Birk's store who was on the medical registry and used his own name. He performed "Dilation and Curettage" for \$150 to \$350 in his office, but refused to have anything more to do with the woman after the D&C.

Ruth found that the most trustworthy contact was "Nurse Adelle's Reducing Salon," run by Dr. Blockberger at the top of the Ford building at Hastings and Main. The price of an abortion was around \$75, and two methods were used: some early abortions would be attempted by drugs, but after two months an operation was necessary. The clinic had hospital beds in cubicles, and women could return or a nurse could be sent to the woman's home if there were later complications. Contraception information and devices were also freely available.

"Dr. Blockberger was a very fine Jewish doctor," said Ruth,

and he didn't run it [the Salon] to make a great deal of money, and I presume, because he charged so little, that he probably wasn't paying much in the way of protection money. It was a service that was particularly reserved for an aspect in society that they knew would need it — very much the army and the police.

Ruth was just a go-between, so she often did not meet abortionists face to face, know their names, or even their addresses. She would get a phone number, and then she would use a certain expression or name as a password.

The abortionist would generally not know her name either. Only Dr. Blockberger's office was more open. She would talk to him using her name or a family name, "Lovat," to give information on a certain person. Patients were told to go to a certain area and then would be picked up and taken elsewhere.

It was mostly young wives with children who contacted Ruth, many of whom worked in the war industries. Sisters or cousins in rural areas relied on women living in the urban centers to send information. Some women came from the north, and before seeking help, many had already tried, without success, the well-known techniques of gin and hot baths or the insertion of slippery elm bark into the uterus.

Ruth was well aware of the dangers of this work, and everything had to be kept secret. Little was said to husbands about abortions. She believed that her family might have understood her spreading birth control information, if they had known, but was sure they would be dismayed if she were caught helping to procure abortions. In addition, as a left-winger within the CCF, she felt her credibility would be damaged with some members if she was known to be associated with abortionists. After the war, when she was involved in the Trotskyist movement, Ruth was not active in clinics or organizations, in part because she had to avoid illegal activity which might have given the authorities reason to move against the party.

Ruth believed it "unfair" that men could enjoy recreational sex while women could not.

Discussion of recreational sex was hushed up and only referred to in dirty jokes. The middle class could go to doctors, but working-class women did not have the funds for visits to their physicians for information. Sex for them was less likely to be an enjoyable activity. Ruth saw the problem as part of "the woman's question." She considered issues of birth control and abortion a private part of women's oppression in capitalist society.

In the back of a handwritten recipe book, Ruth kept notes on contraception and abortion issues throughout the 1930s. She quoted from Margaret Sanger, the well-known American birth control advocate: "war exists as a substitute for adequate birth control, birth control was legal in Europe, and a Vancouver birth control clinic was established in 1932." She also quoted section 207c of the Criminal Code, which outlawed birth control, and questioned some of the wording. She noted there was a proviso that if the public good was served, then a conviction was not in order. She wrote tartly:

Should the family physician be consulted about contraceptives? With tonsillectomy not the popular fad it was, the GP must be provided with some easy means of support! And what easier victims could one have to a graft than desperate men and women?

In her recipe book she formulated her own questions about birth control and religion: "Do people marry for the express purpose of having a family through which to glorify God? Should they?" And, "The rhythm method of birth control is approved by some Roman Catholic authorities. If one method, why not another?"

She quoted George Bernard Shaw about the state's responsibility for children, especially since the state often made life and death demands upon its citizens. She noted there were:

1,600,000 abortions in the U.S. each year. A racket. Why are only women — the victims — mentioned? Many single men are hauled into court — does marriage absolve a man of all responsibility? And on the tombstones of these women — "Beloved" — etc. —!

On one page Ruth neatly summarized the main ideas in Malthus's 1798 essay on population and drew a graph showing the curve of decreasing food supply being crossed by the curve of increasing populations. By Malthus's definition, she thus proved there was a surplus population. She labeled the diagram, "China" and noted that Malthus's conclusions called for late marriage and moral restraint.

Ruth also wrote an essay and kept it in the same recipe book, a rare document of "rank and file" attitudes among socialist women. It marshals two main arguments as to why birth control was necessary. The first is based on Malthus's idea of surplus population and is an excellent example of the economist bias of socialist feminism in the 1930s:

How can workers organize unions or obtain higher wages if the supply of labor is constantly excessive relative to the demands of the labor market? Every child a laborer puts on that market is potentially a weapon against labor's cause.

To build her case that a surplus working population currently existed, Ruth added that the birth rate among those on relief was 60 percent higher than that of others, and said the cycle of "low standard" resulted in the poor having larger families.

A second argument noted, "Defectives in so many cases outbreed normal people — surely the quality of the citizenry is of first concern." However, she quickly followed that with an observation that if the state can control the legality of birth control, then might it not try to stop the birth of "subnormal" people by legalized and compulsory sterilization? Ruth thought this attitude wrong because, ultimately, neither church nor state should control individual liberty on such issues: "In these matters the authority for one's conduct is oneself, in conscience. Each must work out his own life with respect for the personality of self and others."

Having backed away from a eugenicist position because of her abhorrence of state intervention in these personal concerns, Ruth went on to refute some religious propositions against birth control. Firstly, it was sometimes argued that birth control violated the sacredness of marriage, whose prime purpose was procreation. She countered this with her own ideas of marriage and some apt questions:

This [idea of procreation] is absurd, for what marriage has as its first and sole purpose child-bearing? People marry generally because they love one another and wish to make their relationship more complete and permanent and realize themselves in one another. Indeed, shall we say of a childless marriage that it has been a failure or is incapable of spiritual qualities? And where people deliberately limit their family to two or three children, shall we judge that their family life is less ethical than that of those whose families are of eight or ten?

She also dismissed the theology which "deduces that all the millions of unborn souls must be born in order to be baptized and saved." Ruth thought this was not an argument which would justify church authority on such a subject. She dealt with the Roman Catholic Church's position on the rhythm method of birth control and questioned its premises:

At this point the Roman Catholic Church shifts its ground and admits that family limitation is not sinful but the method used must be "natural." What is natural? Man in a sense has been against nature all his days. In wearing clothes, living in heated houses, flying, man is, in a sense, fighting with nature.

She said the church had used the same arguments against the adoption of anesthetics in childbirth in the past. Every "advance of science" was combated with the slogan, "unnatural."

"If any birth control is right, then the best methods known to science should be used and made available to all who need them." Sexual expression, when countered with strict moral restraint, would result in a divided self. With a hint that Freudian concepts had become well accepted, she said: "Undue repression of natural human forces laden with good, causes much

harm to oneself and to those at whose expense one compensates.”

In contrast she believed that the “full life” was the development of all parts of the self. Initially, Ruth says that no response is necessary

to the claim that the availability of birth control would lead to “gluttony and adultery...license and abuse,” but she later says such beliefs are not unreasonable. Her final conclusion was that self-restraint would always be needed. She did,

however, question whether people should be “made good through being kept ‘innocent’ in the sense of ignorant.” □

A Tribute to Ruth Bullock

by Frank Lovell, with Sarah Lovell

The first time Sarah Lovell and I saw Ruth Bullock was when she and her companion, Reggie Bullock, were building the house they lived in for the rest of their lives. That was back in 1950, as we recall. The reason this first meeting comes to mind is because we saw Ruth then as the woman in action, or perhaps better said, the woman in motion. She was dragging and sawing huge rough-cut planks, fresh from the saw mill, and nailing them in place with long spikes. And she was enjoying this heavy work, talking about the unique construction of these outer walls and dreaming of what the house would be like when finished.

Our visit on that occasion was brief and we didn't have much chance to talk about problems of the labor movement or the perennial postwar crises of North American radicalism in general and of Canadian and U.S. Trotskyism in particular. We were not fully aware at the time that the organizational and strategic problems of the Trotskyist movement were largely derivative of the Cold War and the restructuring of the outmoded capitalist system worldwide. We later learned that Ruth was among those who soon began to sense that this was the case.

The last time we saw Ruth was in April 1987 when Sarah and I returned from a trip to China. We drove with our friend Shaun Maloney from Seattle to North Vancouver and walked, almost unannounced, into the house that Ruth and Reggie had built. But Ruth was waiting for us, prepared with questions and her own stories of how our world was drifting.

She and Shaun had never met before but they recognized in each other kindred fighters in the long struggle for workers' democracy. Ruth was familiar with maritime union history and knew a good deal about how the Canadian Seamen's Union was destroyed in the early years of the Cold War. And Shaun, for his part, was a leading participant in the fight against the corrupt leadership of the Seafarers International Union, which conspired with the U.S. and Canadian governments to wreck the maritime unions in both countries.

Maloney was later elected president of the Seattle local of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) and served in that capacity until his retirement a few

years before we visited Ruth. So she and Maloney had a great deal to talk about and found that their appreciation of what went wrong with the unions after World War II was much the same: corrupt union officials joined hands with anti-union employers and their governments.

During the intervening years between our first and last visits with Ruth, Sarah and I kept in touch with her through mutual friends and sporadic correspondence, always mindful of the parallel fortunes of Trotskyism in Canada and the U.S. When the first issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* was published in December 1983 Ruth was among the first to welcome and endorse it. When all known or suspected Trotskyists were purged from the U.S. Socialist Workers Party, Ruth was among the first to condemn the anti-Trotsky clique that had surreptitiously gained organizational control of the SWP. She abhorred all signs of bureaucratic control and organizational manipulation.

During the years that followed our expulsions and with the continued publication of *BIDOM* we received from Ruth frequent notes of encouragement and praise of particular articles she liked, usually those on the state of the union movement and women's struggles. She always renewed her subscription long in advance and occasionally sent a modest financial contribution. In this way we were reassured of Ruth's devotion to the movement and her political integrity.

When we saw her in 1987 she was anxious to tell us all about what had happened to her in connection with the Pathfinder bookstore in Vancouver. Ruth had been in charge of the bookstore and operated it successfully for several years. She was especially proud of the circle of customers she had attracted who visited the store regularly to buy radical publications, sometimes a new book by Pathfinder, or just to browse or exchange opinions on the latest shifts in local politics, usually connected to the rightward drift of the New Democratic Party. Ruth knew all about the checkered history of the NDP, especially in Vancouver.

What happened to her and the Pathfinder bookstore was not unexpected, but the way it came about was something of a surprise, she said. The Canadian Trotskyist section, follow-

ing the U.S. SWP, undertook a purge of all committed Trotskyists in 1984. And of course Ruth was high on the purge list. She thoroughly enjoyed telling us all about how the heads of the former Trotskyist group in Toronto managed to get rid of her. They did it simply and crudely by recalling all members of their group back to Toronto and dissolving the Vancouver organization. By so doing they also liquidated the Pathfinder bookstore. In this way, they thought, they had rid themselves of what they considered a troublesome problem. But Ruth remained in Vancouver, surrounded by the wide circle of friends and political associates she had developed over the years.

During our visit with Ruth several of her friends came by, at least five or six people of different ages and interests. One was a longtime union activist. Another was a young woman who brought some flower seeds, as I remember, or something from her garden for Ruth. Some of these visitors “just popped in,” as they said. Others who came stayed to talk about the condition of the world at that time. But the discussion was by no means limited to world politics, nor to any other aspect of the current political situation. It was clear that Ruth had a great variety of interests, that her life was not consumed with small group politics, nor with the Machiavellian stratagems of union bureaucrats.

She looked beyond all this and tried to understand the social ills that caused it. She talked about her experiences in the radical labor movement with satisfaction and humor, without rancor. But she did remember that once in the heat of argument she had been referred to as petty bourgeois and this, she said, could not be forgotten or forgiven. In this respect she was like an earlier generation of socialist activists who made their daily lives meaningful by seeking to influence the course of history and change the world through comradely collaboration with all other radical-minded workers.

This is how we remember Ruth, and how much we gained from our long association with her. □

April 16, 1994

What Must Lead to a New Leninist Upsurge in the United States?

by Chris Brooks

Chris Brooks writes for the British Fourth Internationalist fortnightly *Socialist Outlook*.

It is nearly a full year since Paul Le Blanc's "Notes on Building a Revolutionary Party in the United States" opened the rich and deep discussion which has unfolded in the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. While clearly reflecting the different attitudes Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. have towards Solidarity, Le Blanc in fact raises very general points about Leninism which are not limited to the U.S.

Additionally, Le Blanc's view of the role of culture has been dramatically elaborated in last month's *BIDOM*, and even this will hopefully be discussed fully in a separate article from this.

In October Steve Bloom correctly observed that Le Blanc's "Notes" were "creating a theoretical rationale for justifying and codifying the present divisions" between Fourth Internationalists in the U.S. Certainly Le Blanc enthusiastically counterpoises the building of Solidarity — which he points out is neither Leninist nor a revolutionary-activist organization — to the declarations of small and de-classed radical sects claiming to have the correct ideas.

"An American *Iskra*"?

Le Blanc is recoiling from propagandism and sectarianism. A good example is Peter Johnson's well-meant but sectarian response, "Where to Begin? With an American *Iskra*?"

Having advocated the establishment of an American paper for open polemic, Johnson concludes that not even the publication of his organization:

has enough authority in the Trotskyist movement to be an American *Iskra*, although a major success in the class struggle or a significant regroupment could change this. Meanwhile, those who agree with the perspective outlined above should continue to explain the need for the political regeneration and organizational reconstruction of the Fourth International as the starting point for resolving the international crisis of leadership and building a revolutionary party in the U.S.

Of the comparison between such a paper and *Iskra* — later — but what is one to make of this remarkable strategy for Fourth Internationalists?

For Johnson before we can take the lead of working people we must resolve the questions underlying the disunity of the Fourth Internationalists. Before we can do that we must establish a newspaper for open polemic within the working class and radical movements. Before that, we must unify the Fourth International-

alists, and before that Johnson's Trotskyist League will just patiently explain the case of unity.

Faced with such unappetizing prospects, some Fourth Internationalists suspect it may actually be possible to engage in some political activity in the mass movements, and that may bring Fourth Internationalist unity a little sooner.

We should, however, discuss Johnson's comparison with *Iskra*. The success of *Iskra* did not rest on the authority of its publishers within Russian Marxism. *Iskra* was part of a fight against "Marxist" Economism (itself an attempt to break away from discussion circle politics) and many of the leading "Marxists" of the time.

P.B. Struve, for instance, who wrote the remarkable 1898 manifesto of the first congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party, was contemplating publishing a legal liberal paper, *Osvobozhdenie*, at the time Lenin's *Iskra* was first published.

Furthermore, *Iskra* was not a point of beginning for Marxism in Russia but the culmination of a whole period of development, not only of Marxism, but crucially of the working class. *Iskra* marked the time when it was possible for Marxists to jump out of what Lenin called the "Primitiveness" (or, closer to Russian, "cottage industry methods") of discussion circle life, and into a working class that was at that moment on the boil and asking how to be taken into battle. It was this stage of working-class development that made *Iskra* possible.

"A Necessary Precondition"?

Le Blanc counterpoises, to Johnson's twilight orientation to the American Fourth Internationalists, a wide orientation for socialists, proposing, among other ideas, that:

A consistent and militant struggle for the immediate (non-socialist) economic demands of the working class and especially for the democratic demands of all oppressed sectors of society necessarily leads in the direction of workers' power and socialism....

The struggles for reforms should not become an end for itself but must be an integral part of organizing a working-class majority to establish its control over the political and economic life of society.

Le Blanc argues that the establishment of an actual Leninist party — like the Bolshevik party — is not best secured through founding of a "group whose activities have little relevance for the working class," but instead stipulates that

Marxists must instead build up the labor-radical subculture he considers an essential aspect of developing the widespread class consciousness needed for the establishment of a party. The best route to that is a labor party:

The development of a real, mass-based working-class party in the United States — a development which may not be inevitable, but is certainly possible.... An accumulation of trade union struggles, an accumulation of social movement struggles, an accumulation of coalition efforts, an accumulation of socialist education activity, an accumulation of creative cultural efforts will be a necessary precondition.

There is a tendency for two points to be expressed unclearly in Le Blanc's articles.

Firstly, of the form of consciousness needed for the construction of the Leninist party, is the level of consciousness in the vanguard or in the class? Is it "trade union" class consciousness or actual revolutionary consciousness?

Secondly, is there a role today for those who call themselves Fourth Internationalists to supplement both their activity in the mass organizations and the existing coalitions and their educational propaganda, in order to put forward a line of march to be enacted today which stands ahead of the current consciousness of the advanced workers?

These points are crucial for the comrades gathered around the *BIDOM*. In fact, the life of the parties of the Fourth International has for some time gone beyond the life of propaganda circles which participate in the mass organizations.

We put forward and follow out concrete initiatives which contribute to shifting the balance of forces within the mass organizations and the working class internationally. It is an essential part of our life as an international party and our construction of an international experience and leadership.

Counterpoising the construction of interventionist cadre organizations, which advance a line of march beyond the current struggles, to our participation in the everyday struggles while making propaganda for socialism reflects a skepticism about the possibility to build such organizations today. Of course, it is a technical point whether they are called parties or not — the parties of the Fourth International are not yet mass parties, but they clearly are parties. The word itself comes from the Latin *pars*, which means "part." We are a part of the working class

and represent the world outlook which will bring its liberation.

Prospects for Party Building

We understand how it is possible to question the possibilities for building revolutionary organizations which avoid the fate of sects.

The feminist, radical, and workers' movements have been on the defensive in the imperialist countries for nearly 20 years. The traditional labor leaders are weak in the face of onslaught. Their refusal to fight and the lack of a credible anticapitalist alternative creates disarray.

But even the partial setbacks and even defeats that have unfolded need not have happened. It is a period in which organized revolutionary parties can make immense differences.

This vast potential has not just existed in the imperialist centers. Toiling masses have moved against Stalinist repression and against imperialist domination.

The potential for party building has been there.

While we have not had clearly revolutionary situations, we have massive social explosions against capitalist austerity and bureaucratic repression, many of which could not have been predicted. Who foresaw the Chiapas rebellion in Mexico or the upsurge of French youth in March?

New leaderships certainly are the order of the day.

For these reasons, we still aim to construct revolutionary parties and our international, not from the irrational faith of a sect but from an understanding of the conjuncture. If consistent Marxists do not explain how and why we are to do this, there will be deepening crises, and we will not be able to train or win new cadres.

- Firstly, it is necessary and possible to build revolutionary parties. Ours is not a permanent conjuncture. On the contrary, we now see mass and diverse explosions. Only revolutionary organizations can prevent new defeats and assure new victories.
- Secondly, our uncompromising resistance to the effects of capitalism can demonstrate our present usefulness, however small we are, to vanguard workers and youth and reverse the decline of class struggle forces.
- Thirdly, the relationship of forces inside the working class is crucial for the future. Germany and Russia in the period 1910–1914 show how what will happen to future explosions is determined by the previous development of revolutionary parties.

Skepticism about the ability to build our parties today underplays the grave crises: of imperialism, of the long-term economic depression, of social explosions, of the crisis of working-class leadership, and of differing strategies being fought over among the ruling rich.

The coming depression will have diverse effects in imperialist countries. Labor leaders, "democratic" institutions, and civil liberties will all be tested. New social movements — women's, antimilitarist, ecologist, and so on — will fight against the state.

Reformist Utopias

Nearly a century ago, Eduard Bernstein outlined two strategic choices still facing working people today. Either there will be a deepening aggravation of the capitalist crisis, a realizing of anticapitalist perspectives of the direct action of workers and their allies, or there will be an attenuation of crisis and gradual displacement of political struggles with parliamentary reformism.

Since then — and including all our experience since 1917 — these choices remain, reaffirming our historical justification for the Bolshevik Party, the Communist International, and building the Fourth International today. Today gradualist and reformist strategies are utopian. Revolutionaries are the realists. The reformists failed to foresee all the great crises in Europe: 1914, 1917, 1929, 1933, 1940–41, 1949, 1968, and the depression that opened in 1973. They have more surprises, none of them identical, ahead.

The risks facing humanity will grow. Blows against us will become harder. Under these blows the masses will "awake," and the "ostrich" politics of the reformists will worsen.

We are in a period where the whole ideological order of the ruling rich must be recast. While the Clinton administration attempts the moral rehabilitation of imperialist intervention, the whole order of social welfare gains are under attack in Western Europe. This is indeed a period when, in Marx's words, "All that is holy is profane." Suddenly the welfare rights that underpinned a certain form of social peace are the major enemy of the rich.

The reason for this is simple: today there is no economic basis for maintaining the old order.

Reformism worldwide is thus redundant. Of course, this is not to suggest that we do not fight for democratic or other reforms. Far from it. However, new and major reforms cannot be won, except at times of acute crisis and in order

to turn workers away from seizing power. Such reforms themselves would be quickly challenged once the threat of revolution had been stomped by the ruling rich.

The credibility of the union leaders and reformist party leaders is put to the test and the masses are becoming more skeptical as reforms we won between 1945 and 1975 in Europe are threatened. There is a gradual weakening and a profound ideological crisis of the labor bureaucracy, right when many intellectuals and disappointed of the 1968 generation retreat to reformism.

Thus the bourgeoisie has accumulated a number of "left" intellectuals of the 1968 generation. The reformist project is the ideal bridge between their leftism of yesterday and the desire to get stuck in to the fruits of today.

In fact, there is no chance of a reformist solution to the coming depression and inter-imperialist conflicts. Key markets are persistently saturated, while no major industry can expand enough to produce a long wave of capitalist growth. Indeed, trade and purchasing power continued to stagnate even in the "upturn." Neither a fall in the price of labor nor an expansion of demand immense enough to produce such a growth in the rate of profit is possible. Instead a long wave of (not necessarily connected) tests will accumulate.

We face a period of austerity. Bourgeois offensives against social, workplace, and trade union rights will provoke ripostes. Periodically there will be vast explosions — not necessarily generalized struggles or general strikes — broad enough to produce a space for contestation, and a new credibility for anticapitalism among the youth and organized labor.

For humanity to gain from this, consistent Marxists need a rival strategy to the reformist projects of integration into the bourgeois state and the electoral rejection of mass struggle.

Correction

Through an error in the editing and page-making process, the opening sentence was dropped from the second paragraph of Paul Le Blanc's article "Culture, Consciousness, and Class Struggle" in the April 1994 issue of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. This omission wrongly gives the impression that Le Blanc is leveling a sharp criticism at articles by Peter Johnson and Steve Bloom. Here is the paragraph as originally written, with the first sentence restored:

"First of all and most importantly, I want to focus attention on those like Mary Scully who wrongly interpret what I have written as meaning that Leninism and revolutionary party-building should be rejected or at least set aside for the time being. This fundamental misunderstanding arises, in my opinion, from a stilted conception of what Leninism is — so that my application of Leninist

perspectives to the realities we face is misperceived as an abandonment of Leninist perspectives. Connected to this is a serious confusion over such questions as (1) the tasks facing revolutionary Marxists in the United States today, (2) the actual history of the U.S. working class, (3) the meaning and importance of *culture* for historical-materialists and revolutionary activists, and (4) the nature of working-class consciousness. In what follows I will give sustained attention — in reverse order — to these four questions, elaborating on points made in my earlier contribution, but here offering more substantial quotations from a variety of sources in order to achieve a more substantial (hopefully also more understandable) expression of my views. This may be more fruitful than a point-by-point defensive response to what strikes me as a tangle of misperceptions."

The "Three Sectors"

In the place of the complicity of each national workers' bureaucracy with its own bourgeoisie, we reaffirm the world unity of all the proletariat: linking our fight to break the fetters of the multinationals in solidarity with the fight for permanent revolution in the so-called Third World and the fight to defend the workers' states from the capitalist austerity championed by the decaying bureaucracy.

The interaction of these three sectors is not automatic at the level of the consciousness of the toiling masses and the vanguard: it must be reached by our action and political clarification.

It is not enough to found the need for the revolutionary party on long-term perspectives, though these are indispensable. One cannot mechanically draw from such a perspective the immediate priorities, medium-term activity, or prospects for party-building. Such a decree would risk the construction of an organization of militants with a propagandist deformation.

Today our party-building prospects especially rest on the perspectives for both capitalism and for mass action, the immediate events in the class struggle and social movements, the structure of the organized workers' movement and the different levels of consciousness produced. With this foundation and an understanding of the real strengths and weaknesses of the revolutionary nucleus itself we can demonstrate (if only to a limited layer of vanguard fighters and only at occasional movements more broadly) the immediately usefulness of the revolutionary party as an intransigent weapon in the defense of workers' interests without subordinating them to the constraints of bourgeois economic realism, state control, and economic pragmatism.

As we have seen, the cowardice of the labor leaders renders it possible for our organizations — even if temporarily — to initiate and lead significant struggles exactly because we are willing to fight.

The usefulness today of our parties in the life of the masses and vanguard can be shown not only through resisting the economic austerity offensive of capitalism but also in our solidarity with the most vulnerable layers of the masses, the oppressed sectors of the world revolution, and the defense of civil liberties.

This is already the activity of the parties in the Fourth International. The more implanted our parties are in workplaces and trade unions the more the usefulness of our parties can be demonstrated, the more easily we can recruit and, above all, consolidate such gains.

Recognizably, our current work is based on defensive immediate demands: for democracy, the rights of women, against war, in defense of the environment, and so on. so we must supplement this fully with propaganda: periodicals, leaflets, public meetings, and more. We put forward our transitional demands; our anti-crisis program for breaking with the logic of profit and the creation of an economy not based on its commodities sector; our need to turn to satisfy the desires of the mass layers marginal

to the life of consumer society. Doing this involves the refinement of our program on questions where we lag behind: ecology, health, urbanism, public service, and new technology.

This also involves a dynamic stand defending Marxism today against the vigorous anti-socialist, anti-humanist, and anti-rationalist ideological offensive of capital. We reaffirm our goal of a classless society without a state, without a commodity-based economy, and the transitional towards it — workers' power, workers' self-management, political pluralism, parties as instruments of socialist democracy.

First: Build Our Parties

To prevent workers being turned away from struggle at decisive moments by illusions, utopias, and reformist treasons it is necessary, if not sufficient, for us to defend our programmatic heritage.

So we advocate both Marxism's conception of revolutionary strategy and concrete initiatives such as: antimilitarism, internationalism, labor democracy, and so on. And these initiatives remain quite necessary, unless one thinks the mass won't move in the foreseeable future or that it can spontaneously dispose of its previous obstacles.

We reject the idea of a spontaneous upsurge of "revolutionists of action" in the reformist currents in the face of this bourgeois offensive. Cannon taught us such layers are "blunt weapons" in struggles in the imperialist countries. A consistent left-wing formation can survive only through assimilating the Fourth International's experiences. They may not adopt the label "Trotskyist"; however, they must adopt our revolutionary strategy and learn the lessons of popular fronts, imperialist wars, and reformist betrayers.

The fate of such left-wing currents thus depends on our ability to win them to our program and our project of constructing mass revolutionary parties and a mass International. If we fail, there will be new disappointments, defeats, and setbacks.

This is why in some countries Fourth Internationalists loyally and critically work inside mass workers' parties. There is no suggestion that the Labour Party in Britain, the Communist Refoundation Party in Italy, or the Workers' Party in Brazil are revolutionary parties, nor can they accomplish the tasks of such parties. We aspire to politically recompose these parties so that militant workers can discover through their own collaboration with us the correctness of our program. Sometimes — as we have recently found in Spain and in Germany — a project of recomposing a party does not succeed, and we continue to independently build our organizations.

This is exactly a national and tactical reflection of the activity outlined in the statutes of the Fourth International, which our world congress affirmed in 1969, 1974, 1979, and since then: "The aim of every national section is to become a mass revolutionary Marxist party capable of guiding the class struggle within the country to a successful conclusion in a socialist victory. To

achieve this the main task of a national section is to build a leadership that measures up to the historic need and to conquer mass influence."

A "Great Single Party" of Labor

We advance the labor party slogan for established reasons already explained well in the *Bulletin IDOM*. But our ability to build ourselves as a revolutionary party is not set aside until a mass party of labor exists, in which "Leninists" and reformists are "united." In the current situation a labor party, representing a massive deepening of the workers' struggle, would be a transitional formation.

A labor party apparatus may be controlled by those who favor incorporation into the bourgeois state. They would hold onto the apparatus by all repressive means. Suggestive of this is the German Social Democratic Party before 1914 and in the calm before 1923, as well as the British Labour Party in the 1980s — which has a pluralist and democratic tradition far stronger than do parties on the continent.

Such "unity" will be fatally tested when mass resistance and revolts of workers come up against a government including "friends of labor": consider the mass expulsions of trade unionists from PASOK in Greece after strikes hit up against the government of Papandreu.

U.S. reformist labor leaders will follow the same route as in Europe: economic protectionism, limiting international solidarity to those within the trade bloc of one's own ruling class, advocating an increase in the supply of money and credit to reflate the economy (which would require reformist majorities in the continent's parliaments). This route is a dead end: it is impossible to escape national constraints; it is impossible to defeat capitalism without internationalizing struggle.

From Propaganda to the United Front

There is no contradiction between our modest campaign parties, inside the present struggles, and propaganda. Our actual choice is between intervention and propagandism (that is to say the conception of propaganda as the only tool we can currently employ), not between intervention and propaganda.

Our current aim — to build our parties and the consciousness of layers of working people and their allies (struggling for power is not our current task) — is best gained through that combination.

But there is a gap between our current work for immediate demands and the need to recruit and convince those around us to build revolutionary organizations. The prolonged defense of a political line by our parties bridges the gap — by explaining class solutions to current problems: the workers' government, the need for unions to break from big business parties and establish workers' parties, that we are for the government of workers' parties only.

To bridge this gap we may even attempt to advance positions which allow us to conquer a particular hegemonic space while asserting our desire, devoid of sectarianism, for pluralist and unitary mass struggles.

Central to our party-building project is a continuing orientation to organized labor. Even if workers now follow their mass organizations more skeptically than before, we continue to argue for the United Front. This is especially vital when union leaders are more serious about opposition or even aim to build movements against certain attacks. Such seriousness is quite rare from the reformist cadre, but the base of the organized labor movement can still make them move.

We must avoid any illusion that a layer of the labor leadership is a substitute today for the activity of our organizations, even when we critically support their struggles against capital and the right wing of the unions. We defend against them our program and vision of revolutionary crisis — the insurrectionary general strike — and the struggle for power in the imperialist countries.

The social nature of everyday life in the imperialist countries already sets the working class on this road. So we reject strategies based on parliamentary institutions which the masses will have gone beyond in the insurrection.

Linking our current usefulness to propaganda allows us to aim to restructure the labor movement politically and organizationally when the struggle deepens.

The New Generation

Because of the recession, the new generation has neither the experience of combat nor the finesse of the previous. Especially since the Fourth International today is larger and better anchored in the working class than before 1968, we are not afraid of this situation. But the gap between even our current strength and the need to influence, inform, train, and even lead the new generation is enormous.

The South African Elections and the Military

Continued from page 13

only unopposed, but supported by the army. They then proceeded to smash the mass workers' organizations.

Forty years later history repeated itself when the socialist Popular Unity government of Salvador Allende was smashed by a military coup in Chile. Allende repeatedly gave the same reassurances that the armed forces of the capitalist state would defend his government and the constitution. Today these fatal illusions are once again being sown, this time by the leaders of the ANC.

For the Completion of the Democratic Revolution

Like the Weimar Republic of the German Social Democrats, the coming period in South Africa may indeed mean extended political instability as the struggle of the workers and the reaction of the right overstep the bounds of the new bourgeois democracy.

The elections will bring in an ANC government administering a capitalist state. The masses will have their "own" government only to the extent that renewed confidence and higher ex-

The deterioration of living conditions has brought to many the shock of unemployment. A series of struggles will create conditions more favorable for their politicization. But in what way? spontaneous struggles do not automatically rise in quality as they proceed. We consciously and collectively attempt to shape the radicalization and infuse it with our notions of organization, delegate-based democracy, and the need for a revolutionary party of the workers. Of course, we follow the real process of radicalization, not a schema. We gauge each development ideologically and by its effects on mass action. Especially, we reject any schema based on a preferred terrain for the construction of our parties.

We must continually educate our cadre in the workers' United Front and rejection of sectarian approaches to building mass movements. Today only our differentiated and pragmatic approach is worthwhile, and this can imply a whole series of tactical operations.

An International Means Collaboration

Construction of the Fourth International is decisive for maintaining parties in this unfavorable conjuncture. Subjectively the best communist tradition, which we maintain, is of self-organization and socialist democracy as a part of international collaboration.

There is no real internationalism without international organization.

This is the real contrast between the internationalism of revolutionaries and the almost worthless internationalism of cheerleaders and scoundrels.

The choice is either to build the Fourth International or to retreat to campism. As in 1933–38

and 1953–62 behind organizational discussions there is often the political question of whether the left of the labor leadership is adequate to reform itself and carry forward struggles. Any refusal to build revolutionary parties today from the basis of such an idea will fall away in the face of mass action hitting up against the bureaucracy.

Construction of the Fourth International is a precondition for the successful conclusion of the world revolution. Only we are convinced that the nation-state is as obsolete as private property. We cannot fall back in an opportunistic way from the need to simultaneously build revolutionary parties (even if small) and a revolutionary International (even if isolated). This opportunism underpins ideas of building strong national parties before "federating" them into a mass international, or of putting off the construction of revolutionary parties until the 1914 split in socialism is repaired.

There will be no spontaneous rebirth of internationalism without practice, education, and systematic collaboration of a long duration. such spontaneity is as illusory as faith in the birth of a mass political class consciousness without political activity and systematic propaganda — without a revolutionary party.

To build our International as one which applies common lines on international questions we develop international initiatives beyond international solidarity. This is the true significance of our eleventh — and now thousand-strong — youth camp, November's second "Assembly for Another Europe," the convoys into Bosnia of International Workers' Aid, and the unique activity of our International Institute for Research and Education. □

April 8, 1994

pectations lead them to demand implementation of the Freedom Charter and that the ANC government responds by arming and mobilizing the masses for land reform and nationalization of industries. But that would require the ANC bureaucracy to break its historic compromise with the ruling class, whose army remains intact and ready to ensure that the ANC keep its promises to the capitalists, not to the masses.

Nearly sixty years ago in a letter to revolutionary Marxists in South Africa, the great Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky suggested the outlines of a tactical orientation to the ANC that is today being actively pursued by WOSA. Trotsky called for "defense of the [African National] Congress, as it is, in all cases when it is being attacked by the white oppressors and their chauvinistic agents." While defending the ANC, revolutionaries should "place the progressive over the reactionary tendencies in the program of the Congress."

This principled defense of the ANC and the progressive aspects of its program would be the only way revolutionary Marxists could gain a hearing from ANC supporters among the work-

ers. Such a hearing would allow them to patiently explain

the inability of the Congress to achieve the realization of even its own demands, because of its superficial, conciliatory policy. In contradistinction to the Congress, the Bolshevik-Leninists develop a program of revolutionary class struggle. (*Writings of Leon Trotsky (1934–35)* Pathfinder, 1974, p. 252.)

That inability of the ANC will become clearer after the elections when mass enthusiasm over the democratic electoral victory will confront the broken promises and brutal reality of the ANC administering a capitalist state and economy for the profits of a white minority ruling class. Only a socialist revolution led by the Black working class can guarantee land reform and nationalization of the banks, mines, and industries. It will thereby lay the basis for creating a truly democratic, nonracial South Africa, which will complete the democratic revolution. □

April 15, 1994

FSLN Debates Issues for May Conference

by Stephen Marks

The following article is excerpted from the April 20 *Green Left* weekly (Australia).

District Six in Managua's eastern section is a working-class area and a strong base for the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). Recently I was invited to a meeting in the district where representatives of two declared tendencies defended their platforms for the FSLN's Extraordinary Conference in May.

Before some 300 members and sympathizers, Carlos Gallo, National Assembly member from the district, supported the "For a Sandinism That Returns to the Majority" tendency, while William "Chele" Grisby, the director of Radio Primerisima, backed the "Sandinista Democratic Left Discussion Forum" tendency.

Announced last July in response to widespread concern about the party's statutes and program, particularly the question of relations with the right-wing UNO government, the May 20-22 conference will be a reconvening of the first FSLN congress, held in 1991.

Gallo addressed the issues presented in the document "For a Sandinism That Returns to the Majority," which was printed in the newspaper *Barricada* on February 15 along with some 500 names in support.

Heading the list of signatories were the two principal leaders of the Sandinista Bench in the National Assembly, former vice-president Sergio Ramirez and Dora Maria Téllez, who was health minister in the Sandinista government...

Declared supporters of the left current include former foreign minister Father Miguel D'Escoto and the Managua party political secretary, Victor Hugo Tinoco.

What has become known as "Sergio's document" calls for a more open membership of the party and the abolishing of the current categories of members and sympathizers. It emphasizes a total rejection of any and all forms of violence to achieve political ends and stresses the importance of winning the next elections in November 1996...

[Speaking for the left,] Grisby stressed the need to support popular struggles. Only by unequivocally supporting the poorest sectors, those most affected by the government's policies, could the party retain and win back grassroots support...Grisby also noted that the government's policies of throwing people out of work, encouraging evictions, introducing school fees, and running down the hospital system are a more subtle form of violence.

Group of 29

[The left's stand is based] on last July's declaration by the "Group of 29," which called on the FSLN National Directorate to come out clearly against the government and its drive to overturn the revolutionary gains made by the people. In January a national left meeting estab-

lished a working commission to draw up [a] document, which was endorsed at a public meeting of 240 Sandinistas on February 4.

Prominent participants in this process and Democratic Left leaders were Managua councilor Monica Baltadona, Grisby, and sociologist Orlando Núñez. National Directorate members Daniel Ortega and Tomás Borge are said to be associated with much of their thinking, but they, like most members of the National Directorate, have not declared support for any current.

Both presentations were followed by contributions and questions from the floor. The District Six Community Hall, where we met, is quite close to [a transport cooperative] depot, a stronghold of militant pro-Sandinista bus drivers. Representatives of these workers, who were a strong force behind January's national strike against fuel rises, wanted to know why leading figures associated with the "Return to the Majority" tendency had publicly criticized their... strike.

Other workers...questioned the tactical support given by Sandinista representatives in the National Assembly to a government which was sacking workers...[and asked] why Sandinista campesinos in the north should...not have arms to defend themselves against the Recontra death squads.

The sympathies of the meeting lay clearly with the left tendency...These leftist sympathies are reported to be widespread in the rank and file of the party. Political secretaries such as Isaas Perraes in Esteli and the secretaries in Leon and Matagalpa, important bases of party membership, support the left.

Women Intervene

A quarter to a third of the audience in the six-hour meeting were women. The predominant age group was 25 to 50, the generation which made and defended the revolution.

While they are in the leadership of both tendencies, women are intervening in the debate with their own analysis and demands. For example, in the March 8 *Barricada*, Sofia Montenegro announced that "a group of women militants of the FSLN has launched a discussion of the party's stance and attitude toward women and the results of the debate in the women's forum will be taken to the congress."

On March 19 the "Permanent Women's Forum" was formed; it reportedly attracted party and non-FSLN women inspired by the opportunity to debate and promote women's issues... [in] the FSLN preconference discussion...

While discussion continues throughout the country in barrio meetings, it also occurs in the pro-Sandinista media. *Barricada* and *El Nuevo Diario* have thrown open their pages, while

radio stations Ya, Primerisima, and Sandino in Managua and the Channel Four television station have aired debate.

Socialism

In an address to a meeting in District Four in Managua, Tomás Borge was reported to have discussed the experience of applying to join the social democratic Socialist International (SI). He said that the SI recognized that the FSLN was a revolutionary party and as a result had granted it only observer status. Borge said this had provoked ideological confusion in the party and...encouraged social democratic tendencies.

The ex-secretary of the Foreign Ministry, Alejandro Bendaña, writing in *Barricada* on February 10, defended the socialist perspective by pointing out that Sandino himself had described himself as "communist nationalist" and had been very much influenced by the libertarian socialism prevalent among the oil workers of Mexico, among whom he had worked for three years.

Both tendencies agree that it is critical to win the November 1996 elections. Sergio Ramirez has proposed himself as the FSLN's candidate. To illustrate the need to win the middle ground, he has pointed to the results of the recent elections in the two autonomous regions of the Atlantic coast.

The far-right mayor of Managua, Arnoldo Aleman, was able to fund an opportunistic alliance which gave his Constitutionalist Liberal Party a strong vote and an overall total of 36 council seats in the two [regional] councils. The FSLN won a total of 32 seats, while the other 22 seats were won by mostly regionally based minor parties.

While these results cannot be generalized because of the particularities of the Atlantic coast and the specific disadvantages faced by the FSLN's campaign, they do show that the right has the potential to put forward a strong presidential candidate in 1996. Although not without his own problems (serious corruption charges), Aleman, the overthrown dictator Somoza's former youth leader, looks likely to be the main right-wing candidate.

The District Six meeting indicated that the preconference debate is running very deep in the party. Despite the obvious warm respect between Grisby and Gallo, the debate is cutting across traditional political friendships and allegiances. It is also clear that wide sections of the pro-Sandinista population are interested in the opportunity to discuss and clarify the political issues that affect ordinary people. □

A Marxist Analysis of Bureaucracy by Ernest Mandel

Power and Money by Ernest Mandel. Verso, 1992. 252 pp.

Reviewed by Sean Flynn

A recent issue of the left-liberal U.S. magazine *The Nation* devoted its lead article to an appeal to the left to give up its sentimental but now obsolete infatuation with socialism. Implicit in the argument, now so commonplace among former socialists who, in the wake of the collapse of the USSR and the "command economy," feel betrayed by history, is an identification of the Stalinist experience with socialism, and hence, of socialism with bureaucracy and economic inefficiency.

The argument that socialism is utopian and best left behind is based on two intertwined themes: first, that economic planning can end only in a centralized bureaucracy and the consequent curtailment of individual freedom; second, that the experience of central planning and the resulting economic inflexibility has shown that the domination of the market is necessary to ensure economic efficiency.

These positions pose serious theoretical issues which call into question the very feasibility of socialism. The present crisis of confidence within the left is proof positive of the depth of the challenge. Although many questions remain unanswered, Ernest Mandel's latest book is a timely defense of socialism as both possible and, in light of the continued exploitation and degradation of humankind and the environment under capitalism, eminently desirable.

Power and Money is devoted to a Marxist analysis of bureaucracy, both in capitalist and post-capitalist society, a phenomenon which is explained as the product of social, economic, and ideological forces. The title of Mandel's book summarizes his argument: the persistence of bureaucratic power in society reflects the continued survival of commodity production and money. Hence, Mandel argues, the suppression of bureaucracy and the withering away of commodity production must also go hand in hand.

Was the Soviet Bureaucracy a New Ruling Class?

As his point of departure, Mandel analyzes the class character of the Stalinist bureaucracy, defending the Trotskyist conception of deformed and degenerated workers' states. At first glance, this could appear to be the quixotic reaction of an old leftist unwilling to let the past rest.

Yet for many, the ultimate argument against socialism is the indisputable fact that the Soviet Union was characterized by the

hypertrophy of bureaucratization rather than the withering away of the state. Hence, a correct analysis of what existed in the Soviet Union and how it developed is key both to grasping why bureaucracy is not inevitable under socialism and to deciphering the social and economic conditions that spontaneously generate bureaucratism.

Repeating Trotsky's view which links the bureaucratic degeneration of the USSR to the failure of the revolution to extend itself to the advanced countries, the exhaustion of the Soviet working class, and the consequent isolation of the revolution to an economically underdeveloped country, Mandel begins tracing the connection between want and scarcity, on the one hand, and bureaucracy and social classes, on the other.

Answering concepts of the Stalinist bureaucracy as either a "state capitalist" or "bureaucratic collectivist" ruling class, Mandel counterposes the view that "actually existing socialism" is a social formation which began the transition from capitalism to socialism, but found itself in suspended animation, controlled by the needs of a bureaucratic strata which monopolized economic and political power in order to preserve itself and the social formation on which it rested and still rests.

Mandel makes clear the distinctions between capitalism and these transitional formations, reminding his readers that capitalism is an economy based on generalized commodity production. Because the aim of production is exchange rather than direct use, a transitional society in which the bulk of production was essentially planned, albeit bureaucratically, could not in any sense of the word be "capitalist," state or otherwise. This is underscored by the fact that in these transitional societies the worker was guaranteed the right to a job; hence, labor power had to a large degree escaped the commodity form it takes under capitalism.

On the other hand, the fact that the bureaucracy has to deny the extent of its true power and insist that the working class still rules expresses the temporary nature of its reign, again indicating that it lacks the stability of a social class. This fact was brought home by the spectacular fall of the bureaucratic regimes of Eastern Europe only decades after they had first emerged. The fact that the bureaucratic system, unlike capitalism, broke much more easily when faced with crisis showed the absence of the inherent strength of a social class rooted in the underlying mode of production.

This is also shown by the bureaucratic layer's lack of a unified *raison d'être*, re-

vealed by the fractured response to its present crisis. In the throes of stagnation, deep conflicts arise between those — particularly in the state, party, and union apparatuses — who realize the organic connection between their privileges and collective property, on the one hand, and, on the other, technocratic and enterprise management sectors pushing to secure for themselves private ownership of the means of production.

Mandel sums up the contradiction as follows:

In the USSR and similar countries, the ambivalent and hybrid character of the workers' bureaucracy was seen most clearly in the relationship between administrative power and money wealth. The non-capitalist nature of that bureaucracy was expressed in the fact that it essentially ruled not through money but through a monopoly of political power. Its non-socialist nature, on the other hand, was expressed in its inability to free itself from the influence of money and money wealth. The fact that it was not a new ruling class was expressed through its inability to free itself from the whole hybrid combinations of power monopoly and money power, and to base itself on fundamentally new mechanisms of power [pp. 6-7].

One cannot deny that Trotskyists underestimated the damage done by the bureaucracy to the socialist cause and therefore overestimated the opposition to capitalist restoration. We implied that one piece of evidence showing the class character of the deformed or degenerated workers' state would be the resistance of working people, including through civil war, to attempts to restore capitalism. The ragged and uneven response to the dissolution of the German Democratic Republic or to Lech Walesa's procapitalist program showed how the very idea of socialism has become discredited among wide layers of the producers, the ultimate result of the bureaucracy's encouragement of the fragmentation of labor resulting in deepened alienation and cynicism, and the continued attractive power of the industrial capitalist world's level of consumption to the oppressed workers of the Eastern bloc. Though the workers strongly resist attacks on their right to work or to social security, they do not link these rights to the absence of capitalism.

Bureaucracy, Scarcity, and Commodity Production

Mandel argues that the hypertrophy of the Soviet state was an expression of the continued regime of scarcity, and reflected the bureaucracy's attempt to manage the social contradictions resulting from the marriage of proto-socialist or planned production relations with bourgeois, or commodity-based,

relations in the distribution of consumer goods. Mandel therefore turns to the role of want in producing bureaucracy.

He reminds us that when a society evolves beyond subsistence production but the social surplus is still too small to be meaningfully shared, society divides itself into the producers and a ruling class which appropriates that surplus. Class society in turn creates the state, a special apparatus above society whose function is both to preserve the domination of the ruling class and to regulate conflicts within that class.

This division of labor is part and parcel of the evolving complexity of society and the *technological* division of labor. But given the separation between the producers and the appropriators, there also emerges a *social* division of labor between those who lead and those who follow. Bureaucracy, whether in a capitalist or transitional state, an enterprise or a trade union, sees itself as the embodiment of mental labor, attempting to monopolize the coordination of societal functions.

Bureaucracy in Capitalist Society

Mandel points out that the dominant mode of production guides the evolution of all strata within that society. Under capitalism, production is geared not for direct use, but rather for the intermediate stage of market exchange and the realization of profit. The money relationship — the quintessential expression of exchange value — therefore determines the functions of capitalist bureaucracy.

Capitalism, based on the competition of many capitals, requires regulation by non-capitalists. "Private capitalists cannot, for example, effectively assume the role of a central bank, because they cannot make abstraction from their private interests" (p. 13). This role falls to the capitalist governmental bureaucracy, whose permanence is enhanced by its security of tenure, fixed income, and hierarchical organization, but which remains subordinated to capital:

Nowhere has any sector of the bourgeois bureaucracy been able to break the decisive power of money wealth. On the contrary, whereas in post-capitalist societies money wealth is in the final analysis subordinated to political power, in capitalist societies political power is in the final analysis an emanation of money wealth. Whenever [the bureaucracy] achieves an unusually high degree of autonomy, this becomes either an avenue for primitive accumulation of private money wealth or a means of penetrating into the upper layers of the bourgeois class [p. 7].

In capitalist society, besides the dominance of the bourgeois state bureaucracy, there are two parallel processes: the emergence of what Mandel calls the "para-state bureaucracy," and the stratification of the trade unions. The trend for the unions to become more subordinated to the state "stems from the objective need for capital to tighten control over labor, not only at the workplace but in society as a whole, as the historical crisis of

profitability and of bourgeois social relations become more acute" [p. 163].

The emergence of a para-state bureaucracy stems from working class gains in securing the "socialization of wages" through a network of social security and health service systems. In dispensing benefits, the resulting bureaucracies imply that human beings have a right to a minimum standard of living and to health care, that human needs take priority over profits.

But social service systems operate under capitalism and are seen by the ruling class as a drain on the state. The resulting inadequacy of funding undermines the quality of service and fosters a web of eligibility restrictions administered by the bureaucracy in an effort to restrict access to these limited resources. Hence,

[t]he demand for greater openness and a radical simplification of social security legislation is thus an essential component of the struggle against bureaucracy here and now in the capitalist countries [p. 163].

Mandel concludes:

...[Both] the "socialization" of wages and the stratification of trade unions are real historical trends, involving a gradual loss of the degree of autonomous control over living conditions which had previously been conquered by the labor movement. The bureaucratization of para-state institutions is thus a powerful motor for the transfer of such control to capital. And in the same sense, the labor bureaucracy present in these institutions tend to be gradually transformed into parts of the bourgeois state bureaucracy [p. 163].

The Labor Bureaucracy and the Dialectic of Partial Conquests

Having sketched the origins of bureaucracy in scarcity and the division of labor, Mandel applies these themes closer to home.

"The problem of bureaucracy within the working-class movement," he writes, "arises from the fact that full-timers and petty-bourgeois intellectuals come to occupy the middle and top functions of a permanent apparatus" (p. 59). Yet,

to reject all centralized workers' organization on the grounds that it can become bureaucratized...is to propose a cure worse than the sickness itself...Such a relapse into primitivism denies the very possibility of workers' self-emancipation, which can be achieved only at the level of society in its totality [p. 96].

Squaring the circle requires a closer look at the mechanisms fostering bureaucratism, in particular what Mandel calls the "dialectic of partial conquests."

A century and a half ago, Marx and Engels wrote that the proletariat had nothing to lose but its chains. For many workers, particularly in the industrialized world, this is no longer literally true.

The organized proletariat of today does have something to lose conjuncturally — namely, the economic, social, and political gains that

its long struggle has wrested from the ruling class. It should be stressed that the dialectic of partial conquests reflects real problems and not a logic of contradiction (p. 66).

Consequently, in debating options in the class struggle, a trade union or workers' party is forced to consider whether the possible losses outweigh potential gains. This has a potentially conservatizing effect, particularly where the movement is headed by a bureaucracy whose privileges are based on the maintenance of the status quo, whose power is the result of having weakened the working class's control over its own institutions, and who increasingly identify their own interests with those of the members.

What organizational fetishism really means is that the party or trade union becomes more and more a goal in itself, so that working-class emancipation is identified with defense and consolidation of the organization, itself increasingly defined in terms of its apparatus [p. 66].

Although fundamentally a social phenomenon, Mandel points out a familiar psychological dimension:

[Bureaucratic] organizational regimes...unleash a process of negative selection in which persons lacking character, will-power, independence of judgment and capacity to resist pressure, or even displaying servility and conformism tinged with base motivations, will inevitably come to the fore [p. 129].

The result of all these processes is working-class passivity and cynicism. Fortunately,

[a]n incipient trend towards bureaucratization of working class mass organizations is indeed unavoidable, as are periodic declines in mass activity. But periodic surges in the level of mass activity are equally unavoidable products of the inner contradiction of capitalism and bourgeois society: they more than once have taken on the form of revolutionary action...The more this process unfolds, the more the trend towards bureaucratization can be checked and its previous results reversed [p. 94].

The Bureaucratization of Workers' Rule and Commodity Fetishism

If scarcity and the evolving division of labor are the roots of bureaucracy under capitalism, post-capitalist society emerges, as Marx pointed out, "bearing the birthmarks of the old society." The new order thus carries with it a strong tendency to reconstitute bureaucracy, a bent further complicated by the fact that the working class has not been prepared to fully assume the management of society.

During the period of the bourgeoisie's rise to power, it was already an economically and culturally privileged and self-confident class, aggressively asserting its ideological hegemony over society while still being politically oppressed. It could therefore, in the aftermath of victorious revolutions, capture with relative ease the absolutist state apparatus and remodel it in its own interests. It could create a special corps of state functionaries subordinated to it by the all-pervading power of money and wealth...

After a victorious socialist revolution, the working-class finds itself in an entirely different situation. It has no experience of how to rule. It is culturally less developed...It cannot use the bourgeois state apparatus... When isolated in one or a few countries...it constantly suffers the consumerist technological and cultural pressure of the world market...[p. 74].

Yet unlike the capitalist class, whose private possession of economic power gives it countervailing strength,

[there] is no way in which the working class can rule without governing... Thus, the functional division of the proletariat, between those who "professionally exercise power" and the mass of the class, sets in motion a social process which suppresses the direct collective rule of the class as such [p. 75].

Hence, the lack of experience of rule, coupled with scarcity, calcified the social division of labor between the "masses" and their "vanguard," resulting in the hypertrophy of the state bureaucracy.

Mandel does not ignore what he calls "the dark years of Lenin and Trotsky," during which institutionalizing the single-party system and temporarily banning factions within the Communist Party assisted the process of bureaucratization. The "dark years" were based on two misjudgments: first, that despite the political and economic dispersal of the kulaks after 1921, famine and NEP would make counterrevolution the main danger, requiring a more centralized party; and second, that the passivity of the working class required enhancing the power of the party as the conscious vanguard of the class. Nevertheless, Mandel concludes that

those writers who see Lenin's mistakes of 1921 as decisive in the victory of the Stalin faction fatally underestimate the shift in the social relationship of forces that occurred in Soviet Russia. Neither Lenin nor Trotsky nor any faction of the Party could have achieved a political reactivation of the mass of the Russian working class in 1923 [p. 123].

Recounting the emergence of oppositions within the party, Mandel writes that

the real tragedy of the Russian Revolution at that moment in history is that the leading cadre of the Bolshevik Party did eventually understand the danger of Stalinist Bonapartism and despotism — but not together and not at the same time, rather later than sooner, when it could no longer be stopped...[p. 125].

Mandel points out that the existence of scarcity and of a division of labor become ideological excuses to justify the bureaucratic order. Thus Stalin's theory that despite the overthrow of capitalism the law of value continues to guide socialist society reflected the need to justify the material privileges of the ruling caste. Similarly, the division of labor between mental and manual work excused the bureaucracy's monopoly of political and economic power. But the inequitable distribution of consumer goods could not be replicated in the sphere of production with-

out the restoration of private ownership. Hence the conclusion that bureaucracy feeds off of the underlying mode of production, and not vice versa.

All top bureaucrats [in capitalist society] even if they rebel in spirit, sooner or later go the way of all flesh, attempting to translate their power into private capital accumulation. This is the key dissimilarity between bourgeois and pre-capitalist or post-capitalist societies. In the latter, power overrides money; owners of money wealth can be expropriated by those who hold power. In the former, no state — including the Nazi one — has been able to overcome the sway of money wealth [p. 187].

The bureaucracy of the post-capitalist states therefore plays the contradictory role of defending collective property against the outside capitalist world in order to preserve the basis of its own privileges, while defending its monopoly of power and the privileges resulting from that monopoly against the producing classes of their own countries. Mandel then argues that in order for the Soviet bureaucracy to have become a new post-capitalist class, it would have had to free itself from the influence of the law of value. But because this would have required the disappearance of both the influence of the world market — e.g., the abolition of world capitalism, and of distribution based on exchange within the USSR, possible only with abundance — such a metamorphosis would have destroyed the very basis of the bureaucracy's existence: its balancing act between imperialism and the Soviet working class.

Can Economic Efficiency Be Determined Only Through the Market?

The problem of power in a post-capitalist society is essentially political in nature. It involves the key question of socialist democracy, of decisive control by the toiling masses over the state, of forms of decision-making in which the autonomy of the apparatus is decisively broken, its dimensions radically reduced, its elective character imposed against bureaucratic resistance [p. 77].

But this perspective implies the feasibility of socialism as a mode of production superior to capitalism. Trotsky pointed out in *The Revolution Betrayed* that if "history is nothing but a struggle for an economy of working time," then "socialism could not be justified by the abolition of exploitation alone; it must guarantee to society a higher economy of working time than is guaranteed by capitalism." Mandel therefore addresses the argument that the market is the only mechanism for rationally distributing scarce economic resources.

This contention is based on a series of false assumptions. First, it simplistically counterposes private ownership to state property. Actually, Mandel writes, as much difference separates private ownership by petty commodity production from capitalist ownership

based on wage labor as distinguishes the collective "command economy" from social ownership through democratic self-management. The key question is who controls under private or collective ownership? A second assumption is the long-discredited presumption of equality between the worker and the capitalist. A third is the abstraction of "consumer sovereignty" despite the disparity of "effective demand" between a Rockefeller and the great mass of working consumers. In short, rule by the market is premised on what Mandel calls the "structural inequality of status."

Similarly, Mandel points out that the benefits of competition in reducing economic waste depends on one's point of view. One should question the rationality of unemployment caused by the pressure to cut costs, or, in light of the human costs, the efficacy of overproduction and insolvency caused by failure to anticipate the market. As Mandel puts it, "[economic] criteria are not by themselves sufficient for a full evaluation of the comparative rationality of different social systems. We also have to introduce the concept of macro-social rationality (optimization) into the analysis" (p. 225). Indeed, "[the] fundamental argument in favor of socialism is precisely that humankind can no longer endure the costs of aggregate irrationality" (p. 243).

Moreover, far from responding to economic signals emitted by the market, Mandel reminds us that even under capitalism, much of what is produced, particularly means of production, infrastructure, and construction, is built to order and is in that sense "planned," rather than made for sale on the open market. The problem is that the underlying rationale is still profit and "effective demand."

Thus, in weighing the economic feasibility of socialism, one must identify the results peculiar to the bureaucratization of the post-capitalist societies.

Because of its economic nature, the sources and forms of its income, the bureaucracy — hence the "command economy" which it controls — is more conservative, less flexible, less capable of adaptation to new challenges, and less responsive to a changed environment — except in periods of acute crisis and in certain priority sectors — than is an advanced capitalist society. It is not, as Milton Friedman contends, that the lack of a free market deprives it of signals about what is amiss. Rather, it reacts more slowly to the available signals, since there is a built-in incentive to falsify, or not transmit, information [p. 223].

Because bureaucracy — and not the economic dynamics of a bureaucratized transition — is the main subject of *Power and Money*, Mandel does not further elaborate the means that a transitional society will employ to ensure economic efficiency. Hence, whether subjective will can replace competition as an objective spur to technological

change, or how to counter the tendency for “soft budgetary constraints” to encourage efficiency — the same problem encountered in the capitalist defense industry with the “costs plus ten percent” mode of operation; these and other economic issues are not addressed in the book.

Similarly, Mandel writes that

all economic calculation under capitalism and in societies transitional between capitalism and socialism has to be imprecise. As long as the economic actors behave in a fragmented way, because labor is not yet completely socialized, a unified aggregate practice is impossible. Each independent actor constantly changes the overall situation, thereby modifying what can be known and what needs to be known [p. 221].

Yet a dynamic and nonstagnant socialism will itself be constantly in flux, again raising the difficulty of achieving “a unified aggregate practice” and the socialization of labor. In any event, Mandel does not advocate the ultraleft immediate elimination of commodity production and the market mechanism.

Our solution includes precise measurement of production costs through a stable currency and a system of consumer goods prices — except for those distributed free of charge — corrected by the operation of the law of supply and demand. The difference between this and generalized market economy... resides in the long-term dynamic of the economy and society as a whole. Key allocation of scarce resources — say 50 to 75% of the total — would be decided democratically and *a priori* by the mass of the people themselves, and not left to the vagaries of market fluctuations which, in reality, are governed by the big bank accounts [p. 226].

The Conditions for Socialism and the Disappearance of Bureaucracy

The persistence of bureaucracy reflects a stage in the development of human society in which the “working time” required of the mass of society is so long — and the social surplus product so small — as to preclude both a meaningful equal division of the surplus and the full involvement of society’s members in governing themselves. Mandel points out that capitalism, by revolutionizing technology, greatly multiplied the social surplus product while, through computerization and the increased educational and technical level of the producers, made feasible a dilution of the social division of labor.

“If the ultimate source of bureaucracy and state power lies in scarcity, then the withering away of the state depends on its gradual elimination in a climate of abundance” (p. 205). The reason, of course, is that society would then have less need to allocate scarce resources through the market.

Mandel defines “abundance” as the saturation of demand for basic consumer goods and services. “The concept of saturation of the passive consumption of goods and services hinges on a theory of needs which is

indeed hierarchical. It divides them into basic needs, secondary needs that become indispensable with the growth of civilization, and luxury, inessential or even harmful needs” (p. 207). Answering the contention that such a hierarchy is inherently tyrannical, he turns the argument around, writing that “[precisely] because aggregate resources are finite, a systematic priority for luxury needs implies systematic non-satisfaction of some basic needs for the less fortunate majority” (p. 208).

Given abundance, the withering away of commodity production would begin through the planned allocation of a greater and greater proportion of production outside of the market. “The reason for setting these priorities would be formally the same as the reason why, in a bourgeois state, the army, police and judiciary are given such scrupulous attention. They are fundamental safeguards of the social order” (p. 212).

Selection of the general framework setting forth the basic proportions for dividing resources would occur through the debate over alternative programs proposed by various parties, followed by a vote. Mandel suggests that decisions on details would be delegated to regional, district, or neighborhood councils who are closer to the points of production and distribution. “The social product is created at the workplace. It is then centralized by being transferred to other places. Institutional safeguards for a gradual decline in bureaucracy therefore concern the degree of power that the producers have directly to control a fraction of their products” (p. 213).

Mandel readily admits, “No final answer can yet be given to the decisive historical question: Could a victorious political revolution in the post-capitalist societies qualitatively reduce the dimensions and weight of the bureaucracy?” Nevertheless, he sets forth a number of affirmative social and political steps which would give socialist democracy real meaning.

These include a radical reduction in working time — perhaps to 20 hours per week — simply to provide the producers the time to govern. Abundance and technology increasingly make this possible. Another factor is the suppression of secrecy in the realm of production to begin reversing the fragmentation and consequent alienation of labor. “[People] must know exactly what they are producing, for what reason, and with what purpose, before they can even think of themselves making decisions about the nature and allocation of the products of their labor” (p. 202). Again, the increasingly computerized and high technological level of production — and the correspondingly sophisticated work force required to operate it — make the digestion and utilization of information more possible. A third factor Mandel points to is the need to bring society to a minimum level of general culture and skill through the prioritization of education and the allocation of resources necessary to achieve it.

The new society must also address the division of labor between mental and manual work. Here, Mandel points out the important distinction between power relations — the *devolution* of power on bureaucrats — and the *articulation* of power conferred by specialized knowledge. He notes that a physician’s power to perform surgery does not necessarily imply her or his power to control access to operations. He also points out that the very diversification of specialized knowledge has increased the interdependence of those who apply that knowledge, undermining the ability of specialists to monopolize power.

Therefore, Mandel writes:

Socialism does not necessarily imply the total disappearance of the technical division of labor... But what socialism certainly does imply is the withering away of the social division between those who fix and those who accomplish the goals of production, between administrators and producers, between bosses and the bossed over [p. 79].

The objection has been raised that we are projecting a withering away of bureaucracy by making everyone into a bureaucrat. But bureaucracy is not synonymous with organization, centralization and the exercise of authority per se, but with their usurpation by special (and specialized) bodies of people, divorced from the mass of society and professionally paid to carry out their function [p. 214].

Mandel reminds us that capitalism itself has created the conditions for realizing the socialist vision.

The third technological revolution, with its trend towards the computerization of economic activity in production, distribution, accounting or transport, contains a powerful dynamic for a reduction in the working week and a major extension of group cooperation as the basic social structure. Society is faced with a critical choice. Either it evolves into a “dual society” in which a sector of skilled labour, more or less protected and even “scarce” in periods of economic expansion, coexists with another sector of degraded, unskilled and, to varying degrees, unprotected labor. Or else it imposes a new homogenization of labour, with an end to unemployment, a shortening of the working week to 30, 24 and 20 hours, and an enhancement of the role of education, skill formation and retraining during the producer’s lifetime.

In point of fact, even the more “enlightened” capitalist employers understand that a country’s [we would add: humanity’s] macro-economic productivity is much more a function of the workforce’s skill and adaptability to new technological processes, than it is of increases in the current extraction of surplus-value. Marx’s prophetic vision of a society in which leisure and full development of the personality were the main source of wealth is thus, in a certain sense, beginning to become reality as a result of the development of the productive forces under late capitalism...

Only in a socialist commonwealth of associated producers/consumers/citizens will the “free development of each” become the real

condition for the "free development of all...[p. 240].

This requires the radical extension and institutionalization of democracy, culminating in the withering away of the state. Mandel proposes:

1. A weaker state and the replacement of duplicative ministries and bureaus with self-administrative bodies; the decentralization and reduction of full-time functionaries such that schools and hospitals replace education and health ministries. Mandel writes:

It would certainly be preposterous to imagine that everyone would decide and discuss about everything — indeed, the very idea of a progressive devolution of bureaucratic functions to the mass of citizens implies a basic thrust towards decentralized decision-making and administration. Only then could the participation of everybody in public administration ... be realistically conceived [p. 203].

The effective coordination of autonomous regional and functional bodies nevertheless remains problematic.

2. The extension of political democracy and the guarantee of a multiparty system, of freedom of the press and advertising, and effective access to the media through the dismantlement of press monopolies.

3. The expansion of direct democracy over representative democracy to counter the trend that "the larger the country, the greater the shift in decision making from the citizens to representative bodies, and the larger the bureaucratic state (and para-state) administration" (p. 198). Neighborhood citizen bodies would assume some functions of state and

city councils, and there would be widespread use of the referendum, greater frequency of elections, and a strengthening of the right to recall. However, Mandel argues, "self-administration does not entail the disappearance of delegation. It combines decision-making by the citizens with stricter control of delegates by their respective electorate."

Answering whether "human nature" makes this vision utopian, Mandel replies:

Inasmuch as we are dealing with human beings who have been conditioned by centuries if not millennia of commodity production, of institutionalized scarcity, real or induced, of the universal struggle for existence with its competition and drive to accumulate individual wealth, private self-interest does loom large in the consciousness of most citizens, including workers. But for that reason, because it is in their "private" interest, the majority of people will probably be prepared to take part in some form of self-administrative activity [p. 204].

Such measures are counterposed to the centralized "command economies" first established under Stalin. Mandel writes that

the idea that "Marxian socialism" implies a complete socialization and therefore planning of the whole of current production, or at least an ever-growing part of it, is essentially of Stalinist origin and in total contradiction with the writings of Marx and Engels. What socialism meant for them was a socialization (social appropriation) of a large part of the social *surplus product*, for reasons of both social justice and of economic efficiency... It did not at all invoke alienation of the producers' right to dispose of the rest of the social product as they saw fit — indeed,

that would contradict the very definition of socialism as a regime of *freely associated producers* [pp. 213-14].*

* * *

Faith in Market and State: The Truly Unrealistic Utopianism

The arguments against socialist "utopianism" are premised on the indispensability of the market and of the state. But if these institutions are necessary for the regulation of human relationships, it is only a short step to the conclusion that only capitalism affords their effective operation. To accept this conclusion requires not only acceptance of the degradation and destruction which comes with the existing order but also the surrender of any hope for a solution.

To believe that the trend towards self-destruction can be stopped without overcoming competition and long-term global irrationality, "the war of all against all," the universal rule of greed, is in no sense realistic. It is utterly utopian. It points straight to Doomsday [p. 246].

The merit of *Power and Money* is that by systematically unveiling the roots of bureaucracy, by revealing its ties to scarcity and commodity production, and by showing how it can be overcome, the book rehabilitates the idea of socialism. Simply put, Mandel reminds us that "there is only one non-capitalist alternative to bureaucratic arbitrariness: a system of management and planning in which the mass of workers themselves centrally allocate resources and democratically determine priorities" (p. 51). □

April 5, 1994

On Democratic Decision-Making in the Labor Party Movement

Continued from page 31

its ranks to struggle for workers' immediate and long-term needs, organize the unorganized, organize the unemployed, champion the interests of the specially exploited and oppressed sectors of the workforce, build coalitions with its natural allies, and engage in working class political action separate and apart from the bosses' parties, a vacuum has been created which is increasingly being filled by independent workers' formations. These include workplace committees, minority unions (where a majority of workers have not yet demonstrated support for a union), organizing centers, workers' community groups, networks, caucuses, etc. For example, there are Black Workers for Justice, Teamsters for a Democratic Union, the UAW New Directions movement, and the Youngstown Workers Solidarity Club.

These independent formations increasingly play an important role in the development of the workers' movement as a whole. They need to be represented as legitimate vehicles of the rank and file, and they must have a genuine voice.

This is not to imply in any way that the organized labor movement can no longer be the bedrock for a workers' party. Despite their setbacks and current weaknesses, unions in the U.S. today have a combined membership of some 16.6 million. Union workers run the means of production, distribution, communication, transportation, government, education, and a significant part of the service industry. A united labor movement has the capability of shutting down the nation's economy.

The union movement (united in the AFL-CIO) is the largest mass organization in the country. It has an apparatus that extends into every state and major city. It has enormous

power and tremendous resources. The independent formations referred to above are no substitute for the unions, but they can complement them and stimulate their revitalization, transformation, and growth.

The point is this: while the unions must be the base for a labor party, they cannot monopolize its decision-making processes. Not with the unions' decline in membership to 15 percent of the workforce. Not with their history of institutionalizing bureaucracy. Not with their inability to overcome divisive organizational competition among themselves. Not with their failure to fight militantly in support of the unorganized and oppressed sectors of the population. Not with their practice of coalescing with government and the big corporations in implementing an imperialist foreign policy.

It is sometimes argued that the trade union movement alone should form a labor party

* This vision nevertheless poses the question of effective coordination of freely associated producers: How would the "surplus" be determined? Given the specialization of production and the possibility that producers would consume none of what they produce, how could they "dispose of the rest of the social product"? Although not answered in this book, Mandel proposed possible solutions in the article "In Defense of Socialist Planning," in the September-October 1986 issue of *New Left Review*, which should be read in conjunction with *Power and Money*.

and that this party would then represent the interests of the entire working class. But has this been the case in other countries where union officials ran labor parties? And wouldn't it be better for other sectors of the working class, including independent formations established to fight for specific workers' needs, to have their own voice and their own vote? After all, the organized labor movement in North Carolina, to cite one example, represents only 4 percent of workers in that state. Should the other 96 percent be denied direct representation, voice, and vote in a labor party? Could a labor party seriously expect to win power without their support?

For a Central Leadership Role for African American Workers, Other Oppressed Nationalities, and Women

Related to the above is the need to ensure significant representation and a leadership role in a workers' party for African American workers, for workers of other oppressed nationalities, and for women workers. If a system of representation and leadership is devised that does not meet this need, then the system must be revised in favor of one that does.

Organizing the South has long been a fundamental objective of the workers' movement in the U.S. But this can only be achieved if Blacks play a central leadership role. Most Black workers bring to the struggle a sharper level of understanding, militancy, cohesion, ties with the community, and the experience that comes from centuries of fighting oppression.

Black workers are also vitally needed to help lead a workers' party. Without their leadership, the party would have limited prospects for winning the confidence and participation of masses of Black and other workers, for arriving at a correct program, and for uniting the working class as a whole against divisive anti-labor forces.

Here is how the call to the founding conference of the Workers Unity Network put it:

Blacks and the working class as a whole cannot win freedom and real power in the U.S. so long as this country is ruled by the two parties of big business. But an independent labor party which challenges that rule can only be effective if it has significant organizational leadership and a sizable base among African American workers. It will get this leadership and participation only by championing the struggle for equal rights and Black empowerment.

The same holds true for other oppressed nationalities, including Native Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans. Today the U.S. ruling class pits these groups against each other and against African Americans. A workers' party, by contrast, would struggle to unite them around a platform ensuring their empowerment and full opportunity for cultural diversity.

But again, a workers' party can most effectively win workers who are members of op-

pressed nationalities to its ranks by guaranteeing their participation in the decision-making process. That will help ensure that the program adopted by a workers' party will speak to the needs of these groups.

Despite modest advances here and there, women remain grossly underrepresented in labor's leading councils. For decades the executive council of the AFL and its successor AFL-CIO were exclusively male preserves. The few women finally admitted to the ranks of that so-called august body have never been permitted to play a significant role. Thus, when the issue of abortion rights came before the body and it was decided to set up a commission to conduct hearings prior to the Federation's taking a position, a male member — characteristically — was appointed to head it up. (The AFL-CIO eventually decided on a position of neutrality, providing yet another example of the labor leadership's not taking a position on a question involving fundamental women's rights.)

The member unions of the AFL-CIO, for the most part, have leadership bodies which do not differ qualitatively in composition from the parent body. And even where women do occupy leading positions, too often their voices are muted in fighting for women's rights, either because they are reluctant to be deemed crusaders for a "separate" agenda without an adequate base of support in their ranks, or because they adapt to the male bureaucracy's program.

All this must change in the most fundamental sense when a labor party is constituted in the U.S., if we are to learn from past experience. Women must have representation and be elected to positions of responsibility and leadership at least proportionate to their numbers. Hierarchical considerations — which dictate people of rank in the union movement occupying leadership positions in a labor party — will have to yield to more basic democratic principles of inclusiveness and representation.

A workers' party must be a party that looks like, talks like, and reflects the working class as a whole, not its current bureaucratic leadership. That means Blacks, other oppressed nationalities, and women must have meaningful and *central* leadership roles.

The Experience of Labor Party Advocates

On October 8, 1993, 81 trade unionists and activists in the workers' movement met in Chicago in response to an invitation by leaders of Labor Party Advocates (LPA) to form an interim steering committee. The meeting took up and approved a proposal to organize a convention in 1995 to establish a labor party. But an interim steering committee to collectively plan and direct such an audacious undertaking was not formed at the Chicago meeting and as of this writing has still not crystallized.

The hesitation in putting such a committee in place stems from the concern that it would

be unduly narrow and that, as a consequence, it would be a barrier to winning broader trade union forces to the projected labor party.

The concern is understandable. But LPA leaders find themselves in this contradictory position: they have decided, to their credit, to launch a labor party despite the existing *narrow* base of committed union bodies (two international unions: Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers and United Electrical Workers, plus a couple of California labor councils, plus a few scattered local unions); yet they want *broad* trade union leadership to head up the organizing effort. So they delay setting up any kind of representative leadership body.

Many of us who support the projected 1995 convention do not foresee it as establishing a mass labor party. We do, however, believe it can be a step forward by advancing the process leading to the establishment of such a party.

Meanwhile, collective, representative, and democratic decision-making cannot be held hostage to the search for official trade union leadership figures to sign on to the project. Those who are ready to move forward now should do so, and organize themselves accordingly — with due regard for other working class activists who are ready to participate and with due respect for democratic processes. Working class leaders not yet committed but who in the future can be won to the idea of a class-based workers' party can always be integrated into leadership bodies if democratic processes are maintained.

The Need to Build the Workers Unity Network

A number of activists have raised concerns about democratic decision-making in the labor party movement. They have long advocated unions that are run by the rank and file, and they want to see a workers' party anchored to this same principle. They also want guarantees that people of color and women will be well represented and play a central leadership role in any workers' party that is constituted.

Activists who share these ideas can most effectively advance them by banding together in caucuses and networks. The Workers Unity Network, approaching the first anniversary of its existence, is one such formation. Its ranks are open to worker activists — organized and unorganized — who believe that the struggle for democratic decision-making in the labor party movement is of critical importance, both now in this formative period and in the future, when a mass workers' party is finally established.

At the same time, we believe we can build the Workers Unity Network by "practicing what we preach," that is, by adhering to democratic decision-making within the WUN as well as in the other organizations in which we function. □

March 28, 1994

An Indian in the Starring Role

Geronimo: An American Legend. Columbia Pictures, with screenplay by John Milius and Larry Gross. Starring Wes Studi as Geronimo, with Jason Patric, Robert Duvall, and Gene Hackman. Directed by Walter Hill. Music by Ry Cooder. PG-13. 115 minutes.

Reviewed by Jack Bresée

At last, Hollywood has cast an Indian in a starring role. Indeed, *even a title role!*

We have seen Burt Lancaster as sports hero Jim Thorpe, Tony Curtis as Ira Hayes (one of the Marines who raised the American flag on Iwo Jima in World War II), and Jeff Chandler as Apache chief Cochise. But it took Walter Hill to cast Wes Studi — villain in both *Dances With Wolves* and *Last of the Mohicans*, as the last great Indian war chief, Geronimo.

One might ask if Wes Studi and Graham Greene didn't have starring roles in *Dances and Last*, or if Chief Dan George didn't in *Little Big Man*? The answer must be "no." These were certainly excellent films, in which the treatment of Indians took quantum leaps forward — at least by Tinseltown standards. But the Indians were still sidekicks, not different dramatically from the Lone Ranger's Tonto, or else they were there essentially as scenery, like the buffalo or the teepees. The main story was *about* the white man and his girl, and took place around the Indians.

Geronimo is about the Indians and takes place around white men of military persuasion. It is not surprising that Walter Hill was the director to take this step. He has always been willing to take a risk.

In 1979 Hill directed *The Warriors*, about a New York City gang trying to make its way back to Coney Island after the assassination of a gang leader modeled on Malcolm X — who is seeking to organize the city's gangs into a political entity. The Coney Island gang, *The Warriors*, are falsely named as the killers and fight their way through the other gangs, finally reaching their own turf after starting out from Central Park.

The Long Riders, from 1980, features the legend of Jesse James and the gang. The Keach brothers play Jesse and Frank; the Carradine brothers play the three Youngers; the Miller brothers are played by Dennis and Randy Quaid; and Nicholas and Christopher Guest are cast as the Ford brothers who shot Jesse in the back. This brothers-playing-brothers gimmick works and, along with a wonderful soundtrack by Ry Cooder of Grate-

ful Dead fame played on period instruments, gives the film an authentic flavor. The point is that the James gang didn't go too far wrong until they left their own "turf" and tried to rob a bank in Minnesota. The rest is history.

Hill's 1981 film, *Southern Comfort*, uses allegory to make a similar point in the context of the post-Vietnam era: people shouldn't invade others' space and cause them trouble — be it in Southeast Asia, or in the Cajun country of Louisiana. But *Southern Comfort*, like Hill's previous work, brought more notoriety than money or fame.

Subsequent films that he worked on — *Alien*, *Aliens II*, and *Aliens III* — earned some of both. Here again we have the same theme of "Home" and the invasion thereof by outside forces. Strangely, the "Alien" beast is defending her own turf. Humans are the invaders, the ones who are out of place. This, too, is an allegory for our own time.

In *Geronimo* the theme is the same, but this is not an allegory. It is real, not at all remote from our present time and place. It is still going on — this struggle of Indians for their land, their "turf."

Geronimo died in 1909. He had seen Florida and driven a Cadillac — just as the rock'n'roll song states. During the last years of his life he lived in Oklahoma (Fort Sill) and saw the so-called New Indian Territory become a state. Statehood for the Arizona and New Mexican territories was still in the future, but the U.S.A. had extended its Manifest Destiny to much more of the Western Hemisphere and all the way to China. His is a story of our century as surely as it is of the centuries of Apache life in the White Mountains of New Mexico.

Geronimo's story is not a fantasy. It is not only heroic, even to Indians then and now, but also sad and brutal. Such is war. Such is a struggle for a people's land and birthright. Such is a fight against racism and genocide. There were many noble white men involved in the Indian wars, regardless of the base motives of the government and despite the rapacious economic system which drove those wars. There were many sadistic, cruel, greedy and powerful Indians. Both Indians and whites, after all, are only human beings. Their respective populations are peopled with the same proportions of potential heroes and humanitarians, as well as psychopaths and monsters.

But Indians did have the more humanistically-based community in this case, as this movie — and others before it — bring into focus. That is good. Maybe the film can help to raise consciousness among the general population about the possibility and importance of such a humanistic community, something which revolutionary Marxists in the U.S. have not been particularly successful at doing.

The film does have flaws. One is a bit of New Age hot air, which is now public enemy number one to Indians. They refer to New Agers as "Cultural Vultures," and resent the fact that many Indian rituals are being lifted out of context, with no respect for their meaning or the values they actually reflect. Sweat Lodges and Pow Wows are one side of Indian culture. But the foundation for all Indian spirituality is the taking of life — and taking responsibility for the taking of life. A New Age vegetarian/animal rights activist hoping to do the Sun Dance is an abomination.

Another flaw — though some may disagree — is the odd use of sepia-toned photography. It adds nothing in this reviewer's opinion, but works against the contemporaneous message of the film. Is it nostalgia we want here? I think not.

Lieutenant Charles Gatewood, played in the film by Jason Patric, is almost too precious. It is hard to believe that a cavalry officer in the frontier territory could be so good. After all, he had to deal with many tough customers — white as well as red. Hackman and Duvall have small parts with big impact. And a bit more flashback history might have helped give this film epic proportions. Ry Cooder is again responsible for Hill's music, and while his scoring is quite good it isn't comparable to what he composed for *The Long Riders*.

Indians are not mere historical subjects; they exist in our hemisphere today — under very bad conditions for the most part. Likewise, the cultural and racist war waged by the U.S. government — and other governments in countries like Guatemala and Mexico — is far from over. A story like Geronimo's, or that of Quannah Parker, if it is told right, could provide a bridge from the Old West to today. But that remains the next quantum leap that moviemakers have to take. Perhaps this film will hasten the day when someone will make that leap. □

The Freight Strike Settlement and Teamster Reform

Continued from page 1

ham said publicly, according to an April 25 report, that the union, not UPS, should have to pay damages, perhaps a reference to the IBT's countersuit against UPS to recover lost wages and benefits for UPS strikers. It seems more likely than not that UPS will use Durham's statements as evidence in their suit against the Teamsters for damages over the February strike.

A source close to the New Teamsters leadership said, "Even though our strike won an agreement that UPS workers are entitled to help from another Teamster when handling packages over 70 pounds, Durham and the conferences are still carrying management's water."

Daily Strike Bulletins

To ensure that freight strikers were the best informed strikers in recent IBT history, the Carey leadership issued daily strike bulletins and special communications directed toward the picket lines, rallies, and demonstrations. When the IBT learned that some local officials were not getting the information to their members in a timely fashion, the IBT organized a two-way fax-based Rank & File Network to fill in and keep all strikers up to date.

With old-guard officials still in control of most of the 200 freight locals, it simply made good sense for TMI to bargain as though Ron Carey had not been elected and with the expectation that the old guard would see to it that the freight companies were protected. Certainly the old-guard administrations from 1977 to 1992 looked out for the companies' interests, for during that period freight workers saw their average annual wages fall by 21 percent (*San Francisco Chronicle*, April 9) and their numbers drop like a rock from nearly 500,000 to 120,000 today (*Detroit News*, April 3).

Bowing to pressure from exposure by the New Teamsters leadership, the four old-guard conference chairs did publicly declare their support for the freight strikers and for solidarity with them. They stated they were willing to meet with Carey, despite their authorizing a \$600,000 payment of the members' money toward their effort to retain their power in the conferences, which Carey says are "outmoded, undemocratic, and wasteful."

Prior to the freight strike the old guard opposed Carey's attempts to put the union on a sound financial basis by recommending that the members vote no on a dues increase in the first-ever membership referendum. Voting on the basis of the union they know best, that is, the majority of locals still dominated by old-guard officials, members rejected the increase

3-1. In so-called TDU locals the measure either passed or came close to passing.

Mine Workers Loan Strike Funds

Short of strike funds, in part because the previous administration had transferred \$34 million out of the strike fund and partly because of an old-guard deal with the Justice Department to squelch corruption charges, which has cost \$40 million to date, Carey was forced to finance the \$15-million-a-week freight strike payments by taking out loans from various unions, including \$5 million from the United Mine Workers.

Undermined by the old-guard fifth column, and short of funds, Carey was forced to battle the predatory freight bosses with just a fraction of the muscle that should have been his to command. Under the circumstances, Carey did not walk away from the bargaining table with less than the union's crippled power was able to win. Once again, as he did in the national car-haul negotiations and in the one-day UPS strike, Carey came out on top on the key issue in the bargaining confrontation — in this case, the question of part-time workers.

What Was Won, What Lost

The bosses managed to push the Teamsters back and win concessions in the grievance procedure, the use of casuals, diversion of freight to railroads, and the length of the contract. Important offsetting gains were won by the Teamsters in provisions that will allow elected officers to retain their company seniority, which should expand the pool of candidates available to run against old-guard incumbents. Other provisions allow suspended or fired freight workers to remain on the job pending the completion of the last step in the grievance procedure, an "innocent until proven guilty" clause that Carey also won for the UPS workers. Job security language is expected to cushion the effects of the increase of rail freight.

In summary, Carey was not outsmarted and gave nothing away unnecessarily. What was lost reflected closely the adverse relationship of forces that the old guard helped create over the past several decades of go-along, get-along relations with the freight bosses. The long-term consequences of the settlement will depend on more than a simple reading of the new contract language. Who controls the grievance panels, who decides which contract enforcement issues to fight on, and how the Teamsters relate to the rest of labor will significantly shape the balance sheet on the freight contract. There is still much that freight workers can win or lose before the contract expires, depending on their combativity and leadership.

What Next?

Next on the New Teamsters' agenda is the matter of the conferences, which, on the one hand, spend \$14 million a year in wasteful duplication of services provided by the international union and, on the other, provide extravagant salaries and benefits for their officials. In the West, Policy Chair Mike Riley received in 1992, \$215,639 in pay and perks from the Western Conference of Teamsters (WCT). Owing to multiple salaries, Riley's total compensation from the dues payers was \$329,491, making him the most overpriced union bureaucrat on God's green earth today. Fully 25 cents on every dues dollar paid to the WCT goes to fund a special officers-only pension fund. For Riley, that is only one of five pension funds he will enjoy in what will literally be his "golden years."

Carey's move to restructure the union will not only save precious dues dollars but also go far toward correcting the misleadership that is the hallmark of the old guard. This writer is personally familiar with the recent destabilization of the Northern California grocery chain-store industry, when conference and joint council officers refused to fight and instead, behind the backs of their members, rigged a "baseball arbitration" that to date has meant the substitution of mileage pay for hourly pay, the permanent loss of jobs for hundreds of veteran Teamsters, and concessions by many grocery workers, even though they were not directly involved in failed negotiations with Safeway stores (a failure that also lies at the door of the old guard). Sad to say, similar stories are more common than not throughout the old guard's domain.

Carey is not alone in his fight to restore members' pride and dignity, hold the bosses at bay, and win accountability to the ranks by all officers. The Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), a reform caucus in the IBT, has backed Carey from the beginning and is widely credited with providing him the the margin of victory in the 1991 elections.

But Carey's greatest source of power is in the larger membership, where contrary to cynical old-guard timeservers, principle, courage, and solidarity are to be found, as expressed to a *New York Times* reporter by a Baltimore Red Star striker: "When I came into the union, I had a level of pay and a lot of benefits I never had to fight for. A lot of the guys have had that. But when I leave, I want to leave something for the younger guys." □

April 30, 1994

Colosio Assassination: RIP for the PRI?

Continued from page 10

ing business leaders and Washington that they represent a reliable alternative to the current regime in order to fulfill their hopes for a democratic transition from above.

On March 24, PRD president Porfirio Muñoz Ledo called for a united front of all of the country's political parties to stem the threat Colosio's death posed to national sovereignty. By early April he had traveled to the U.S., where press reports quoted him as insisting that "continuity in current economic policy" was of key concern.

Cárdenas himself has gone so far as to say he is "waiting for a phone call from Salinas" to discuss how to work together to bring order and stability to the country, while issuing his own calls for national unity to assure stability. "I am awaiting any call [Salinas] might make to look for a solution [to the crisis] that the country needs."

Large-scale defections from the PRI remain unlikely for the time being, since discontent with Salinas is largely based on the premise that he is undermining the party's grip on power. Discontented sectors are more likely to fight tooth and nail from within the ruling apparatus and the military to shore up their privileges and power. The PRD opposition's current approach actually works to the regime's favor and provides Salinas with desperately needed breathing room, since it is highly unlikely that the regime will turn over power in the absence of widespread mobilizations.

The fact is that broad sectors of the population are clearly disaffected with the games the leading parties continue to play. Colosio's death may have served to move the EZLN off the front pages for the moment, but as business groups warn, there is little sign of renewed enthusiasm for electoral politics, except on the level of conspiracy theories.

Social Crisis

The January 1 rebellion in Chiapas helped to highlight the conditions of misery and brutal repression that mark the lives of millions of Mexicans. According to even the government's dubiously optimistic figures, in Mexico, the newest member of the club of First World countries, the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), one wage earner in four makes less than \$110 per month, and in some states that category applies to more than 60 percent of the active workforce. At least 21.6 percent of the population now relies on firewood for cooking, and a similar number lacks access to running water. In fact, a mere 7.6 percent of employees make more than 5 times the minimum wage or \$660 a month.

With the economy mired in a full-fledged

recession since mid-1993 and no signs of a significant recovery anywhere in sight, business leaders, who continue to express wholehearted public support for the PRI, are expressing alarm at the potential political fallout from recent events. "The [year's] political avatars have done more to promote speculation on stock markets than inspire the interest of voters, who are convinced the coming elections will not be aboveboard," the employers' group Coparmex recently warned. In his zeal to override resistance within ruling circles to his own brand of "modernization," Salinas has weakened a significant part of the party apparatus, and the nature of his project has undercut efforts to build new mechanisms of political and social control to replace the traditional corporatist structures, whose usefulness is largely played out.

Salinas has presided over a massive transfer of wealth to a select group of the regime's favorites, many of whom have become billionaires virtually overnight. The need to placate capital's demands for higher profit margins on the backs of workers and peasants inevitably threatens social stability and undercuts efforts to shore up a modern labor bureaucracy and projects such as the famous Solidarity program the late Colosio presided over. On the same day that Zedillo's candidacy was announced, Salinas eliminated price controls on basic foodstuffs, including beans and corn, thereby driving another nail into the coffin of millions of *campesinos*, who are simply unable to compete against cheap U.S. grain exports.

The Clinton White House

There are absolutely no indications that Washington has in any way reconsidered its unconditional support for the PRI regime. In the wake of the Colosio assassination, Treasury officials scrambled to revive a \$6 billion line of credit (more than was provided to the Yeltsin regime in Russia) to the Banco de Mexico. This had been secretly negotiated late last year to back up the Mexican economy in the event NAFTA failed to win congressional approval. Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen also illegally ordered a temporary suspension of trading on Wall Street of American Depositary Receipts (ADRs) of Mexican stocks in an effort to cushion the immediate impact on markets.

Mexico's highly questioned request to join the OECD was immediately ratified by a unanimous vote, in part due to U.S. pressure. For some time it has been perfectly clear that both the Bush and Clinton administrations have understood NAFTA primarily as a key element in its policy of "national security." More than a mechanism for reassuring the dominance of

U.S.-based transnationals in North America, the pact has been openly touted as key to the survival of the most stable regime in Latin America, which happens to govern U.S. imperialism's proverbial back yard.

Just as Washington views as essential the existence of authoritarian regimes in Eastern Europe to impose an extended process of capitalist restoration, the fruition of capitalist restructuring in Latin America frequently demands equally heavy-handed rulers capable of forcing neoliberal prescriptions down the throats of increasingly impoverished populations. That is even more the case in a country like Mexico, where just such an authoritarian regime has controlled most facets of public life for decades.

Pulling the rug out from under the PRI would be tantamount to gratuitously opening a Pandora's box of political and economic instability, unless of course the ruling party demonstrates that it has definitively lost all viability.

Even in a worst-case scenario, in which growing expressions of social discontent and mass anti-fraud protests threaten to extend the Chiapas rebellion to the rest of the country following the August elections, Washington would most likely favor a brokered solution, in which the PRI would cede a limited share of power to the PAN and PRD in the context of a national unity government.

From Obregón to Colosio

The PRI regime was born in blood. The 1928 assassination of president-elect and revolution-era general Alvaro Obregón served as the catalyst for the formation of the PRI's precursor, the National Revolutionary Party (PRN). The death of Luis Donaldo Colosio opens the door to an extended period of political and social unrest, institutional fragility, and perhaps the end to 65 years of semi-dictatorial rule.

The initial impact of the assassination may have had a chilling effect on social movements. But as the events of March 23 begin to fade and the regime's credibility continues to weaken, the opening for social protest created by the EZLN's uprising is likely to broaden further. One key test of developments will come on April 10, when *campesino* organizations, the most radicalized sector of society at this point, have scheduled a nationwide series of demonstrations and land takeovers to coincide with the anniversary of another assassination: that of Emiliano Zapata. □

April 9, 1994

Peace With Justice and Democracy in Chiapas

Continued from page 11

any agreement the authorities propose for reaching a negotiated settlement in the region.

- c. Full, unqualified respect for the human rights of the people of Chiapas.
3. To give solidarity and support to the struggles of the indigenous peoples in the state of

Sonora, who are demanding satisfaction of certain needs comparable to those of the Indians of Chiapas.

4. To participate in every action undertaken by other forces that have similar objectives to those of the Committee.
5. To publish its appeals and announcements,

and accounts of its actions, in order to keep public opinion in our state informed of the Committee's activities.

6. To collect food and medicine for the Chiapas communities affected by the conflict.

*Hermosillo, Sonora
January 26, 1994*

Letters

Treasure the Tradition *BIDOM* Is Founded On

I received this morning the February issue... I note that you are holding a conference for *BIDOM* supporters. Please convey to all the comrades there that there are many of us, on this side of the Atlantic and around the world, who treasure this journal and the tradition that it is founded upon.

Best wishes always
B. Skanthakumar
South Harrow, Middlesex, England

Remembers Charlie Curtiss

I just received the news of the January 23 memorial for my old comrade Charlie Curtiss, one of the great proletarian leaders of the revolutionary movement.

As an organizer of the unemployed, he recruited Fred Halstead's father, and Fred later became a leader of the anti-Vietnam War movement. Charlie educated the entire cadre of SWP [Socialist Workers Party] youth in Los Angeles. He inspired my study of *Capital* and wrote economic analyses for the old *Fourth International* magazine. He recognized Murry Weiss's talent as an organizer and with typical modesty pushed his leadership. Sara Weber told me that Trotsky said of Charlie, "He's absolutely incorruptible."

Nat Simon
Miami Beach

A Comment on the Black Liberation Debate

In the recent debate in your magazine on Black liberation, I think both sides missed the important point.

Black people do not uphold either integrationist or nationalist views as timeless principles. Both are tactical weapons that Black people in this country have used autonomously in struggle, regardless sometimes of what the leaders or organizations have wanted people to do. And when people struggle, they are forced by the circumstances of the struggle itself to choose the weapons that seem most likely to lead to a victory. At times it may be that so-called integrationist views win; at other times what appears to be a nationalist approach will come to the fore.

Neither remains a permanent perspective for the masses of Black people when they are in motion. Rather each reflects the contradictory experience Black people have had in this country, and both will surface and disappear depending on the ebb and flow of struggle itself.

Curtis Price
Baltimore

Another Comment on the Black Liberation Debate

Over a year ago in the pages of this magazine, Peter Johnson initiated a polemic around the national question, which he attempts to sum up in the March letter col-

umn. While much of the discussion may have appeared exotic and esoteric, its importance can be understood once we realize that the workers' movement in or out of power in the 20th century has been characterized mainly by a bureaucratic attitude in regard to both the national question and revolutionary history and theory.

A bureaucratic and sectarian attitude toward oppressed nationalities, when confined to small groups usually hurts no one but the group in question. The results are quite different when we witness a mass party with state power denying the very existence of an oppressed nationality. It usually tries to make reality conform to its sectarian bureaucratic vision through a ruthless suppression of the political life, culture, and history of the people who don't happen to fit into its schema. Of course by this time, rationalizing away the nationality and self-determination of a people has become merely a means to divide the working class and prepare the grounds for a new exploitation of the nationality in question.

Similarly, in regard to theory, a bureaucratic mentality usually begins by rewriting the history and political evolution of a living or historical revolutionary leader based on a key "passage," or by taking a valid definition or concept and applying it in a rigid and schematic manner. Jack Barnes's "Their Trotsky and Ours" and his rigid application of the concept of a workers' and farmers' government is one example in recent historical memory.

Johnson claims that my warning on the similarity of his method to the Stalinists was actually an attack on the Marxist and materialist definition of a nation. Stalin's definition and criteria in and of themselves do not equal a materialist approach to the national question. *The method by which they are applied determines that.* Johnson was only able to dismiss everything that Trotsky wrote on Black nationalism by claiming that at the very end of his life Trotsky suddenly discovered Stalin on the national question and endorsed not just the "materialist" definition of a nation but a universally rigid and schematic, i.e., nonmaterialist, application of it.

Contrary to what Johnson seems to claim at the end of his letter, there is no Chinese wall between Black community control and full self-determination "in the classical Leninist sense," and therefore no "false argument" on self-determination. The 1969 SWP "Transitional Program for Black Liberation" recognized the right of African Americans "to exercise their right of self-determination through the creation of a separate black nation or within the context of a single socialist republic" (*Transitional Program*, Pathfinder, 1973, p. 180).

Johnson claims in his March letter that he repeatedly throughout the debate endorsed the right of Black self-determination. Yet in his article a year ago he postponed the question of self-determination until after full socialism is achieved. "We can leave it to future generations that have grown up without political, social, or economic coercion to decide for themselves how they, as truly free people, will relate" (*BIDOM*, #103, p. 21).

To the extent that Johnson supports the right of Black self-determination *today* that is a step forward. It stands in contradiction, however, to his contention that a Black nationality does not exist in the U.S. and that there is no possibility of its coming into being.

Jim Miles
Chicago

Israeli-PLO Accords

In his article, "The Israeli-PLO Accords" (*BIDOM*, Nov.-Dec. 1993), Michael Smith correctly characterizes the limited "autonomy" in the Gaza Strip and Jericho as a "raw deal" and a Bantustan solution for the Palestinians. So it is inexplicable and frankly quite shocking that he goes on to endorse it as a marginal improvement for the Palestinians, especially because he also points out that a condition of the accords is that the PLO dismantle the Intifada.

Michael argues that the Palestinians probably could not have gotten more from the accords, given the relationship of forces between them and the "now unfettered might of the oil-minded United States backing up Israel," and he maintains that "those who criticize the accords are obliged to state the alternatives."

Perhaps more could not have been gained through diplomacy between Zionism, imperialism, and the bourgeois nationalists of the PLO, but what about the mass struggle represented by the Intifada, which the accords were designed to demobilize and repress? It should be obvious that one of the only mobilized forces responding to the "unfettered might" of U.S. imperialism in the Mideast is precisely the Palestinian Intifada, representing the national struggle of the Palestinians for self-determination.

Michael's position cannot be distinguished unfortunately from that of left Zionists who support the accords precisely because they leave intact the status quo — i.e., the Zionist state of Israel and U.S. imperialist domination in the region. Far from being the best the Palestinian people can get, the accords represent the American-Israeli solution to national oppression and dispossession. As for the bourgeois nationalist PLO, it represents the politics of capitulation and treason to the inalienable rights of the Palestinians.

"What did the Palestinians get?" Michael asks. He answers, "They got the Israeli boot off their necks. They got recognition as a people."

"Recognition as a people" is a hollow phrase signifying nothing when not even the most rabid Zionist could argue against the existence of the Palestinian people. The fact that all of Israeli society has been militarized since its foundation in 1948 to combat the Palestinian people, the hundreds of thousands of Palestinian deportees and refugees, and the 13,000 political prisoners in Israeli jails are all sufficient evidence of Israeli recognition of the Palestinians. More importantly, "recognition" in any meaningful sense does not mean a diplomatic tip of the hat. The terms in the accord are those dictated by U.S. imperialism and the Zionist state of Israel and do not include even the most minimal demands of the Palestinians. The accords express the terms of Palestinian surrender and are in no way a recognition of their human and democratic rights, particularly that of self-determination, which is the only kind of "recognition" that means anything.

Far from getting the Israeli boot off their necks, the accords are designed to increase repression of the Intifada. How else do you explain that the conditions of the agreement require recognition by the PLO of the right of Israel to exist (which flies directly in the face of Palestinian self-determination); that the PLO dissociate itself from "terrorism" (which in imperialist and Zionist double-speak means the Intifada)? There is no Israeli commitment to full military withdrawal or to dismantling the Zionist settlements; there is no provision for the unconditional amnesty of the Palestinian political prisoners; no provisions for the "right of return" for refugees and deportees. The Bantustan economies remain dependent on Israel as a source of cheap labor. In fact, the only changes in the formal relationship between Israel and the occupied territories are cosmetic changes.

Most importantly, the PLO is mandated under these accords to provide a "strong police force" to do the dirty work of Zionism and imperialism and repress the human and democratic rights of the Palestinian people by destroying the Intifada.

Michael's argument that the PLO ill-served the Palestinians by its "foolish support for Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War" must surely be a misformulation of his view of the Gulf War, because unconditional support for Iraq against U.S. imperialism was not only the duty of revolutionists but certainly represented a fight against the "unfettered might" of U.S. imperialism in the Mideast. The national struggle of Palestinians for self-determination is another challenge to this domination, which is precisely why the accords were designed — not only to keep Israel's boot on the Intifada's neck but to draw in the bourgeois nationalists as accomplices to more effectively strangle it in order to maintain imperialist control.

Revolutionary Marxists have a commitment and a duty to advance the cause of the

Palestinians by exposing the accords for what they are and by condemning the role of U.S. imperialism, Israel, and the Zionist movement. The just and inalienable rights of the Palestinian people cannot be advanced by rationalizing the diplomatic crimes of imperialism but only by remaining steadfast in supporting the mass popular opposition of the Palestinians against the diplomatic machinations of Zionism and imperialism and the political treason of bourgeois nationalism. The Palestinian response to the Hebron massacre testified to the determination of their fight for self-determination. It is by advancing that mass opposition that a real lasting solution to the Palestinian national question will be realized.

Mary Scully
Boston

Michael Smith Replies

Reading Mary Scully's letter reminded me of the position a Spartacist League member pressed on me last week. When I asked him what his alternative to the peace accords was he could only reply that the Palestinians had to keep struggling.

During Vietnam his organization raised the banner advising "All Southeast Asia Must Go Communist." When we said "Out Now," they came up with an ultimatum. Nothing transitional about these folks.

The truth of which Mary is unaware is that at the time of the signing of the accords the Intifada was spent. People are made of just flesh and blood. My article gave reluctant support to the peace accords and asked, "What is the alternative?" What is it, Mary?

No one familiar with the situation there doubts that there will be a Palestinian state. Mary cannot seriously argue that this is not an improvement.

Last, I did not pen a "misformulation," as Mary suggests. I do believe that Yassir Arafat's support to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait "ill-served the Palestinian people." A consistent position for the PLO would have been for them to support self-determination, for Kuwait as well as for themselves. Also, it didn't help Palestinians to have Arafat cheering the Iraqi rocket bombing of Israeli civilians.

Michael Steven Smith
New York

From Russia with Thanks: Four Letters from Russian Readers

Today we've received parcels with the last issues of *BIDOM* for KAS-KOR and Renfrey. Thanks a lot. I find your bulletin very useful for understanding of current situation in the different parts of the world. Also I'd like to thank you for paying too many attention to the Russian events. We think it's very important to spread truth about our country on the West and we'd like to receive *BIDOM* in future. Please note, that *all* envelopes we got by mail are *open*. It can be postal workers looking for money, but maybe KGB still works. So,

please never send anything very important by regular mail. It's better to send it with somebody who are traveling from NY to Moscow.... We are working on the new magazine now. Probably it will called "The New KAS-KOR." When it'll be published I will send you a copy.

In Solidarity,

Kirill Buketov
Moscow

I received your letter and parcels with *BIDOMs* on November 6. Thank you very much!...I didn't write you before only because to send a letter abroad became impossible (expensive). Now I have an opportunity to send this very short letter through my acquaintance. *NeRV* [an independent workers publication has] disappeared. *Rubicon* from the autumn was printed as a paper. There are 3 issues. The fourth and the future are under big question because of lack of resources. In summer they were driven out from [their premises] because of the same reasons. Thousand excuses! My very best greetings to you....

Nikolai Preobrazhensky
March 20, 1994

Thank you very much. I've got your materials. It is grievously, but we can't to publish our newspaper because absence of means. You see, our organization is too small, many of us are unemployed, and the others have salary about 30-50,000 rubles in a month. But prices of publishing is too high, 200-300,000 for 3,000 copies.

There will be conference of Ural workers in Perm at end of May. Have you any possibilities (or your friends) to take part in it? On the 30th of March there was a real revolution in one Perm plant named *Dzherzhinsky* (military). Workers wanted to push their directors from the plant, but official trade union suppressed this demand. Workers can't get salary during three months. On the 28th of March there was so-called directors' meeting (3,000 metalworkers) in *Lysva* (Perm region). All political space now is occupied by official structures — without self-determined workers organizations.

Good Luck,

Boris Ikhlov

I am very glad to have received from you *Bulletin In Defense of Marxism*... We are thankful to you for the magazine because we have absolutely no information about the movements in other countries and your journal contains very interesting analyses of the political situation.

Unfortunately we have no E-mail, and although we have a computer and print our [Bulletin of the Left Information Center] on it, we don't have a modem.

Thanks again for the magazine, and all the best.

Dmitri Kostyenko



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.

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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 back-

ground information 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.

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The Bulletin Builders Fund posted receipts of more than \$3,300 in the first 30 days after the announcement of our fund-raising campaign. This is proof that the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* has held the loyalty of its original sponsors and attracted new supporters over the years. As an authentic Marxist publication, dependent on its dedicated staff and readership, it has tried to describe and interpret the shifting political and economic scene as the ongoing struggle of class forces in capitalist society.

We now reach a new stage in *BIDOM's* life. Is it prepared to meet the demands that the deepening crisis of this society will put upon it? The future will tell how well it performs. But at this juncture it is clear that decisions taken at the forthcoming conference in

BIDOM Builders Fund

Pittsburgh on Memorial Day weekend will be a major factor in the magazine's performance in the period ahead, perhaps definitive for its survival as a Marxist publication.

We greatly appreciate the early financial contributions and fully expect that the remaining weeks of our Bulletin Builders campaign will push us past our goal of \$10,000. But beyond this we are most anxious for the continued participation of our builders and other readers.

We all know that these times we live in are headed for social transformation. This is generally recognized by serious students of world economy and those who are seriously fighting against the stratagems of the banks and corporations, and their governments. Noam Chomsky, for example, in the February 21-March 6 issue of *In These Times* made the following observation: "Major changes in the global order over the past quarter-century have led to a huge increase in unregulated financial capital and a radical shift in its use, from long-term investment and trade to speculation."

Chomsky sees the present uprising in Mexico as one of many "time bombs," not confined to Third World victims of imperialism but inherent in the capitalist system of wage slavery worldwide. "The New Year's day uprising of Indian peasants in Chiapas can be seen in this general context," he writes. "The uprising coincided with the enactment of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The Zapatista army called NAFTA a 'death sentence' for Indians, a gift to the rich that will deepen the divide between narrowly concentrated wealth and mass misery, destroying what remains of their indigenous society."

Our own correspondent in Mexico wrote in greater detail about the uprising in Chiapas and its meaning: "[The] recent events serve to recall the prediction made more than half a century ago by the revolutionary Marxist Leon Trotsky that the next Mexican revolution would take up where Zapata's revolution of 1910 had left off." (See our issue for March 1994.)

He quoted the leadership of the rebel Zapatista army, the EZLN: "Our form of struggle is not the only one, and for many perhaps it may not be the proper one. There exist many other invaluable forms of struggle and other honest, progressive, and independent organizations. We have organized [the EZLN] because it was the only option left to us. The EZLN calls on all Mexicans to take up this standard, not the flag of the EZLN, not the flag of the armed struggle, but rather the standard which is the right of all thinking beings, the conviction of our people...liberty, democracy, and justice...This is the task that belongs to all...To everyone in their own field of battle, with their own forms of struggle, and their own organizations and ideas."

This declaration bears repeating here in the context of our appeal for the Bulletin Builders Fund because it expresses essentially the same attitude and approach toward independent working class political struggle as that of the Fourth International's transitional program for the transformation of society from capitalism to socialism. This is the program upon which the Fourth International was founded and to which *BIDOM* adheres. This is what *BIDOM* identifies with and seeks to explain and apply to the vexing problems of the working class in contemporary society.

All our magazine's readers can help "the invaluable form of struggle" that this magazine represents by contributing in all possible ways to the Bulletin Builders Fund and by participating in the *BIDOM* national conference in Pittsburgh Memorial Day weekend. We hope to see you there.

Frank Lovell
April 1, 1994

The *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* proposes to hold a conference of its active supporters on Memorial Day weekend in 1994 at Chatham College, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The purpose of the conference will be to assess the work of the magazine since it was re-organized on a new basis in September 1992, to lay out perspectives for the further work of the magazine, and to raise funds and involve more supporters, so that the magazine can continue to meet the need for the kind of revolutionary Marxist, Fourth Internationalist journal that *BIDOM* has been since it began publication in 1984, carrying on the best traditions of the American Trotskyist movement.

The conference will also elect a new Editorial Board on the basis of a preconference discussion period that began in February this

year and that is open to all active supporters of the magazine. Active supporters are those who have a full one-year subscription to *BIDOM* (\$24), have made an additional supporter's contribution (minimum, \$20), and are committed to the aims expressed in *BIDOM's* Who We Are statement of purposes. Active supporters have the right to participate in the preconference discussion and in the election of the new Editorial Board. The last day by which one can be registered as an active supporter for purposes of participation in the conference and preconference discussion is April 15, 1994.

For more information write to *BIDOM* at P.O. Box 943, Village Station, New York, NY 10014.