

# In Defense of Marxism

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## African-American Self-Determination and Independent Political Action

*One Million Man March in Washington*

**Against Male Dominance & Rape!  
Charge Genocide & Destruction of Black  
Families! Against U.S. Imperialism!**  
*by Black Workers for Justice*

**The Farrakhan Factor in the 1996 Elections**  
*by Ron Daniels*

**Progressives from Around the U.S. Meet to  
Discuss Independent Politics**  
*by Don Rojas*

**Socialists and African-American  
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*by Vera Wigglesworth*

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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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## Bipartisan Foreign Policy Not "Humanitarian"

# End the U.S. Blockade of Cuba, No to U.S., UN, NATO Intervention in ex-Yugoslavia

by George Saunders

**W**e experience the joys of living under a "democracy," which means that the corporations (such as Hormel, Gannett, and Knight-Ridder, whose activities are described elsewhere in this issue) and the ruling rich who own those corporations dictate public policy through their politicians, both Democrats and Republicans.

Usually the resulting "bipartisan" foreign policy is presented as "humanitarian" in intent. But when a people chooses to reorganize its society to serve its own needs and aspirations, the corporate rich of the profit system feel threatened. As a result, in the case of Cuba, they have imposed an economic embargo for more than 30 years. And in the case of Bosnia, they imposed an arms embargo that kept the people from defending themselves from one of the most barbarous and genocidal instances of land grabbing since the "winning of the West" and the slaughter of the indigenous peoples.

### "Humanitarian" Results in Cuba

How non-humanitarian — how inhuman! — the foreign policy of the ruling rich really is. This can be seen from a detail resulting from the

blockade of Cuba, as described by a pediatrician from Maine, Dr. William T. Whitney, Jr., a supporter of Maine's "Let Cuba Live" committee (part of the National Network on Cuba).

Three weeks ago I was visiting pediatric hospitals in Cuba. As a pediatrician, I was appalled at the high incidence of corrosive esophagitis. Dr. Alberto Ruiz, one of many pediatric surgeons in Havana, cares for two new cases each month.

In Cuba they have no soap mostly because of the embargo. People make their own, using sodium hydroxide, a caustic (lye). Toddlers drink it. Many need a section of the colon put in to replace the corroded section of the esophagus. Later on, many need repeated painful dilation of the esophagus because of scar tissue.

Why can't our elected officials make an exception for soap? If soap was available in Cuba, far fewer children would suffer these injuries. Why not allow...soap for Cuba?

In my view, the American embargo does no good and causes harm and suffering. (Letter to the *Maine Sunday Telegram*, May 1, 1994.)

### Imperialist Intervention in Bosnia

As we have stated repeatedly in the pages of this magazine, the intervention of the imperialist

**Because of unanticipated production delays and reorganization, this will be our issue for both October and November.**

powers of Western Europe and North America in the wars now rending former Yugoslavia, including their intervention under the "humanitarian" disguise of the United Nations, is not carried out with the interests or concerns of the peoples of ex-Yugoslavia in mind. This imperialist intervention may momentarily seem to benefit one or another of the contending elements, but in the long run imperialist intervention is designed for only one thing — to benefit imperialism.

The least dramatic, but longest lasting and cruelest form of imperialist intervention was the arms embargo that prevented Bosnia from adequately defending itself from the well-armed former Yugoslav police and military machine. That force was dominated by the former Titoist-Stalinist bureaucrats who had adopted a policy and ideology of Greater Serbian chauvinism in an attempt to retain their power and privileges. Those bureaucratic centralist forces had initially been supported by imperialism and the International Monetary Fund when they tried to maintain the Yugoslav federation against the desire of the non-Serbs for independence.

Favored by imperialism, the powerful Serb-dominated military machine headed by Slobodan Milosevic, made use of the Croatian Serbs and Bosnian Serbs in its cruel and rapacious "ethnic cleansing" drive toward a "greater Serbia." And the imperialist arms embargo kept the Bosnians' hands tied as they underwent years of rape and pillage.

The Western powers instituted a war crimes tribunal against the Serbian chauvinists — seeking to veil their own complicity. In the same way, the U.S. government would prefer that the world overlook and forget its pre-World War II policy of barring Nazi-hounded Jews from asylum in the United States. Those guilty of the crime of nuclear devastation at Hiroshima and Nagasaki passed judgment on the defeated German Nazi leaders for their genocide of the Jews. But who will pass judgment on the victorious

*Continued on page 36*

## A Model: Bosnia Solidarity Campaign in Britain

[Most of Bosnia's population are poor and working class. They have, as the deputy mayor of Sarajevo put it, "very little money." The workers and the poor of Bosnia, as in the other countries of ex-Yugoslavia, lack trade unions and political organizations that they themselves control, that will speak up for and fight for their interests. Such workers organizations are needed, and they need to be linked with others in international solidarity.]

[A mass-based working class International, including the major workers organizations in the imperialist countries, would be able to take effective measures to aid Bosnia and help end the wars in ex-Yugoslavia — and in the ex-USSR, too, for that matter. Pointing in this direction of hope for Bosnia and of international workers solidarity was a recent demonstration in Britain, described as follows in the September issue of *International Viewpoint*.]

An estimated 5,000 people marched through central London on July 22, in the country's biggest demonstration yet in support of multi-ethnic Bosnia.

Marchers demanded "Stop the rape of Bosnia!" "Break the arms embargo!" and "End UN collusion with genocide!" Many marchers carried placards with the slogan "UN out!" — though others seemed to be equivocal on this question.

Speeches demanded the lifting or breaking of the embargo in order to enable the mainly Muslim government in Sarajevo to acquire arms.

The march and meeting were called by the Alliance to Defend Bosnia-Herzegovina, Workers Aid for Bosnia, the Muslim Solidarity Committee, and the Jewish Socialist Group. Dozens of other groups supported the march, including Socialist Outlook (British section of the Fourth International) and International Workers Aid.

The various groups have now established a broad Bosnia Solidarity Campaign "to continue the political struggle for a multi-ethnic Bosnia and against genocide and fascism."

As yet, the campaign has neither address nor telephone number. For more information contact Socialist Outlook: 0181/800 7460.

# An Alternative View of the Status of Women in China Today

by Zhang Kai

The Chinese government is hosting the Fourth World Conference on Women in September this year. In February 1994, it published the "Country Report on the People's Republic of China's Implementation of the Nairobi Strategy to Enhance Women's Status"; in June 1994, it published a White Paper on "The Situation of Women in China." Both documents talk of the positive achievements women in China have gained, demonstrating the achievements of the ruling Communist Party.

In fact, the status of women had improved before the CCP came to power in 1949. A century ago, outcries against feudal oppression such as foot binding or deprivation of education for women had begun. Notably, during the Boxers' Uprising in the late 19th century, a whole series of equality rights for men and women were proposed. After the 1911 revolution, the women's movement focused on women's participation in politics and the right to education and individual freedoms. During the resistance war against Japanese invasion and subsequently the civil war, women also fought along with the men in the revolutionary process of national and social liberation. Hence, in 1949, when "New China" was formed, the law stipulated that women would enjoy the same rights as men in all aspects of life — political, economic, cultural, educational, and social aspects. After 1949, women also participated actively in all aspects of social life. What women in China have gained is the fruit of a whole century of struggle.

Yet when we look at the status of women in China today, the rights and safeguards for women that exist in the law do not always correspond to the reality. Women have still to fight hard to further their rights and improve their status. The two official documents on women in China have either evaded the negative aspects of the situation or simply glossed over them.

This article will therefore look at some of the negative side of things in order to provide a different perspective.

### Political and Human Rights

Similar to men who are engaged in political activities fighting for democracy and human rights, many women have been detained or jailed simply because they tried to exercise their basic rights of speech and association. The latest examples are the arrests of Gao Yu, a woman journalist, and Tong Yi, secretary to the famous dissident Wei Jingsheng. Many wives and mothers of jailed dissidents have also been harassed or put under house arrest because of their activities in seeking the release of their husbands or sons. Amnesty International recently reported that since 1992, around 200 women

have been arrested for participating in demonstrations for Tibetan independence. The Tiananmen crackdown of 1989 is one obvious example, and the Chinese government's abuse of human rights needs no further illustration.

### Right to Employment

Since the Reform started in 1978, one key problem that women face has been the question of unemployment. According to the Labor Bureau in China, over 70 percent of the 20 million "redundant" workers in state or collective enterprises are women. According to the Shenzhen Labor Bureau, 80 percent of the unemployed above the age of 24 are women. Sit Chaojun, the deputy president of the National Labor Federation, commented that "according to many of our sample surveys, women constitute about 60 percent of those dismissed in recent years due to redundancy; they not only suffer from psychological pressure but also find it very difficult to make a living."

The White Paper made no mention of the large-scale unemployment problem women find themselves in. It stressed that women enjoy the same right to a job as men, and only said in passing that "women have some difficulty in finding a job because some enterprises are reluctant to recruit women."

### Rights of Women Workers

The rights of women workers have often been abused, especially in joint-venture enterprises. Wang Jun, deputy head of the Women Workers' Section of the National Labor Federation, pointed out that surveys indicated serious abuses of the legal rights of women workers in foreign-owned enterprises; no safeguard for labor rights; violations of rights of the person; low remuneration; nonimplementation of stipulations in the Ordinance to Protect Women Workers; humiliation and sexual harassment. And from a survey of joint-venture enterprises in Shanghai in the spring of 1995, it was found that over half the enterprises did not strictly adhere to the 44-hour working week, that overtime work was the usual practice, and that some enterprises asked for as much as 137 hours of overtime work in a month.

### Right to Form Free Trade Unions

There are 56 million women workers in state enterprises, with another 50 million in rural industries. It is important that workers have the right to form free trade unions to protect themselves. The official trade unions toe the line of government policies and often cannot represent the interest or will of the workers. The Women's Federation, though called a "mass organization," is also under the leadership of the Party. Incidences

of Chinese workers following the example of the Polish workers in organizing independent trade unions have all resulted in repression.

### Rights of the Person

The White Paper says that Chinese women enjoy the right to life and health, as men do, and the law safeguards women's reproductive rights. In actuality, the one-child policy being sternly carried out at all levels, the suffering of a lot of women and the abuse or even killing of girls are facts of life many people are familiar with. This has added to the discrimination that women suffer. At the same time, the male-female ratio is being upset. Just at the age group of 30-44, there are 7.4 million unmarried men while there are only 0.5 million unmarried women. The phenomenon will worsen in the coming years.

According to a scholar from the Shanghai Social Sciences Academy, cases of discrimination and abuse of women have increased, and wife battering and domestic violence have risen.

### Right to Education

According to an international conference on Women and Education, at the end of 1992, 2.1 million girls were not in school. Women university graduates constituted only about 1.1% of all women. Most working women have received only primary school education. The White Paper also reports a 32 percent illiteracy rate among women.

### Right to Political Participation

Although the White Paper claims that women are participating in general social affairs and quotes the figures of women in the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, it is generally known that these two bodies are only rubber stamps to CCP policies. As for the Communist Party, which holds real power, there are over 7 million women party members, constituting 14 percent of the total membership; but in the Political Bureau, not one of the 20 full members or the two alternate members is a woman. This might not be a bad thing for the women's movement, because having women in top power positions does not provide any guarantee for women's interests, since these women would be representing not the interests of the majority of women, but the interests of a minority elite.

### Antagonizing Women from Around the World

While China hopes to gain credibility for housing the UN Conference on Women, it has fears about the parallel NGO Forum. Such acts as moving the site of the Forum to suburban Huairou and denying visas to women from many parts of the world have put the Chinese government in antagonism to a lot of women and movements in the world. Such bureaucratic measures are an extension of the CCP's own domestic repression of women's rights. The furthering of the cause of women will depend on women fighting for their rights with their own strength. The World Conference and the NGO Forum on Women provide an opportunity for women from different parts of the world to come together for exchange and networking, and will help advance the cause of women both in China and in the world. □

July 30, 1995

# Zapatista "Consulta" Opens New Stage in Mexican Struggle

by Rosendo Mendoza

Like many aspects of the Zapatista movement, it was definitely a first — a nationwide referendum called by a clandestine military organization. Approximately 40,000 people participated directly in staffing 10,000 polling stations and processing the vote count, with many more responding to the Zapatista call by helping to publicize the *consulta*. Though many belonged to Alianza Cívica, a non-governmental organization (NGO) which is well known for its efforts in monitoring election processes and which the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN — Zapatista Army of National Liberation) asked to organize the voting, a wide spectrum of political and social activists promoted the event as an expression of political support for the Zapatistas.

Definitive results have yet to be released because some sectoral and international voting is still taking place, but the overwhelming bulk of the vote was registered August 27. With about 1.2 million people participating, the turnout was considerably below the 2 million figure projected by some *consulta* organizers, but twice the number who voted in Alianza Cívica's only other national referendum (on whether former president Carlos Salinas de Gortari should be brought to trial for his handling of public affairs). The comparison with this earlier non-governmental referendum offers a good basis for measuring the success of the *consulta*.

## Comparison with Salinas Referendum

The referendum on Salinas was held in February, when public outrage over the debacle of official economic policy was clearly focused on the former president. It was also conducted before Zedillo quietly established a nonaggression pact with his predecessor, which apparently was partially brokered by Washington. So the referendum on Salinas faced no opposition from the government, which was more than happy to push the blame for the economic crisis onto the previous president.

This time, the government successfully "encouraged" the mass media to ignore the referendum and even to refuse paid advertising. Police and other public employees were ordered to tear down promotional posters and intimidate or cancel promotional events. At one rally in downtown Mexico City, police confiscated two buses that had been loaned by the locked-out city bus drivers union (SITAU). On the day of the voting, municipal, state, and federal police actively worked to intimidate and photograph those participating in the event and banned many voting booths.

The referendum on Salinas was actively promoted by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), but, when it came to the Zapatista *consulta*, the PRD leadership totally sat this one out. In fact, the party held its third national convention the same weekend as the vote, thereby effectively limiting, if not canceling, the participation of many PRD activists, who otherwise would have helped to build the event. And PRD leaders issued a half-hearted endorsement only days before the *consulta* was held.

Many people also appeared intimidated by the complexity of some of the questions posed on the referendum ballot. Despite these multiple obstacles, the August 27 vote proved much more successful than any referendum in Mexico's history. Even the government's national consultation last summer (on its National Development Plan) drew slightly more than 300,000 participants, despite a massive publicity blitz.

## Changing the Rules of the Game

The Zapatistas are aware that little will be achieved at the negotiating table, understanding that it is the Mexican people, not government bureaucrats, to whom they must direct their demands, and that ultimately their fate is tied to the prospects for a revival of the mass movement and the construction of a political force capable of extending the Zapatista cause and the struggles of the exploited and oppressed throughout the country. The consultation is a key ingredient in this strategy.

The referendum was aimed at achieving several political objectives. Most of the questions on the ballot implied an endorsement of the EZLN's platform of demands and its proposal to establish a broad opposition front. There was little doubt that these points would win an overwhelming "yes," though the strong vote in favor of the affirmative action initiative for women was particularly encouraging.

But the results requiring the greatest scrutiny involved the Zapatistas' decision to place two alternative proposals on the ballot regarding their perspectives.

## Questions of Political Organization

Question number 4 basically implied that the EZLN should go it alone in building a national political organization, whereas question number 5 posed the construction of a new political project in terms of an alliance with other unspecified forces. While the two options caused some confusion, it was surprising how consistent the voting proved on these two points.

Few organizations actively campaigned to influence the precise outcome of the vote. How-

ever, in regions where ultraleft organizations enjoy a considerable following, the results were heavily weighted in favor of question number five. These organizations, largely united in an umbrella group called the National Coalition of Independent Social Organizations (CNOSI), have increasingly come into conflict with the EZLN and its initiatives as a result of CNOSI's Stalinist politics. They hoped to assure that the *consulta* would not grant the Zapatistas an exclusive mandate to lead the conformation of a new political organization.

Nevertheless, on a national level a clear majority emerged in favor of referendum point number 4 (52.6 percent in favor and 38.2 percent against). Particularly in regions where there is a long history of political organization by leftist organizations (and where the PRD also tends to enjoy a strong following) the preference was overwhelmingly in favor of the Zapatistas building a national political organization, thereby reflecting the growing dissatisfaction with the Cardenista party.

In the state of Chiapas, where indigenous communities staged a massive march before holding voting assemblies, the percentages were equally clear in this direction (question 4: 66% yes, 22% no, and 12% "don't know"; question 5: 28% yes, 61% no, 11% don't know).

## Global Significance

The decision to extend the *consulta* beyond Mexico's borders was aimed at developing support abroad and extending the international appeal of the movement. Though the international *consulta* lacked significant support from any organized currents, 81,775 people cast votes in 41 countries, with the largest participation registered in Italy, Spain, the United States, Canada, and Austria.

Lastly, the referendum was geared toward undermining government efforts, supported by political parties, to restrict the "peace" talks to local questions and exclude the Zapatistas from the government's national political dialogue, which is ostensibly designed to achieve a consensus among political parties for political reform measures.

## Peace Talks Go Nowhere

Following the *consulta*, Subcomandante Marcos stated the obvious: that the negotiations in Chiapas had reached a dead end. Since the latest series of talks began last May, officials could hardly conceal their outrage at having to sit down at a table with an entirely indigenous Zapatista delegation. Lacking any serious proposals, the low-level government delegation has spent much of its time personally insulting Zapatista delegates and cranking out press releases blaming the EZLN for the lack of progress. The few concrete proposals which government representatives have placed on the table, such as a plan for creating a demilitarized zone, were delivered on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.

During the fifth round of talks, Zapatista delegates suggested that a direct meeting be-

*Continued on page 33*

## The Detroit Newspaper Strike

# A Key Test for Organized Labor

by Jerry Gordon

*This article is based on a telephone interview with the author, who is a staff representative of the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) and is active in the Labor/Community/Religious Coalition in Support of the Striking Newspaper Workers in Detroit.*

The Detroit newspaper strike began July 13, with 2,500 workers going out. Six union locals are involved. The Teamsters make up 1,600 of the 2,500.

The strike was precipitated and forced on the workers by the companies. In this case we're talking about two newspaper chains: Gannett, which owns the *Detroit News*; and Knight-Ridder, which owns the *Detroit Free Press*. There's absolutely no question that the unions were looking for a settlement. They wanted to avoid a strike in the worst way. The owners, with their demands, forced them out onto the street.

The two papers formed a joint operating agreement in 1989, a hundred-year agreement, agreeing to split profits 50-50. They constituted themselves the Detroit Newspaper Agency (DNA). In negotiations since 1989 the unions have given up 1,000 jobs. Until 1994 the newspapers claimed they were losing money, but in 1994 they made \$56 million, which is more than \$1 million a week. And nationally they made \$640 million. The workers had given up any wage increases over the last six years; the contracts have been concessionary.

But this wasn't enough for the employers. Even though they had gotten the unions to give up 1,000 jobs, they demanded more. At the outset of the negotiations they wanted the unions to give up 300 more jobs. Then when the strike began, the DNA raised this figure by another 150. So now they want to get rid of 450 jobs.

The main issue is jobs, but in related matters, the companies want a free hand to subcontract, to bring more workers in on a tier system, and on a part-time basis, with no benefits.

Also a key issue, in the case of the Newspaper Guild (TNG), was that the employers wanted to eliminate across-the-board pay increases, and simply have merit pay increases. Interestingly enough, one of the most outstanding reporters — who won a Pulitzer Prize — didn't even get a merit increase. (At the time they had both across-the-board and merit increases.) So no one wants to trust the employers.

### The Course of the Strike

At the beginning the companies suffered gigantic losses. The first four weeks cost them about \$600,000 a day; now it's about \$300,000 a day. They had put aside about \$200 million to pursue this strike. This is the same pattern the newspaper companies followed in New York, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco in the last few years.

But in Detroit, they have learned the lessons of New York, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco. They are taking a much tougher line. They are out to bust the six unions; there's no question about it.

Incidentally, there were five small craft unions that had already settled with the DNA before the six larger unions went out. So we have that situation, too, where some people are going in, having made their own contract.

Of the six union locals that are out, the main one is the Teamster drivers. The others include the Teamster mailers, the Guild, two locals of the Graphic Communications International Union (GCIU), and a local of the Communications Workers of America (CWA), the typographical workers.

The employers have hired two security firms, Vance and Huffmaster. They've got a couple of thousand of these goons around, about 1,200 of them inside. These guys provoke and instigate violence; there are cases where they have beat up individual strikers. They walk around in uniforms, trying to intimidate.

### A Fight to Shut the Plants Down

What distinguishes this strike from some other recent strikes is the fact that the workers have physically shut the printing plants down, and have fought an attempt to open them up.

This has particularly happened on Saturday nights, when the companies try to bring out their Sunday edition (which is the main money-maker for the employers; it makes more profit than the other six days of the week).

On Saturday night September 2, the Labor Day weekend, there was a big mobilization. It started with a rally at a UAW hall about a mile away from the printing plant in Sterling Heights, a suburb of Detroit.

As we were marching from the rally toward the picket line at the plant, we got word that the companies were trying to get their trucks out with the Sunday edition. There were only a few hundred workers on the picket lines at that time.

### The September 2 Mobilization

We broke into a run, about 3,000 of us, and got there just in time, to the three gates of the plant. When the picket line was fortified with these reinforcements, the bosses pulled back from trying to get the trucks out those gates. Before we got there, the few hundred workers on the picket line had to fight off the police. It had come down to hand-to-hand fighting in order to

maintain the closing of the printing plant. The police backed off when the reinforcements came.

That was the first big mobilization, on September 2. In advance of that there had been a lot of training in civil disobedience for marshals. This was organized by Rev. James Orange of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) from Atlanta, Georgia; he's on the national AFL-CIO staff. But when the critical moment came, these workers did not "go limp"; they stood their ground.

The security people were on the inside and police from 14 communities had been called out. So you had a huge presence of police. And you had 3,000 workers, not just the strikers, but of course UAW and workers from throughout the trade union movement. So that was quite a confrontation.

But during the night the numbers on the picket line thinned out, and by 8:30 in the morning there were only 40 or 50 of us left at the main gate, so at that point the police parted the line. They came over in a body, and there was no contest. They had many more cops than those of us still there at 8:30. So the trucks went out, but the papers had been delayed by about 14 hours.

### The September 9 Mobilization

The following Saturday, September 9, there was another very large mobilization. When we have these mobilizations to shut down the gates, the workers put rocks, boulders, logs — anything and everything — against the gates, just making it impossible to bring the trucks out. So again the plant was shut down. But this time the company got helicopters and flew the papers out (very expensive for them).

It was after this second major mobilization that the newspapers succeeded in getting an injunction against mass picketing. That was on September 13. And that was the moment of truth. The leadership had to make a decision whether to obey or defy the injunction.

### A Key Decision

The decision making process consisted in the top leaders of the six striking unions, with some advisers, meeting together and making the decisions. It's unfortunate, but after the injunction was issued, the leadership did not call a mass meeting of all the strikers, together with key forces from the rest of the labor movement. The Metro Detroit AFL-CIO represents 350,000 workers, and they're squarely behind the strikers and totally involved in this struggle. That's how the decision should have been made — by a mass meeting of the rank and file, with key labor leaders in attendance who could indicate what their unions were prepared to do in solidarity with the strikers.

The result is that at the Sterling Heights plant the strikers are limited to ten workers at each gate. Since that time, the employers have been able to bring the papers out.

### Role of Democratic "Friends of Labor"

Now there's another printing plant, at the Riverfront in Detroit. There was the illusion that

## Twin Cities Support for Detroit Strikers

### "If It Can Happen in Detroit, It Can Happen Anywhere"

John Castine, a striking *Detroit Free Press* reporter and a leader of The Newspaper Guild (TNG), spoke on September 25 to a support meeting of over 100 trade unionists and others in St. Paul.

Castine reported that this was the first meeting outside Michigan to which strikers had traveled to tell their story. The meeting was organized by the St. Paul Labor Speakers Club, a public forum on labor issues held monthly at the city's central labor hall. The Newspaper Guild local in the Twin Cities arranged for Castine's presence.

*Minneapolis Star Tribune* columnist Doug Grow, writing in his paper the next day (article entitled "Paper Strike in Detroit may prove fight for union life"), described Castine's talk as "a grim report to Minnesota union leaders Monday night at the St. Paul Labor Center. 'This is happening right in the heart of Detroit,' [Castine] said. 'If it can happen in Detroit, it can happen anywhere.'"

"After Castine's talk," Grow reported, "a hat was passed and the Minnesota union folks dug deep because, even though there are plenty of worker woes close to home, the thought of losing a big one in Detroit is a grim thought indeed."

Castine described the events leading up to the strike and gave a vivid account of the mass picketing and police provocations at the papers' printing plant in Sterling Heights. Castine described the march of thousands on that plant on Labor Day weekend, although they did not have a parade permit. Castine estimated there were as many as 6,000 people. "That was our permit," he said.

The St. Paul meeting was attended by representatives of local affiliates of the striking unions (Teamsters, GCIU, CWA, and TNG), all of whom presented Castine with contributions for the strike fund. Also attending was Bernie Brommer, president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, who also turned over a check from the statewide federation, bringing the total contributed that night to about \$10,000.

Earlier in the day, union activists handed out leaflets at the Dayton's department store in downtown Minneapolis, asking Minnesotans not to shop at Dayton's or their subsidiary Target stores because they continue to advertise in Detroit papers. Last month members of newspaper unions picketed in support of the Detroit strikers outside the headquarters of the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, owned like the *Detroit Free Press* by the Knight-Ridder newspaper chain. Managers from the *Pioneer Press* have been recruited, with the inducement of huge bonuses, to travel to Detroit to work as scabs.

In the Twin Cities area, the *Pioneer Press* and *Star Tribune* have both constructed new, fortress-like printing plants within the past few years, an ominous sign to newspaper workers here that the battle in Detroit may indeed be a prelude to a fight of their own.

**To have representatives of the Detroit newspaper strikers come to your city to speak, contact the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions in Detroit or the Labor/Community/Religious Coalition in Support of the Striking Newspaper Workers. A slide show and video about the strike are also available.**

— David Jones

The strike has electrified the labor movement nationally. It has caught the attention of working people coast to coast, because it's a concrete experience for them of how mass picketing, at least temporarily, can shut down production, or in this case, distribution.

But then we got the injunction and the helicopters, and there's been a disorientation since then.

### Labor/Community/Religious Coalition

One of the highlights of this experience has been the formation of the Labor/Community/Religious Coalition in Support of the Striking Newspaper Workers. It was formed shortly after the strike began on the initiative of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), which had established a labor-community coalition in support of the Kroeger supermarket strikers in 1992. There had been fantastic labor and community support for that struggle, and so it became a model for establishing a similar coalition in this fight.

The coalition's first meeting was July 27, two weeks to the day after the strike commenced. It was formed at the hall of UAW Local 174, and 250 attended, including union leaders, rank and file union activists, and community supporters.

This coalition from the beginning has taken a consistent mass action line. It has taken the position that this has to be seen as a national strike and that the situation calls for national demonstrations, national mobilizations, mass picketing, mass involvement of the community, and reaching out to African Americans and other oppressed nationalities and to women.

### Strike Strategy: A Central Question

On the other hand, the strategy of the strike leadership has vacillated between mass mobilization and a corporate campaign. The national AFL-CIO has sent a number of representatives into the area. Some of them are pressing for a corporate campaign and contending that the strike will be won by getting the advertisers out. There was great success initially in getting advertisers out of these papers. At one point they had 279 advertisers out; but as the weeks have gone by, many of them have come back in, so according to a recent report, there are only 159 out. So there's a constant tug of war to get advertisers out and keep them out. On the other hand, there's a feeling by many that although this can be a facet of the campaign to win the strike, it cannot be the central focus.

### Teamster Leadership Fight Reflected in This Strike

Another key factor in this strike is that the Teamsters locally are under the Teamsters Joint Council led by Larry Brennan, who recently made Jimmy Hoffa, Jr., his "administrative assistant." Hoffa of course is the representative of the old guard running against Ron Carey for president of the IBT. The International leadership of the Teamsters union has not been able to play much of a role until recently, but it is now

because you have a Democratic mayor, an African American, and a police force with a large Black composition, that things would be different from the way they were at Sterling Heights. But there have been confrontations now at the Riverfront, and it's the same thing. So the workers are saying, "The police are the police are the police."

It doesn't matter if there's a Democrat as mayor. The cops still take the side of the employers, make sure the scabs go in and the trucks loaded with papers go out. And so, some illusions got pierced as a result of these experiences.

### Police Brutality, with Company Funding

One of the features of this strike is that Sterling Heights was paid about half a million dollars by the newspaper companies for "police overtime." Now that's become a scandal, that the scabherding police are subsidized by the DNA. The Sterling Heights City Council has voted to stop accepting money from the newspapers, and they also fired the city manager, an ex-cop who backed the violence-prone police in their actions.

The Sterling Heights police have been very brutal toward the strikers. Five minutes into the strike, a policeman clubbed a striker and knocked his teeth out. In another incident involving the Sterling Heights police, a picketer was thrown to the ground and rendered immobile, and a picture was taken of a police lieutenant getting ready to kick him while he was in that immobile state.

This photo became the subject of t-shirts, showing how brutal the Sterling Heights police are, and it also appeared in *Time* magazine. The lieutenant has since been fired.

### Strike Taking Its Toll

The strike is taking its toll. The Teamsters had no strike fund going into the strike. The Teamster strikers were out there, but they were getting nothing. The AFL-CIO raised \$1 million to pay the Teamsters strike benefits until September, when the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) began paying benefits on a regular basis.

asserting itself and intervening to organize major support activities.

The local Teamster leadership has not conducted the strike along the same kind of militant lines as the United Parcel Service strike of 1994, in which Ron Carey defied an injunction and the Teamsters won the strike. Last week IBT Vice-President Diana Kilmury was in town. She attended a meeting of the coalition and spoke there, and also a mass meeting of the strikers, although she did not speak there. She said that this situation is so serious that the International is coming in, it's involving itself. How this is going to be worked out, given the internal problems of the local Teamsters, remains to be seen.

Ed Scribner, president of the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, told a meeting of 400 UFCW Local 876 stewards on Tuesday, September 26, that there are some major plans to bring this struggle to a successful conclusion in the next few weeks. However, he did not disclose what these plans are.

### Coalition Calls for Area-wide Work Stoppage

Another idea that's been discussed and approved by the coalition is for a one-day work stoppage in the Detroit metro area. We are urging the striking newspaper unions to adopt this idea and bring it to the Detroit AFL-CIO for approval and implementation. At a mass meeting of the strikers, the program of the coalition was distributed to every striker, and one striker in particular, Crawford Webb, an African American who is running for president of the main Teamsters local, Local 327, got up and advocated this proposal. It was not a meeting for motions, so there was no formal action, but this idea is being heard.

This idea is not unique or unprecedented in this period. The Philadelphia AFL-CIO approved a call for a general strike in support of the transit workers recently, and some years back they did the same in support of a strike by AFSCME (American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees). So Philadelphia has a couple of experiences along these lines, and we are urging that that example be followed here.

The idea is being resisted by the leadership of the AFL-CIO. They're raising the question of legality, and so on. But the idea is out there; it's being taken more seriously than in some other strikes in recent times.

The solidarity displayed in support of the strike has been just fantastic. A retired former officer of the building trades unions attended a meeting of the building trades last week and urged a \$1-a-week assessment per member for the duration of the strike, and this idea, too, is beginning to be considered now.

### The Key Issue: Union-Busting in a Union Stronghold

But what's key here is that this is Detroit, a union stronghold. To think that major employers can come into Detroit and bust newspaper unions in this fiercely union town indicates how far the corporations' union-busting campaign

has gone. This is not the periphery. This is hitting right in the core of union country.

The employers have let it be known that they're willing to spend any amount of money and stay as long as it takes to work their will. And they are supported by the cops and the politicians and the powers that be.

### Role of Democratic Politicians

There was a meeting of top union leaders with the mayor of Detroit, a Democrat who was elected with union support; there was an expectation that he would support the strikers. At this meeting it was posed to him, "We want your support." He said he wanted to be a bridge between the two parties. The president of the AFL-CIO said, "That's not enough; you've got to do more than be a bridge." But the mayor hasn't done more than "be a bridge."

It was widely predicted and anticipated that the mayor — his name is Dennis Archer, he's a former Michigan Supreme Court justice — that he would side with the unions. But as it turns out, of course, he's a law and order man, and law and order means scabs in and delivery trucks out.

So workers are learning the hard way, through experience, who their friends are and who their enemies are.

The ranks are very restive. They're not satisfied with the leadership they're getting. It took eight or nine weeks to get out a fact sheet on what this strike is about. The workers don't see a winning strategy. Some of them on the picket line say they're concerned that this could be another *Chicago Tribune*, where the unions were busted several years ago.

### Total Mobilization Needed

The only solution, the only correct strategy for this strike is one that involves a total mobilization on a national basis of the whole labor movement. This has got to be seen like the Pittston strike, where trade unionists poured in from all over. And there are thousands of workers in the Detroit area who can serve as a reserve army in support of the strikers, if called upon. But if the corporate campaign is going to be the main strategy, then this struggle is just going to go on and on and there's a danger that it will erode.

As it is, the number of strikers who are active in the strike at this point is about 500, which is one-fifth of the total. This does not mean that the others have gone in; it just means that many are not actively participating in the strike. In terms of workers who have crossed the picket lines, about 45 percent of the Guild has gone in, but the rest of the unions are remaining pretty firm.

### Company Goons

The security firms the companies have employed are really messing with people. These goons have been running people down on a daily basis. In the confrontations that have taken place large numbers of workers have been arrested and charged with felonies. Picketing is taking place at 25 distribution centers, plus the two printing plants. Pickets are maintained at all these places, and at the offices of the two newspapers.

After the mobilizations of more than 3,000, which faced down the cops, the striking workers and their supporters have been accused of violence. The companies are running TV commercials showing the workers defending their jobs at the plant gates, and denouncing them for violence, whereas the facts show that the companies initiated the violence with their goons and the use of pepper gas by the cops. The estimates of what the goons are being paid range between \$1,000 and \$1,800 a week, plus room and board. That's their reward for committing mayhem on the workers.

They have run trucks out of the plants at such speeds that people could easily be killed. During the second week of the strike one worker, a woman, was pulled out of the path of a speeding truck a moment before losing her life. This was captured on film and shown to the judge, and became the rationale for issuing the injunction, that lives were being endangered.

### Sentiment to Defy Injunction

There was a lot of sentiment among the ranks of the workers to defy the injunction. This question has been debated at coalition meetings. But it's not up to the coalition to set strategy, and we've had to deal with some people who want to substitute the coalition for the striking unions. That obviously can't be done. The coalition is to support the striking workers, and if there's going to be a change of policy it's up to the rank and file to change the policy of the unions.

The next few weeks are going to be pivotal because there has to be a strategy that will win. There is a central need for a mass action strategy. If the local leadership adopted a mass action strategy, if they called on people to pour into Detroit, if they massed people at the critical points of distribution and production, if they called upon the thousands of trade unionists in this area, if they decided to take that kind of a stand to stop distribution and production, if they called for national marches and national demonstrations, if they agreed on a call for a one-day work stoppage, then we would have a different situation from what we have now, a better prospect for winning.

There are people who are pushing for that strategy, including in the ranks of the unions. Because the alternative is to just let this thing erode.

### Escalation of Employers' Strategy

On September 2 an article about the Detroit newspaper strike appeared in the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. It was a reprint of an article in the *St. Petersburg Times*, which quoted Robert Giles, editor and publisher of the *Detroit News*. There's one key paragraph in this article, which reads as follows:

Giles does not see a quick end to this strike. "We're going to hire a whole new work force and go on without unions, or they can surrender unconditionally and salvage what they can," he said.

This statement has been reproduced and distributed in large numbers. The leadership of the striking unions and the rank and file have all



seen this article. This paragraph is being widely quoted at mass meetings. And what it makes clear is that this employer is playing hardball. Either the unions surrender unconditionally or there'll be no more unions.

This statement marks a profound escalation in ruling class strategy. It leads to a clearer understanding that the negotiations, at least at present, are going nowhere.

### **An Unfair Labor Practices Strike**

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has issued a complaint charging the employers with unfair labor practices. There were supposed to be joint negotiations with all six unions on economic questions, but the employers refused to deal with the unions jointly, insisting on negotiating individually. A hearing on the complaint is scheduled in October. The feeling is that the NLRB is likely to rule that this is an "unfair labor practices" strike. That means the workers have a better chance of getting their jobs back, if they decide to go back in, because permanent replacements are barred in such a strike. You can get your job back by making an unconditional offer to go back in.

### **One Paper or Two?**

Another factor is that under the joint operating agreement, which required the approval of the federal government, the companies were supposed to have separate papers. Until the last week or so, they were producing a single paper called the *Detroit News/Free Press*, and in that sense were violating their agreement with the government. The Justice Department is now investigating this violation.

The DNA is now producing two separate papers once again. To do this, they have brought in an army of scabs, including employees from other Gannett and Knight-Ridder papers all over the country.

### **Two Big Corporate Empires**

Shortly after the strike began Gannett announced the purchase of *Metro Media* for \$1.7 billion. This graphically showed how deep their pockets are. Once this deal is completed, Gannett will have nearly 60 newspapers, with a total daily circulation above 6.4 million. Right now the operating revenue of Gannett is \$3.8 billion, and in 1994 their net income was \$465 million. They have 36,000 employees and 82 media properties, including *USA Today*, ten TV stations, and 11 radio stations. So you're dealing here with a very big corporate empire.

Also since the strike began Knight-Ridder has announced they are buying Leshner Communications for \$360 million. Leshner publishes several weekly newspapers and inserts. The top officers of Gannett and Knight-Ridder have appeared on TV and said outright, "We're losing a lot of money and we don't care; maybe we'll continue to lose money, but we're going to run our business the way we want to run it, and nobody can stop us."

### **Labor's Lack of Political Power**

In the state of Michigan, the labor leadership is completely integrated in the Democratic Party, and as a result labor has no political power. The present governor of Michigan, John Engler, is an ultra right-wing Republican, and the president of the Michigan state AFL-CIO says 46 percent of those Michigan unionists who bothered to vote in the 1994 elections voted for Engler.

### **Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions**

The unions at the two Detroit newspapers have an informal alliance, the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions, created in 1971, to negotiate with the employers on economic issues such as pay benefits and vacation time.

The Labor/Community/Religious Coalition has asked for a meeting of its steering committee with the leadership of the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions. We have good relations with the Council; there are no tensions there at all. In fact they have tremendous appreciation for the work of the Coalition, and we hope they will be open to recommendations the Coalition plans to make for a consistent mass-action strategy to win the strike.

### **Involvement of the Left**

The left is very actively involved in this strike — including people from Solidarity, Workers World, the Trotskyist League, and other formations. Some ultraleft groups have come in and announced actions, that they're going to defy the injunction, as though they wanted to substitute themselves for the striking unions.

The Coalition meetings are orderly and well run. The coordinator is Shavonne Perpena, an African American woman who's on the national AFL-CIO staff. The Coalition meets weekly, and the meetings are conducted democratically. We decide on actions, and where there has not been prior discussion and approval by the striking unions, we approve recommendations to them, such as the idea of the one-day work stoppage or a national march in support of the strike.

When these other groups come in and want to decide on a strategy that's in conflict with what the striking unions are engaged in, it's just out of order. That was a bit of a problem, but it's not a problem now, because we've agreed on procedures that just bar that kind of thing. So there's full discussion and full debate, but it's within the confines of the strategy the unions themselves have undertaken.

### **Defense of Victimized Workers**

There have been a lot of victims in this strike, a lot of arrests, with charges of felonies. Some of the Coalition's key activists have been arrested. We're going to be forming a fund-raising/defense committee to work together with the striking unions to support people who are facing charges.

One of the people facing serious charges is Don Stone, a staff representative of Teamsters for a Democratic Union.

### **A Determination to Win**

There is really a genuine commitment by the established leadership of the organized labor movement to fight this strike through and win it. There's a very deep concern that if this strike is lost, that will have devastating consequences for the whole labor movement in this area and nationally. This is the one strike that cannot be lost.

The AFL-CIO is pouring a lot into this. They've had Donahue and Sweeney in town. Trumka was in town. He called a meeting of 40 or 50 key trade unionists. I was there representing the UFCW. A strategy was planned, but it was not a consistent mass-action strategy, although there was an element of that. This was in advance of the Labor Day weekend, when we had the September 2 mobilization, plus the Labor Day rally at the struck newspapers.

### **Labor Day**

The Labor Day march takes place in Detroit, but it's organized by the statewide AFL-CIO. The plans initially were not to have a rally this year, because there was no political contest, no Democratic candidate to beat the drums for. The Michigan labor movement more than in any other state is deeply entrenched in the Democratic Party.

It was the Labor/Community/Religious Coalition that spoke up and insisted that there must be a Labor Day rally, and it should be right by the struck newspapers. So it was decided to have a rally, and several thousand came to it, but it was planned poorly. Tens and tens of thousands of workers were still marching. They should have abbreviated the march and had everybody concentrated by the newspaper offices, which are quite close to each other.

### **Detroit's PATCO**

The leadership wants to win this strike. Frank Garrison, president of the Michigan state AFL-CIO, has called this strike Detroit's PATCO. People do understand the very high stakes. But because the Teamsters International hasn't been able to come in as it would like to, and because of the absence of a consistent mass-action perspective — a perspective of mobilizing the whole labor movement and seeing this as a national strike — and because of timidity in the strike leadership, there is a crisis. The strike has been largely directionless, especially since the injunction.

But as I said, we have been told now that plans are under way for a major action, so it's not foreclosed that there will be a new approach to shutting down production and distribution.

Everything is being discussed. Many workers are radicalizing. There's a feeling that something must be done to prevent further erosion, and to mount an offensive.

And the next few weeks will be crucial in determining whether finally, belatedly, a correct strategy is arrived at, which will permit the unions involved and their allies to prevail. □

September 27, 1995

# Third National Teamster Strike: Carhaulers Hit the Bricks

by Charles Walker

It's no secret who calls the shots in the carhaul industry — Ryder and General Motors

— *Teamsters Strike Bulletin*

On September 7, 5,300 auto transport Teamsters went on strike against the giant of the carhaul industry, Ryder System, Inc., and its subsidiaries, Commercial Carriers, I.J. Boutell, and Transport Support. The nationwide transport corporation handles 6 million domestic and foreign vehicles a year, through 80 locations. Reportedly, Ryder said it would not be able to continue most operations during the strike. At stake for the Teamsters is job security. The Ryder Corporation refuses to agree not to create and transfer work to non-union subsidiaries or brokers. If Ryder would concede this point, the other 27 carhaul companies of the mostly unionized transport industry would fall into line. Egging Ryder on is General Motors, which accounts for 60 percent of Ryder's business. GM hopes to benefit if Ryder can lower its labor costs. Although the strike starts at the beginning

of the new model year when capacity is strained, it's still too early to forecast how long the tenders will hold out.

This is the third nationwide strike Teamsters President Ron Carey has authorized since taking office 43 months ago. By Teamster standards, Carey's record is phenomenal. Before Carey, it wasn't a snap to get local or regional strike authorization, let alone approval for national strikes. Before Carey, the Teamsters strike fund was large, because it was largely unused. In fact, in 1991, the old-guard opponents transferred \$34 million out of the strike fund to cover expenses incurred in their deal to allow the federal government to oversee the union's activities. Judging by the silence throughout the Teamster organization, not many Teamsters seemed to notice, or even care. The reason is easy to understand: why worry about a strike fund that you don't get to utilize. During Carey's 1991 election campaign, he angrily criticized the misuse of members' strike

money to finance the top officers' stratagem to escape racketeering prosecution.

During the 1994 nationwide freight strike, the Teamsters strike fund was drained and was supplemented by a \$15 million loan from other unions. Since then, old-guard loyalists have unceasingly criticized Carey for not paying strike benefits as provided for in the union's constitution. But when Carey conducted a membership referendum for a general dues increase that would allow the resumption of \$200 a week strike benefits, the old guard successfully campaigned against it. A second Carey proposal for a strike benefit funded by a modest \$2 a month dues increase has gained the support of only one-third of the unions' local officers. By the eve of the carhaul strike, Carey's elimination of multiple pensions and salaries and other reforms and economies has allowed the union to resume strike payments, but at a \$55 a week level.

Despite an overwhelming 95 percent vote by carhaul Teamsters to reject the companies' last contract offer, the bosses have refused to offer acceptable terms. "Ryder and GM have been pushing the attack on good jobs in carhaul since day one," said Teamsters General President Ron Carey. "Our members are standing up to these corporate giants to fight for a secure future for our families." □

September 9, 1995

## The 1996 Teamsters Elections: "New Teamsters" vs. "Real Teamsters"

by Charles Walker

The battle is on for the future of the Teamsters union. And the rank-and-file Teamsters will have the final say in the outcome.

— *Teamsters for a Democratic Union*

In December 1996, the Election Officer supervising the Teamsters International Officers' election will count the members' ballots and certify the results. The winner will be either reform-minded Ron Carey or James Philip Hoffa, son of one-time Teamster President Jimmy Hoffa, widely believed to have been murdered by Mob rivals in 1975. The authority of the Election Officer and the members' right to directly elect the international union's highest officials derives from the deal cut between the federal Justice Department and the old-guard General Executive Board (GEB) in 1989. At that time, the federal government and the courts gained the right to oversee the affairs of the international union, and in exchange, the 1989 GEB members escaped prosecution on racketeering charges. Financing the federal government's intervention has drained over \$50 million from the members' dues payments.

### New Obstacles to Carey's Reelection

The 1991 membership vote for the Teamsters' highest echelon was a historic first for the union founded in 1903. Nearly as historic as the stunning upset victory by Ron Carey (a second generation UPS truck driver) and his slate over two rival slates drawn from the senior ranks of the Teamster officialdom. A second Carey victory in 1996 over the entrenched bureaucracy seems more likely than not. However, the reform-minded Carey faces two new obstacles. One, his main opponents, the self-styled "Real Teamsters," have united in a single slate, headed by James Hoffa. Two, in 1991, Carey undoubtedly benefited from a widespread anti-incumbent mood. In 1996, Carey is the incumbent and no doubt will be held responsible by some members for the continuing decline in members' job security. The freight industry is a maelstrom of mergers and closings, with firings and forced relocations taking a heavy toll on what once was the core of the Teamster membership. In August, Consolidated Freightways, a major Teamster employer, announced plans to

eliminate 1,100 jobs and undermine seniority protection. Because the decline is continuing on Carey's watch, he's sure to pay a political price. That's true, despite his militant leadership of the 1994 24-day national freight strike that ended with a settlement ratified by an 81 percent margin. In 1991, Carey beat his divided rivals with a plurality of 48.8%. In 1996, a united opposition that benefits from an anxious, anti-incumbent mood could close the gap and topple Carey's slate.

### Carey's New Slate

In 1991, Carey had the support of the Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), a 20-year-old insurgent rank-and-file democratic caucus that claims 10,000 members. TDU is generally considered to have tipped the scales in Carey's favor, due to their indefatigable worksite and shop floor campaigning. In 1996, Carey can count on the support of a stronger TDU that now includes many newly elected local union officers. Also in 1996 Carey will have the support of some officers who opposed him in 1991. How many won't be clear until the July 1996 nominating convention, although one imprecise

measure is that 250 local unions out of 600 local unions have endorsed Carey's proposal for a modest \$2 a month dues increase. Twelve members of Carey's 26-person slate for 1996 were rival candidates or supported Carey's rivals in 1991. Three of the slate members are officials of three of the Teamsters' largest local unions. Another slate member was defeated by Carey's ticket in 1991, and still another is the only incumbent vice president who opposed Carey's 1991 election, but he has consistently backed Carey up on crucial GEB votes.

Four 1991 Carey slate candidates will not be on the 1996 slate. One is under investigation by the three-member Independent Review Board (made up of a member named by the Justice Department, a member named by the Teamsters, and a so-called independent member, who is a former director of the FBI and the CIA). Two other 1991 candidates formerly identified with TDU defected to the old guard, while a third ran against Carey's endorsed candidates in a critical local union election.

No new rank-and-file Teamsters have been added to the Carey slate. Two women, one of whom is Black, a Black male, and two Latinos make the 1996 Carey slate far more diversified than the three 1991 slates, including Carey's slate. However, the new slate, with its weight shifted to more officers and former opponents, presents distinct risks for the future of Teamster reform. If Carey had not been able to serve out his first term, replacing him would have been relatively smooth, though his replacement might not have been as stalwart as Carey when the old guard resisted reforms and unity overtures, and also undermined three national actions, including two nationwide strikes. If Carey should win in 1996 but fails to serve out his second five-year term, the balance of power is more likely to shift toward conservatism and accommodation with the mainstream of the bureaucracy than would have been the case during Carey's first term.

In part, Carey's move to add former opponents to his slate is rooted in the practical day-to-day problems of administering the 1.4-million-member union and Carey's belief that most officials are hard working and dedicated and will do right by the members, if given a chance from above. From his inaugural speech to the present, Carey has offered the Teamster officialdom one olive branch after the other. At times, he appeared to have wearied of the attempt to win the bureaucracy over. But after handing them a defeat, as he did when he took \$11 million and various perks away from them in the wake of their sabotage of the nationwide UPS strike, he attempts to woo them again. At this point, Carey seemingly disagrees that the bureaucracy is incapable of self-reform. Presumably, Carey is unaware of the concept of a labor bureaucracy as a caste with interests separate from and in conflict with the ranks.

Carey's revamped slate is also necessitated by the threat that may be waiting for him at the 1996 convention, which has the authority by majority vote to amend the union's constitution.

The office of the General President and the entire GEB could be reduced to nothing more than symbolic, ceremonial posts. Anti-reform delegates will want to restore the substance, if not the form, of the baronial power that Carey clipped in 1994. Just as high on their list of reactionary changes would be the reinstatement of multiple salaries and perks that Carey has abolished. However, any constitutional changes may not conflict with the 1989 Consent Order, as interpreted by the federal judiciary. At this point, one guess is as good as another as to whether Carey will have a convention majority. At the 1991 convention he had 15 percent of the delegates. He probably has doubled his delegates by adding former rivals to his slate. He can and will gain still more delegates during the coming winter and spring delegate elections in the 600 local unions. If he does not have a majority by the convention, then Carey must attempt to bargain with those delegates who plan to broker their convention vote to the highest bidder.

### Petition Drive Results

Under the Election Officer's rules, any candidate or slate that obtains signatures on petitions of at least 2.5% of the members entitled to vote for a specific office is designated an "accredited candidate." A full slate of 26 accredited candidates is entitled to 13 pages of free space in the October 1995 and February 1996 issues of the *New Teamster* magazine and the right to access the 1.4-million membership list for purposes of mailing, phoning, and polling. Carey's slate got off to a late start, yet managed to collect 104,298 signatures in 22 days, three times the required number. In 1990, Carey circulated accreditation petitions twice. The first time he collected 58,726 signatures — 20,000 over the requirement. Four months later, Carey beat his own record when his second drive collected 62,000 signatures. That year, Carey's opponents either did not circulate petitions or failed to meet the deadlines when they did. The importance of free space in the magazine is clear to any candidate who must spend over \$250,000 for a single mailing to the 1.4-million membership.

### Hoffa's Slate

This year, Hoffa's petition campaign started weeks before Carey's and yet gathered under 60,000 signatures. Still, Hoffa gained enough signatures to qualify as an accredited candidate. But Hoffa will qualify for only two pages in the October magazine, not 13 pages, since he did not collect signatures for a full slate. At this time, Hoffa has only qualified himself and two others. While Carey has circulated a single slate petition, Hoffa has not. That means that each Hoffa candidate must have a separate petition, and a circulator needs to ask signers for multiple signatures and could lose potential signers rushing to or from work. To date, Hoffa has named only 13 members of his slate, which raises questions of his unionwide strength. In the West, where he has a full regional slate, Hoffa has chosen only one candidate who is widely

known and has a considerable base. The others are either unknown or lack credible reputations. The traditional head of the Southern California Teamsters is not on the slate, though his office manager is. Perhaps the employee is a surrogate who plans to resign if she wins office, making possible her boss's appointment.

The old guard has chosen Hoffa as its candidate primarily for the name recognition he brings to their slate. The media has given Hoffa a lot of coverage. On Labor Day this year, the major television networks included coverage of Hoffa addressing his supporters and marching in Detroit's Labor Day parade. In contrast, Carey was Grand Marshal of New York City's Labor Day parade and not even the *New York Times* chose to notice. Hoffa was ruled ineligible to run for office in 1991 because he had not worked in a Teamster craft or held a Teamster union post for the previous 24 months. The old guard created a "job" for Hoffa as an administrative assistant, to make him eligible to run for office in 1996. About Hoffa, TDU states, "He's never worked on a truck or in a shop, office, or warehouse. He's never been elected to anything, even a steward. He's never been on strike or filed a grievance." Up to now, Hoffa has not been an inside player in the top bureaucratic circles. However, no one should believe that Hoffa is untutored about the dark side of Teamster history and its matter-of-fact abettors and apologists.

### If Carey Loses

A loss for the Carey and TDU forces would certainly be a setback for reform in the Teamsters and in the broader labor movement as well. In the October AFL-CIO federation election, Carey will cast 1.4 million votes, enough to tip the scales in favor of challenger Sweeney against former Federation President Kirkland's choice, Donahue. However, a setback is just a setback and not a knockout blow. Carey began calling the Teamsters the New Teamsters shortly after his election. But the union became the "new Teamsters" when the members gained the right to reject contracts with a simple majority vote and later the right to vote directly for their international officers. The power of TDU has been magnified by those two victories. As long as the members can hang on to their new rights, the reform forces cannot be marginalized. As a matter of fact, in a wide open race, reformers stand a good shot to return to international office should they lose in 1996. Helping to keep elections wide open is the pool of potential challengers, which is at least as large as the union's officialdom of between 4,000–5,000 part-time and full-time officers. Clearly, the potential for rivalries and competition is substantial. But the reformers' chances for leadership are tied more fundamentally to the stark fact that business unionism, which seemed so successful in the postwar period, has not since the 1970s been "bringing home the bacon" as it once did. And no turnaround is in sight. □

September 8, 1995

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## A Reflection of Present Conditions

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# Labor Day in New York

by Frank Lovell

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Labor Day 1995 in New York City had the outward appearance of previous Labor Days, whether or not there happened to be phalanxes of union members dutifully marching up Fifth Avenue. In recent years the traditional Labor Day parade has sometimes been canceled, as last year. The reason given then by the astute heads of the Central Labor Council was "lack of interest." No further explanation. But this year things are somewhat different.

The difference is a perceptible shift in the social and political consciousness of millions of working men and women in this country, brought on by massive layoffs and low-wage jobs for those who can find work. On top of this the politicians at all levels of government, Democrats and Republicans alike, are so busy looking after the needs of "free enterprise" and finding ways to cut government expenses by reducing social services (and lining their own pockets in the process) that they have no time for the needs of working people and shun the pleas of union officials for protective legislation and other forms of relief.

Many workers who in the past have taken enough interest in politics to at least vote now feel betrayed by those they helped elect. This sense of malicious injury inflicted by imagined "friends of labor" and other self-proclaimed political benefactors is exacerbated by the scandalous behavior of politicians and daily reports of pervasive corruption in government. So the vast majority of workers and poor people have no illusions about the current crop of politicians.

Also, many union members who previously took the advice of union officials to "vote straight Democratic" now question the wisdom of those leaders. The union movement itself in recent years has become rife with talk of electing new officials. Mainly because of widespread collusion with employers and other forms of corruption. "Vote the old gang out" is a common sentiment these days.

But when parade time came hundreds of thousands of union foot soldiers led by local union officials marched up Fifth Avenue, with only subtle indications of the growing sentiment for change and a new social awareness. The semi-official estimate of the size of the parade, given out at the Central Labor Council, was 500,000. Observers thought this figure might be more or less accurate if spectators on the sidelines were included in the count. The parade started at 11 a.m. and continued through the afternoon until nearly 5 p.m., stretching from 42nd street to Central Park at 59th street. It was spirited. And most marchers seemed to enjoy

the shared sense of strength in numbers and proud to be part of the huge demonstration.

### Service Union Contingents

Many unions gave out caps and T-shirts to identify the different contingents. The teachers union had a very large turnout, carrying banners for union solidarity and against current cuts in government funds for public education. Likewise the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), among those unions most directly affected by cutbacks in government funding for social services, protested layoffs and carried signs for more jobs. Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which represents workers in both private and public sectors of the service industry, like many other unions marched behind a brass band and alongside decorative floats. Another union in the service industry, Hospital Workers 1199, was impressive with its large number of marchers and their disciplined determination to make known their grievances against overwork and massive layoffs.

These marching ranks of all different unions in New York's diverse, sprawling service industry (including sanitation workers, hotel and restaurant workers, etc.) showed the composition of the workforce in this industry to be largely Black, other people of color, and female.

### Building Trades and "Needle Trades"

The building trades unions stretched out for several blocks, and came on at different intervals in the parade. Sometimes their demonstration included heavy equipment of the construction industry, big trucks and other machines. These contingents of marching construction workers (carpenters, plumbers, electricians, laborers, painters, etc.) were united by their most prominently displayed demand: "Save Davis-Bacon." This is the 1931 Act of Congress which provided for payment of prevailing wage rates (the union scale) to laborers and mechanics employed by contractors and subcontractors on public construction, now under attack and being eroded by anti-union employers and politicians. The changing composition of the workforce in this once nearly all-white-male industry, was on display this Labor Day. Among the marchers were large numbers of Blacks and representatives of other minorities, and some women in overalls.

The needle trades (a term not commonly used for the modern textile and garment industries) was led by a large float labeled "Needle Trades" and carrying the logo of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. The garment industry in New York is largely unor-

ganized — though renewed efforts to organize it are under way — but there was a large contingent of union garment workers in the parade proudly carrying union banners and some signs demanding an increase in the minimum wage scale (promised by the Clinton administration). Most garment workers in this city are women, many paid less than minimum wages. Many are foreign-born, recent immigrants.

### Teamsters

The Teamsters Union came along early in the parade and may have been the largest sector. Teamsters President Ron Carey was the grand marshal of the parade. Many different locals followed one after the other, each with its own local banner, and all of them with a single message: America Can't Grow On Part Time Work. This reflects a key demand of the union in current negotiations with United Parcel Service and major trucking firms to eliminate casual labor on the loading docks and part-time work throughout the industry.

One Teamster local was distinguished from others by a large number of banners for a Labor Party, featuring the Labor Party Advocates (LPA) slogan: "The Bosses Have Two Parties. We Need One of Our Own!" Other banners calling for a Labor Party were scattered sparsely in other sectors of the parade, carried by members of locals that have endorsed LPA and by LPA members. Some marchers in the ranks of Locals 1180 and 1881 of the Communications Workers (CWA) carried signs calling for a Labor Party, as did members of a few other union locals. As they marched along the unions displaying these unusual signs, not seen before in any Labor Day parade since the brief resurgence of the union movement in the wake of World War II in 1946 and 1947, attracted attention and occasional applause from crowds of spectators.

### LPA Presence

Some LPA members standing on the curb and holding up Labor Party placards were rewarded with shouts and signs of approval and support from many in the march. In at least one instance a marcher was so enthusiastic about the call for a labor party that he asked for an LPA sign and took it back in the parade.

The only other significant expression of political action was a group of marchers with a long streamer which said in large letters "SAME BOAT COALITION." This was displayed by a small group of marchers who had draped the streamer around themselves in such a way as to resemble a small boat bobbing along. This attracted attention and received favorable response from spectators who knew what it meant. Handbills had been passed out along the line of march that explained: "Today, we are all under attack. On every level of government, budget cuts are going into effect which will dramatically change the quality of our lives. Many unionized workers face lay-offs and permanent loss of jobs. All of us face drastic cuts in health care, education, housing and other vitally important programs. Whether we are working or are unemployed, whether we are

retired or on welfare, whether we are in school or sending our children to day care...we are all in the same boat.”

### Not a Rally for Democrats

If there were banners and signs and pictures of candidates for public office, advertising the virtues of the two-party system and hailing the accomplishments of the Democratic Party, they were not prominent either in the parade or curbside. The absence of such political activity in behalf of the employing class political structure is truly remarkable, and says a good deal about the political quandary of union leaders. It appears as if the Central Labor Council, responsible for organization and coordination of the parade, had made a decision not to have the usual political displays this year. In past years the Labor Day parade was more like a Democratic Party rally than a demonstration of labor's might.

What follows from the huge turnout this year (some reports say that the half million demonstrators was the largest display of union strength anywhere in the country, and may have been the largest ever in New York) will depend partly on the next turn of events in the national political arena, and largely upon the new course for organized labor that is presently under debate. Those who favor a more militant stance against employer and government attacks will surely take heart from the response of the ranks in New York unions this year.

### Condition of the Union Movement

Most of what has been written recently about the condition of the union movement has called attention to the steady decline in union membership during the past fifteen years and the stagnation before that going back to the mid-1960s. The impression is often given that unions are on the verge of extinction, that nobody cares because they are antiquated institutions, that they are unfit for survival.

But this ignores the fact that 16 million workers and working class families constitute what can become a tremendously dynamic movement, potentially the most powerful social and political force in this country. Anyone who doubts the potential might of the unions as now constituted should be reassured. No other organization, no political party (certainly not any so-called “grass roots movement”) is capable at this time of calling into the streets a half million workers to show what they think about their position in society, and what they hope will happen in the immediate future.

### Wall Street Journal on LPA

New York daily newspapers carried summary accounts of the Labor Day parade, concentrating most coverage on the contest for AFL-CIO president between Thomas R. Donahue and John J. Sweeney, both longtime members of the federation's executive council and wedded to the Democratic Party. But the *Wall Street Journal* (September 5), which tries to keep its wealthy readers informed of what social and political changes are in the making, carried a report captioned “It's getting to be party time

for some labor-union activists.” The brief article (quoted here in full) went on to say:

Labor Party Advocates pick Cleveland for the formal launch of a Labor Party next June 6-9. With 35 chapters and more than 5,000 dues-paying members, the idea of a rank-and-file political party gathers steam with the endorsements from four unions, including the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers and United Electrical Workers.

“We would hope to shape the debate” in the 1996 presidential race, says Tony Mazzocchi, a party organizer. “We don't want to be just another splinter party,” adds Stan Smith, president of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter. Some 1,000 delegates are expected at the convention. But important trade-union leaders, including those fighting for the top AFL-CIO positions, oppose the idea of a new party.

### Rank-and-File Discussions

Much can be learned at events like the Labor Day parade and other working class demonstrations where masses of workers gather. At the site of the New York parade, which was not confined to the line of march up Fifth Avenue but took over all the side streets along nearly the whole distance, all the way over to Sixth Avenue on the West Side and for most of the block of all cross streets on the east side of Fifth Avenue, thousands of workers gathered to make up their union contingents and be prepared to enter the march when their time came. By 10 in the morning workers were beginning to gather. Decorated trucks and flatbeds with union signs and other types of floats (some quite elaborate) were moving into place. The parade would not start for another hour, and many contingents already beginning to form would not step off until 2 or 3 o'clock in the afternoon.

This is the time and place where union workers gather, having received specific instructions from their union locals on where to assemble. Many come early and joke among themselves about being among the first to arrive, probably out of training by the boss never to be late on the job, one says. Others laugh rather self-consciously at being reminded of how their lives are controlled.

Along comes a straggler. He belongs to a different local and can't find where its members are. A fellow worker recognizes him. They haven't seen each other for several years and ask themselves how long has it been. They exchange a few words about conditions of work, where better jobs can be found, and such matters. This kind of talk usually stops when the local business agent walks up. He is glad to see such a good turnout and congratulates everyone for showing up, and what a good day it is for the parade. Some ask questions like when will they join the parade, which has by this time begun.

It's almost noon and large grills have been set up over charcoal fires. The smell of smoke and cooking hamburger meat gives the whole area a kind of picnic atmosphere. Besides, it's good to be able to get something to eat this time of day. Groups gather and seem to be talking seriously. One of the opposition candidates in the local union election has arrived. He has handbills explaining why he should be elected to

represent the local. Somebody says he was in office before and didn't do so well.

Among several groups the talk turns to union politics, prompted partly by the race for AFL-CIO president, which has received some attention on TV broadcasts. But this is something these rank-and-file union members don't think they have much influence over. They agree that they are now beginning to have some control over their local unions. Some of the old officials have recently been voted out, and others are in prison. They are reminded of what has happened in recent years in the miners union and the Teamsters.

### Changes in the Unions

Closer to home, in the building trades, big changes in the leadership of the painters union happened recently. Also there seems to be some changes in the structure of Painters District Council 9, which has a big turnout for the parade. One of the Carpenters locals recently held a special election but no one knows for sure what the results were. Somebody reports a rumor that a Teamster local out in Hempstead is in trouble and some of the crooked officials there may soon be indicted. Maybe some working teamsters will be elected to run the local.

This kind of talk by rank-and-file members is different, more open, than only a few years ago. It shows a greater interest and more self-confidence on their part. The changes now taking place in the unions are encouraging, and this partly accounts for the general upbeat spirit that animated the New York Labor Day parade.

### Remnants of Earlier Radicalizations

There was little evidence of change in the broader political consciousness of the marchers, except what is reported here on the presence of Labor Party Advocates in the parade. Some remnants of earlier periods of labor radicalization, going back to the 1930s and the rise of the CIO movement, were present in the form of radical newspapers and other literature. Free copies of *Peoples Weekly World* (published by surviving Stalinists, the remnants of the Communist Party) and *Workers World* (the publication of a small cultist group) were distributed free. Neither referred to the growing movement for a labor party based on the unions. Both papers were received politely and with some curiosity. One worker was heard to ask, “Are the Communists still around?” with no trace of hostility. Workers World Party members were greeted similarly, with a degree of curiosity. Other radical literature was distributed by members of the Freedom Socialist Party, a small group left over from the radicalization of the 1960s. The Freedom Socialists displayed a sign, “Labor Needs Its Own Party, A Labor Party.” And this was not distinguished in any way from LPA banners by marchers and spectators. No other radical groups or their publications were noticeably present, though some may have been there along the parade route.

It was a day of Labor Solidarity. And a foreboding sense of more trouble ahead. □

## Reunion of Unions

# Unionists Commemorate Tenth Anniversary of P-9 Strike

by David Jones

Hundreds gathered in Austin, Minnesota, on August 20 and 21 to celebrate a "Reunion of Unions" — the tenth anniversary of the strike by United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local P-9 against the Hormel meat-packing company.

In one of the most widely publicized fights against concessions in the 1980s, Local P-9 struck Hormel on August 17, 1985. When the company began bringing in scabs in January 1986, strikers and supporters shut the plant with mass picketing. Although the plant was reopened a few days later by National Guard troops and the state highway patrol, mobilized by the Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party governor, the union received an unprecedented outpouring of grass-roots support. Spurred by a campaign directed by labor organizer Ray Rogers, over 3,000 local unions sent in \$1 million to aid the strikers, and thousands came to Austin to demonstrate support in rallies and demonstrations.

In mid-1986, the UFCW international union placed the local in receivership, obtained a court order to take the union hall away from the workers, and called off the strike. The entire local executive board and some 70 other union activists were fired by the company with the complicity of the UFCW. A new scab-officered union was chartered by the UFCW as "Local 9," an agreement establishing lower wage scales was imposed, and it was not until two years later that some of the original strikers began to be recalled.

### Hormel's Policy of Intimidation — Workers Fired for Boycott Activity

Eventually about 300 former strikers were recalled, out of a unionized work force of about 1,500 at the Austin plant. Nevertheless, in December 1992 a slate of former P-9ers won a majority of the union's local executive board. Still, the members of the slate had not been part of the old P-9 leadership and were for the most part uncertain as to how to proceed. Most of the former P-9 activists who were fired after the strike were charged with being associated in one way or another with boycott activity, which the sweetheart contract made grounds for dismissal. One activist was fired because a car belonging to a friend and bearing a "Boycott Hormel" bumper sticker was parked in his driveway and photographed by a company spy.

As a result of this intense, continuing, and intimidating pressure from the Hormel company, the local union president, although a loyal

former P-9er, declined to endorse the reunion. There was a fear that if any boycott literature, T-shirts, slogans or statements were reported at the reunion, current employees in attendance would be fired. Although the reunion organizers took great pains to avoid the presence of any such material, as of this writing it is too early to tell if there will be any retaliation by the company.

Still, taking no chances, the company scheduled the plant to work on Saturday and Sunday in order to forestall attendance by the current work force. In what was a real act of courage, the local's secretary, Dale Chidester, who had worked a night shift, spoke at the rally.

"I speak today," he said, "not as a representative of the union, or the people I work with, but as a member of the working class. As a member of the working class I believe I have a right to be present and voice my opinion." In 1986 Chidester worked in Hormel's Ottumwa, Iowa, plant and, along with some 500 other workers, refused to go to work when pickets from Austin showed up shortly after the strike began. The Ottumwa workers were fired by Hormel but reinstated later, and when the Ottumwa plant was sold, Chidester and other Ottumwa workers were able to transfer into the Austin plant.

### At the Reunion: Jim Guyette and Ray Rogers

Also present were Jim Guyette, former local president, and labor organizer Ray Rogers. Guyette and Rogers were the two most prominent leaders of the Hormel struggle. Both were indicted on charges of "felony riot" in April 1986, although the charges were dropped after a vigorous national protest campaign.

A car caravan of supporters departed from the UFCW hall in St. Paul and traveled to Austin on Saturday for the march and rally. The caravan got to Austin just after the march had stepped off from the starting point and, arriving at a downtown street corner just as the first section was turning a corner, drove right into the parade.

Located in the first car, I heard noisy and vigorous chanting coming from the marchers just ahead: "Corporate greed has got to go!" and "P-9!, P-9!" There was a familiar ring to the loudest voice, and looking ahead I saw Ray Rogers, a little grayer than ten years ago, but brimming with the same pure and irrepressible enthusiasm. The organizers had allocated a car for him to ride in, with his name on the side like a celebrity in the Rose Bowl parade, but he had

declined. "Who will there be to wave at in downtown Austin?" he wanted to know. "Just squirrels and trees." As it turned out there was a respectable number of friendly people on the sidewalks as the march wound through the downtown area.

Speaking at the rally, Rogers said that he believed that only the rank and file had the right to turn union leaders out of office, and consequently he still considered the deposed executive board the legitimate leadership of the Hormel workers movement. He pointed out that William Wynn, the former UFCW international president, had been forced into early retirement as a result of financial improprieties, and that Packinghouse Division Director Lewie Anderson, openly depicted in Barbara Koppel's "American Dream" setting up the backroom betrayal of P-9, and fired by Wynn not long after the strike, is still scuffling around the UFCW's packinghouse locals trying to drum up support for an opposition caucus headed by Anderson.

### Pete Winkels

Also speaking was Pete Winkels, the former business agent and editor of *The Unionist*, the union's weekly paper, during the strike. "Take a look at the former executive board," Winkels told workers from the Staley and Caterpillar strikes in Decatur, Illinois, who were present. (Dave Watts, president of UPIU Local 7837 in Decatur, was one of the speakers). "They tried to starve us into submission," said Winkels, who weighs close to 300 pounds. "You can see how successful they have been."

Continuing in the same vein, he said he tells people he meets that he has gone from holding union office to being active in precious metals futures and government debentures — "Aluminum cans and food stamps, that is."

Touching on a delicate theme, he spoke about how the "B" word could not be spoken at the rally, for reasons well known to all. However, he said, he wanted to relate a story about a camping trip he and his son had taken to northern Minnesota. They had taken separate tents, he said, and it had turned out that his was placed in a sunny spot which became increasingly uncomfortable as the temperature rose and he tried to nap. His son invited him to use the other tent, located in a shady area, which he did. "Laying on my *boy's cot*," he said, "I thought about Hormel."

Winkels' uncle, John Winkels, ninety years old, a fervent supporter of the P-9 struggle and one of the original group of workers in the Hormel hog kill department who led the strike in 1933 that established the union, was present in the front row for the three-hour rally. Along with fellow hog kill workers Joe Vorhees and Joe Ollman, he became a key leader of the union over several decades, and helped to organize a branch of the Socialist Workers Party in Austin in the 1930s. In 1934 the Hormel workers sent a motorcycle squad to Minneapolis to assist in the Teamsters strike.

As is his custom, he joined in the singing of "Solidarity Forever" and added a few verses of

his own. "They can't make the workers keep their mouths shut," he sang, "the union makes us strong."

### Peter Rachleff and Gladys McKenzie

Peter Rachleff, former chair of the Twin Cities P-9 support committee and author of *Hard-Pressed in the Heartland*, a book about the strike published by Southend Press, acknowledged that the "B" word could not be spoken that day, but said that he personally would never consume another Hormel product.

AFCSME organizer Gladys McKenzie, who had participated in many P-9 support activities, was billed by the rally organizers as "Today's Leader."

"I've spent every day of my life over the last six years organizing among and with my friends and co-workers at the University of Minnesota. We've brought 4,000 new workers into the labor movement in that time. We've struggled to build a union to be proud of and I can tell you the experience has been one of intense joy coupled with days of real heartbreak. What gets me through the tough moments is made up of a lot of different things. Among them are all the days I spent ten years ago in Austin, Minnesota."

"Barbara Koppel made a movie and got an Academy Award for showing the P-9ers as victims," McKenzie said. "But those of us who worked with the Twin Cities P-9 support committee knew these people better. We shared their struggle over months and years and were inspired because we saw here in Austin what ordinary people can do."

"I believe the revitalization of the American labor movement is a highly attainable goal. I say this every chance I get. I believe it is based on the simple P-9 recipe. P-9 stood up and deliberately sought us out. Found us in our union halls. They scoured the country for us and reminded us where our strength lies, in each other and our ability to care for one another and support one another. They talked about values and they left tremendous optimism in their wake."

### The United Support Group — A Workers' Social Organization

The reunion was organized by the United Support Group (USG), made up of retired and fired workers and their spouses. The group was originally organized in 1984 at a meeting of strikers' wives in Austin's Todd Park, where the first union meetings had been held in 1933. The group has existed continuously ever since, occupying a one-story frame building two blocks from the giant Hormel plant for the past ten years, publishing a regular newsletter, "The Support Report," monitoring events in the UFCW and other unions, intervening in local politics, and carrying on a variety of social activities. Rally participants who gathered there after the main event were served some of the 1,500 Oscar Mayer hot dogs provided by a contingent of supporters from the UFCW local at that company's Madison, Wisconsin, plant,

## The Fight Is Still in Them

### Hormel Workers Vote to Reject Contract

Workers at six Hormel Foods plants voted in mid-September to reject a four-year contract recommended by the union's leadership. Coming ten years and one month after the beginning of Local P-9's strike at the Hormel plant in Austin, the vote stunned many business and financial observers and prompted alarmed newspaper headlines.

The September 19 *Minneapolis Star-Tribune* quoted labor commentator Peter Rachleff as saying: "This is so incredible. People [working at the plants] are scared to death of Hormel, so it's amazing they could vote like this. Hormel has ruled by intimidation."

The workers rejected by a two-to-one margin a proposal that would have provided a 15-cent hourly increase in the first and third years, along with \$400 bonuses in the second and fourth years. Coupled with increases in the cost of health insurance to be paid by the workers, the result would be a net wage cut.

The head of the UFCW's Hormel chain bargaining unit, a former union officer who scabbed during the 1986 strike and was rewarded by the international union for his services and appointed business agent of the Austin local after the strike was defeated, quickly announced a "renegotiated" contract for the workers to vote on one week later. After some minor additional concessions from the company, and threats from the union bureaucrats about the consequences of a strike, the Hormel contract was supported on the second vote. It has been the UFCW's pattern over the last decade and a half to force workers to vote repeatedly on concessionary agreements until an affirmative vote is finally obtained.

The 2,700 workers involved in the vote are employed at Hormel plants in Austin; Fre-

mont, Nebraska; Atlanta, Georgia; Beloit, Wisconsin; Houston, Texas; and Algona, Iowa. At the Fremont plant, where a two-tier wage system implemented ten years ago pays kill floor workers some \$2 an hour less than other production workers, the vote was four to one. At the Austin plant, the kill and cut slaughtering operation is run in a section of the plant incorporated separately as "Quality Pork Products." A low-wage sweetheart agreement was negotiated between the UFCW and this alter ego Hormel subsidiary. These workers were not allowed to vote on the contract offer. If they had, the "no" vote might have been even more decisive.

Production workers get a base wage of \$11.70 an hour after two years, although this base excludes workers such as those at "Quality Pork," who hire in around the \$7-an-hour range. With tremendous turnover in the plants, a sizable percentage of the work force is always at the starting rate. Nevertheless, the wages are significantly higher than those at non-union meatpacking plants, a legacy of the great struggle waged in 1985-86.

As is apparent, this differential has not reconciled the unionized workers to the current rates of pay. Their desire to win better wages and conditions, despite the crushing defeat in 1986, has fueled such actions as the election of a slate of former P-9ers to the Austin local's executive board, and this emphatic rejection of the pact jointly proposed by the company and the union bureaucrats.

Seen in this light, the company's decision to operate the plant over the weekend of the 10th anniversary celebration of the strike in Austin in order to prevent current workers from attending is understandable.

— D.J.

one of the few remaining large-scale meatpacking plants that is union-organized.

The USG is the type of workers' social organization, once common but now virtually nonexistent in this country, supplanted by American Legion Clubs and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts. Posted prominently on the wall inside the building is the United Support Group "Preamble," reflecting the group's working class outlook and its continuing need to function under potential threats of reprisal from the company: "We, the participants of the United Support Group pledge ourselves to bring awareness to labor and other vital issues essential to a strong democracy. The USG is operated solely by donations from the masses and is not incorporated. Dues are not required and no formal list of participants is kept. No constitutions, bylaws, rules of order and responsible elected officers..."

Participants in the reunion were urged to

patronize local establishments considered sympathetic to the cause, including an American Legion post and Lefty's Bar. Since the last time I was in Austin, there has now appeared a "Righty's Bar." What the significance of this is, I cannot say.

### Wage Cuts = Millions for Hormel

According to the *Minneapolis Star-Tribune*, "In the past decade, Hormel has enjoyed substantial financial growth, posting record profits year after year. Last year, its sales exceeded \$3 billion for the first time while profits soared to \$117.9 million, three times what they were 10 years ago."

"In the past 11 years, Hormel has increased base wages to \$11.70 an hour. But when adjusted for inflation, real wages have declined 21 percent from the high before the strike. Moreover, the hefty bonuses that Hormel once paid

workers for high productivity are gone.” (“In Austin, Hormel strike that divided is far from forgotten,” August 14, 1995.)

Estimates are that today’s Hormel worker earns about \$10,000 a year less than ten years ago. With well over 1,000 workers, it is obvious that the strike’s defeat has meant, at a minimum, a \$100,000,000 gift for the company from 1985 to 1995. In fact, Hormel’s major financial problem today is finding places to invest its bulging surpluses. According to company annual reports, Hormel had net earnings of over \$600 million in the ten years since the strike. Since the majority of Hormel stock is held in trust for the descendants of George Hormel by the Hormel Foundation, this means that the preponderance of this huge sum went to the members of one already super-wealthy family (or was invested in their behalf), none of whom even participate directly in running the Hormel Company.

### Worsening Conditions in Meatpacking

Conditions for most workers in the meatpacking industry have plummeted since the defeat of the Hormel strike. The huge multi-story older facilities which characterized the industry for so many decades, and around which the local unions that made up the United Packinghouse Workers of America were built in the 1930s and ’40s are for the most part gone. The old Hormel Austin plant was replaced with a modern facility in the late ’70s, built with millions of dollars in concessions from the workers. (The Hormel plant has the distinction of being the site of the first recorded outbreak of what was later called “Legionnaires disease.”)

The new and mostly non-union facilities are located primarily in small towns and semi-rural areas. The employers have imported new immigrants in wholesale to operate them — Asians, Hispanics, Africans, and others. One plant in western Minnesota is operated primarily by workers from Somalia.

“The experience of Polish immigrants this year indicates that finding people to take some of the new, low-wage meatpacking jobs isn’t easy,” the August 14 *Star-Tribune* reported, adding:

“Quality Pork [a fictitious corporation Hormel created to operate its Austin slaughterhouse operation at wages below the rest of the plant] thought Chicago might prove fertile ground for employees because the city’s large Polish population included people with backgrounds in meat processing...Quality Pork and city officials arranged for about 30 immigrants to be bused from Chicago to Austin, where they spent a weekend touring the city, inspecting housing and checking out jobs at the slaughterhouse. Most of them returned to Chicago.”

### Bankrupt “Strategy” of Union Bureaucracy

The experience in the meatpacking industry over the last decade and a half exposes the utter stupidity and bankruptcy of the union bureaucracy’s “strategy” (if it can be dignified with that term) to defend workers’ wages and conditions. The meatpacking industry didn’t run away to the Third World. It brought the Third World here, and under the jurisdiction of U.S. labor laws and U.S. constitutional democracy for the most part smashed unionization in the industry.

Meat products sold in this country are almost without exception processed and packaged within the borders of the United States, and from livestock raised in this country. Union concessions were entirely irrelevant to whether meatpacking production remained in this country, or whether it remained profitable. As is apparent, it is stupendously profitable, and it is impractical to remove it to other countries. The employers had no weapons that they did not possess in the so-called golden years of the 1950s and ’60s in relation to meatpacking unions. If they ran away, it was only from South St. Paul, Minnesota, to Columbus, Iowa. The new immigrants only came into the industry after the union had been largely defeated, in the late ’80s. The union collapsed in the meatpacking industry because the UFCW bureaucracy, a product of a disastrous merger of the UPWA with a larger union in 1979, consciously collaborated in its destruction and helped to sabotage the spontaneous resistance of the workers.

Where the resistance went from spontaneity to conscious, organized activity, as happened in

most developed form in Austin, the bureaucracy worked hand in glove with the employers, the courts, the media, and the government to destroy the resistance and defame the workers and their leadership. (It should not be overlooked that mergers of relatively democratic and militant unions like the UPWA with others like the Amalgamated Meat Cutters Union, in 1969, and the Retail Clerks, in 1979, accelerated the process of decay tremendously.)

### The Employers’ Brutal Record

The meatpacking employers have a ruthless and brutal history of confronting unions in their industry. Packinghouse workers organizations of national scope were defeated in the strikes of 1904 and 1921, and in each case long periods of non-union conditions followed. Only in the 1930s did the workers succeed in establishing stable and relatively long-lasting organizations, and only in the ’60s did the union finally win a comprehensive master agreement. But once again the industry is predominantly non-union and the workers for the most part have been driven back to conditions of exploitation and low wages that existed prior to organization in the ’30s.

### A Force That Can Change the World

The struggle of Local P-9 made a major contribution to the eventual emergence of a militant and class conscious labor movement. Its impact and significance did not end with the defeat of the strike. The intransigent defenders of that tradition, and of solidarity and, yes, even internationalism, were the organizers of the 10-year anniversary celebration in Austin. They were transformed by those events more profoundly than anyone else, as might be expected, and in them you get a glimpse of how the class struggle and all the peculiarities of American life will eventually fuse into a force that can change the world.

*BIDOM* readers can subscribe to *The Support Report* by sending a contribution to the United Support Group, 585-7th Street NE, Austin, MN 55912. □

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# The History/Herstory of the United Support Group and the Women Who Founded It

by Pat Higgins

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*This article is reprinted from the 10th anniversary “Reunion of Unions” edition of The Support Report, published by the Austin United Support Group. The edition is dated August 19, 1995. Subheads were added.*

**W**omen played an important role in the Austin strike between Local P-9 and the George A. Hormel Company. Women have always played important roles in labor history. Austin was no different.

The women involved in the Support Group were inspired and motivated to become in-

involved because of the economic hardships their families were about to meet or had already experienced. The 23% wage and benefit cuts imposed on the workers by the Company were retroactive for six weeks. These wage and benefit cuts left many families in economic despair, causing some families to live off negative pay

checks. The wage cuts, the benefit cuts and the pending strike were the dominating forces that united Austin women into organizing the Support Group. This unity would produce a lasting bond for many.

The Austin United Support Group was formed in October of 1984 by several wives of



union members who wanted to show support for their partners. Memories vary as to how many women actually attended the first Support Group meetings held at Todd Park. The numbers ranged from as low as thirty to as many as three hundred. The average response put the number somewhere between 100 and 200 women who participated at the first meetings held at Todd Park in October of 1984.

### **First Organizers and First Actions**

The general consensus of the women was that Jeannie Bambrick, Michelle Hendrikson, Billie Goodew, Diane Swenson, and Vicki Guyette first organized the Support Group. Actually two groups of women had the same idea and approached Jim Guyette, then president of Local P-9, with their idea. Jim suggested the women contact Vicki, his wife, because he did not feel it was the union's place to start a women's support group.

One of the group's first actions was to put together a flyer which they handed out to Local P-9 members at a meeting held at the Austin High School in early October of 1984. The first few Support Group meetings were held outside in Todd Park because Local P-9 would not allow the Support Group to use the basement of the union hall. The Support Group participants, both male and female, did not actually belong to the union so, therefore, it was agreed by the union executive board that the Support Group could not use the facilities of the union hall. Later one of the older executive board members, Floyd Leno, would convince the executive board to allow the Support Group to use the basement of the union hall.

The meetings at Todd Park grew in size as word spread about the Support Group. The Support Group's primary goals in the beginning were to: (1) Show support for their spouses in whatever way possible; and (2) Educate the community about the strike issues, such as the wage and benefit cuts. They tried to educate the community through informational pickets, carrying placards that said "Can Austin Survive on \$8.25?" and "We Don't Need Corporate Greed!" The women passed out information on the west side of Austin at a shopping mall for many months before the strike.

Another way women showed support for their spouses was by picketing at the plant gates in the mornings and afternoons before the strike started. One Support Group woman described how the spouses responded to this action taken by the women.

The first time we showed up at the gates to boost the workers' morale, the word was passed around inside the plant that we were out there. The guys on their breaks would go to the roof and they would be shouting at us just as loud as they could because it meant so much to them. When they left work they would honk and wave at us, so it was really a morale lifting experience for the guys.

### **Economic Support for Striking Families**

The Austin community, as a whole, did very

little to alleviate the economic needs of P-9 families. As a result, the Support Group was put in the position of trying to provide economic support to the striking families. In the beginning the UFCW provided each striking family with a weekly \$40.00 check, but after the strike was called off by the International Union in March of 1985, these \$40.00 supplement checks from the International Union stopped.

After the strike was called off by the International, the local continued on its own. The Support Group provided each striker with a \$40.00 weekly check for several weeks, then dropped the amount to \$25.00 a week for several weeks thereafter. When you take the weekly checks and multiply them out by the number of strikers (about 850) the amount of money the members of Local P-9 and the women raised is staggering — about \$153,000 in less than 10 weeks. These checks from the Support Group were sporadic, but nonetheless this was a primary source of support for the strikers. The amount of support provided to the strikers by the Support Group was phenomenal.

### **A Safe Place for Striking Families**

After the International withdrew, the Support Group found itself solely responsible for the economic and emotional needs of the striking families. The Support Group provided a safe place for the strikers and their families to come to air their feelings. This was especially important because most of the community did not support the strikers. Strikers had no other place in the community to congregate, visit, have a friendly cup of coffee, or see a friendly face. Some businesses in the Austin community did support the strikers. None, however, provided a safe haven like the Support Group did. Lack of community support angered the strikers and many of them boycotted most businesses within the community.

### **How the Money Was Raised**

In the beginning the women participants of the Support Group raised money in a very traditional manner: bake sales, craft sales, rummage sales, sock hops, and button sales. As the Support Group's need for large sums of money grew, so did the women's methods of raising money. The women organized mass mailings that were sent out to unions and individual supporters all over the country and internationally. The size of these mailings ranged from several thousand to as many as eighty thousand.

The mailings, in themselves, took a considerable amount of organization, money, and people power. None of the women had previous training for the skills needed for many of these tasks. Ray Rogers, who was hired by Local P-9 as a strategist and P.R. person, taught the Support Group activists how to put together a successful mailing list, write cover letters, and develop a good flyer. After Ray returned to New York in the late summer of 1988, the Support Group sent out several mailings on their own. The Support Group's methods reflected the personality of the group and were sometimes a little

rustic, but very effective. The success of these mailings developed a very large support network that included all fifty states and six or seven countries as well.

### **"Shirt Shack"**

The Support Group also raised money by selling T-shirts, sweatshirts, bumper stickers, posters, caps and pictures through their "shirt shack." It was not uncommon for Local P-9 speakers out on the road to observe other supporters in large cities, small cities, and even little towns wearing different paraphernalia sold by the Support Group. One man who had just returned from a speaking tour in New York City told me: "I could not believe it! Here I was walking down a street in New York City when I noticed the man walking in front of me was wearing a 'Lefty's' jacket." Lefty's Bar is a union working class bar in Austin which strongly supported Local P-9 during the strike.

The first "Cram Your Spam" sweatshirt was made by Jeannie Bambrick for her mother, Billie Goodew, in the fall of 1984. The first sweatshirt simply said "Cram Your Spam Please." After "Cram Your Spam" T-shirts were sold, the slogan became a national rallying cry.

The most effective means used by the Support Group to raise money was through their nationwide public speaking tours. Speakers also went to Canada and England. Many people from the Support Group went out on the road and spoke at different functions, union meetings, rallies, and conventions. From 1984 through 1987, Support Group activists along with union members, both male and female, went out on public speaking tours to help raise money. This not only enabled Support Group to raise large sums of money, but it provided the speakers with the opportunity to rebut the propaganda being put out by the Hornel Company and by the UFCW International Union.

### **The Food Shelf and Santa's Workshop**

The food shelf was started before the strike due to the wage and benefit cuts and continued through 1988. Mary Arens, Linda Novak, and Carol Kough were the Support Group participants who helped union members set up the food shelf, worked every week during this period bagging and handing out groceries. The food shelf gave out weekly groceries (two bags) to over 800 families for about six or seven months. As the strike prolonged, the number of families receiving services gradually declined. Many striking families found other work and the food shelf disbanded in late 1988.

The adopt-a-family program was a great idea and a lot of effort was put into this program. Many families received support through this program and unions all over the country donated to it.

Another program, Santa's workshop, was started, in December of 1985, by Donna Simon and her sister, who were wives of retired P-9ers, to make toys for P-9 children. The first year they made wood toys, Cabbage Patch dolls, and

Pound Puppies for the P-9 children. Later they started to make teddy bears for P-9 children and to sell them. The teddy bears were sold by the public speakers out on the road, through the *Support Report*, and by a small mailing put out in the fall of 1988.

### "The Support Report"

The Support Group's development of their newspaper, *The Support Report*, became the best strategy to keep the strikers and their supporters

all over the country updated on current happenings in Austin, MN. The women who worked on *The Support Report* had no previous training or experience in writing or editing a newspaper. In the beginning, the newspaper was very rustic but matured with practice.

This gives you a little insight into the role women activists in the Support Group played in P-9's struggle. The participants of the Austin United Support Group themselves do not fully realize their important role in labor history/her-

story. Neither has the community of Austin or some labor historians yet recognized the power and contributions of Local P-9 and the women of the Austin United Support Group to the labor movement.

I want to thank all the Austin United Support Group women and all women throughout labor history/herstory who have contributed their time and energy towards social change. □

## A Landmark of America's Labor Struggles

# The Place of the Hormel Strike in U.S. Labor History

by Peter Rachleff

*This article is also reprinted from the 10th anniversary "Reunion of Unions" edition of The Support Report.*

American labor history revolves around the anniversaries of important struggles, including the Chicago "Haymarket Riot" of 1886, the Homestead Strike of 1892, the Great Northern and Pullman strikes of 1894, the Seattle General Strike of 1919, the Minneapolis Teamsters strikes of 1934, and the packinghouse strike of 1948. Although labor "lost" many of these battles, each one set the stage for an ensuing advance for the movement as a whole.

The 10th anniversary of the Hormel strike gives us an opportunity to assess its legacy. In the summer of 1985, the eyes of America were on Austin, Minnesota. There, with the national labor movement in a tailspin since Ronald Reagan fired striking air traffic controllers in 1981, one local union (United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9) galvanized national attention by launching a creative and militant campaign against their powerful employer's demands for givebacks.

Over the course of this strike (which lasted from August 1985 to June 1986) Austin was frequently in a media spotlight. In September 1985, Judge Edward Devitt issued an injunction which shut down the union's energetic campaign against First Bank Systems on the grounds that it violated the anti-"secondary boycott" provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act. By October, Local P-9's international union had made public its opposition to the struggle. At the same time, hundreds of local unions from all over the country sent donations to the strikers, and "P-9 Support Committees" were organized by multi-union coalitions in more than 20 cities.

In late January, Hormel began hiring "permanent replacements," which led about 500 workers to cross their own picket lines and return to work. When a peaceful mass demonstration closed the plant on Martin Luther King Day (January 20, 1986), then-Governor Rudy Perpich dispatched the Minnesota National

Guard to reopen the plant. When Local P-9 tried to spread the strike to Hormel plants in other cities, hundreds of workers in Ottumwa, Iowa, and Fremont, Nebraska, were fired. Mass arrests at picket line rallies and civil disobedience demonstrations gave many meatpackers and their families their first experience behind bars. In early June, the international union placed P-9 in trusteeship, replaced their officers, announced an end to the strike, and negotiated a contract with Hormel. Most of the strikers would never return to work.

### An Example That Lives On

Many commentators have dismissed the Hormel strike as a bitter defeat. Film maker Barbara Koppel won an Oscar for her "American Dream" documentary, which depicted the strike in bleak terms. For some it will stand as a symbol of the decline of the labor movement in the 1980s.

But many of the strike participants — Hormel workers, family members, retirees, other union activists — see things differently. They feel that they were tested — to stand up with their fellow workers and neighbors despite the risk of the loss of their jobs, to fight for fairness and against injustice — and that they stood up to the test. While they would rather have won the strike, they continue to celebrate that they won their self-respect and created a new community among themselves.

There is even more to Local P-9's legacy. Their network of supporters around the country continue to provide a basis for the exchange of information, sharing of experiences, and organization of solidarity, from education to fund-raising and boycotts. In some cities, the former support committees have been a core for local solidarity campaigns. Activists who first met during the Hormel struggle are also playing a key role in discussions about the creation of a

Labor Party, as well as in the debate about the leadership of the national AFL-CIO.

The developing struggle to rebuild and revive local unions follows P-9's themes of participation, involvement, and internal democracy. So, too, have efforts to integrate family members into the heart and soul of the movement. Jim Guyette's dictum that labor needs to "reorganize the organized before we can organize the unorganized" has become a veritable motto.

Unions have also followed P-9's example and reached out beyond their immediate boundaries to build solidarity with other unions and form coalitions with other organizations in their communities. Public employees, coal miners, truck drivers, retail, rail, and manufacturing workers have extended support to each other in increasingly regular fashion. They have also built new relationships with farm, environmental, and peace and justice organizations. These diverse relationships increasingly span national boundaries.

To achieve these goals, many unions have learned from P-9's innovative tactics. Union halls and meeting rooms have become beehives of activity. Color-coded message-bearing T-shirts have become common fare. Singing at rallies and meetings has also caught on. Other unions have experimented with mural painting or drama troupes. Hundreds of rank-and-filers have become effective public speakers, as they carry their unions' issues personally and directly to other audiences. Some unions also send their messages via well-produced videos, reaching even wider audiences.

P-9's legacy belongs not just to the men and women who struck in the summer of 1985, but to the entire labor movement. The anniversary of this strike deserves its honored place in the labor history calendar. □

# Labor Party Founding Convention to Be Held in June 1996

by Tom Barrett

History will be made in Cleveland, Ohio, June 6-9, 1996, when delegates representing workers from all over the United States will launch a new political party, anchored in and responsible to the organized labor movement. Labor Party Advocates chapters are working hard over the months leading up to the convention to raise money, secure additional endorsements, and organize local platform hearings so that the new labor party's platform will be a reflection of the hopes and concerns expressed in workplaces and working-class communities in every region of the country.

Three years of the Clinton administration have shown clearly that the Democratic Party offers no positive alternative to the Republicans' anti-worker agenda, misnamed the "Contract with America." Polls since 1992 have consistently shown that a majority of American voters are ready for a new political party which truly represents them; the fascination with H. Ross Perot, who in fact has nothing of substance to offer working people, is indicative of the deep disgust and frustration with politics as usual. New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley, who has decided not to seek a fourth term in the U.S. Senate, is hinting at an independent run for the presidency, as is Jesse Jackson. They recognize that their political career aspirations may no longer be well served by remaining in the Democratic Party, let alone by bolting to the Republican Party, whose record as the majority party in Congress shows its total contempt for this country's wage-earning millions.

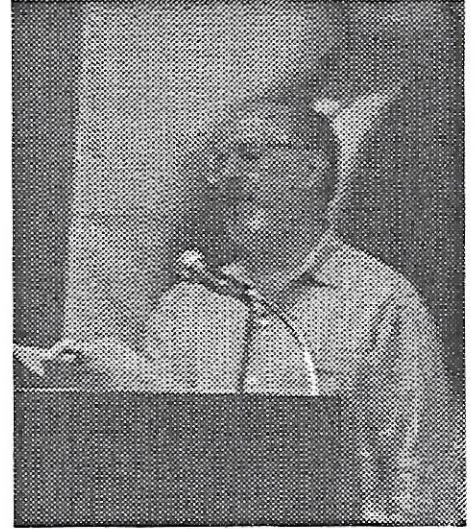
Just as the inability of the Whigs and Democrats to commit to stopping the spread of slavery

led to the formation of the Republican Party in 1854, the inability of the Republicans and Democrats to commit to stopping the impoverishment of hard-working American families is now culminating in the formation of a new political party. This one, however, will not only be new, it will be different: rather than providing a means for lawyers and bureaucrats — including mainstream politicians like Bill Bradley — to advance their careers in what they call (and with a straight face, too!) "public service," it will be a political formation to open a new battlefield in which working people can fight for universal single-payer national health insurance; trade policies which lead to more jobs and higher wages rather than the opposite; effective legislation to stop the employment of scabs; guaranteed parental leave; and other important gains which can no longer be won at the bargaining table or the picket line alone.

## Over a Decade of Preliminary Organizing

During the 1980s, Tony Mazzocchi, who was at that time secretary-treasurer of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers international union (OCAW), began a revival of organizing for a labor party, a campaign which had been essentially forgotten during the 1950s. His work took organizational form in 1991 with the formation of Labor Party Advocates (LPA), which began to probe the depth of rank-and-file sentiment within the organized labor movement for the creation of a political party based in the trade unions.

Printed questionnaires circulated in a number of international unions and union locals showed



Tony Mazzocchi

surprisingly strong support for the idea of a labor party, sufficiently strong to convince the OCAW Executive Board to reassign Mazzocchi as a special presidential assistant to devote his full attention to LPA.

As Mazzocchi has visited local unions all over the U.S. during the past four years, speaking and organizing, it has become clear to even the most skeptical that active union members are ready to exert their political energies in a new direction. Labor Party Advocates has grown faster than anyone expected, and the numbers of workers who have come out to Mazzocchi's speaking engagements and to LPA organizing meetings has proved that the time is ripe to organize a convention and launch the labor party.

## New Jersey LPA Schedules Platform Hearings

The New Jersey chapter of Labor Party Advocates is sponsoring a meeting to discuss the issues facing the upcoming labor party convention next June. It will be held Saturday morning November 11 at the Labor Education Center at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. Besides the international unions which have endorsed LPA's campaign to organize a labor party (the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers, the United Electrical Workers, the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees, and now the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union) the event has been endorsed by District 1 (representing the northeastern states) of the Communications Workers of America (CWA)

and the New Jersey Industrial Union Council (IUC), the successor to the state CIO.

The event will open at 9:30 in the morning with keynote speeches by Bill Kane, president of the IUC, and Joanne Bell, president of Local 2336 (Washington, D.C.) of the CWA. They will be followed by two hours of testimony by invited labor representatives. There will be an hour devoted to discussion from the floor before the hearings end at 1:15 p.m.

For further information contact: New Jersey Labor Party Advocates, P.O. Box 583, Avenel, NJ 07001. Phone: (908) 381-3920.

— T.B.

## Creating a Revival of Class Consciousness

In July Tony Mazzocchi was a guest on the "Fresh Air" talk show on National Public Radio. During the half-hour interview conducted by Terry Gross, Mazzocchi explained why a labor party is necessary, what it can accomplish in the 1990s, and the kind of party that he sees as the appropriate vehicle to serve labor's political interests.

One of the goals which he stressed during the interview was the revival of the realization by working-class people that they *are* working-class people, rather than belonging to a different section of the same "middle class" as their employers. Mazzocchi described the class consciousness which prevailed in his youth in Brooklyn, New York, during the 1930s. There was a deepgoing sense of solidarity among the families in his neighborhood, a feeling that every-

*Continued on page 30*

## One Million Men:

# Against Male Dominance & Rape! Charge Genocide & Destruction of Black Families! Against U.S. Imperialism!

by Black Workers for Justice

The following is reprinted from the September 1995 issue of *Justice Speaks*, monthly newspaper of Black Workers for Justice (subscriptions: \$10, one year; \$16, two years; P.O. Box 26774, Raleigh NC 27611). This document appeared under a section of the newspaper entitled "Call to Justice — Analysis, Views & Demands from the BWFJ."

On October 16, 1995, the Nation of Islam and the African American Leadership Summit have called for one million Black men to converge on Washington, DC, in a "Holy Day of Atonement and Reconciliation."

It is called [at a time] when the attacks and devastation aimed against the African American community, and all oppressed sectors, have intensified. This period started in 1980 with the Reagan counter-revolution, with the U.S. turning toward fascism and reaction. A major, well organized mobilization, which the Million Man March holds promise to achieve, could serve to rally all oppressed to organize and resist.

Secondly, march organizers have essentially called for a national "stay away" that day posed as a national boycott of American work, schools and stores.

And thirdly, this march has called for Black communities to raise funds from grassroots efforts to support the march. This is a politically correct call to push against the tendency by many "progressives" to write "a grant" to fund each and every effort to strive for change. It promotes self-reliance as the first basis toward liberation.

### The Promise Is Flawed

Disappointingly, the great promise of the Million Man March is politically flawed because the most pressing political questions its organization and Call raise are either posed as secondary questions or do not exist at all.

First, the Million Man March specifically calls for the exclusion of Black women from the march. In principle, we are not opposed to any sector of our community calling for a march of that sector. This includes Black men. However, we are opposed to the exclusion of women.

Second, when a march of Black men is called that summons the Black man to "recognize and unconditionally atone for the absence, in too many cases, of the Black male as the head of the household, positive role model and builder of our community," we take strong issue with this outlook. These key planks of the march clearly raise two of the most important historical questions of the Black Liberation Movement (BLM).

Will we once again make the critical error of silencing millions of African American women,

## Preparations for the Million Man March

Rev. Ben Chavis, national director of the march and convener of the National African American Leadership Summit (NAALS), has said that there are 120 local organizing committees at work in preparation for the march — in Philadelphia alone, for example, he reported there were nine such committees.

The *Newark Star-Ledger* reported that New Jersey march supporters plan to bring 250,000 down to Washington from that state alone.

Chavis, Farrakhan, and Cornel West, a Black Harvard professor and prominent left-liberal commentator, appeared together on Black Entertainment Television (BET) for a discussion of the march.

In the wake of this broadcast, according to *The Final Call*, the TV network and the organizing offices for the march were flooded with calls by people wanting to know more about it or how they could participate.

*The Final Call* also reported that Farrakhan has promised to place the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal in the forefront of the march.

In late September, growing support for the march within the Black community was reflected in endorsements by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, civil rights pioneer Rosa Parks, Jesse Jackson, the Congressional Black Caucus, and three Black mayors: Marion Barry of Washington, D.C., Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore, and Edward Rendell of Philadelphia.

### Exclusion of Women?

Black columnist Derrick Jackson, writing from a left-liberal perspective in the *Boston Globe*, applauded many of the march's aims but questioned the exclusion of Black women, as have others. (See the accompanying article from *Justice Speaks*, newspaper of the Black Workers for Justice.)

In Pittsburgh, Black activist Claire Cohen reports that the Nation of Islam has been suggesting that women organize educationals or teach-ins on such things as Black history and the needs of the Black community, not that they should just "stay home."

March organizers have also said that they won't turn women away if they come to the march.

### Voter Registration — As Independents

A big part of the march preparations and the march itself will focus on getting Black people to register to vote — but to register as *independents*, not as *Democrats* or *Republicans*.

The idea that Black people should vote independently as a bloc in an effort to achieve their needs and demands is one that Malcolm X raised during the last year of his life. This idea was a central part of the program of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), which Malcolm founded.

— George Saunders

over 50% of the African American people, as equal partners with equal say in the terms and conditions of our liberation? Women were "equally" stolen from Africa and "equally" sold as chattel slaves. Today, women are "equally oppressed" by the U.S. system of economic exploitation and injustice. Black women are super-super-exploited as Africans, as women, and as working class people!

Black women have more than earned their place as leaders and equal partners, from Queen Nzingha of Angola to Harriet Tubman, Queen

Mother Moore, Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, and on. As a Black Liberation Movement we must call for the creation, through sincere struggle for the liberation of our entire people, of a new African-American man and a new African-American woman. This is the man and woman which rejects the norms and images of manhood and womanhood as promoted by a racist, sexist, patriarchal U.S. Monopoly Capitalist system. Where both Black male and female are considered "only three-fifths of a man."

Continued on page 21

## Political Potential of Million Man March

# The Farrakhan Factor in the 1996 Elections

by Ron Daniels

The following article appeared in the August 18 issue of *The Final Call*, newspaper of the Nation of Islam. In the 1992 elections, Ron Daniels ran for U.S. president as an independent Black candidate on the Campaign for a New Tomorrow ticket. He is currently head of the Center for Constitutional Rights.

One of the most significant points Ron Daniels makes during the last year of his life — namely, that Black voters should vote as a bloc to advance their own interests. That is also a demand of Malcolm's Organization of African American Unity. It is particularly worth noting that this demand is being raised again in connection with the Million Man March.

While Rev. Jesse Jackson ponders his fate and future in terms of the '96 election, another Black leader looms large on the horizon, Minister Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam. With Black America restlessly searching for decisive leadership and direction in this moment of grave crisis, the Million Man

March called by Minister Farrakhan could be a defining political event of 1995.

On October 16 the whole world will be watching, waiting and listening to see how large a turnout will be and what platform, agenda and demands will be articulated. And, if Minister Farrakhan makes good on his pledge to register

one million Black voters as independents, the Nation of Islam could become a major factor in the 1996 election.

The turn to electoral politics, independent Black politics in particular, is a logical extension of the rebirth of the Nation of Islam. Stead-

*Continued on page 21*

### Farrakhan Opposes "Contract on America"

### Explains "Why a Million Man March?"

The following are excerpts, with subheads added, indicating some of the political and social aspects of the October 16 march on Washington (and omitting the religious motivation); these excerpts are from an article entitled "Why a Million Man March?" by Min. Louis Farrakhan in the August 30 *Final Call*, the newspaper of the Nation of Islam.

Farrakhan rightly points out that the Republican "Contract on America" has been "agreed to by the Congress" as a whole. It is also true that Democratic President Clinton has failed to veto "Contract" measures. For more on the "Contract," see Michael Livingston's article in last month's issue of *BIDOM*.

There is an increasingly conservative and hostile climate growing in America towards the aspirations of Black people and people of color for justice. The "Contract with America," proposed by the Republicans and thus far agreed to by the Congress, is turning back the hands of time, depriving the Black community of many of the gains made through the suffering and sacrifice of our fellow advocates of change during the '50s and '60s.

#### Protest the Attack on Affirmative Action

The recent Supreme Court decision on Affirmative Action has set the stage in the U.S. for closing the doors, thereby impeding the progress made in Black enrollment in, and graduation from, colleges and universities, and minimizing business opportunities and the hiring of Black Americans in the public and private sectors.

#### Oppose Clinton's "Crime Bill"

Each day, somewhere in this nation, the Black community witnesses and falls prey to an increased rate of crime and violence. Aspects of the "Crime Bill" suggest that Black males will be filling the jails of America and will spend the rest of their lives working for little or no pay in the new prison-industrial complex. The unfair use of the death penalty to

[disproportionately] punish the Black male is in fact a systematic genocidal tool being institutionalized to significantly decrease the Black population.

#### Present a Different Image of the Black Male

The proliferation of drugs and gun-related violence in the Black community, and the escalation of Black male fratricide, has diminished the positive role and attributes of Black men. We, therefore, have deemed it necessary in this critical hour to call for one million disciplined, committed, and dedicated Black men, from all walks of life in America, to march in Washington, D.C. — showing the world a vastly different picture of the Black male. As the sons of a proud people, we are coming together and moving forward to chart the course for our future as responsible heads of our families; to reclaim and build our neighborhoods; to unify our families; to save our children who will lead us into the next millennium....

#### Register Blacks as Independents

We are asking all those who have not registered to vote to go to a house of worship on October 16, to get registered. There are approximately eight million Black persons in the U.S. eligible to vote, but who remain

unregistered. Our goal is to have a registrar in as many churches as possible. There will be teachers present to provide guidance, instructions, and information. The most critical election of this century will be held in 1996. This will be the last presidential election of the century. We are determined that never again shall any political party take the Black vote for granted.

#### Develop a National Black Agenda

We are asking that you join many of our leaders who have gathered together to develop a national agenda for our people, as a follow-up to the Million Man March. Religious, political, civic, and youth leaders will be called to come together to incorporate sound ideas and recommendations; and to amend and finalize this national platform of action. We shall take this platform of action to various communities in America to hold town meetings to encourage the Black community's input and secure our people's approval and active support of this agenda. We shall emphasize in our actions and in the written word that the Black community shall not give our vote to anyone who is against, or is not willing to represent, the best interests of our people.

## An Account of Pittsburgh "National Summit"

# Progressives from Around the U.S. Meet to Discuss Independent Politics

by Don Rojas

The following is reprinted from the August 30 – September 5 issue of *The City Sun*, a New York City weekly. (Another report on the Summit, from *Black Workers for Justice*, appears in the sidebar on this page.) Don Rojas was communications director for Grenada's revolutionary government under Maurice Bishop (until its overthrow in 1983), then was editor of Harlem's *Amsterdam News*, and in 1993–94, was communications director of the NAACP under Ben Chavis.

The Pittsburgh Summit elected a Continuations Committee consisting of Rick Adams, Claire Cohen, Ron Daniels, Marsha Feinland, Mary France, Ted Glick, Howie Hawkins, Inila-Wakan, Arthur Kinoy, Sandra Rivers, James Vann, and Linda Wambaugh. For a report on the Summit by the Continuations Committee (\$1.00 apiece for up to ten copies), or for an audiotape (\$10) or a videotape (\$25), write to National Independent Politics Summit, P.O. Box 170610, Brooklyn, NY 11217.

As national polls continue to show a steady rise in public support for a third political party, [more than 200] progressive activists from around the country met at the University of Pittsburgh Aug. 28–30 to explore ways and means of combining forces to build "an independent, progressive alternative to the two-party hegemony."

Billed as the National Independent Politics Summit, the gathering listened to impassioned speeches from veteran activists like Ron Daniels and Peter Camejo, attended workshops, caucused and adopted resolutions.

Called by the National People's Progressive Network and the National Committee for Independent Political Action [NCIPA], the summit was endorsed by over two dozen progressive groups ranging from the Campaign for a New Tomorrow to the Green Party (USA).

"In the face of the escalating attacks on our human rights and our right to survive being led by the Republicans and supported by most Democrats, the need for operational unity on the part of the independent progressive forces in the United States is urgent," noted Daniels, leader of the Campaign for a New Tomorrow, which plans to [make a] transition into the Independent Progressive Party in November.

The summit afforded delegates an opportunity to network and share information, skills, resources and contacts. They discussed firsthand reports from the movements of resistance as well as the independent parties that have cropped up from California to Maine.

Questions of strategy were debated, including a People's Pledge Campaign to build a mass base for the independent movement and the possibilities for a coordinated approach to the 1996 elections and beyond.

Many delegates harshly criticized both the Republicans and Democrats for implementing a bipartisan "Contract on America," claiming that this bipartisan program is at work not just in Washington, but at the state and local levels as well.

"This is a mandate for a hard-hearted corporate agenda of regressive taxes and budgets,

## National Independent Political Conference Adopts 1996 Action Plan

The following is reprinted from the September 1995 issue of *Justice Speaks*, monthly newspaper of *Black Workers for Justice*.

The National Independent Political Summit meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, [held August 18–20, 1995] adopted an action program promoting the creation of a progressive third party alliance in U.S. politics.

Elements of the action program include a People's Pledge Campaign to obtain one million signatures supporting a progressive, independent party; a March and Caravan for Social Justice beginning Mothers Day 1996, to culminate in a civil disobedience action on Wall Street; and a commitment to organize a national slate of 1,000 or more independent local progressive candidates for office in 1996.

The African American Southern Caucus of the Summit called for a Southern regional meeting to discuss a long term view of independent politics in the South and ways to

support local progressive, independent or non-partisan office holders. Ron Daniels, former Executive Director of the National Rainbow Coalition, was one of the chairs of the Summit. He stated, "The National Independent Political Summit was a big success! In this time of major attacks on affirmative action, environmental regulations, women's rights, workers' rights, civil liberties and the standard of living of a majority of the people of this country, this Summit is a beacon of hope.

"We are determined in 1996 to make visible the growing grass-roots movement for an independent, progressive alternative to the Republican and Democratic parties."

More than 200 participants representing over 80 organizations from 26 states and the District of Columbia attended the Summit.

repressive 'anti-crime' laws, scapegoating of immigrants and people of color, unrestrained 'free trade' and radical deregulation of social and environmental standards," noted the written call put out by the summit organizers.

[It added:]

If there ever was a time for developing a vision of a real alternative to the profit-oriented economy and corporate-dominated government; if there ever was a time for building an independent people's movement and a party to carry that vision forward — that time is now...

### Make a Clean Break

Several speakers urged that progressives within the Democratic Party should make a clean break with that party because the Democrats "have turned away from the New Deal compromise between business and labor, have ignored the needs of people of color, and they will not bite

the corporate hand that feeds them by supporting progressive policies."

At a panel discussion that examined the current national political environment, Gwen Patton of the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice said with great optimism, "If we pull together in an independent political thrust we can mobilize a lot of support in the South...our communities are ready for independent politics and I do believe we can get a third party on the ballot."

Peter Gilmore of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers Union and Miya Yoshitani of the Student Environmental Action Coalition also spoke on the panel. Gilmore called for an independent political party "rooted in the working people" and observed that over 60 percent of the American people did not vote in the last congressional election.

Yoshitani said her 30,000-member coalition

of students, along with other networks of youth, are "on the front lines fighting the conservative right, fighting against racism, sexism, classism, and the fact that these networks exist is grounds for hope."

In spite of the intensified attacks from the right, there was a consensus at the Pittsburgh meeting that an independent, progressive alternative, grounded in and supported by the majority of Americans, can be successfully built. One

delegate pointed out that "it's not just Clinton who's in trouble with the American public, every major political figure tested in recent surveys has either a very negative or increasingly unfavorable rating."

In an oblique reference to Jesse Jackson, Ron Daniels said he was convinced that the American people don't need "superstar leaders... we are the leaders we've been looking for."

Most delegates left the summit satisfied that the first important steps were taken toward "operational unity" of the various streams and tendencies in the progressive movement.

Many said they plan to attend the founding convention of the Independent Progressive Party in Philadelphia... Nov. 16-19 as well as the gathering of "real populists" called by the Citizens Alliance for St. Louis, Nov. 10-13. □

## Against Male Dominance & Rape! Charge Genocide & Destruction of Black Families! Against U.S. Imperialism!

*Continued from page 18*

Will the Black man again be pushed forward as "the leader" simply because he was born male?

### The System Has Failed — *not* Black Men

The call for "atonement" suggests that the Black man, and Black people — clearly the victims of this system — are somehow "at fault" because we have not stood up as "real men" at the "head" of the African-American people. With all our faults and difficulties, the Black

man has not failed. Neither has the Black woman. The system has failed us. It is the system that has enslaved us and jailed us. The system that sent us to Viet Nam either to die or come back mentally and/or physically crippled. It is the system that super-exploits our labor and marginalizes us. Makes us jobless, homeless, then blames us for "welfare," miseducates us, provides and promotes the drugs and alcohol, then turns us to fratricide and submission. And it is the system that has taught us that gender separates us into the dominant and the submissive.

This system of oppression must be challenged and defeated. Women can not be called upon to "stay home" and "teach the children" self-esteem. Our struggle is a glorious burden that we must carry together — united and equal as human beings — returning us to our birthright as a new African People.

Let us forge a spirit of unity in the Black community that defeats male supremacy and all it has come to mean in our lives and that upholds us all as equal human beings and equally great people of African descent. □

## The Farrakhan Factor in the 1996 Elections

*Continued from page 19*

ily rebuilding its administrative, communications, educational and economic infrastructure and vigorously promoting a militant program of self-reliance and self-development, the Nation of Islam has re-emerged as a formidable force in Black America. Min. Farrakhan has demonstrated a remarkable mass appeal as he speaks to overflow crowds in rallies in city after city across the nation. A good percentage of the thousands who flock to hear the Minister speak and teach are unregistered or non-voters who have disdain for the electoral political process. No doubt thousands of those who stream into Washington for the Million Man March will not be registered to vote.

About eight million Blacks remain unregistered, and large numbers of those who are registered often fail to vote on election day. Chronic low voter turn-out is a serious problem plaguing Black communities across the country. Polls indicate that large numbers of Black people are disaffected with the two establishment parties and disillusioned with Black elected officials.

There is a feeling that large numbers of Black elected officials have lost their sense of mission, that Black politicians have become self-aggrandizing buffers within an oppressive system. They are disconnected from the grassroots and therefore incapable of promoting and defending the interests of the Black masses within the electoral political process. Thus the quality of life for the Black masses is drastically deteriorating even though Black America now has more Black elected officials than at any time in history. Clearly this situation must change.

### Malcolm X: No Illusions in Democrats

It was Malcolm X, in his "Ballots or Bullets" speech, who said that Black Nationalism means that Black people must "control the politics and economics of our community." Malcolm had no illusions that either the Democrats or the Republicans were concerned about the destiny of Black people. By registering a million Black people as independents, the Nation of Islam could take the lead in aiding the Black Nation to assume control over the politics and politicians in our communities.

Utilizing the concepts embraced at the historic Gary, Indiana, Black Political Convention in 1972, a relevant model of Black participation and a meaningful covenant for a new breed of Black politicians could be developed. We need to internalize the concept of holding grassroots political conventions to adopt Black agendas and select candidates to run for public office who will represent the interests of the community.

### A Malcolm X Institute of Black Politics

We need to grow a new breed of Black politician from amongst the grassroots; politicians who are ideologically conscious and committed to being servants of the people. Working with Black political scientists and political activists from around the country, the Nation of Islam could develop a Malcolm X Institute of Black Politics where the theory and method of a new Black politics could be taught to community-based organizations and grassroots leadership. This is what could emerge from the Million Man March and the registration of a million Black people as independents.

A million Black independents, if properly

oriented and organized, could become a potent power bloc and catalyst for change in the Black community in '96. A political housecleaning could begin. Black people who have previously ignored electoral politics could inject themselves into the process with a new found mission and purpose — controlling the politics and politicians in our community. Such a bloc of voters could support progressive, community-minded Black politicians who sign a pledge to support the Black Agenda. Corrupt and unaccountable politicians would be swept from office and replaced by new politicians schooled in the new Black politics. Non-Black politicians would have to pledge to advance our interests or face defeat. A bloc of a million Black independent voters could make a decisive difference in local and state elections all across this land.

A million Black independent voters could also have a major impact on the '96 presidential election. Should Rev. Jackson decide to run for president as an independent and if Rev. Jackson and Minister Farrakhan could reach a mutually respectful accommodation, Black America would rise up with a vengeance at the ballot box. Rev. Jackson has already demonstrated that he is a master of voter registration. But Minister Farrakhan could reach and motivate thousands, even millions, of Black people that Rev. Jackson may be unable to reach. This unbeatable combination would stimulate an unprecedented voter registration and a voter turn-out of historic proportions. This Black flood (Lavalas) of voters in coalition with other people of color and progressive whites would transform the political landscape of this country. The Farrakhan factor could be formidable in the '96 election! □

# Socialists and African American Self-Determination

by Vera Wigglesworth

The following presentation was delivered to the Milwaukee Solidarity branch educational on May 21, 1995, as part of an ongoing national education series on the basics of Marxism. The topic of this section of the class series was *Socialists and the Fight Against Racism*. Vera Wigglesworth is an African American activist and a member of BIDOM's Editorial Committee.

I thought that Jamal phrased the context of this class really well. He pointed out the clarity C.L.R. James had in terms of what it is going to take to resolve what was then called "the Negro question" in America, which we now call the Black liberation question today. And in the subsequent selections for this class (articles written by Michelle Wallace, Angela Davis, Manning Marable, and Mary Hollens) we don't see that clarity. Now one explanation might be that these people are not from the same political tradition; in fact they're from four different political traditions. Our main handicap today is that there isn't a mass Black movement, hence there's a lot of clarity, a lot of leadership, and a lot of action that is simply not here today.

I'd like to just point out the conclusions of each one of these articles to highlight what I mean, in ascending order of clarity, excluding C.L.R. James, who was pretty clear, and then I want to take up the main point.

I'd first like to cite Michelle Wallace's conclusion. Michelle Wallace, writing from the perspective of a Black woman, in a particularly sophisticated way, talks about the dilemma the Black woman faces in the political movement. That is, whether her concerns really belong with the women's liberation movement (which almost all Blacks see as a white women's movement) or with the Black movement, which unfortunately is still dominated by Black male conceptions. That is just the political contradiction that Black women face, in addition to the contradiction of their daily lives.

Unfortunately, her conclusion is the least clear.

"Official America had no conception of what equality might mean in its practical application, no intention what so ever of making it happen." (That part is very true.) "It would be up to all of its citizens if they ever could rise, Black and white, Jew, Gentile, Muslim, Native-American, Cuban and Asian, male and female, Gay, straight and transvestite, sick and well. To struggle with and through their feelings and ideas to give equality lasting and concrete significance."

I think that the list of people she has here who need to get together and fight is very good. But what does it really mean? In what way would we struggle? In what way would that actually achieve equality?

Angela Davis's article makes only a little more progress. Angela Davis, as we all know, was a longtime leader of the Communist Party; now she is a left ex-CPer and a Committees of Correspondence leader. Concentrating her talk on the Black family, Angela Davis concludes:

If we as Black people in the United States want to guarantee that the dream for a better life is realized through our children, we must recog-

nize the importance of setting our sights on a socialist future.

Now this is a very common view in the socialist movement: the view that the solution to the Black question is — socialism. I do not consider that a clear solution at all.

Here's the best part of the article by Manning Marable, a left Social Democrat: "Blacks and blacks alone must take the initial and decisive steps."

That's the road to clarity right there. His conclusion, though, is somewhat weak: "They must take these decisive steps towards developing an adequate social theory to destroy white racism."

Now, white racism is an endemic part of the structure of this society; as we know, its purpose is to exploit Black labor. Modern capitalist society very much depends on that. So it's very hard to see how a *social theory* is going to destroy racism. I know what he means, to come up with some clear ideas and then do something about them. But that doesn't lend clarity to what the task is at hand.

The last person I want to cite is Mary Hollens, the staff writer for *Labor Notes*. I think she becomes more concrete, although there's a lot more to be added, which I will do shortly. She concludes with her orientation toward Blacks in unions being key to mounting an effective fight to change society. She says:

It is very difficult for us to make progress without allies among white working people. But it is impossible for them to make progress without us. Whether the African-American worker organizes in the work place and the community will help determine what shape the labor movement and all working people find themselves in as we enter the 21st century.

That's very good and concrete. That's really what we're talking about.

## Will the Socialist Revolution Solve the Black Question in the United States?

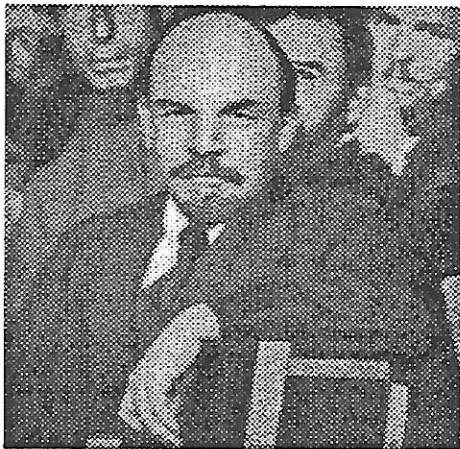
This is a controversial question, and my discussion of it actually flows out of the 1930s discussion between Trotsky and the American SWP around Black nationalism and the state. The question is: Will the socialist revolution solve the Black question in the United States?

Now most socialists assume so, and in fact that's the whole axis of our propaganda. I'd like to answer the question by saying, No, it's not true. The socialist revolution alone is not the answer to Black liberation in this country. When we talk about the Black liberation movement we're really talking about the movement for

Black self-determination. Unfortunately this is not presently a widely understood question on the left in the United States. But it was at first Lenin and then Trotsky that led the early Communist Party and later the Socialist Workers Party in the United States on this question. It took *Russians*, having gone through these enormous battles for self-determination in Europe during and after the Russian revolution, to export that clarity into the American Communist movement shortly after the Russian revolution to explain the American situation here, which was the situation concerning Blacks and which the American Marxists had no clarity on whatsoever, and who in fact had neglected this question up until that point, until Lenin and Trotsky had introduced some understanding.

## The African-American Question Is the Question of National Liberation

What it boils down to is this: African Americans are discriminated against and held in a subjugated position, *as a people*, for the economic reasons that we're all acquainted with as socialists. Therefore, what is confronting them is the question of *national liberation*, a question of national self-determination. The role of Marxists is to support that thrust, that drive that has existed since the earliest days of Black history in this country, that thrust for self-determination. Our duty is to support and build support for it to whatever extent African Americans feel they need to carry this fight — up to and including separation into a separate state. In fact Leon Trotsky in this book, *Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, spends quite a deal of time explaining to the American comrades why the question of the Black state is key.



Lenin in 1920: A supporter of self-determination for oppressed nationalities in Russia and America.



I think the question has to be posed sharply that way in order to generate the necessary debate and clarification. I mean to say, and Trotsky said, that a movement for a Black state is a tremendously progressive step, and actually the thrust of Black people *toward* that is what is going to be the *detonator* of the proletarian revolution in this country. Mary Hollens came closest to it. It may be possible for us to move forward, us as Blacks, if whites are not our allies, but the fact of the matter is that white workers are not going to make any real progress toward consciousness of themselves as a class until Blacks go into motion.

Nearly everyone in the radical movement today is very aware that Blacks are imbued with far less of the ideology of the ruling class in this country than are white workers. Generally, it's assumed that that's the case simply because Blacks have been treated worse. But it really is a much deeper question of Black people being a separate people, a captive nation. And that is manifested throughout all of our culture, all of our history, our approaches to things, the way we fit into the workplace, the way we don't fit into the workplace, the way we're accepted in the workplace, the way we're not.

It becomes clearer as time goes on that the Civil Rights movement actually *clarified* the Black nationalist question in the U.S., although presently I think most people, including socialists, are more confused as a result of the Civil Rights movement about the necessity for Black nationalism. That is, the victory of the Civil Rights movement opened doors for most Blacks that didn't exist before. So now all of a sudden you see Blacks in middle management, for example, even a few Black capitalists, and a lot more Black visibility in the media and the arts, and integration of the unions. In contrast to the pre-Korean war era there has taken place a significant integration of African Americans into the American workplace, *numerically* speaking.

### The Limits of American Democracy

But precisely because the Civil Rights movement was so successful in that regard, we can now test the limits of American bourgeois democracy. How far did it go? There's a great book that came out just last year called *The Rage of a Privileged Class* by Ellis Cose in which he talks about the Black middle class. They have done all the right things, gotten Harvard MBAs, Harvard Law degrees, and PhDs in every kind of discipline, and have been the best and the brightest, the hardest working. They've played the game absolutely perfect. (They even look perfect.) Yet they find themselves passed over for promotion time and time again by *less qualified whites*, and they are now bitter. Increasingly they experience severe emotional distress, some of them are near suicidal. They have done everything it takes to be accepted by this society. Society promised them the American dream if they worked hard — and they have achieved it materially; some of these people live in \$500,000 or million-dollar homes, and yet they're bitterly, bitterly alienated. Equality, status as a human being, is beyond price.

What's the point of this? To be concerned about a tiny layer of well-off people? No, the point is that they have *tested the limits of American democracy* — and found it wanting. So then, what is the future for all the Blacks below them, who still aspire, who were taught that we were supposed to look up to their example, that if we try hard we'll make it like them? What is the future for African Americans who haven't even been able to finish high school, if they even *have* what we call a high school education?

There — is — no — hope. There is no such thing. It's not even just a matter of there not being enough jobs or of enough job training — that's not it. Black people are not going to make it *ever* in this society because their oppression as a nation is absolutely required for the maintenance of profit margins in this country *and reflected by the whole culture that's been built up on it*. So it's not enough to just simply remove the material basis for the exploitation of Blacks. And to remove the economic causes, to revamp all of society, all of its culture, its traditions, its consciousness, is certainly going to take the ultimate social upheaval. But what's going to make that happen? It's going to have to be Blacks taking matters into their own hands.

All of the major changes that benefited African Americans have been fought for, led, and built by African Americans themselves. This goes all the way back to slavery. Even the abolitionist movement, in spite of its good work and good intentions, failed to advance Black *economic* rights. They were glad to help free slaves, but when the slaves came North and needed jobs, the white abolitionists had no time for them. Blacks had to organize their own abolitionist movement just to enable the runaway slaves and newly freed slaves to find jobs.

### Necessity for Independent Organization

So that is why Leon Trotsky said that self-determination is what it's going to take for Blacks to free themselves. Now the question remains, and these well-meaning early leaders of the SWP asked him: but isn't that going to divide Black and white workers? There are all kinds of objections normally associated with critiquing Black nationalism. Doesn't Black nationalism separate Black and white workers? Isn't it really the working class as a whole that is going to lead social change in this country? How can we really talk about Black statehood? Where is this state going to be? Who's going to decide that and what's going to happen to the people who already live there? All of the obvious questions come to mind.

Trotsky said to forget about all that stuff! We're talking about Black people determining their own destiny. That means they get to decide *whether* they want their own country. If they do, they get to decide *where* it's going to be. They get to decide *how* they are going to build a movement to bring that about, and *who* the leadership of that movement is going to be. That's all of their decision. Our job is simply and only this: to support that process to the hilt,

based on our understanding of the historical experiences of past fights for self-determination.

Now that's the beginning part of *Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*. In the later part of this book he explains some of the concrete tactics that revolutionary Marxists need to develop and advance in order to participate in this process. A first prerequisite is for revolutionary Marxists to be able to identify what is truly a self-determination movement. It's one that *consistently* fights for Black liberation; this means that it maintains a total independence of the capitalist parties and of the capitalist ruling class. It is a movement that consistently makes demands on that class for things that are owed to African Americans, but that refuses to reposit any confidence in that class, that refuses to look for leadership to, or to bend to, any part of that class.

### The Combined Revolution for Socialism and Black Self-Determination

Such a consistent Black nationalism is going to be proletarian. There's no question about that. Malcolm X was the highest embodiment of the leadership of such a potential movement. He was the most consistent Black nationalist and therefore the most consistent Black liberation fighter. And that's why he was beginning to look at socialism very seriously. Both Trotsky and C.L.R. James say that a Black liberation movement consistently fought begins to draw revolutionary conclusions. But the point that Leon Trotsky was making, that no one has made since, is that precisely because of that it's going to be Blacks that lead the proletarian revolution in this country. *Black people in the course of fighting for national independence are going to therefore be in the vanguard of the proletarian socialist revolution.*

Now those people who are into some of the basics of socialist theory are going to say, Now



Leon Trotsky in 1920: Educated American Marxists in the 1930s on the revolutionary dynamics of Black Nationalism.

wait a minute. We're talking about a national liberation movement here. Then we're talking about a socialist revolution. Socialist revolution is supposed to be beyond the question of nation-building. The bourgeois-democratic revolution that accomplished the task of building nations was supposed to be an earlier revolution. So what are we talking about, something pre-socialist? How can it be a working class revolution when we're talking about building nations? The process of building nations incorporates other classes. [Note: this is a serious question. Wrong class alliances in various countries have led to catastrophic defeats.]

In this case we're talking about some Black capitalists and a good many Black petty bourgeoisie who might be joining in this fight to create a separate new nation. However, it is highly unlikely that they will be able to lead that fight to a successful conclusion. Trotsky expressed it this way,

The Negroes will, through their awakening, through their demand for autonomy, and through the democratic mobilization of their forces, be pushed toward a class basis. The petty bourgeoisie will take up the demand for equal rights and for self-determination but will prove absolutely incapable in the struggle; the Negro proletariat will march over the petty bourgeoisie in the direction toward the proletarian revolution. [*Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self-Determination*, pp. 25-26.]

Anybody who wages a *consistent* fight for Black liberation is going to be proletarian in orientation and such a movement is going to be proletarian in composition. Further, because the composition of the Black community is overwhelmingly proletarian, African Americans will increasingly find themselves in important leadership positions in the union movement. Trotsky was certain, without any experience with Blacks whatsoever, that Blacks will be in the forefront of the union fights, and that they will be the best fighters.

What makes them so? Are African Americans inherently or physically better fighters? No, it's the fact that African Americans are oppressed as a nation that makes them go into motion first. National oppression creates nationalist consciousness. And that immediately puts democratic demands foremost on the agenda. Trotsky explained that "to fight for the possibility of realizing an independent state is a sign of great moral and political awakening."

### Liberal vs. Democratic Demands

What's the difference between liberal demands and democratic demands? Trotsky criticized the SWP leaders who were saying that they preferred to advance a slogan of political, economic, and social equality because that's what Blacks seemed to want. Blacks at that time in the 1930s weren't calling for a separate state. So it didn't seem realistic to call for that. What Blacks seemed to want most was equality. So that's what should be advanced, said the early SWP leaders.

But Trotsky said that line of reasoning was "not very convincing." Political equality is one



Malcolm X in 1964: A consistent fighter for Black self-determination.

thing, he said. But what does it mean to call for social and economic equality in the context of capitalism? That has no meaning. I think you're talking about some liberal demands here, he said. But the democratic demand is the demand for national independence. It's a democratic, not a socialist demand. But it is *not* a liberal demand because it poses a direct challenge to the rule of the capitalist class.

### The Working Class Will Achieve Class Consciousness Through Black Self-Determination

However, once Blacks go into motion and detonate the proletarian revolution in this country, one has to ask this obvious question: can Blacks actually win nationhood here in the context of capitalist America? That's pretty hard to see. Given our numbers, we'd be crushed.

It would take proletarian allies, namely the white proletariat. They would have to be in motion to be the allies of the Black liberation movement. However, the reason why Trotsky said it was vitally important that the American comrades pay great attention to this key question is because he felt that it was going to be the deciding factor of the American socialist revolution, the question of Black liberation. That it is not possible for *white* workers to reach revolutionary conclusions, i.e. class consciousness, if they don't stand in solidarity with Black people. And they will never learn to do so if Black people don't first go into motion. So it's not an option. There's no way a socialist revolution could happen in this country if Black people don't already launch a revolution for their national independence. And there's no way that the borders of an independent Black workers' republic could be won and secured unless it was backed up by a workers' revolution and a workers' state in the rest of America.

### From the Discussion Period:

**Jim Miles:** A couple of years ago we went through a debate in the pages of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* with some other revolutionaries. In the course of engaging in that debate we went back and researched Lenin on self-determination as well as Trotsky. But one thing we also did was review some documents the Socialist Workers Party had adopted at its conventions in the late 1960s. One of those, "A Transitional Program for Black Liberation," is in the collection *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, put out by Pathfinder Press.

The thing that we found remarkable about that document is that it made very concrete the things that had been talked about in this book (*Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism*) in the 1930s. During the '60s there was a big movement among African Americans for Black control of the Black community. There were proposals put forward in the SWP document that addressed that struggle, centering around the line of Black workers taking control of institutions, hospitals, factories, etc., in the Black community and running it themselves.

In the 1960s there was a real potential for that to happen. You can even see it today when there's elemental explosions in the Black community like in L.A. That was an explosion that didn't have any organized forms behind it or leadership to it but it showed the potential there.

One thing that becomes clear from the experience of being in unions today is that despite the fact that unions are the most organized centers of the working class in the United States, in a certain sense, they're the most conservative, the most cautious workers' organizations.

But this is not the case with the Black community. Trotsky emphasizes that through self-determination African Americans may advance to the dictatorship of the proletariat sooner than whites — that is, forming workers' councils as the fundamental organ of a workers' state, where workers and people in the community come together and elect their own government. If that happened in Black communities across the country, if it was led by an organized political force, that would be the beginning of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the workers' state.

So I think that in that sense there is still a much higher degree of potential (although you can't see it right now) for the dictatorship of the proletariat — these workers' councils if you will — coming into being in the Black community sooner than (despite the motion for a labor party) there is for anything like that in the white communities.

**Question:** How does this interface with the Native American movement?

**Vera:** Them too! Theirs is a question of national liberation also. So, I think it's going to be important for them to mount a fight for self-determination too. And the workers' state will have to deal with that. And we're going to want to deal with that. That's my view.

Here's the thing — self-determination means: they get to decide. If they want a separate block

of the country, they get to decide that. And they also get to decide where it's going to be.

Now even some liberals, like some of my coworkers, say: "Of course Blacks should have their own country. I agree with that. Of course they should decide where it is." But they always *assume* it's the South — or as one socialist has written, it would be the desert Southwest! — if a Black state were to come into being.

But what if Blacks wanted New York City? Now where would we all stand? Trotsky says specifically here that "of course there may be whites living in those areas, but we don't need to be worried about that." That's what he says. (Lenin said, in his writings on self-determination for oppressed nations, that socialists must lead workers to understand that the working class has no interest in maintaining the borders drawn by the imperialists.) That's what self-determination means. That's how serious support to that is.

And if Blacks take up arms to start defending the territory they've taken over, whether we agree with the timing of that or not; if they set up barriers and arm themselves with these councils — (they're more than just some formation where people discuss and vote, they would be voting to get that National Guard Armory over there and barricade this area over here and kick all the white cops out and let nobody in except the people) — and if they're going to hold that territory, even if it's just Chicago's South Side or Milwaukee's North side — we're supposed to support that. With our lives. It's a serious thing.

And that's how I believe the socialist revolution is going to happen in this country. Trotsky pointed this out 60 years ago. Can you imagine if Blacks don't get themselves together enough to do that? Where will white workers be? Much further behind.

The consciousness of the white working class is not going to burst out of the racism that even Trotsky, who only spent a few weeks here in this country in 1917, understood immediately. This racist ideology is not just a bad thing, it is peculiarly American — our entire history and institutions are based on that. It is so deep that it took somebody from the outside to alert us to the central part of our propaganda work that the right to self-determination has to occupy. The Russians had to tell the socialist vanguard that. It's a trip. That's how deep it is.

The particular problem of racism is peculiarly American because of the legacy of slavery, because the fundamental identity of "American" is structurally dependent on the subjugation of non-white peoples.

### Not a Fight Against Racism

So you see, it's not a matter of a fight against racism. There is no such thing to me as the "fight against racism" being just one of our tasks. Only African Americans can get rid of racism — the subjugation of Black people, by refusing to be subjugated any more — by bursting asunder the whole structure of this country, with white workers joining in and the whole

thing being remade. That's how racism will be destroyed. The fight against racism is inherently *the* fight against imperialism in this country, the entire structure of this society. It is an "internal" colonial struggle.

It's not just one of the extra projects we've got, you know — we've got the environment over here and workers' job conditions over there and then we've got racism over here. That's not a materialist view. It's the entire society and everything about it and everything we are in our own minds too. It will take a socialist revolution to root out this heritage of racism. That heritage extends into the socialist movement as well. And it is not just a matter of historically bad positions on the Black question like the early Socialist or Communist parties in this country. Racism influences socialists just like anybody else. I discovered that quite painfully. (And Lenin warned against it most clearly — and said that socialists must vigorously promote the right of self-determination in order to defeat *among themselves* the chauvinism that is bred into *everyone* by class society.)

Now, I'm not excluding African Americans from this either. That's what the whole thing about Black consciousness is, to get the racism out of our own minds too. Not the idea so much that we *are* inferior, but that *because we are Black* therefore we are inferior. You see? The idea is first that *Blacks* are inferior and therefore I am inferior. Or... what it is today is... "There's something I didn't do right. I've got my Harvard MBA, I'm super competent, I've done everything. But they don't accept me; they're trying to drive me out. It *must* be something I didn't do." Especially now, after the victory over Jim Crow, that is the modern form of racism that operates in Blacks' own minds. Very destructive. It can drive you insane.

All of that is going to have to be burst asunder. It's going to take the cataclysmic remaking of this society just to begin to attack, just to *begin to attack* racism...

So that's why I really don't like this phrase "the fight against racism" (as it is used to identify merely one of our tasks). It really diminishes the fundamental material reality of it. It's the same thing as the fight against imperialism. It's identical.

### Defending Affirmative Action and Self-Determination

The question of racism as it relates to the task confronting white activists is a difficult one to delineate in a short phrase. I believe that the struggle posed for white workers should be formulated not as one against racism per se, but as a struggle against racist conceptions and attacks in the workplace. For example, we can organize the union to fight against victimizations of Black co-workers. I would say defending affirmative action on the job is a key task of unions today — and in their own immediate interests as well.

But I think what is also on the agenda for the revolutionary vanguard right now is under-

standing what steps the Black community will probably need to go through in the fight for self-determination, the fight that will overthrow racism.

First and foremost in many different forms is self-organization. Blacks need to organize by themselves and for themselves with their own leadership. This is an immediate concern for those of us outside the Black movement. What is our stance toward the Black leadership that is selected by Black people? How do we interact with them?

That's why a theoretical discussion about Black self-determination is necessary first, in order then to begin to analyze a phenomenon like the Nation of Islam. Now that is very immediate and it's today. We have to deal with attitudes about that on the job and within our own minds as we read the press. And when we do our political activity, we run into the Muslims or other nationalist formations.

How do we interact with them? You have to be theoretically armed first — in order to understand what is positive about every tendency toward Black self-organization, no matter what its form. And then how to respond to, let's say, a young Black person that says "I know you're a socialist, I like socialism, what do you think of the Nation of Islam?" How would you approach that question? How would you then draw that person toward an understanding of *consistent* self-determination.

That leads me to mention another thing that is going to be necessary. One of the most important expressions of consistent self-organization will be a Black political party. I think it will be inevitable that Blacks will form their own political party. It will be the political arm of the liberation movement. That's something we should study and point to as a necessary step for the fight for Black political power.

I want to emphasize again that the understanding of this question cannot be postponed to the future. The time to understand this question is now. So that we're not caught off guard, so that we're not *obstacles* to a process unfolding before us. So that we're able to recognize something that's budding, that's going to head in the right direction, and give it assistance.

And that's what I mean by questioning the concept of the struggle against racism, which is really a struggle against the entire structure of this society. We should consider what is a more precise formulation in my view: that the struggle against racist conceptions and attacks in the workplace and, above all, defense of affirmative action, is what the struggle is for white activists.

And to understand, as Mary Hollens put it:

"Whether the African-American worker organizes in the work place and the community will help determine what shape the labor movement and all working people find themselves in as we enter the 21st century." □

# Memorial for Ernest Mandel Held in New York

by Joe Auciello

Approximately two hundred friends and comrades attended a memorial meeting for Ernest Mandel on September 24 in Swayduck Auditorium at the New School for Social Research in Manhattan. As several speakers pointed out, the site was a fitting one, as Mandel had several times spoken to overflow audiences in that very auditorium.

The meeting was sponsored by an organizing committee which included representatives from a variety of organizations, among them Solidarity, Socialist Action, the Committees of Correspondence, the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, the Brecht Forum, the Freedom Socialist Party, and others.

Mary Boger of the Brecht Forum chaired the meeting and read a selection of the many messages that were received. In keeping with the sponsorship of the event, the audience heard several speakers from a number of political groups.

Marilyn Vogt-Downey, from the Committee for the Study of the Legacy of Leon Trotsky, referred to Mandel's work in the former Soviet Union, especially his efforts in promoting the rehabilitation of the defendants in the Moscow Trials. In addition to his trips and speaking engagements there, Mandel also raised funds for the Russian language *Inprecor* and encouraged knowledgeable comrades to deepen their contact with Marxists in Russia.

Paul Siegel of Socialist Action spoke warmly of Mandel as "an incredibly prolific and fecund author with encyclopedic knowledge," whose scholarship was not impeded by but grew out of his political activity. Siegel pointed out that, in writing his own book, *The Meek and the Militant*, he had corresponded with Mandel and from him obtained sources that he found nowhere else.

Steve Bloom, a National Committee member of Solidarity and editor of a collection of Mandel's essays, noted the diverse sponsorship of the meeting and explained why it was no surprise. Mandel, he said, purposely maintained comradely relations among different revolutionary organizations and individuals regardless of political disagreements. Citing personal experience, Bloom pointed out that Mandel tried to collaborate fully with Fourth International members and supporters despite the different positions that may have existed among them.

Berta Langston echoed this theme, stating that for Mandel the word "militant" was a term of high praise. She read a statement sent by Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, the Mexican human rights activist and member of parliament, thanking the Fourth International for its solidarity efforts and recounting her meetings with Mandel. [See texts of Langston's and Ibarra's statements elsewhere in this issue.]

Miriam Braverman, in turn, read a statement sent by Paul Sweezy, editor of *Monthly Review*. Sweezy wrote that Ernest Mandel was an economist without peer, a Marx scholar, and a teacher. Sweezy cited Mandel's ability to focus on and analyze late capitalism, not merely to reiterate Marx but to apply his method to contemporary social reality. Anwar Shaikh developed in greater detail Mandel's intellectual contribution to economics: his analysis of capitalism's laws of motion and those factors which point to economic crisis.

Thanks to a videotape provided by Stan Heller, the most engaging and dynamic presentation was given by Mandel himself. The audience viewed selections from a forum held in New York following the repression of the Chinese workers and students in 1989. In the excerpts, Mandel spoke of the new socialist man and woman who were emerging in solidarity in the streets of Beijing. He argued that the political defeats in China would be temporary, and in ringing tones called for the victory of the world socialist revolution. (The full text of his speech appears in *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* No. 69, December 1989.)

The concluding speaker was Jakob Moneta, a friend of Mandel's, who came from Germany to address the meeting. He provided a brief overview of Mandel's political career, basing himself largely on an article which appeared in the previous issue of the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*. He reminded the audience that the Sandinista leader Omar Cabezas had written of how the Sandinistas studied Mandel's well-known booklet, *An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory*, as they prepared for the overthrow of the Somoza regime, and that they later invited Mandel to Nicaragua. A decade earlier Mandel had visited Cuba at the request of Che Guevara and participated in a debate on the economic organization of Cuban society.

Moneta quoted from the conclusion of Mandel's recent book, *Power and Money*, highlighting the optimistic spirit to which several speakers referred: "To believe that the trend toward the self-destruction of humankind 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....Socialists believe that Doomsday can still be averted if we increase the degree of rationality of our collective behavior, if we strive to take the future into our own hands. That is the freedom and self-determination we are fighting for."

Statements were read from Charlene Mitchell of the Committees of Correspondence, Robert Brenner of *Against the Current*, the editors of *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, the New York Marxist School, the Freedom Social-

ist Party, the International Institute for Research and Education, and from sections of the Fourth International in Denmark, Ecuador, the state of Israel, and Mexico. Following the formal presentations, an open microphone was provided to allow comrades to address the meeting.

One speaker read from Mandel's biographical sketch of Belgian Trotskyist leader Abram Léon, suggesting a comparison between the two revolutionaries:

Those who knew him will retain [his] memory... as an example to emulate and a constant source of inspiration. Those who read his book[s] will admire the clarity and vigor of his reasoning and will be astounded by the maturity of [his] mind...Among those who learn the story of his life there may be some who will perhaps ask why a man of such remarkable qualities tied his destiny to a small revolutionary organization; they will praise his sincerity, his complete ideological honesty that caused him to live in complete harmony with his ideas. They will ask themselves: why did the Marcel Hies, the Martin Widelins, the A. Léons, who were among the most gifted European intellectuals, choose a movement which could promise them neither success nor glory nor honors nor even a minimum of material comfort, but which on the contrary demanded of them every sacrifice, including their lives, and which required long ungrateful work, frequently in isolation from the proletariat to whom they wanted to give everything? And if they are able to recognize in these...revolutionists, along with their intellectual gifts, exceptional moral qualities, they will then say to themselves that a movement capable of attracting such men solely by the power of its ideas and capable of leading these rationalist dialecticians to such heights of self-denial and devotion — is a movement that cannot die because in it lives everything that is noble in man.

In that same article, the young Mandel wrote, "The void he leaves behind will not be quickly filled by a figure of similar stature." Sadly, and prophetically, these words also apply to Ernest Mandel himself. □

September 29, 1995



# Introduction to Rosario Ibarra's Statement

by Berta Green Langston

Ernest considered it the highest praise to describe someone as a "militant" — that is, one who played an active role in the day-to-day struggle. He regarded Rosario Ibarra, who is an independent socialist, not a member of any section of the Fourth International, as an exemplary "militant."

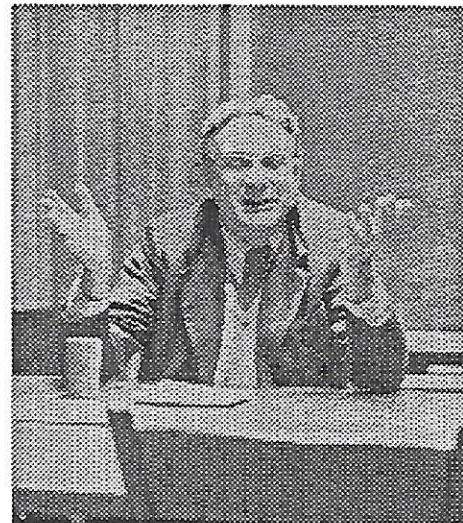
Rosario became Mexico's foremost human rights activist soon after her son, Jesús, was "disappeared" by the Mexican government in 1975 as a result of his political activism. Following months of fruitless efforts to learn her son's whereabouts, Rosario began to organize relatives of missing political and social activists into a national committee that led the fight against repression and in the search to learn the fates of the "disappeared." That committee exists to this day under the name EUREKA.

In 1982 Rosario became the first woman candidate for the Mexican presidency running on the slate of the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores (Revolutionary Workers Party). She has twice been elected to congress and is

currently a member of parliament. On several occasions she has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. In August 1994 she was elected president of the Convención Nacional Democrática (National Democratic Convention), a broad alliance of social and political organizations and individual activists created in response to a call issued by the EZLN (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional — Zapatista Army of National Liberation). Since that time, Rosario has tirelessly campaigned in Mexico and abroad to defend and extend this indigenous rebellion led by the EZLN.

Yesterday [September 23] marked the anniversary of a symbolically important assault by leftist guerrillas on a military base in the state of Chihuahua. Rosario, who many years ago initiated the practice of commemorating this event along with relatives of those who died in that action and the mothers from the EUREKA committee, was called upon to preside over the event this year. As a result, she was unable to

attend this memorial meeting but has sent the accompanying text.



## Statement to the New York Memorial Meeting for Ernest Mandel

by Rosario Ibarra

Sisters and Brothers,

Previous commitments have made it impossible for me to be with you today to share in this tribute to our beloved friend Ernest. On September 23, I will be in the northern border state of Chihuahua to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of one of the first, modern political-military movements in Mexico: the assault of September 23, 1965, on the Madera army base, led by Arturo Gámiz. Although the event will be held in northern Mexico, it will be impossible for me to reach New York in time for the memorial meeting.

I am confident that Ernest would have understood the reason for my absence, as I'm sure you will. However, I would like to take this opportunity to accompany you today in the form of a brief message.

During the decade of the 1970s, when I became politically active in the search for dozens of *compañeros* who had been detained and "disappeared" by the repressive bodies of the Mexican state, many democratic and leftist currents offered their support for the mothers and wives, brothers and sisters, who were bound together by the grief of having lost children, spouses, and siblings.

Of all those currents that offered their help, there is one that has never abandoned our struggle. I refer to the comrades of the Fourth International; both those who work inside Mexico and those who struggle from other parts of the globe.

This relationship afforded me the opportunity of knowing Ernest and of meeting with him over the years, either when he traveled to Mexico or when I had the opportunity to see him on European soil.

I very fondly recall each of these encounters; each one filled with the warmth he always displayed with his comrades (among whom I include myself). I also vividly remember the clarity of his speeches at political meetings; each one a treasure chest that he generously shared with us, revealing thereby the richness of his thought. But I most clearly remember the times I witnessed Ernest during meetings of the Fourth International to which I was invited — the image of Ernest with his emphatic interventions, his heated oratory and convincing arguments.

I was deeply saddened to hear of Ernest's death. I thought and felt how important it would have been for Ernest to accompany us in our struggles for a few more years.

Friends and *compañeros* had told me of the keen interest Ernest had maintained in the new political situation in Mexico that was opened by the Zapatista rebellion of January 1994. How I would have like to discuss and share with him the advances registered in this struggle; to have shared the lessons I have learned from our Zapatista brothers and sisters; and to have heard his advice and opinions.

In the wake of the global shift in the correlation of forces to the detriment of the exploited and oppressed of the world, Ernest once wrote, "We must revive hope." I would like to end this message by saying that the Mandelista hope (if our dear Ernest would permit me to use that term) is reborn in our Zapatista *compañeros*, in Marcos, Tacho, Ramona, Heriberto, and David — and in all the Zapatistas who have begun to organize beyond the indigenous communities of Chiapas and even beyond Mexico's borders.

We would have preferred that Ernest had not died, but in the face of the inevitable, we can only say that his revolutionary hope and optimism has been left in good hands: in our hands, and in those of the Zapatistas in Mexico and throughout the world. □

# Ernest Mandel: An Appreciation

by Keith Mann

The death of Ernest Mandel is a loss not only to the Fourth International of which he was a central leader for decades, but to the Marxist movement in general. In this brief article I would like to offer a few personal observations of Ernest as well as several comments about his contributions to contemporary Marxism.

One of the most striking things about assessments of his life and work that I have read from radicals outside and often hostile to the Fourth International, was a profound appreciation and respect not only for his contributions to Marxist economics but also for his integrity as well. He was certainly one of the few revolutionary socialists in the second half of this century (besides figures who actually led revolutions like Che Guevara or Fidel Castro) who enjoyed such authority outside the ranks of his own organization.

Though I saw Ernest regularly in Paris when he came there for Bureau meetings, I can't really say that I knew him very well personally. In fact I think that there were few if any comrades of my generation who had the type of relationship that older comrades had with him. This wasn't out of disrespect for younger comrades or youth in general, but rather the result of his highly charged schedule of activity, poor health, and age. I did very much appreciate, however, the way he spoke to me at length about an article I was preparing about contemporary changes in the labor process that was later published in the FI's theoretical journal *International Marxist Review*. It was after a long meeting of the Bureau, Ernest was tired, a bit irritable, and wanted to rest for the next day's international public meeting of the LCR (June 12, 1993, where he spoke with vigor and conviction about the need for a Socialist United States of Europe), but he patiently discussed with me for a good forty minutes. His comments were penetrating and incisive and I incorporated much of what we discussed into the article.

Ernest's life itself was profoundly marked by the most dramatic and tragic events of this tortured century. His political activity began as a teenager in Nazi-occupied Belgium. He was arrested several times and sent to a Nazi concentration camp. It is very difficult for people of my generation to imagine what it must have been like to become — and remain — a revolutionary under such conditions. The Trotskyist movement of which he became the most outstanding leader, gave him a political and intellectual framework to fight effectively against the two threats to humanity of his times — capitalism and Stalinism. His entire political life was devoted to a remarkably consistent fight against these two scourges.

I think that in many ways that Ernest, who was born in 1923, represented a bridge between the best traditions of 19th and 20th century

Marxism. He had the type of broad culture that is quite rare today but which characterized many of the early Marxists, particularly Marx and Engels themselves, and later Trotsky. He spoke several languages, some well enough that he easily wrote in them. His talks and writings were often littered with historical and literary allusions. He had an acute sense of history, particularly of the workers movement. I always appreciated his frequent allusions to this or that writing of Trotsky during meetings of the Bureau of the United Secretariat that I attended as part of the staff of *International Viewpoint*.

His most profound contributions to Marxist theory were certainly in the realm of economics. In a series of writings, some of which unfortunately have not been translated into English, he sought to account for and explain the phenomenon of the postwar boom, that period of unprecedented capitalist economic growth when it seemed to many that capitalism had left behind its crises and would continue to provide near full employment and ever expanding access for workers to consumer goods — at least in the advanced industrialized countries. His work on long waves, which continued and deepened the work of previous Marxist economists, offered a powerful explanation for both that period and the long depressive wave which succeeded it after 1973 — a period in which we are still living.

An in-depth analysis of his contributions to Marxist economic theory is beyond the scope of this article, but one aspect of his methodology deserves to be mentioned. In his economic and other theoretical writings, Mandel adopted a deft combination of objective and subjective factors when analyzing a given phenomenon. As a Marxist he stood solidly on materialist grounds. But in the best traditions of Marxism he was always aware of, and sensitive to, the importance of nonmaterial factors. His economic work was informed by a sensitivity to the role of political factors such as wars, revolutions, and bureaucracies. In this realm as in all others, Ernest had little in common with the vulgarizers of Marxism of either the Stalinist or ultraleft variety.

I remember reading a note that Ernest sent to the meeting celebrating the life of U.S. Trotskyist leader George Breitman after George died in 1986. Mandel characterized George as the type of revolutionary who was at home on the picket line and in the library. This characterized Ernest as well. Though he was better known as Professor Mandel, the learned Marxist economist, than as a revolutionary leader, he was also a day-to-day to militant close to and familiar with the workers movement in his own country, Belgium.

Ernest's contributions to the revolutionary workers movement are less known and there is far less agreement over the value of his political

contributions, as compared to his economic and other theoretical work. This is due to the modest size and influence of the Fourth International, as well as the multiplicity of international far left currents. But for those of us in the Fourth International or who sympathize with its goal of building a mass international revolutionary movement, they are no less important.

In a brief article, written just after Ernest died and printed in the newspaper of the French section of the Fourth International, Livio Maitan, also a central leader of the International from the same generation as Ernest, explained how much Italian Trotskyists appreciated the role of Ernest in helping establish the FI section in Italy after the war. Differences of opinion still exist today, especially among U.S. veterans of the Trotskyist movement, as to the role of Ernest in some of the disputes in the FI, especially the 1953 decision to adopt an entry tactic into the CPs and SPs or the debates in the 1970s around guerrilla warfare. But most U.S. comrades probably still appreciate the role that Ernest played in helping to unify the FI in 1963. I remember how much I appreciated — and learned from — his essay, published as a supplement to *International Viewpoint*, defending the theory of permanent revolution when it was challenged by the Barnes clique of the U.S. SWP and its cothinkers in the early and mid-1980s.

Ernest's position within the International leadership said much about him and the International. He held no official position apart from being a member of the Bureau of the United Secretariat. This reflected both his modesty and the democratic functioning of the FI. Unlike the Stalinist apparatuses or the crude ultraleft sects that call themselves Trotskyist, the Fourth International has no pope, official or unofficial. He did not seek nor was given the title of secretary general. If he was first among equals, it was due to his political and moral stature.

Ernest was motivated by the very best sentiments of human solidarity and equality. He dedicated his important work *Traité d'économie Marxiste* to his father because, as he wrote in the dedication, it was he who taught Ernest to "consider every man as his brother." His optimism, his undying confidence in the capacity of the working class to rid the world of oppression and build a democratic socialist society were as much a part of his socialism and basic instincts as his broad culture and learning.

Ernest always struck me as one of the most uncynical and honest people I ever met. Nearly all who saw him speak were struck by the fact that his high intelligence and impressive powers of analysis never obscured the pain he felt when explaining the intense misery that the capitalist system has brought to so many on this planet, nor his faith in the capacity of the working class to abolish that system. Like Marx himself, Ernest's high intellect was always at the service of his moral revulsion at the waste and destruction of the capitalist system.

*Continued on page 34*

# William Moses Kunstler (1919–1995): A Case for Courage

by Michael Steven Smith

*Michael Steven Smith practices law in New York City.*

A month before he died, Bill Kunstler did a stand-up routine at Caroline's Comedy Club in Manhattan. I wasn't surprised to see the ad for his appearance in the *New York Times*. He was entertaining and extremely funny. He had recently cracked up a bunch of us outside my office door with a terrific Groucho Marx imitation. His high spirits and irreverence, even about himself, rubbed off on people, making them feel good about themselves. Even though he was 76, he said he would never retire but instead envisioned himself checking out while delivering a summation to a jury, sinking to the courtroom floor, clutching his notes. The tag line to that was that then Ron Kuby (his partner) would grab the notes from his hands and rise to finish the summation.

One of Bill's favorite stories came out of the Chicago Seven Trial. Someone had mailed him a vegetable substance and he immediately called its receipt to the attention of Judge Julius Hoffman. "What are you telling me for?" remarked the obtuse judge (who the defendants referred to as Mr. Magoo). "Do something with it yourself." "I assure you, your honor, that I will personally burn it tonight."

I remember Bill finishing a talk on the death penalty he gave at the New York Marxist School a couple of years ago. He was leaving. A group of people gathered around him and asked him for his address. "Here is a get out of jail free card," he offered, producing several business cards from his wallet and handing them out.

I met him for the first time in 1966 when I was a law student at the University of Wisconsin. Although he was a generation older than me, we were radicalized at the same time and truly hundreds of lawyers like myself, products of the '60s, many in the National Lawyers' Guild, strongly identified with and were constantly inspired by Bill. Bill spoke at the law school about government repression. He used the metaphor of "silken threads" descending and strangling. The honorarium was \$1,000, which I was happy to help get for him and which went through his hands into the movement, as usual. I saw him some years later at the City Hall subway entrance. His hand came up from his pocket empty after fishing for a token. "Here," I said, offering him one and putting it in the slot. "Now it is 1,000 and 1," he replied walking through the turnstile.

Several months ago, Bill was at my office for a deposition. This time he was the defendant. I and Michael O'Neill of Syracuse had the good fortune of defending him against a trumped-up legal malpractice action. Bill charmed the socks

off the opposition attorney, a guy who had flown up with his associate from Washington, D.C. and paid a whole lot of money to have Bill's testimony videotaped.

The deposition, with Bill sitting at the end of the table on camera, lasted all day. The D.C. lawyer did not lay a glove on Bill who remembered in detail events of eight years past. Then the damndest thing happened. When Bill got through cleaning the fellow's clock and the deposition ended, the D.C. guy, who had told us during the course of the hearing that he had earlier worked for the Federal Bureau of Prisons as the Assistant to the Director, got up from the conference table, leaned over, and hugged Bill. And you know, despite Bill's feelings about the Bureau of Prisons, he bore the D.C. guy no personal malice. He hugged him back. Indeed, during the course of the entire morning and afternoon of the deposition, when Bill was being sued for a telephone number that, if enforced, would have wiped him out, Bill had nothing but kind words to say about the plaintiff, and he sincerely meant it.

Incidentally, Bill had lost a letter he had written to the plaintiff. Had Bill been able to produce the letter, the plaintiff's bogus suit would have been shown to be groundless. But he could not find it. "Just say what you had written in it," I volunteered, figuring that any stick would do to beat a dog. But Bill would not do it and then, as if to show that virtue is sometimes more than its own reward, several weeks later Bill actually found the exculpatory letter.

Bill's 75th birthday party last year at Gus's, his favorite Village restaurant, was so full of laughs that I was reeling. Bill talked about his early childhood in Harlem and told of being a mischievous troublemaker, a "real pisser," "Peck's bad boy," as he put it. Truly, as Milton wrote, "childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day."

Bill went on to relate a story about himself. He had been representing the mobster, John Gotti (on the issue of whether Gotti had the right to choose his own lawyer), and he was invited out to dinner with Gotti and his crowd. Bill was asked at the restaurant if he would please make a toast. He rose from the table, glass in hand, and declared, "Here's to crime." The entire gathering sat stone silent staring at him. Bill then exited. After he left, they all fell out.

Bill first got involved in the movement representing freedom fighters from the north who helped desegregate interstate travel. He stayed committed to the Black struggle for four decades until the end of his life. He represented

Martin Luther King as his personal attorney for six years, and this year successfully represented Malcolm X's daughter. He had left a successful Westchester practice with his late brother, Michael, and eventually set up an office in the basement of his house on Gay Street in the Village, which he told me had been a stop on the underground railroad.

With characteristic courage, Bill recently told a Supreme Court judge he was "a disgrace to the bench" over a racist ruling the judge had made. The judge then lodged a formal complaint against Bill with the Character and Fitness Committee of the Bar asking that Bill be "disciplined". Bill found himself on the witness stand defending himself in the courthouse downtown in Manhattan. The room was packed with his supporters. Bill spoke about his life and his beliefs. Dewitt Clinton High School, Yale, Phi Beta Kappa, Army Major, World War II in the Pacific, Bronze Star, Columbia Law School (Stone scholar).

Morton Stavis, Bill's good friend and president of the Center for Constitutional Rights (Bill was a vice-president, founder, and volunteer attorney), elicited more of the details on Bill's accomplishments. Bill ended speaking about his representation of the Attica brothers, Fred Hampton, Assata Shakur, the Harlem Six, and Larry Davis. He spoke of his friendship with Malcolm X, whom he admired immensely. The effect of Bill's testimony on me and everyone else in that room was weighty and moving. We are in the presence of a great and fine American, I thought. The panel must have thought something good also because when their "disciplinary" decision came down, it hardly amounted to a slap on the wrist.

Bill Kunstler's legal accomplishments in the defense of African Americans and democratic rights were of historical significance. Bill took cases, he would say, to make a point and educate people. Fees were not important to him. Lots of times he did not charge any fee at all, and when he did he never kept very good track of it. On wealth, he said, "Just get enough to live on. Animals that overeat die." On his career of litigating, he said in a 1993 interview: "Overall, I never counted, but my lifetime batting average is probably better than Willie Mays." His victories included:

- Trial Counsel, *Adam Clayton Powell v. McCormack* (1966 reinstatement to Congress case)
- Trial Counsel, *Hobson v. Hansen* (1966 Washington, D.C., school desegregation case)

- Trial Counsel, *Stokely Carmichael v. Allen* (1967 invalidation of Georgia Insurrection Statute)
- Trial Counsel, *McSurley v. Ratliff* (1968 invalidation of Kentucky Sedition Statute)
- Trial Counsel, *U.S. v. Berrigan* (1968 defense of Catholic antiwar activists accused of destroying draft records at Catonsville, Maryland)
- Trial Counsel, *U.S. v. Dellinger* (1969–70 Chicago 8 Conspiracy Case)
- Trial Counsel, *U.S. v. Dennis Banks and Russell Means*, (defense of American Indian Movement leaders accused of a number of crimes in the takeover of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1973)
- Trial Counsel, *U.S. v. Sinclair* (1971 invalidation of government's claim of unrestricted wiretapping powers)
- Trial Counsel, *U.S. v. Butler and Robideau* and Appellate Counsel, *U.S. v. Leonard Peltier* (defense of American Indian Movement members on charges stemming from 1975 shoot-out on Pine Ridge Reservation, resulting in the deaths of one Native American and two FBI agents)
- Appellate Counsel, *Texas v. Johnson and Eichmann et al.* (1989 and 1990 Supreme Court arguments in flag-burning cases)

With the modern media being what it is, and Bill's expert use of it, he probably had more of an impact on more people in his time than Clarence Darrow had in his. Bill was featured on "Face the Nation," the "Today Show," "Good Morning America," "20/20," "60 Min-

utes," "Prime Time Live," and the "Donohue Show," to name a few. He was a guest on countless radio programs throughout the country. He was even a member of the Screen Actors Guild, playing the role of Jim Morrison's attorney in Oliver Stone's *The Doors* and the role of the judge in Spike Lee's *Malcolm X*. He was a consultant to Oliver Stone on the forthcoming *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. Bill wrote articles for dozens of law reviews and magazines. He also wrote 13 books and has another one in the pipeline (*The Simpson Sonnets*). His first book of poems came out in 1941 (*Our Pleasant Vices*) and he published two others — *Trials and Tribulations* (1985) and *Hints and Allegations* (1994). He wrote two books on the technical aspects of legal practice and he even wrote a best seller (*The Minister and the Choir Singer*, 1964). Bill's book on the civil rights struggle of the '60s, *Deep in My Heart*, is dedicated to several hundred fellow attorneys who went South for the struggle.

Bill had no funeral. He wasn't religious. Religion to him was superstitious. Being part of a sect was too narrow and confining. The Jewish heretic who transcends Jewry belongs to a Jewish tradition. The historian Isaac Deutscher had a phrase for it, "the non-Jewish Jew." Bill was in line with the great heretics, rebels, and revolutionaries of modern thought, Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Freud. They all went beyond the boundaries of Jewry, finding it too narrow, archaic, constricting.

I do not wish to stretch the comparison. Bill was not so much a radical thinker as a man of

action. But his intellectual understanding — and he was extremely well educated — powered his activity. He had in common with these great thinkers the idea that knowledge, to be real, must be acted upon. As Marx said, "Hitherto the philosophers have only interpreted the world. The point is to change it."

Like his intellectual predecessors, Bill saw reality in a state of flux, as being dynamic, not static. He saw the great movement and contradictoriness of society. Bill was essentially an optimist and shared with the great Jewish revolutionaries an optimistic belief in humanity and a belief in the solidarity of humankind.

At the end of the Civil War, when the guns were still crackling and the union troops (many of them Black) marched in to take over the remaining Southern outposts, a song they often sang was:

*John Brown's body lies a molderin' in the grave,  
John Brown's body lies a molderin' in the grave,  
John Brown's body lies a molderin' in the grave,  
But his truth goes marching on.*

So does Bill's.

Bill's dear friend, Michael Ratner, the former director of litigation at the Center for Constitutional Rights is organizing the William Moses Kunstler Foundation for Racial Justice under the aegis of the Center to carry on Bill's work.

Bill leaves behind his wife, Margie, herself a constitutional litigator, and four daughters, a doctor, a lawyer, a student at Yale, and a student at the United Nations International School. □

## Labor Party Founding Convention to Be Held in June 1996

*Continued from page 17*

one was enduring their hardships together, and that they needed to help each other get through them. Anyone who crossed a union picket line during a strike brought dishonor on himself and his family, and it was not safe for a scab to be seen on the streets.

Mazzocchi recalled the rich cultural life in New York's working-class communities during the years before the Second World War. Workers' class consciousness was reflected in theater, painting and photography, poetry and fiction, and music. To a great extent it reflected the immigrant character of the New York working class, but it drew from the American heartland as well, as the union movement brought the foreign-born in the East Coast and Great Lakes factories together with miners and railroad workers from the South and West. Unionized musicians and actors gave inexpensive performances for working-class audiences, recognizing with the women textile strikers of Lawrence, Massachusetts, that roses, as well as bread, are a necessary part of life.

The atomization of the working class during the years following World War II put an end to all that. The GI Bill of Rights offered returning war veterans (1) a free college education and

therefore the possibility of a professional, technical, or managerial career, and (2) low-interest home mortgages, insured by the Veterans Administration, enabling workers to become homeowners for the first time. Eager real-estate developers made fortunes draining swamps and — worse — carving up farmland and filling them with what songwriter Malvina Reynolds called "little boxes made of ticky-tacky." Some even recognized the social impact of breaking up the "old neighborhoods," the working-class communities of the big cities. White workers moved into suburban communities, and African Americans migrated by the hundreds of thousands to Northern cities, in search of industrial jobs and a better life.

The nearly full employment and steadily increasing wages of the 1950s and 1960s — the result of U.S. dominance over war-ravaged capitalist rivals — gave rise to the illusion that workers had become permanently "middle class" and that American capitalism had truly put an end to their oppression as workers. Through most of that period the Democratic Party claimed the credit for the improvements in working families' lives and was rewarded with loyalty in the voting booth. The union officialdom along with the Democratic politicians per-

petuated the false notion that its negotiating ability, combined with the Democrats' "real concern" for "the working man" — rather than the victories won in struggle in the 1930s and 1940s — had resulted in the relative prosperity of post-World War II years. Under the leadership of a complacent bureaucracy, the labor movement sank into routinism and for the most part forgot how to fight for the membership.

The working class was thus atomized and defenseless against the employers' ruthless drive to reduce its standard of living, and the results have been devastating. Union representation — especially in the private sector — is less than half what it was 40 years ago, at the time that the American Federation of Labor and Congress on Industrial Organization merged to form the AFL-CIO. As the unions have declined in membership and strength, the strike weapon has lost much of its effectiveness. Employers have by the thousands closed their union shops and reopened in new locations, with new names, and new wage rates. Home ownership for young working-class families is today either out of reach or a crushing burden. Employers no longer pay the complete cost of their employees' health insurance, and many no longer even provide it. Even as U.S. industry has regained



its lead in productivity *and* competitiveness, overall employment is shrinking, and employment in the private manufacturing sector is shrinking even more.

The formation of a labor party *in and of itself* would be a great step forward in rebuilding American workers' consciousness of themselves as a class. A labor party is based on the premise that all workers — regardless of race, gender, or skill level — have interests in common and should vote together for candidates which represent them.

However, as Mazzocchi explained to Terry Gross and the NPR audience, Labor Party Advocates and the party which it will be launching will be engaged in activity to further class consciousness and labor solidarity. It will not be simply an electoral machine.

### A Non-Electoral Labor Party

In the "Fresh Air" interview, Mazzocchi went to great lengths to explain that the projected labor party would *not* be an electoral party, that it would *not* run candidates for office. He did not make it clear whether this was a matter of principle for all time or only a temporary policy, nor did he explain *why* it would not be right for a labor party to contest elections, now or in the future.

Mazzocchi argued that all the social gains won by workers — and by people of color, women, youth, and so forth — were *not* the result of electing sympathetic people to office. Higher wages, reduced working hours, women's reproductive freedom, desegregation, and affirmative action were all won by direct action, by struggle on the picket lines and in the streets. He took issue with the idea that progressive social change can be accomplished simply by changing the composition of governmental bodies. Of course, the historical record supports his contention. He recognizes the reality that government at all levels exists to serve the employing class's interests, by force and violence should that prove necessary, a recognition that is more widespread within the working class than is usually acknowledged.

However, Mazzocchi did not address the issue of legislative action, which has proved to be an important activity for the labor movement throughout the industrialized world. Social programs such as unemployment insurance, union rights legislation such as the Wagner Act, and government restrictions on environmental pollution and hazardous workplaces are all victories for working people, and their importance should not be underestimated. It is true that direct action was often a primary factor in winning them, but they still had to go through the parliamentary process.

In addition, labor today has many issues facing it which cannot be resolved at the bargaining table or the picket line. Two of the most glaring

are health care and job export. Though the imposition of trade barriers to the U.S.'s imperialist rivals — such as Japan and Germany — are a false solution, the employers' practice of exporting manufacturing jobs to countries where no restrictions exist on the super-exploitation of working people must be stopped. The main means, of course, will have to be a strong international labor movement, which can fight back against the corporations in countries to which jobs are being exported, such as Taiwan and Mexico. Another, however, is the defeat of trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, both of which institutionalize the flow of jobs to the lowest-wage countries. Additionally, labor needs laws — and the enforcement of laws — specifically outlawing trade and investment practices which drive down wages and increase unemployment in the United States.

As every union member is aware, health insurance has become one of the biggest, if not the biggest, issue in contract negotiations over the last ten to fifteen years. It has been a primary point of contention in nearly every strike which has taken place, as employers have attempted — with much success — to force workers to pick up a greater and greater portion of their health insurance costs. It is the insurance carriers, more than the employers, who are to blame. The increases in premiums can only be described as obscene, and employers often are telling the truth when they tell union negotiating committees that they cannot afford to pay the increased costs of health insurance.

There is only one answer: single-payer national health insurance, a benefit which workers enjoy in every advanced industrial country except the United States. In every country where national health insurance has been enacted, it has been labor's parliamentary representatives who have either led the struggle or passed legislation through an outright parliamentary majority. The most recent example is Canada, where the New Democratic Party — Canada's labor party — spearheaded the campaign for national health insurance, which was victorious in 1970, in only the fifth year of the party's existence.

National health insurance cannot be won on the picket line, and it is doubtful that any plan which truly benefits working people can be won without labor's own representatives in Congress. Anti-scab legislation, an increased minimum wage, the repeal of section 14(b) of Taft-Hartley (which permits states to outlaw the union shop through so-called "Right to Work" laws) are among other important issues which cry out for labor representation in Congress and state legislatures.

However, there is a vast difference between *running* candidates and *electing* them. Though it is important, in my opinion, that labor be

genuinely represented in the federal Congress and state legislatures, running candidates without a reasonable chance of getting elected would be counterproductive and demoralizing. Successful campaigns for public office will require large amounts of money from union treasuries and sufficient support from rank-and-file union members so that state petitioning requirements can be satisfied in the shops and union halls rather than by street-corner canvassing. And that means support not only from the rank-and-file but from sections of the union leadership as well, support which is growing but not yet strong enough to give a reasonable chance of success to electoral bids.

It was unclear from the "Fresh Air" interview whether or not this was Mazzocchi's motivation for not contesting elections at this time. However, he did make clear that during the period immediately following its launch, the new labor party will be fighting for workers' interests at every opportunity and *earning* the respect and support of its constituency *in action*. It will be reaching out to union leaders who are not yet ready to make a complete break with the Democratic Party as well as to rank-and-file members who have illusions in Ross Perot or even General Colin Powell — and it would be fatal not to recognize that both of these "non-politicians" have strong support in the working class. It cannot be stressed enough that the new labor party will have to prove itself by more than its words. The party itself and those individuals who may in the future be its candidates must during the immediate period following the labor party's founding convention demonstrate by their deeds that they can and will fight effectively for their constituency and more importantly re-activate the rank and file to fight for itself.

The labor party must at this time base its policy on what will most effectively reach out and build broad support. That will require maintaining a balance between addressing workers at their present level of consciousness and fighting for their real, objective long-term interests. It can neither adopt a full-fledged socialist program at this time, nor can it repeat simplistic and demagogic slogans as the answers to such issues as taxes and crime just to get votes. Furthermore, all Labor Party Advocates supporters must remember that LPA cannot claim to represent the working class — that claim can only be made by the labor *party* which is called into existence by labor's elected delegates, meeting next June in Cleveland. Even then it will require an intense period of outreach and organizing to broaden the party's support and membership before it in reality can be said to be labor's political voice. That is the perspective which Tony Mazzocchi presented in the "Fresh Air" interview, and it is a valid one. □

September 10, 1995

# Rob Cahalane — A Personal and Political Appreciation

by Joe Auciello

**W**ith their deaths our friends take a piece of our own lives; we, too, die a little with the dead. Mutual experiences and memories accompany them to the grave. Friends remember moments of our lives that we have forgotten; they may even understand us in ways that we have not yet realized, as we may understand them. No wonder we mourn.

Rob Cahalane died in New York this past July; he was 42 years old. Rob was a longtime member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), joining the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA — the youth group in political agreement with the SWP), at 17 as a high school student and graduating to the party while in college. Since the late 1970s he worked in the SWP's national office and served as secretary to Jack Barnes, the party's national secretary.

For about twelve years, in high school and college, Rob Cahalane and I were the closest of friends. For the last twelve years we have not spoken a word together.

Rob was one of four brothers (along with Rich, John, and Dave) who at one time were all members of the SWP. Each had hemophilia; each has since died. Rob also wore braces on his legs that were cumbersome and exhausting. Due to these medical reasons, he did not attend public school for several years but was instead tutored at home.

Rob and I met in eighth grade. In high school we were recruited to the Young Socialist Alliance primarily by Rob's older brother, Rich, then a member of the YSA at Clark University. We soon functioned as a two-person fraction of the YSA. Together we started a chapter of the Student Mobilization Committee, we helped publish an alternative high school newspaper, *The Zenger*, and we organized the Greater Boston High School Rights Coalition. Political work and discussion were the substance of our lives, though we shared all our personal experiences, including the inevitable anguishes of adolescence. Talking together every day helped us to discover our lives and define ourselves.

Politics was foremost, though; we consciously strove to become cadre of a revolutionary organization. While other high school seniors were worrying about PSAT and SAT scores, conferring with guidance counselors, anxiously sending out waves of college applications, Rob and I met together with the YSA branch organizer to discuss which of that organization's college fractions would most benefit by the addition of two freshman members. It was agreed that we would apply to Boston University in order to help the YSA fraction there, which eventually grew to about ten or twelve in number.

At BU, Rob worked in the Student Housing Office and found a job for me there one summer. It soon became apparent that, despite his age and lowly official position, Rob was actually running the day-to-day operations of the office. He was so well-organized, efficient, and capable that the director increasingly turned over his responsibilities to Rob. As a result, he eventually became the de facto director of student housing at the university. Those who knew Rob at the SWP national office would probably not be surprised by this story.

Rob's most significant accomplishment, though, was more personal. No life is simple, but Rob had special difficulties. Because of his hemophilia and leg braces, Rob lived with pain and worry every day. It would be easy to overlook this fact because he so rarely called attention to it, and when he did he often spoke with self-deprecation and humor. But daily living — merely, for instance, walking from one place to another — was punishing for him, however well he endured it. He was, of course, subject to spontaneous bleeding so that numerous hospitalizations were required throughout his life. It would be misleading and sentimental to say that Rob "overcame" his physical limitations; that was never possible. Instead, he coped as best he could. He pushed aside weariness and suffering for as long as his strength could sustain him in order to accomplish the political tasks which he considered important. Just like his brothers, he did so without complaint or self-pity.

Rob was intelligent and possessed a resourceful mind. When he was bedridden as a child, he came to love books, and he read voraciously throughout his life. As students with little money, we combed through the numerous used bookstores in Boston and Cambridge and thought nothing of missing meals in order to save money for books. When it came to politics, though, Rob read uncritically. He studied in order to learn the right arguments for the correct line and could marshal these effectively in political debates. Rob was not inclined to question what he read. He knew, for instance, that Mandel, Maitan, and Frank (leaders of the European-based "international majority tendency" in the Fourth International) were wrong in their analysis of the revolution in Portugal even before he opened the pages of *Intercontinental Press*.

Rob was devoted to the SWP. Unfortunately, that meant he was unwilling to examine it critically. There are understandable reasons for this weakness. It is one thing to become a revolutionary when thousands of your generation are becoming radicalized as well. But as the tide of revolution ebbs, as friends and comrades drop out and disappear into bourgeois life, as fewer

recruits step forward, a revolutionary perspective is more difficult to maintain. Some comrades come to rely on faith and obedience to anchor their convictions and dampen any spark of doubt. Rob was not alone in succumbing to this temptation.

Certain that the SWP was correct on all essential points, Rob fully supported every change in position, every turn in line, and every organizational decision from 1969 to 1995. When core principles of the party were discarded in the early 1980s, shoved out along with the members who defended those principles, Rob expressed no reluctance or regret at seeing them squeezed out or expelled. He could never realize that those comrades who opposed the trajectory which eventually led to the SWP's break with the Fourth International and who defended the party's traditions were no less committed to the party that they too had spent a lifetime in building. Rob, as well as many others of the SWP majority, was willfully blind.

The political break engineered by the SWP leadership also meant a personal break between Rob and me. Given all our past experience, this was particularly painful. On the night I graduated from high school I was forced out of my home because of my political commitment to Trotskyism. Rob and his family took me in to live with them until I could get settled. Years later I was forced out of my party, the SWP, for that same political commitment to Trotskyism. This time Rob offered no help or solace. Our last conversation was a disagreement over the course taken by the SWP, which Rob defended completely, aggressively, even somewhat provocatively.

Rob was not primarily a mass organizer, a writer, or a strategist. He was certainly not a "leader," as the Socialist Workers Party now claims, an honorific bestowed on the deceased. His virtues and unquestionable political contributions were more personal, emerging from his character. First among them was a commitment to the socialist movement that he felt was best expressed by the SWP. He could be relied upon to work hard, to work thoroughly and well, with exacting attention to detail. He happily quoted from the *Writings of Leon Trotsky [1932-33]*: "...I believe that there is nothing worse than dilettantism and lack of order in any serious business, more so in revolutionary affairs." Any fraction of which Rob was a part functioned more effectively because he was in it.

I know the toll a day's labor took on him; I remember how painfully tired he was at the end of work and the evening's inevitably lengthy political meetings. I remember, too, how little he complained of it all. This was Rob's political contribution: he was a model of dedication and self-sacrifice for a cause that is bigger than ourselves. Without this spirit, no movement can grow.

These virtues, however necessary, are not the only ones needed for the development of a revolutionary. In 1933 Trotsky also wrote: "Blind obedience is a virtue in a soldier of a capitalist army but not in a proletarian fighter... Revolutionary discipline does not exclude but demands the right of checking and criticism.

Only in this way can an indestructible revolutionary army be created.”

Rob would not have agreed with me about the implications of this quote, the criticisms I

would have made about the SWP majority's misconduct toward the minorities in the party who were eventually purged undemocratically. No doubt each of us would have felt some

frustration at the other's stubbornness. Still, I wish we could have continued the arguments, the discussions, and the conversations that should never have stopped. □

## Zapatista "Consulta" Opens New Stage in Mexican Struggle

*Continued from page 3*

tween Marcos and the Interior Minister might offer one means to break the impasse. Ever conscious of social standing and rank, the government's lead negotiator immediately ruled out such a possibility, answering that the Interior Minister and the Subcomandante "are not on the same level."

The government's strategy has been geared toward politically and physically isolating the Zapatistas and creating favorable terrain for a possible military offensive. On June 23 the government deported three foreign-born priests belonging to the San Cristóbal de Las Casas diocese, based on trumped-up charges from an unidentified source of violating Mexico's ban on political activity by noncitizens. The priests were denied a hearing or any right to appeal the deportation orders.

The government also convinced the Red Cross to dismantle the encampments it had established in the region following the January 1, 1994, uprising.

### Waiting for Moncolva; the Spirit of Oaxtepec

While hundreds of thousands of people were casting their ballots for the EZLN to create a national political organization, delegates assembled at the PRD's third national convention in Oaxtepec, Morelos, were providing proof positive that the Cardenista project offered no alternative. The event had long been billed as a definitive showdown between *dialoguistas* (those favoring an ongoing dialogue with the government) and the *rupturistas* (those seeking a more confrontational approach). The press frequently speculated about the possibility that the convention would lead to a split.

The party has been permanently fractured into a maze of ill-defined currents, which respond more to material interests than to any ideological or strategic proposals. The social organizations they respectively control have been locked into a patronage system that depends on a working relationship with the government officials who hold the purse strings. And with the PRD's electoral strength waning, Cardenista officeholders are anxious to achieve the sort of *de facto* alliance with the government that the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN — National Action Party, the right-wing bourgeois opposition party) has been able to convert into favorable negotiated settlements of election results.

Most of these "currents" largely lined up along the *rupturista/dialoguista* divide. The increasingly marginalized Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas was seen as the head of the *rupturista* current. Building on his demand early this year that Zedillo resign, Cárdenas called for a campaign to force Zedillo out of office, to be re-

placed by a Government of National Salvation comprised of all "democratic and patriotic forces." As Cárdenas and his followers explained, the proposal would be the central demand of an action campaign that sought to channel the energies of social movements to bring about a change in the correlation of forces and strengthen the bargaining position of the PRD.

Cárdenas understands that the Zapatistas represent an alternative to the left of the PRD, particularly for the social movements and activists that constitute the core of the PRD's base of support. On this level, his image as the undisputed leader of the fight for democracy has been eclipsed by the EZLN and Marcos. Election campaigns and negotiations with the government will not suffice to dispel the threat posed by the Zapatistas in this respect. Along with the PRD's gubernatorial candidate in Tabasco, Manuel López Obrador, who has led an extended series of mobilizations in the wake of the PRI's fraudulent election victory in that state last November, Cárdenas has tried to launch a series of "broad front" initiatives, such as López Obrador's National Democratic Alliance, though with limited results.

The unity of the PRD comes first and foremost for Cárdenas, making him a captive of the corrupt and patronage-based machinery he created in founding the PRD. Before the congress even began, Cárdenas sought a very poor compromise. In exchange for a few scattered references to some of his proposals, he agreed to a final resolution that clearly codified the orientation put forward by party president Porfirio Muñoz Ledo's *dialoguistas*.

Since Cárdenas's poor showing in the 1994 presidential elections, Muñoz Ledo has taken the offensive in promoting a closer relationship with the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party — PRI, the ruling capitalist party in Mexico) regime, trying to compete with the PRI and PAN for the always illusory "political center" and promoting the idea of a top-down political reform in which PRD leaders would negotiate with the regime a bigger slice of the governmental pie. Along with most PRD officeholders, he has also argued that it was the PRD's "intransigence" in refusing to recognize and work with the PRI regime that has turned off voters and allowed the PAN to parlay the PRI's crisis into significant electoral gains.

Muñoz Ledo has frequently cited Spain's Moncolva Pact as the model of a "democratic transition" and argued that "governments of national salvation" had not played a role in the "best" examples of democratic transition in Eastern Europe. But above all, the conciliationists have ingeniously insisted that calls for Zedillo to resign play into the hands of "hard-line" elements within the PRI and the army,

thereby paving the way for a coup or a shift to an increasingly repressive state.

### Is There Danger of a Military Coup?

It appears that the military has been alarmed by the growing crisis of the system and certain aspects of government policy. Steeped in the "revolutionary nationalist" ideology the PRI sustained until Salinas made the formal shift to "social liberalism," the high command was displeased by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the general weakening of Mexican sovereignty in the face of increasing control from Washington. When U.S. President Clinton hosted a summit of cabinet-level military chiefs from throughout the Americas in June, only the Mexican high command declined the invitation, forcing Zedillo to send his foreign minister as an observer.

But there is little reason to think that the Mexican army has a coup on its mind, and it is Zedillo himself who is leading the shift toward more repressive policies in an effort to shore up his position. The military has been granted an increasingly high-profile role in police activities, and a long list of repressive measures and the massive infusion of arms and money that was begun under Salinas continue unabated. After Guerrero Governor and Zedillo *compadre* Rubén Figueroa ordered the June 28 massacre of 18 campesino activists at Aguas Blancas, the president's hand-picked human rights commissioner issued a report that essentially cleared the governor of any wrongdoing.

Reporters for major newspapers have been fired and entire radio news programs canceled because reporters asked the wrong question or expressed an opinion that displeased the president.

### Zedillo May Seek Closer Ties with PRD

Of course, the Zedillo government is quite anxious to establish a better working relationship with the PRD. In light of the Zapatista rebellion, the regime needs an institutionalized left cover, and Zedillo has expressed concerns that Salinas's policy of largely excluding the PRD from public office was a mistake. As the *de facto* alliance with the PAN slowly disintegrates, with the conservative party poised to challenge the PRI's congressional majority in the 1997 elections, the PRD could become an important ally of the regime. And with many of the most retrograde figures within the PRI increasingly turning toward a populist and nationalist discourse to deal with the party's declining support and the disastrous effects of the regime's neoliberal policies, a further political linkage could soon emerge.

Following the convention, PRD leaders declared that the "spirit of Oaxtepec" had served

to dispel the threat of a split and armed the PRD with the perspectives needed to reverse its declining electoral fortunes. But with little to offer beyond a tepid critique of the government's economic policy and the same promises of democratic reform that every other party, including the PRI, have made a focus of their election campaigns, Oaxtepec simply marked the further institutionalization of the PRD into the state apparatus. As a result, many activists will be increasingly attracted to the prospect of a Zapatista-led political formation as an alternative to the PRD.

### A New Challenge

The construction of a national political organization tied to the EZLN represents one of the most difficult challenges the Zapatistas have to face since the January 1 uprising. But it is also one that the EZLN cannot postpone indefinitely.

In trying to develop nationwide initiatives, the EZLN has demonstrated a healthy sensibility in regard to the dynamics and varied opinions of the menagerie of political currents, social organizations, and NGOs that have responded to the demands and struggle of the Zapatistas. But the amorphous character of these forces and a series of political miscalculations have served to frustrate most of the initiatives launched from the Lacandón rain forest.

The first major effort to give organized expression to popular support for the Chiapas uprising, the National Democratic Convention (CND), was launched only weeks before the 1994 presidential elections. Betting that Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas would repeat his strong showing in the 1988 elections, and aware that the PRD leadership would once again try to derail any anti-fraud mobilizations while negotiating with the government to obtain a few extra parliamentary seats, the CND was initially designed as a framework through which the mass movement could organize postelectoral protests and generate a broad opposition movement outside institutional channels. But Cárdenas's poor showing and the ensuing demoralization on the left frustrated the efforts to build such mobilizations and served to exacerbate major political differences within the CND. Since then, the CND has been plagued by incessant infighting and an unresolved split.

Later efforts to establish a "broad opposition front" were even less successful, for many of

the same reasons. With the CND forces in disarray and the PRD moving to the right, the Zapatistas lacked a direct means for generating the pressure needed to build such a front or any significant allies for such an initiative.

### Problems of Building a National Organization

But the problems faced in building such broad fronts could prove minor in comparison to the task of building a national political organization at a time when EZLN forces are surrounded by 40,000 troops in the most remote corner of the country. Naturally, the biggest hurdles will be political rather than logistical.

The Zapatistas have won widespread popular sympathies by articulating the most basic and heartfelt social and political demands of the oppressed and exploited, who are increasingly immersed in a daily struggle for survival.

But establishing a national political organization will require more precisely defined positions on a series of strategic issues. These include developing and testing key strategic points that have been raised in embryonic form in documents issued by the Zapatista leadership. Marcos has stated, for example, that the EZLN is not looking to take state power but rather to help civil society in assuming power.

In this regard, the Zapatistas have put a great deal of emphasis on developing expressions of direct democracy from the bottom up, at a community and sectoral level. While this proposal bears some formal similarities to the positions developed in recent years by the Villalobos wing of the Salvadoran Farabundo Martí National Liberation Movement (FMLN), it hardly shares the social democratic designs of the former Salvadoran rebels.

It is a proposal that reflects the best traditions of the indigenous communities and sectors of the mass movement that have proven to be the most dynamic in this period of labor quiescence. It also offers elements of a more democratic alternative to the bureaucratic and clientelist methods traditionally employed not only by the state and its political parties but by most of the Mexican left as well.

But it does leave many questions unanswered in terms of just how "civil society" can wield state power and what forms that power should take. Despite the implicitly anticapitalist, anti-imperialist aspects of the Zapatista discourse,

these formulations tend to gloss over the class contradictions within "civil society."

The *consulta* gave the EZLN a virtual mandate to create its own national political organization, but the Zapatistas must incorporate significant forces from a wide range of social sectors and varied political traditions to fulfill its purpose. The political currents that will likely respond to a call by the Zapatistas cover a full spectrum, from followers of Peru's Chairman Gonzalo to Marcos sycophants and other opportunist currents hoping to cash in on pro-Zapatista sympathies.

Another major problem is how to integrate social organizations, political currents, and individuals into a political organization that can both function in the democratic and horizontal manner the Zapatistas frequently advocate and serve as a useful tool of struggle for the broad sections of the mass movement looking for an alternative to the existing political parties. This task is further complicated by the fact that such a movement will be tied, at least implicitly, to a military organization with its own structures and dynamics. Guerrilla movements in Latin America and elsewhere have traditionally been tied to centralized and relatively homogeneous political organizations.

### Challenge for Revolutionary Socialists

Forming a national organization will probably be a very slow process and one that also raises major challenges for revolutionary socialists regarding how to actively build and politically contribute to its development.

In this endeavor, revolutionaries must draw on the experience and active participation of a new generation of social activists searching for the type of political perspectives and project that can allow them to extend the isolated and defensive struggles of today into a concerted anticapitalist offensive. But they must also draw on the lessons learned from decades of accumulated experience on the level of the international workers movement, which continues to provide major insights into the challenges facing working people in Mexico. □

September 26, 1995

## Ernest Mandel: An Appreciation

*Continued from page 28*

Optimism and enthusiasm were key features of his personality. Optimism is an important trait for a revolutionary. But in Ernest's case his extremely large dose of it occasionally led him to make errors of analysis. For example, at the time of the huge anti-regime demonstrations in East Germany just before the wall came down, he was convinced that the East German working class was on the verge of throwing out the Stalinist bureaucrats and building a true socialist democracy. But like others in our world

movement, he underestimated the degree to which decades of Stalinist rule had eroded socialist consciousness in countries with Stalinist rule which helped create illusions in capitalism. But it was to his credit that he could rapidly rectify faulty analysis. One of the themes that he hammered away at in recent years was the idea that the Stalinist experience had deeply discredited socialism in the eyes of millions around the world. But characteristically he also believed that this would only be a short or at most medium-term phenomenon.

Another theme of his speeches in recent years was a modification of Rosa Luxemburg's turn-of-the-century formula that the future of humanity would be either socialism or barbarism. Ernest believed that the destructive nature of capitalism had increased to the point that the future of humanity would be either socialism or the physical destruction of the human race. Throughout his life he strained every muscle to assure that the former would prevail. □

# Global Village or Global Pillage?

Global Village or Global Pillage, by Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello; Boston: South End Press, 1994; 237 pages; \$14.

reviewed by Hayden Perry

The concept of the world as a "global village" was popularized by Wendell Willkie when he ran against President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1940. He was referring to the speed of airplanes that put the remotest places on earth only hours flying time from anywhere, and telephones and radios that provided instant communication around the world.

At that time Willkie and his contemporaries saw the benefits that all could enjoy when the peoples of the earth are drawn closer together. Today, a half century later, the operative term is "globalization," a word that has come to connote fewer benefits and more misery for millions of people everywhere.

Why the misery? In the last 50 years former colonies have become free nations. They are acquiring the technical skills of the West. They are opening factories, mechanizing farming, and building the infrastructure of a modern state. Isn't this the formula for lifting a country out of poverty and making people happier?

The authors of *Global Village or Global Pillage* undertake to solve the puzzle. Jeremy Brecher is a historian who wrote the classic history of American labor, *Strike!* Tim Costello was a truck driver and union activist for 20 years. He has collaborated with Brecher in writing *Common Sense for Hard Times* and 7 other books. They view the world from the standpoint of the working class.

They start with the unprecedented 25-year boom from 1948 to 1973. Production expanded about 5 percent a year in the major industrial nations. Although the New Deal was over, government intervention to smooth out the ups and downs of business cycles continued, and came to be expected. Some restraints on business were accepted. Brecher calls this the period of "regulated capitalism."

In a sort of class truce labor unions won wage increases and benefits. Companies paid health insurance, and retirement plans were the norm, at least in large enterprises. Inflation partially masked the rising cost of doing business, while a whole generation of workers in Europe and America enjoyed a rising standard of living.

Meanwhile, out in the global village few other people were enjoying a boom. Prices for the raw materials and crops the underdeveloped countries sold kept falling, while costs of their imports kept rising. The inevitable result was mounting debt.

But "help" was at hand. The World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) had money to lend — but at a price. These international bodies, controlled by the U.S. gov-

ernment (and the big financial interests behind it), would dictate the economic life of the borrowing nation. Like prisoners on parole, small nations had to obey when the IMF said, Cut welfare, lower wages, pay the interest and capital on time even if you have to borrow more money. The only boom that policy produces is a growing load of debt.

By 1973 the 25-year boom in the U.S. and Europe was over. Japan and Germany were now serious rivals. It was time to cut costs, and become competitive.

Moving to low-wage areas of the U.S. was one option frequently taken in the past by companies seeking to pay less for labor. The flight of the textile industry from New England to the South is an example.

This kind of move helps the company cut costs, but federal regulations still apply. Congress and the Clinton administration are now working overtime to weaken or abolish "costly" regulations, such as health and safety rules.

Now corporations have another option. They can move to the global village and escape U.S. government regulation. The desperate, debt-ridden governments in the former colonial countries accept the foreign corporations on almost any terms. This includes the destruction of their forests, pollution of the environment, and, worst of all, the stunting of the lives of their people.

When General Motors builds an "American" car, its parts are likely to be made in a dozen countries. GM gains a number of advantages from this, but the most important is lower labor costs. Corporations are constantly scouting the world for the cheapest workers. They call this the "New World Order."

Brecher and Costello call it the "race to the bottom" — a race that starts in the U.S. Workers seeking higher wages are told the plant may close and move abroad. It is a threat that workers have not yet countered effectively.

The result has been a 15 percent decline in real wages since 1973. Few workers are secure in their jobs. Part-time and temporary jobs keep millions of workers hanging on the edge.

The authors point to other costs of "becoming competitive": "...subsidized housing, transportation and health care have also been slashed: 60 percent of the unemployed do not receive unemployment compensation, and 38 million are without any form of health insurance."

Overseas the race to the bottom has far-reaching effects, the authors say: "As corporations move jobs that paid \$10 an hour to countries that pay \$1 an hour, workers can buy less of what they produce...the result is a 'downward spiral.' This is reflected in the slowing of GNP growth from almost 5 per-

cent a year from 1948 to 1973, to a mere crawl now."

With the world economy almost stagnant, American business is squeezed by Germany and Japan. Corporate America needs a trading bloc that can virtually exclude its Asian rival. The authors show how the North American Trade Agreement (NAFTA) has roped Canada and Mexico into a trade pact controlled by American corporate interests. While this agreement dictates the terms of trade, NAFTA rules supersede many national and local laws in the three countries.

These developments drastically affect the relation of corporations to their national governments. Three hundred corporations own one quarter of the world's wealth. The *New York Times* noted in 1989, "Many American companies are shedding the banner of national identity and proclaiming themselves to be global enterprises whose fortunes are no longer so dependent on the economy of the United States."

More often unregulated global corporations determine government policy in economic and other spheres. This is clear in the foreign exchange markets where speculators, sitting at their computers, move \$1 trillion across borders every day. The authors write that "national governments have become less and less able to control their own economies; they are more and more like flotsam tossed on the waves of economic forces — witness the inability of central banks...to control the repeated currency crises of the 1990s." [For more on this, see Frank Lovell's article on the capitalist crisis of the 1990s in the July-August 1995 issue of *BIDOM*, — Eds.]

A number of writers, both on the right and the left, have reported on these developments in books that are worth reading. Brecher and Costello, however, go beyond these exposes by pointing the way to an international fightback.

The authors point out that for the last two centuries people have looked to their national governments as vehicles to address their problems. Now, they say, "As corporations have become increasingly global... these vehicles have grown less and less effective. The national powers have been largely outflanked by globalization. The result can be a pervasive feeling of powerlessness in the face of unaccountable global forces."

What is needed, Brecher and Costello say, is Globalization-from-Below. This means people in each country actively supporting the struggles of people in other countries. They cite the United Auto Workers, who have, in the past, expressed their rage over layoffs by smashing Toyotas. Recently a union delegation went to Cuautitlan, Mexico, to help organize the workers in the Ford plant there.

Over 1,700 American companies run maquiladora plants in Mexico. This has led to the formation of the North American Worker-to-Worker Network (NAWWN).

This organization of Canadian, American, and Mexican labor and community representatives sponsor cross-border communication, information, and mutual aid.

This leads the authors to propose the "Lilliput strategy," named after *Gulliver's Travels*, where Gulliver was tied up by the little people of Lilliput while he slept. In this case workers, through "citizens action," will tie up the giant corporations with hundreds of threads composed of rules and regulations enforced by workers in every country. Thereby the race to the bottom would be reversed by upward levelling.

A human agenda, concerned with the well-being of the environment and humanity, would replace the corporate agenda of profit and pillage. The authors envisage a long program of gradual democratization and change. The World Bank and the IMF, they suggest,

might be modified to serve people rather than the corporate elite.

Attractive as such peaceable change might be, is it possible without considering the question of class power? Here is the weakest part of the authors' thesis.

They predict that American unions are going to develop an international outlook, but say nothing about breaking with the Democrats. They don't mention the promising movement for a Labor Party.

They also slide over the question of class power in the less developed world. Why would corrupt governments, subservient to foreign capital, permit their workers to dictate terms to anyone?

No doubt Brecher and Costello understand the reality of the class struggle, but they have lost their way in the wreckage of Stalinism. They try to chart a course that ignores the

signposts of Marxism. The result is a fuzzy program that suggests that capitalism can be reformed.

Their call for international labor solidarity is positive, but it is scarcely new. The authors rightly credit Marx with the concept. Over 150 years ago Marx declared that the workers' campaign for liberation must be an international struggle against an international capitalist system. To this end, he helped form the first workers International, in 1864.

Despite shortcomings, *Global Village or Global Pillage* is a valuable contribution to current discussions on the nature of capitalism today. The question of how far the corporate elite can be truly independent of Washington and its overwhelming military force is a question for extensive study and debate. □

## End the U.S. Blockade of Cuba, No to U.S., UN, NATO Intervention in ex-Yugoslavia

*Continued from page 1*

"great powers"? They are "great," as Lenin said, only in the greater degree of violence and destruction they are able to commit.

### Results of Clinton's Latest "Peace Deal"

After the deal brokered by Clinton with the help of NATO bombs, the *New York Times* is trying to make it look as though life is virtually back to normal in Sarajevo, the war-ravaged capital of Bosnia. The *Times* featured photos of young people dancing in discos and eyeing wedding dresses in shop windows. For the capitalist press, of course, "normality" equals the consumer culture, "getting and spending," the world in which the commodity is king, along with the profit that derives from it.

"With the Bosnian Serbs' heavy guns gone from the hills around town and new commercial routes to the city open, buses zip along the boulevards and traffic clogs streets that were once empty...In the markets, bread, butter and bananas vie for space with an overabundance of chocolate and alcohol," reports the *Times*. Important news, for this journal of the "free market system," is that the price of Marlboros is down to \$1.50. "Five dollars a pack is now only a dim memory."

### Singing the Praises of the Market — and NATO

In a paean to commerce, the lifeblood of capitalism, the *Times* reporter sings: "...young people wearing bright fashions from the newly opened Benetton store dance to Michael Jackson and the Village People."

The commodity, in all its multifarious forms, is back on the throne.

Even the reopening of schools in Sarajevo can be credited to the military arm of Western imperialism, NATO, according to the *Times*, "since NATO bombs forced the Serbian guns to break their tight circle around the city." In fact, all sorts of good things come from NATO, the *Times* would have you believe:

"NATO has improved my love life immensely," says Amel Efendic, 15, explaining that he had spotted the girl of his dreams, 14-year-old Amila, on the first day of class.

### War Not Over

Never looking at the deeper causes of the civil war in former Yugoslavia, and certainly not the role of imperialism and the world capitalist market in helping produce the disaster in the first place, the *Times* does acknowledge, reluctantly, that all is not rosy. Although the heavy guns are gone, it notes, "the smaller weapons that still ring the enclave could turn Sarajevo into a city of darkness and fear once again."

Elsewhere in Bosnia, fighting is still going on, especially in the Bosnian Serb territory around Banja Luka, and "with any real peace deal months away," the horrors of war could return to Sarajevo at any time.

### Prospects of Capitalist Reconstruction

Even in the unlikely event that a "real peace deal" happens — various peace deals have been only "months away" for several years now — the marvels of peace under capitalism may not be all that grand for Bosnians. But big capital will find ways to benefit.

The World Bank has estimated it will take billions of dollars to repair Bosnia's roads, bridges, utilities, and so forth. And it will be happy to provide some of those dollars — at loan-shark interest rates.

Muhamed Zlatar, Sarajevo's deputy mayor for reconstruction, was quoted as saying:

... we have 270,000 people in this town with very little money. It will take a lot of money to put this place back together again, and so far we don't have it.

But here comes the angel of reconstruction, bearing price tags and ledger books to calculate profit and loss:

Rebuilding will be a world affair. The United States [read: U.S. banks and corporate profit hunters] has pledged a multibillion-dollar reconstruction fund for the country, and last month J. Brian Atwood, Administrator of the Agency for International Development, toured Sarajevo's ruins with an eye toward calculating costs.

### All the Charm of an American Ghetto

Nearly every family has lost someone to the war. And those who survive have been traumatized, twisted by hatred, and familiarized with the use of weapons.

"The big city that arises from Sarajevo's ashes may have all the charm of a gang-infested American inner city," the *Times* reports, adding that well-armed street gangs have come out since the shelling stopped. The youngster with the "improved love life" explained:

"Everybody now is armed with either a gun or a grenade or a switchblade...Before the war you could kid around with people. Now you know not to be rude or get angry at anyone." □

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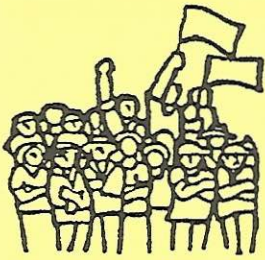
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The FI is an international organization of revolutionary Marxist parties and groups from dozens of countries throughout the world. It was founded in 1938 under the leadership of Leon Trotsky, dedicated to a consistent and forthright struggle for the 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 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.

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#### *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.