

In Defense of Marxism

\$3.00

Changes in Organized Labor

AFL-CIO Convention

Detroit Newspaper Strike

Teamsters for a Democratic Union

Also:
Discussion on the
Million Man March

In This Issue

| | |
|--|--|
| Zionist Extremist Assassinates Yitzhak Rabin The Middle East "Peace Process" and the Fragmentation of Zionism 1 | Document A Strategy to Strengthen and Win the Detroit Newspaper Strike 13 |
| <i>by Tom Barrett</i> | <i>Statement of Labor/Community/Religious Coalition in Support of the Striking Newspaper Workers</i> |
| On the Eve of December Elections No Choice for Working Class Voters in Russia 2 | The AFL-CIO Convention 14 |
| <i>by Aleksei Gusev</i> | <i>by Frank Lovell</i> |
| Discussion on the Million Man March "We Need a Mass Political Movement to Challenge the Power Structure" 4 | Resolution on Independent Political Action 17 |
| <i>Interview with Don Rojas</i> | <i>Adopted by the New Jersey Industrial Union Council</i> |
| Learning from the Million Man March 5 | Social Justice and the O.J. Simpson Trial 19 |
| <i>by Jean Tussey</i> | <i>by Marilyn Vogt-Downey</i> |
| Million Man March Voice of an Oppressed Nation 6 | Making Sense of the O.J. Verdict 20 |
| <i>by Joe Auciello</i> | <i>by Claire M. Cohen</i> |
| Favorable Report on March in In These Times 7 | An Antiwar Activist Responds to Robert McNamara 22 |
| <i>by George Saunders</i> | <i>Reviewed by Evelyn Sell</i> |
| Mumia Update: The Response the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Wouldn't Print . . 8 | Controversy over McNamara's Memoirs War Crimes in Vietnam — and Elsewhere 26 |
| <i>by Jamila Levi</i> | <i>by Frank Lovell</i> |
| Why All Americans Should Support Mumia Abu-Jamal . . . 9 | Fidel Returns to Harlem 30 |
| <i>by Claire M. Cohen</i> | <i>by Michael Steven Smith</i> |
| The 20th TDU Convention "Not One Step Back!" Say Teamsters for a Democratic Union 10 | Demonstrations Demand End to Blockade of Cuba 30 |
| <i>by Charles Walker</i> | <i>by Sarah Springer</i> |
| Detroit Newspaper Strike 12 | David Cooper: A Lifetime in the Cause of Justice and Socialism 31 |
| <i>by Charles Walker</i> | <i>by Mark Harris</i> |

Who We Are

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

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

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

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

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

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

Bulletin in Defense of Marxism

Volume 13, No. 5
Whole No. 129,
December 1995
Closing News Date:
November 17, 1995

Managing Editors

Tom Barrett
George Saunders

Editorial Committee

Lee DeNoyer
Peter Johnson
David Jones
Paul Le Blanc
Evelyn Sell
Marilyn Vogt-Downey

Editorial Board

Steve Bloom
Dorothea Breittman
Claire Cohen
John Daniel
Michael Frank
Saturnino Gonzales
Marty Goodman
Dayne Goodwin
Helen Grossman
Shaista Husain
Vimukthi Jayadeva
Mandy Kivowitz
Linda Thompson Lantz
Lisa Landphair
Ron Lare
Michael Livingston
Frank Lovell
Melana Marchant
Carol McAllister
Mike McCallister
Jim Miles
Bill Onasch
Jon Paul Patafio
Cheryl Peck
Roy Rollin
Jean Tussey
David Weiss
Lisa Weltman
Vera Wigglesworth

International Contributing Editors (partial list):

Pierre Broué
Rosario Ibarra de Piedra
Livio Maitan
Rosendo Mendoza
Manuel Aguilar Mora
Barry Weisleder
Zhang Kai

Send correspondence and subscriptions to *Bulletin IDOM*, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009. To subscribe to *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism*, send \$24 for 12 monthly issues or \$15 for 6 issues to *Bulletin IDOM*, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009. Back issues are \$3.00 each. Indexed in the Alternative Press Index.

The Middle East "Peace Process" and the Fragmentation of Zionism

by Tom Barrett

The first prime minister of the State of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, was quoted as saying that he was grateful for the constant state of war with the Arabs, for without it Israeli society would disintegrate. The accuracy of his prediction was borne out with a vengeance on November 3, 1995, when a 25-year-old Israeli law student, Yigal Amir, shot and killed Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in retaliation for — in Amir's words — "giving the land of Israel to the Arabs." Rabin, who was chief of staff of the Israeli armed forces in 1967 and led the Zionist troops in capturing the West Bank and Gaza Strip at that time, was most assuredly not guilty of the charge. He never wavered in his loyalty to Zionism, and the Arab masses rightly considered him a formidable enemy. His death inspired celebrations in the streets of Beirut, whose people have suffered for decades at the hands of the Zionist forces.

However, Amir and others like him — among the worst racist fanatics in any country — instinctively, and in some cases consciously, understand that the fundamental character of the Zionist state cannot be preserved without a constant state of war. They recognize that an exclusively Jewish state cannot survive if Arabs are granted equal citizenship, and they recognize further that if Arabs are even allowed to live within the Israeli state's borders, it is inevitable that they will struggle for civil rights, and do so with overwhelming international support.

In fact, Rabin and his Labor Party colleagues shared the same recognition. Their motivation for abandoning — gradually and grudgingly, to be sure — the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza was the desire to rid the Israeli state of a hostile Arab population, which continues to grow far faster than the Jewish population and on which Israeli society has come to depend for low-paid labor. The difference within Zionism is a tactical one — whether to hold the occupied territories by force and even to expel the Arabs from them, or to let the hostile Palestinians go their own way. Rabin chose the latter course, and Yigal Amir killed him for it.

The "Peace Process" — What It Is and What It Is Not

The "peace process" is the name which both Zionist and Arab leaders — and their patrons in Washington and London — have given to diplomatic efforts to put an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Several aspects of this diplomacy should be understood:

(1) it will not put an end to the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination in all parts of their homeland; (2) it will not bring about lasting Middle East peace; (3) it is not in and of itself a betrayal of the Arab revolution; and (4) it has the complete support of the key imperialist powers. If that seems contradictory, it is because it is contradictory. Material reality always is. Underlying the entire situation is the drive of imperialism to exploit the human and natural resources of the region for its own profits and, in conflict with it, the struggle of the working people, poor peasants, and nomadic herders of the Middle East to enjoy the fruits of their own labor in peace and freedom.

Imperialism more than anything else requires stability in the Middle East. Conflict is expensive — it cuts into profits. Profits are maximized when they are shared with local bourgeoisies who keep friendly governments in power throughout the region. To impress upon Middle Eastern governments the necessity of playing by imperialism's rules, George Bush carried out a brief but brutal war against Iraq in 1991 after maneuvering Iraqi President Saddam Hussein into invading neighboring Kuwait. It was one of the most cynical, cold-blooded, and disgusting spectacles in quite a long time. One byproduct of the Gulf War was the isolation of Yassir

Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO).

Unable to acquiesce to American aggression in the Middle East, Arafat and the PLO sided with Iraq. It was a difficult decision, for Kuwait had had a long and friendly relationship with the PLO and with Arafat himself. Arafat's al-Fateh organization, which took over the leadership of the PLO in 1968, had been founded in Kuwait City ten years earlier. Kuwait was one of the chief financial backers of the PLO throughout its history. In the aftermath of the U.S. victory and the cutoff of Kuwaiti and Saudi money, the PLO was facing outright bankruptcy. Continuing armed struggle against Israel was out of the question.

However, at the same time the Arab masses of the West Bank and Gaza had for three years been carrying out their own struggle, ostensibly in the name of the PLO but in reality independent of any outside leadership. In a dramatic parallel to the struggle going on at the same time in the Black townships of South Africa, Arabs as young as their early teens took on the Israeli army. Armed only with stones and courage, they accomplished more in two years than the PLO guerrillas accomplished in twenty. They demonstrated to the world — already attentive to the

Continued on page 33

Editors' Note: Changes in Organized Labor

In this issue we address two significant events that occurred in the class struggle in the United States since our last publication — the election of a new leadership in the AFL-CIO; and the Million Man March.

On the AFL-CIO convention, we feature an article by Frank Lovell, which highlights the increased willingness of unionists to fight back against the employers' unending attacks. And we carry related articles by Charles Walker on fightback developments in the Teamsters union. Also, a pro-labor party document from the Industrial Union Council of New Jersey, and a statement issued by the Labor/Community/Religious Coalition in Support of the Striking Newspaper Workers in Detroit.

There are many indications of the changing mood of organized labor. As we go to press, we receive word that the striking Boeing workers in the state of Washington

voted 62 percent strong to reject a proposed settlement that did not deal adequately with the main issue in the strike — job security. We hope to have more on that struggle in our next issue. We also hope to carry more information on the endorsement of Labor Party Advocates by a rail union local in the Seattle area, as well as other news on LPA.

Million Man March

On the Million Man March, we include reportage and commentary from Don Rojas, Salim Muwakkil, Jean Tussey, and Joe Auciello. We also refer readers to the informative and enlightening reports by Shafeah M'Balia, a Black woman worker and leader of Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ), who attended the march in spite of her indignation that Black women were not invited, and

Continued on page 11

No Choice for Working Class Voters in Russia

by Aleksei Gusev

Aleksei Gusev, based in Moscow, is one of the international coordinators of the Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy. He is a member of Sotsialisticheskii Rabochii Soyuz (Socialist Workers Union). We thank Simon Pirani of the Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain for this English translation, which has been edited slightly for reasons of style or clarification.

One fine day in August, investors cheated by one of Moscow's commercial banks held their regular demonstration in the city. Two years ago these people had put their money into the Favorit Bank in good faith. They had been promised a high rate of return — and been left with nothing. “Boiko, give us our money back,” they shouted. Their placards carried the same message.

They know now that in 1993, their money was used by Oleg Boiko, prominent financier, owner of the National Credit Bank and founder of Favorit, to finance the election campaign of Russia's Choice [the party led by Yegor Gaidar, former prime minister and champion of economic “shock therapy”], of which Boiko was the national chairman.

Today, Boiko is thinking not about how to repay the cheated investors, but about how to make new and profitable investments of his own in politics. He has parted company with Gaidar, swapping his party's declining fortunes for the brighter vistas offered by Our Home Is Russia, the bloc led by prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin. And who will foot the bill this time?

It's full speed ahead as we all prepare for the elections to the National Duma, Russia's parliament.

“Party of Power” and “Opposition”

The political scene is livening up as polling day, December 17, approaches. Blocs and coalitions are being formed, lists of candidates being registered, and electioneering begun. Bourgeois-bureaucratic clans of various colors have started the battle for seats. The main fight is expected between the two main sections of the ruling class, which we may conditionally call the “party of power” and the “opposition.”

The “party of power” is represented firstly by Our Home Is Russia. Its social base is that part of the former bureaucracy which is fully satisfied with the status quo, resulting from procapitalist reform and privatization. It brings together the heads of the large corporations, banks, and financial groups, and everyone knows it was founded to serve their interests. Its nickname is Our Home Is Gazprom, because of Chernomyrdin's close links with that giant among energy industry combines. [In Soviet times, Chernomyrdin for many years headed Gazprom, the state conglomerate which owns most of Russia's vast natural gas reserves.]

Nearly all the government ministers and heads of local administration belong to the Our Home Is Russia bloc. Its organizational structure corresponds to its base in the nomenklatura [the top-ranking bureaucrats of the former Communist Party regime]. So striking is its similarity to the old Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) that even the progovernment newspaper *Izvestia* referred to it.

“Nearly all the party [i.e. ex-CPSU] activists in the local economy belong to Our Home Is Russia,” said an article about Our Home Is Russia's organization in the Ulyanovsk region. “Among the bloc's activists are all the [former] district first secretaries of the CPSU. The former CPSU branch officials are well known as propagandists and agitators.” *Izvestia* concluded: “It seems that the CPSU regional organization has just been renamed Our Home Is Russia.”

Yeltsin Backs Chernomyrdin

The other strength of Chernomyrdin's bloc is the support it receives from President Yeltsin. It is well known that the prime minister founded the bloc in line with the president's wish for a “center-right coalition.”

True, the original plan devised by Yeltsin's advisers was to create at the same time an equivalent “center-left coalition” and establish something similar to the American two-party system. In June, Yeltsin himself went on TV to explain all this, designating as head of the “left centrists” the Duma speaker, Ivan Rybkin. The joke was that, since the whole thing was artificial, the members of the political establishment could not agree between themselves who was “right” and who was “left.”

In the end, Yeltsin's plan was not fully realized: Rybkin's bloc, Our Fatherland, having set out to unite all “constructive critics” of the government, proved to be a nine-day wonder. The government's “moderate opponents” decided that Our Fatherland's antagonistic image did not sit nicely with the fulfillment of the president's plans. [According to newspaper reports, shortly after the bloc's foundation, two leaders, Boris Gromov and Stanislav Shatalin, quit.]

This is how Our Home Is Russia became the main voice for the pro-Yeltsin faction of the ruling class. What is its ideology and program? Chernomyrdin is distinguished from his predecessor, Gaidar, by his attachment not simply to economic liberalism but to “state social-liberalism” — i.e., an emphasis on the role of the

state in the economy and a “social orientation” in politics.

To Stimulate Russian National Capital

The prime minister himself explained at a congress of the bloc the layers of society to which it would be oriented: the first step, he declared, was to stimulate the accumulation of Russian national capital. Reliance on the national capitalist and the national bureaucrat, continuation of pro-market reform “without excessive radicalism,” guaranteeing supremacy in the economy for the huge state-owned and privately-owned monopolies — that is the essence of Chernomyrdin's program.

The emergence of Our Home Is Russia is quite natural. The era of Gaidarism [i.e., “shock therapy”], with its passion for destroying the “administrative-command” system and its orientation toward a demonopolized “free market,” à la Adam Smith, has gone. The utopian attempt to implant “pure” private capitalism in Russia has collapsed. In fact that was not the aim of the nomenklatura's so-called market reforms: the real question for them was to modify and modernize the form of the bureaucracy's social-economic rule and redivide the property. Today, the stage at which this was the business of the day is practically over — and, once again, they talk about the “accumulation of capital” with active assistance from the state.

As we will see below, this aim figures in the program not only of Our Home Is Russia but of the great majority of electoral parties and blocs.

Decline of Gaidar's Party

A symptom of this trend is the decline of Gaidar's party, Russia's Choice. If during the last election campaign it was considered the favorite, today it would be hard to find a commentator to predict that it will get more than 5 percent of the vote, the minimum needed to win Duma seats. Gaidar has become unpopular. He is associated in the ordinary voter's mind with the painful consequences of “shock therapy.” His former sponsors, like the above-mentioned Boiko, have deserted him.

The most that is left for Gaidar is to complain that he was not allowed to finish what he had started with “shock therapy,” and to criticize the Russian model of “robber-nomenklatura capitalism.” Gaidar even cites Trotsky's book *Revolution Betrayed* (!) with its prediction that

Second Trotsky Conference to be Held in Russia

The second conference on Leon Trotsky will be held in St. Petersburg, Russia, December 3–5, 1995. It is being organized by the Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy in conjunction with the Economics Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the History Department of St. Petersburg University, and Scholars for Democracy and Socialism. The Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy was founded at the first conference on Leon Trotsky, held in Moscow in November 1994.

The 1995 conference will commemorate the 90th anniversary of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' Deputies, of which Trotsky was the guiding spirit and a key political leader. Established on October 13, 1905, as a product of massive worker rebellions, this council of workers' delegates survived for 50 days before it was crushed by the tsar's military forces. As an institution of workers' power and embryonic form of workers' gov-

ernment, it serves as a model no less today than it did as the century opened.

The theme of the conference is "The Fate of Soviet Democracy" in Russia. The possibilities today for the revival of such councils of workers' rule will be considered, with a special focus on Trotsky's enormous contributions. (See back cover for more information.)

In addition to the conference deliberations, the organizers have planned on the last day of the conference a tour of historic sites associated with the St. Petersburg Soviet.

A partial list of the committee's sponsors appears on the back cover of this issue of *BIDOM*. The Committee is in the process of raising funds for its projects, which include the publication in Russian of the reports to the November 1994 conference on Trotsky. The Committee's Moscow supporters say that this collection will be the first such positive account about Trotsky published in Russia since the 1920s.

The Committee is also planning to translate into Russian the two volumes from the famous Dewey Commission held in Mexico in April 1937 in the aftermath of the first two of the monstrous Moscow show trials. These two historic volumes, *The Case of Leon Trotsky* and *Not Guilty* have never been available to Russian readers. In addition, the Committee will publish other works by Trotsky in their Russian original, such as his *History of the Russian Revolution*.

Scholars for Democracy and Socialism will be sponsoring a scientific conference on the subject of "Problems of Democratic Production," which will be held in St. Petersburg Friday–Monday, December 1–3. These two events have been planned in such a way that those who wish to can attend both. For more information about this conference, contact Alexander Buzgalin at e-mail address: dhr@glas.apc.org

— Marilyn Vogt-Downey

elements of the former bureaucracy would gain most from the restoration of private property.

The only trump card left in Gaidar's pack is the human rights campaigner Sergei Kovalyov, who is on the Democratic Russia's Choice federal list of candidates. Kovalyov's outstanding condemnation of Russian imperialist aggression against Chechnya evoked widespread sympathy (although as a party, Democratic Russia's Choice had an ambiguous attitude, refusing to openly denounce Yeltsin on the issue.)

The Yavlinsky Bloc and Forward Russia

For voters who accept the general direction of Yeltsin's policy, but are put off by Gaidar's tarnished reputation and find Our Home Is Russia's image too elite and bureaucratic, there are other electoral alliances occupying political niches somewhere between Gaidar and Chernomyrdin. The two worth mentioning are the Yabloko bloc led by Grigory Yavlinsky and Vladimir Lukin, and Boris Fyodorov's Forward Russia movement.

The Yavlinsky bloc leans on the support of the middle layers of entrepreneurs, parts of the intelligentsia and state officialdom, and some financial groups, the most important of which is a company named Most [meaning "Bridge"]. Sympathetic sections of the mass media do their best to create the impression that Yavlinsky — once [under Gorbachev] the author of a plan to take Russia to "civilized capitalism" in 500 days — has a unique new program to lead the economy out of crisis. Of course nobody has yet seen this sensational program.

In Yavlinsky's own statements there is nothing new or unique, just the old clichés about "gradual reform," etc.

As for Fyodorov, it can be seen from Forward Russia's name that he aspires to the role of a Russian Berlusconi. His electoral demagoguery is

closely related to Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's, and he has even been called the "democratic Zhirinovskiy." Forward Russia promises to almost immediately eliminate inflation, to stop price increases, to destroy the highest bureaucrats' privileges and to eradicate crime.

Fyodorov, who was formerly identified as a dedicated "free market" monetarist, is deliberately trying to distance himself from Gaidar [whose finance minister he was at the time of "shock therapy"] by constantly emphasizing his movement's "patriotism." Not by chance was he one of the foremost supporters of Yeltsin's invasion of Chechnya.

Strength of Regional Elites

These are the main parties of that part of the bourgeois-bureaucratic class which has already, in general, resolved its "social problem." But it must be borne in mind that only half the Duma deputies are elected from the party lists, while the other half represent territorial constituencies. And here there operates another powerful fraction of the "party of power" — the representatives of the regional elites.

There is no question that these forces, resting on the local financial-industrial and bureaucratic circles, are serious competition for all parties and blocs. The August election of the governor of Yekaterinburg district bore witness to their strength: Aleksei Strakhov, a protégé of Our Home Is Russia, was defeated by Edward Rossel of the Urals Reborn movement.

Biggest "Opposition" Group — the CPRF

Among opponents of the "party of power," first place belongs to the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) led by Gennady Zyuganov. Its social base is that part of the former bureaucracy which considers itself to have been more or less left out of the reform of

the social-economic system: that is, significant sections of the military-industrial complex's management, of the military caste itself, and of middle- and lower-level managers in the economy.

This section of the ruling class is fighting with all its might for a redivision of power and property in its own favor. To this end, the CPRF hopes to secure majority support by claiming to defend the interests of everyone: the "ordinary workers" and managers, the intelligentsia and small tradespeople, the unemployed, and even the "new Russians" (who, according to Zyuganov, are suffering from having "nowhere to invest their money"). Zyuganov's party claims to be uniting "the whole nation" under the banner of patriotism, statehood, and "justice."

Analysis of the CPRF's theory and politics shows, unambiguously, not only that it is not "Communist" (even in words) but also that it can not in general be considered part of the left. The cult of a mighty state or "great power"; the counterposition of the "unity of the nation" to the class struggle, as though the latter was invented by some especially greedy sections of the bourgeoisie; the slogan of "mixed forms of ownership" — all these are the typical bill of fare of right-wing political forces.

Taking into account the labels it uses, Zyuganov's "Communism" can be seen as aspiring not only to new methods of social-economic rule by the bureaucracy but also to tried and true methods from before perestroika. On the other hand, this "Communism" aims at attracting those voters who, facing poverty and unemployment, have come to the conclusion that "things can't get any worse" and are even ready to agree to a partial return to the past under the "Communists."

CPRF's Theoretical Salad

Zyuganov's "theoretical" work is a magical
Continued on page 34

Discussion on the Million Man March

“We Need a Mass Political Movement to Challenge the Power Structure”

Interview with Don Rojas

Don Rojas was minister of information for Grenada's revolutionary government under Maurice Bishop until the U.S. invasion in 1983. For a number of years after that, he was editor of Harlem's *Amsterdam News*, and in 1993-94, under Rev. Ben Chavis, was director of communications for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). He is currently writing a book on the crisis of Black leadership, which will be published next year by Times books.

This interview, a shorter version of which appeared in *International Viewpoint*, monthly publication of the Fourth International, was conducted by Steve Bloom, October 25, 1995, for *Independent Politics*, bimonthly publication of the U.S. socialist organization Solidarity.

Question: You attended the Million Man March in Washington, D.C., on October 16, initiated by Louis Farrakhan. The march was controversial both in the Black movement and among a broader layer of left activists. What was your general attitude before the march? Why did you decide to participate?

Answer: I thought it was important for progressives and people on the left generally, and certainly people of color on the left, to participate in this march from the position of critical support. I had articulated this stand about a week before the march in a public forum at Columbia University and again in an article that appeared in the *Daily Challenge*, a New York Black newspaper, on the day of the march itself.

I thought it was important for the left not to be left out, not to be marginalized by what clearly was going to be a huge mobilization of African Americans — most perhaps from the ranks of working class Black males, and a lot of young Black males as well. All the indications leading up to the march, and certainly within the last two weeks before October 16, pointed toward a huge turnout. So in spite of the serious problems that I had with the lack of political direction, and with the overall orientation of the march — the emphasis on atonement and reconciliation — I became convinced at least a week before that large numbers of men would be showing up for a number of reasons, not necessarily in synch with the call by Farrakhan and Chavis.

I also had a lot of problems with the exclusion of women from the march. I thought that was just another manifestation of the Nation of Islam's backward patriarchy. They have not really advanced very much on the women question and on the whole range of other questions that are critical to those of us on the left.

In spite of that, however, I did go. To explain why, I will quote excerpts from my article that appeared on the day of the March:

I intend to march in Washington to make one simple statement to the world — the cancer of racism is eating away at the heart and soul of

America, thus depriving all its people, of all colors, the fullest realization of their humanity.

I will not be marching to the drumbeat of Louis Farrakhan or Benjamin Chavis or any of the other leaders and organizers of this march but rather to the clarion call of my conscience and to the imperatives of our time. They have their agenda and I have mine. Some aspects of both overlap but they are by no means identical.

Many friends and colleagues will also be marching, not to atone for our sins, as Farrakhan wants us to do before the world, but instead to call attention to America's greatest sin — racism. We will be marching to protest the hemorrhaging of Black America not only by its own hands but more severely by those with their hands on the levers of real political and economic power in this country. We will be marching to demand — yes demand, not beg — for jobs with decent pay for all Black Americans, male and female. We make this paramount because without honest work a man has little or no dignity and self-respect. Jobs are among the most important debts America owes to the sons and daughters of its former slaves.

Yet the march has been so depoliticized by Farrakhan's emphasis on atonement that it is being perceived by the power brokers as posing little or no threat to America's status quo. Major establishment figures from President Clinton to Colin Powell, to the leadership of the Republican Party have embraced the “objectives” of the march, if not its caller.

Q: What was the actual composition of the crowd? Some women did attend. What was the response to this?

A: The crowd was, probably, a majority of working-class males. A good number of middle-class men were also there.

There was a sprinkling of women. The women were welcomed. There was no hostility that I observed toward the women by any of the men. I also saw a handful of whites in the audience and here too there was no hostility.

Let me say again that I vehemently opposed the exclusion of women and I think that was one of the most reactionary aspects of the march. Let me quote one more time from my article:

No one who shares these concerns should be excluded or should exclude themselves from

this march. Indeed, Black men should encourage their wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters to absent themselves from their jobs, schools, and shopping malls and present themselves in Washington to stand with their men in a forceful demonstration of Black unity and solidarity in these critical times. Now is not the time for Black women to stay at home and pray on Farrakhan's anointed “Holy Day.”

Q: What attitude did Black women activists take?

A: They were pretty much split down the middle on this question of whether or not they should support the march. Angela Davis, the most prominent opponent of the march among Black female activists, came out at a press conference in New York and very strongly denounced it. She got support from several Black feminists around the country.

But there were other prominent and not so prominent Black women, certainly some I know in the New York-Baltimore-Washington, D.C., area, and I would think across the country as well, who did express critical support for the march. Some of them actively participated in organizational work leading up to it. So there was no consensus among Black female activists on this.

Q: You have mentioned your objection to the main themes of the march — atonement and personal responsibility of Black men for changing conditions in the community. Do you think this was the main reason people turned out? How prominent were these messages in the speeches, banners, etc? What other ideas were expressed? What messages resonated most deeply with the crowd?

A: No, I do not think that the ideas expressed by Farrakhan were the main reasons that people turned out. I think they came for different reasons. Many came to protest to the government the terrible plight of Black males. Some did come, in fact, to seek bonding and a sense of community and brotherhood with other African American men from around the country. I could

Continued on page 25

Learning from the Million Man March

by Jean Tussey

The Million Man March in Washington, D.C., on October 16 was a powerful demonstration of independent Black working class community self-organization on an inclusive, nonsectarian, united front basis.

The marchers were able to withstand the divisive pressures of the ruling capitalist class and all its institutions and agents, including those within the working class and Black community. Grass roots activists and national organizers generally ignored the quibbling over numbers, leaders, "message and messenger." They mobilized one of the largest — if not *the* largest — mass demonstrations for social change ever held in the national capital.

The Million Man March combined self-confidence and consciousness-raising mass mobilization with personal, one-on-one bonding and discussions (like those of the women's movement of the 1960s and '70s, which were not considered divisive by any but sideline, self-serving sectarians or privileged males and females who felt threatened by equality).

The march set in motion new regroupments of forces to organize and strategize for action around democratic and transitional demands to deal with the burning problems of Black working class communities. And it provided important lessons at a crucial juncture in the struggles of other minority and working class communities, in the labor movement, among advocates of independent working class political action, in the women's movement, and in the disorganized socialist left.

"A Working Class March"

"There were over a million people. It was overwhelmingly, clearly a working class march," said Saladin Muhammad, an experienced organizer and thoughtful analyst interviewed the week after the march.

"Young workers. A quarter to half a million didn't go to work on Monday, October 16. This was one of the largest 'stayaways' ever. Different from the labor solidarity marches of the AFL-CIO, this one was called on a workday. Philadelphia had to cut the bus system down. At least 200 African American bus drivers took off. Also Baltimore. Public workers showed how strong African Americans are in the public and service sectors."

[It was reported that Hartford, Connecticut, among other cities, closed its school system for the day. In Washington, D.C., itself business as usual came to a halt, including in the Senate and House.]

"There were high level political discussions among the participants — not from the speakers' platform — about police, about affirmative action...about what to do when we got back home. We exchanged addresses, phone numbers, etc."



Cleveland participants in the Million Man March

Currently a union organizer in Baltimore and a writer for *Justice Speaks*, monthly publication of Black Workers for Justice, Saladin's experience goes back to the movements led by Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

Black Community Not Dead

Traveling by train from Baltimore, Saladin arrived in Washington at 5:45 a.m. He saw the "powerful sight of a converging mass." This was a "refutation of the view of some that the Black community was too decayed to be mobilized, that the Black community was dead, an open sewer. It ain't true!"

Some said, "I couldn't make it to the March on Washington [with Martin Luther King]," or "I was too young," or "I wasn't active in the '60s, but I want to be a part of this...a once-in-a-lifetime activity."

"They came with children," Saladin continued. A woman with two boys, seven and nine, said: "My two boys — they're going to be in this march. Their father's not here, but I'm going to bring them."

At the mall a brother from Atlanta told of a scene at the train station in D.C. "A drunk came over and said, 'I know I'm drunk, but can you tell me how to get to this Million Man March? I got to be there.' — It was a new lease on life."

"When they called from the stand for all men to reach out to each other, to shake hands, to apologize to each other...everybody embraced!"

Strengths and Weaknesses

"If only there had been a call to action...[for example,] to go back and organize unions, a focus on demands," Saladin said. "But that was the weakness, the focus was diffused...Another weakness, women not included."

"The call for unity was extremely important, and the consciousness of the need for leadership

and a united front. Even Farrakhan was affected by the struggle, despite cultural and nationalist weakness. And others on the platform...talked of registering Black voters as independents, of a Black united front."

"We need a united front on the ground. There are sisters linking up Black caucuses in the SEIU [Service Employees International Union]. AFSCME [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees] sponsored buses for the march. The building of Black caucuses has accelerated; there are more workers of color in unions. A Black Workers Unity meeting will be held in Washington, D.C., on November 11, including workers from Baltimore, Philadelphia, North Carolina" and elsewhere. Also the question of how to strengthen Black majority voting districts is being discussed.

Back Home in Cleveland

While they were marching in Washington, a Unity March was organized by Black student groups from Cleveland State and Case Western Reserve universities. Black United Students held a teach-in at Kent State University. And "the Cleveland City Council canceled its regular Monday night meeting at the last minute, when it became clear that no Black members would attend" (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, October 17).

The most significant event was a meeting of about 200 march participants, held in Cleveland only three nights after the march, to organize the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Million Man March "to start working on healing and rebuilding our community."

The local African American weekly *Call and Post* (October 26) reported that the organizations represented at the initial meeting "who are, or expressed interested in being, members

Continued on page 29

Voice of an Oppressed Nation

by Joe Auciello

In 1968, striking Black sanitation workers in Memphis, Tennessee, supported by Martin Luther King (who was assassinated while supporting their strike), marched with signs proclaiming a simple message: "I Am a Man." The Million Man March in Washington on October 16 made the same declaration, this time on a mass scale. In a racist society that affords Black men little opportunity for self-assertion, a society that downgrades and devalues their existence in thousands of ways, a strong statement of self-respect is a powerful political act. When that statement is affirmed by hundreds of thousands, then it is the voice of an oppressed nation speaking powerfully in protest against its oppression.

Although the March was organized as a "holy day of atonement," participants attended for a variety of reasons. Those who joined the March, bringing their own concerns, in part redefined the program of the March. On October 16 the *Boston Globe* reported a supporter as saying: "The reason I'm going is to be in solidarity with black people...I think the march in one respect will help the community learn the meaning of togetherness and to learn to stand together." Similar statements could be cited from newspapers around the country and heard in interviews with those who attended. Within the Black community, the March became a referendum on Black men.

The question was starkly posed: For or Against? Yes or No? Participants in the March and their supporters answered with a resounding "Yes." Without fully understanding the question, perhaps without hearing it, *The Militant*, newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party, answered "No."

In a front-page article entitled, "'Million Man March' leaders offer no way forward," published in the October 9 issue of *The Militant*, Sam Manuel and Greg Rosenberg criticize the march for having an inadequate program that emphasizes personal development instead of social demands on the federal government, for attracting favorable attention from conservatives (even the fascist LaRouche organization), and for building the Nation of Islam itself.

The views of *The Militant* are of course not that important, but they point up the difficulty of understanding the complex phenomenon of Black nationalism and the struggle for Black self-determination in the United States, even by those who claim to be Marxists and supporters of Malcolm X.

March Defies Standard Categories

In fact, the March has rescrumbled the political spectrum. It has been supported and criticized by various conservatives, liberals, and radicals. On the day of the march, National Public Radio journalist Cokie Roberts, proclaimed: "This is an anti-Semitic march by virtue of its leadership" — a typical instance of nonobjective reporting by the media. Representative Gary Franks, a Black Republican from Connecticut, held a press conference to denounce the March and liken the Nation of Islam to the Ku Klux Klan. (President Bill Clinton and Colin Powell both equated Louis Farrakhan, the caller of the March, to Mark Fuhman, the Los Angeles policeman whose white racist outlook and practices became known to an audience of millions through the highly publicized O.J. Simpson trial.) Former Communist Party leader Angela Davis, after a 20-year absence, returned to the front page of the *New York Times* as part of a press conference held to condemn the March for its "sexist vision." The left-liberal *Nation* magazine has run a number of articles critical of the March.

At the same time the March found supporters across the political spectrum. A variety of capitalist politicians endorsed the March, as did civil rights leaders like Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (formerly headed by Martin Luther King). Potential presidential candidate Jesse Jackson was a significant supporter, as was democratic socialist Cornel West, who spoke out for the March and wrote favorably about it in the same issue of the *New York Times* that featured Angela Davis on the front page opposing it.

With some exceptions the socialist left missed the March entirely, and did not write about it prior to the event. Over the past year, the *Bulletin in Defense of Marxism* repeatedly linked the potential of the March with the Qubilah Shabazz case (the U.S. government's attempt to intensify divisions in the Black community between Farrakhan's Nation of Islam and the family and supporters of Malcolm X). The May-June issue of *BIDOM* urged support for the March, although criticisms were made. *Socialist Action*, in its October issue, printed a generally favorable article, also raising criticisms while encouraging participation.

One-Sided Criticism of a Contradictory Phenomenon

The Socialist Workers Party and the Spartacist League were both hostile to the March, and both attacked it for the same reasons. The only dif-

ference between the two was the tone of their polemic. Their common position was developed more fully and stated more bluntly by the Spartacists, while the SWP was more cautious in its language. Where *The Militant* of October 9 argued: "Farrakhan's political and religious demagoguery in promoting the action echoes many of the same reactionary themes often used by capitalist politicians to justify attacks on the working class — particularly immigrants, oppressed nationalities, and women," the Spartacists wrote: "To hell with atonement!...This march was a reactionary appeasement of the capitalist rulers...This is a poisonous reactionary mobilization...the march was not only built by Farrakhan but also built his authority as the pre-eminent black leader in Clinton/Gingrich's America. And that's not accidental, for his message is not that different from theirs" (*Workers Vanguard*, October 20, 1995).

Denunciatory rhetoric is more characteristic of the Spartacist League than of the SWP, and it is best left to the Spartacists, who are more experienced in such matters. But tone aside, both organizations fail to understand the significance of the March and the role in it of the Nation of Islam. In place of comprehension they offer left-wing rhetoric which, at bottom, is nothing more than sideline criticism.

For socialists to isolate themselves from the supporters of the March because of its programmatic flaws is narrow-minded folly. Sideline critics serve neither themselves nor those who are marching past them.

The Nation of Islam ought not to be condemned as reactionary, but neither is it a liberal or a progressive movement; it involves elements of both. It is best understood as a contradictory phenomenon. Sectarians will not understand this assessment; they will seek instead, in Trotsky's words, to "simplify reality."

Potential for Independent Black Political Action

The attempt to register the millions of unregistered African Americans as independent voters (an important aspect of the March) is a positive development. Urging those who do vote to re-register as independents is part of that effort. If Blacks were to leave the Democratic and Republican parties and organize as a common bloc, it would be a significant event. That process could set in motion a radical dynamic that could go beyond the present intentions of the current leadership. Clearly, Ron Daniels and others are hoping that these measures will help lead to an independent Black-led political party.

Favorable Report on March in *In These Times*

An interesting description of the Million Man March, and a discussion of the question of leadership in the Black community, was written by Salim Muwakkil (*In These Times*, October 30, 1995, pp. 15–18).

“Fraternity was the reigning spirit [at the march], and warm embraces were the preferred greeting,” Muwakkil reports, adding:

The gathering spanned every conceivable spectrum — class, color, religion, political ideology, gang affiliation, even gender. A large number of black women decided to join the march, and there were occasional white faces as well. In an event intended for black men, these self-defined outsiders were treated with respect and, according to one white participant, even some deference.

Discussing why people came to the march, Muwakkil reports that many participants “attributed the large turnout and strong spirit to the extreme dimensions of the crisis confronting black America.” The “fire-on-the-block” metaphor, says Muwakkil, was a common theme. “The black community is on fire,” one of the marcher’s told him, and what people care about is putting it out. If they feel someone is addressing that problem, they will support him. Muwakkil continues:

Indeed, the black community feels a sense of urgency to which mainstream America

seems impervious. While research data detail a black world on the verge of cataclysm, Republican leaders are gleefully shredding the social safety net.

(Omitted here by Muwakkil, or by the editors of *In These Times*, is the fact that capitalist politicians across the board, Democrats as well as Republicans, are “shredding the safety net” — or going along with it.)

For Men in the Black Ghetto: Lower Life Expectancy Than Bangladesh

Muwakkil refers to “the litany of negative statistics that outline black men’s peril; in every index, from cradle to grave, they are ranked lowest. African-American men are the only U.S. demographic group that can expect to live shorter lives in 1994 than they did in 1980. In fact, an oft-cited study by physicians at New York’s Harlem Hospital found that black men in today’s Harlem are less likely to live to age 65 than men in Bangladesh.”

Muwakkil indicates that this was not a conservative or reactionary crowd, as some sectarians have claimed. “Throughout the long day, chants denouncing Gingrich, [Clarence] Thomas, Sen. Jesse Helms..., Rush Limbaugh and...LAPD Detective Mark Fuhrman occasionally rolled across the huge

crowd. But by far the most popular crowd chant was ‘We Want Farrakhan!’”

On this point Muwakkil makes an astute observation: “Farrakhan speaks like no other leader to the rage of a generation of black men that feels abandoned by the inadequate integrationist agenda of the civil rights movement.”

Muwakkil concludes:

In some ways, the march signaled the possible emergence of a new, post-civil rights leadership.

He points to the stress placed by march organizers, particularly by former NAACP director Rev. Benjamin Chavis, on “operational unity” among all elements in the Black community. Citing the record of the FBI in exacerbating disputes between W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey in the 1920s, and between Nation of Islam leaders and Malcolm X in 1964–65, Muwakkil reports:

Chavis and other march organizers are determined to prevent [such] hostile divisions from once again disrupting the black movement.

Muwakkil suggests that these attitudes are shared by “black activists with impeccable progressive credentials” — among whom he names Ron Daniels, Manning Marable, Cornel West, and Ron Dellums.

— George Saunders

A national conference is planned in November to set a national Black agenda which has the potential to establish goals for fundamental social change. Such goals are consistent with the revolutionary socialist concept of transitional demands, demands which seem reasonable to the masses at their present level of consciousness but which, if consistently pursued, lead them to actions objectively undermining the existing capitalist system and pointing toward socialist measures.

Louis Farrakhan is right to say, as he did at numerous rallies preceding the March, that America must atone for its sins against its Black citizens. This is political and social criticism couched in religious language that is unfamiliar and perhaps disquieting to the socialist left. The answer, then, is that socialists must study the language spoken by the oppressed to learn from them and to make our own voices heard and our influence felt.

If the SWP is correct that the March was only an echo of “reactionary themes” not worthy of support, then questions must be raised about the 800,000 or more who, at the current estimate by the mass media, are said to have attended. (March organizers claim a turnout of more than a million.) What does the enormous size of the March reveal about the consciousness of Black America? Farrakhan is a demagogue, says the SWP — as if that charge explains anything. There are other Black conservatives and no lack of demagogues. What is the appeal of this man at this time? If hundreds of thousands are drawn

to a “reactionary demonstration,” attracted by “religious demagoguery,” then Blacks must have made a significant shift to the right and are becoming, if they have not already become, a conservative force. It is difficult to find evidence to substantiate this view.

Black men did not attend this March because they aspired to become capitalists or because they wanted to oppress women. They were not there to attack immigrants or the working class. The March did not focus on white people or on integration into white society. The marchers did not ask for acceptance or approval by whites. They looked to forge unity among themselves. Black men pursuing their own unity is legitimate and significant in its own right — a healthy assertion of self and self-respect.

A Collective Demand for Rights and Equality

There does, in real life, exist room and opportunity for self-improvement. A man can change, “do for self,” and set better goals. To place the potential for change in the hands of individuals strengthens self-confidence and can lead to beneficial results.

But such an approach is not an adequate strategy on a mass scale (facing the problems of capitalist society in a period of long-term economic downturn), and it will not lead to sustainable long-term solutions. To “do for self” instills pride because it means no longer begging the white power structure for handouts. It can also mean gathering together to demand

rights and equality. This is the course that is currently under consideration by March organizers and supporters.

White Supremacist Ideas and Practices Must Go

Although much about the March was positive, a number of criticisms ought to be raised. In many ways, Farrakhan’s speech at the March was a disappointment, not only because he has spoken more powerfully on other occasions. The weakness was primarily in the content of his speech. In his response to President Clinton’s mush-mouthed platitudes delivered earlier in the day, Farrakhan rightly stated that to find a solution for the racial divide in America, one has to probe deeply to the root of the problem. Farrakhan was also right to say, “White supremacy has to die in order for humanity to live.” But the obscurantist religious and numerical aspects of his speech cannot substitute for a dialectical materialist analysis that explains the causes of Black exploitation and oppression in America’s past and present. What led to the rise of white supremacy, what sustains it, and finally how will it be overcome? (The pamphlet by George Breitman entitled *Race Prejudice: When It Began, When It Will End* is a good place to start in studying these questions.)

The Nation of Islam, at best, offers only a partial answer. Here Marxists have much to

Continued on page 35

Mumia Update: The Response the "Pittsburgh Post-Gazette" Wouldn't Print

by Jamila Levi

Stating that, "we've had a lot on that topic already," the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* refused to print the following article, submitted by Jamila Levi, coordinator, Western Pennsylvania Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal and paralegal to attorney Leonard Weinglass.

On September 16, Judge Albert Sabo denied a new trial, writing, "[this court] finds that petitioner fails to prove by a preponderance of evidence each and every claim presented..." Attorneys are appealing to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court. For more information call the Mumia hot line: (412) 361-2889.

This writer spent the summer in Judge Sabo's courtroom for post-conviction relief appeal hearings in the case of *Commonwealth v. Mumia Abu-Jamal*, coming home to find that the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* had reprinted [from the *New York Times*] Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne Abraham's "Mumia Abu-Jamal, Celebrity Cop Killer." Ms. Abraham charges that "four bogus theories ignore the hard evidence." In the interests of truth and justice, the Western Pennsylvania Committee to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal requests that [the following] response be printed in its entirety.

The Fleeing Stranger Theory

Ms. Abraham asserts that "the defense only recently presented testimony" from several witnesses who saw the shooter escape. What she failed to address is why these witnesses weren't heard at the time of the trial. Although the police began interviewing witnesses immediately after the shooting, the defense was not provided with an investigator for two months, and when the district attorney (D.A.) provided names of the witnesses, the phone numbers and addresses were purposely deleted. That was why the D.A. interviewed at least 125 witnesses and the defendant's investigator talked to only two — those whose addresses were inadvertently left on the list.

Testimony this summer revealed a pattern of police intimidation and suppression of evidence — additional witnesses taken into custody, subjected to gunpowder residue tests and a lineup; a polygraph test that the prosecution denied administering; police repeatedly tearing up handwritten statements from an eyewitness and coercing the man to sign a false typewritten statement; threats to family members; police harassment that destroyed one witness's business and sent him fleeing Philadelphia.

The .44 Caliber Bullet Theory

Ms. Abraham fails to mention the bullet fragment removed from Officer Faulkner. This fragment, noted on the preliminary autopsy report, mysteriously disappeared when the police ballistics lab report was made. The missing fragment challenges the D.A.'s assertion that the fatal bullet was a .38. This summer, the highly qualified ballistics expert George Fashnacht testified that police failed to perform key ballistics tests, including the most basic. Or were the tests performed and results suppressed? The defense had neither a ballistics expert nor a forensic pathologist at the time of trial in 1982,

as the meager funds grudgingly provided by the court were not enough to obtain the services of expert witnesses.

The Incompetent Counsel and Unfair Jury Theory

Ms. Abraham refers to court-appointed defense attorney Anthony Jackson as an "experienced former prosecutor." Mr. Jackson testified this summer that he was employed as an Assistant D.A. for a mere six months. Jackson did not prepare for the penalty phase of the trial, formulating no strategy and calling no witnesses. Furthermore, Ms. Abraham fails to note that the defendant clearly and repeatedly stated he wanted to represent himself and did not want Mr. Jackson to be his lawyer. Mr. Jackson himself requested to be removed from the case, and was ordered to continue against his own and his client's wishes.

Ms. Abraham states: "The jury was composed of blacks and whites chosen with Mr. Abu-Jamal's personal participation." She neglects to mention that 11 potential black jurors were rejected by peremptory challenges from the prosecution, solely because of their race, a practice that was subsequently outlawed by the U.S. Supreme Court (*Batson v. Kentucky*). (Prosecutor McGill pared the number down to eight in a false affidavit filed in response to Jamal's 1989 appeal.) Jamal was convicted by a jury of ten whites and two blacks, in a city where blacks made up approximately 40 percent of the population at the time. The defendant was barred from the courtroom during jury selection, only "personally participating" in the selection of one juror. That juror was later removed by Judge Sabo and replaced by an elderly white man who said he couldn't be impartial! During hearings this summer, Sabo quashed subpoenas of witnesses whose testimony would have amounted to a constitutional challenge of racial disparity in death sentencing.

The Conspiracy Theory

Ms. Abraham dismisses the conspiracy theory as "ludicrous," as if the City of Philadelphia has no history of police corruption and the U.S. government never had a counterintelligence program aimed at the Black Panther Party and other revolutionary groups. When you consider the 39th District police corruption scandal, the front-page headline story in the August 12, 1995, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, it is Ms. Abraham's argument that seems ludicrous.

Consider the case of Matthew Connor, who was wrongfully convicted of a 1978 rape and murder and spent twelve years in prison before proving his innocence. The prosecutor? The same D.A. Joseph McGill who prosecuted the case of *Commonwealth v. Mumia Abu-Jamal*. The judge? The one and only Albert F. Sabo. Connor was released after evidence clearly showed a deliberate cover-up involving fabrication of testimony and suppression of evidence to secure his conviction (*Matthew Connor v. City of Philadelphia, Michael Chitwood, Joseph McGill, Esq. et al.*).

This summer, Judge Sabo refused to allow defense attorneys to enter 800 pages of FBI documents into the record, or to allow the testimony of Ward Churchill, author of *The Cointelpro Papers and Agents of Repression: The FBI's Secret Wars Against the Black Panther Party and American Indian Movement*. It took defense attorneys three years to obtain FBI files which show that Mumia Abu-Jamal was targeted by the U.S. government since age 14, when he helped found the Philadelphia chapter of the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. The city denies the existence of Philadelphia Police Department files that would undoubtedly show a pattern of steady surveillance [similar to that of the FBI]. Mumia Abu-Jamal had no prior convictions but was targeted for his political beliefs and journalistic stance against police brutality, racism, and injustice.

Ms. Abraham's piece is most notable for what it does *not* contain. She quietly dropped the most ludicrous parts of the prosecution story, such as Jamal's alleged "confession." Perhaps she realized it was too outrageous to expect readers to believe that all the police and hospital security officers on the scene "forgot" about the confession until two months later after Jamal filed police brutality charges.

You might have mentioned that Ms. Abraham was only recently labeled "Deadliest D.A." (Tina Rosenberg, July 16, 1995) by the very newspaper (*New York Times*) that originally ran this piece [the article by Abraham which the *Post-Gazette* reprinted]. When asked about the case of Neil Ferber, who spent four years on death row only to be found to have been framed by Philadelphia police, who lied on the stand, she retorted, "He wasn't executed. The system worked" — as if those four years were meaningless. □

Why All Americans Should Support Mumia Abu-Jamal

by Claire M. Cohen

According to the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office and the Fraternal Order of Police, Mumia Abu-Jamal is a convicted cop killer who deserves to be executed by the state.

Why, then are the British Parliament, the French government, the South African government, the European Parliament, Amnesty International, International Human Rights Watch, and countless other governments, unions, human rights organizations, and groups around the world urging Governor Tom Ridge of Pennsylvania not to execute Mumia and imploring President Clinton to take action to save his life?

The Philadelphia District Attorney's Office and Fraternal Order of Police would have you believe that Mumia's supporters don't know the facts of the case.

Why, then, have all those who have taken the time to read the court documents and appeals become strong supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal, demanding that he receive a new, fair trial or be set free?

What is this case really about? Why all the fervor around the world?

First, let me warn you that the way not to find out about this case is through the media. The best way to inform yourself about this case is to read the legal documents involved. As one who has read much of the court record, I can assure you that you will become deeply disturbed by what you discover. You may even find yourself becoming an ardent supporter of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

This case will not only cause you to raise questions about the racism and economic injustice within the criminal system, but also about the treatment of political dissidents in this country and the reality of our constitutional rights on paper to free speech and dissent.

When you read the records, be prepared to find documented extensive police tampering with evidence, including coercion, intimidation, and bribing of witnesses, with the appalling complicity of the court and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. You will also read about the court outrageously barring clearly exculpatory evidence from the trial. You will find instances of Jamal being denied his right to be present at critical stages of his trial. You will learn about the judge inappropriately removing a Black juror, seating a white juror who openly stated his bias against Mumia from the beginning, and allowing this juror and two others to hold premature deliberations together in violation of fundamental due process.

You will also learn about the prosecution's inappropriate and unconstitutional use of Mumia's teenage membership in the Black Panthers, fifteen years earlier, to convince the jury of premeditated murder. You'll also learn about

the woefully inadequate defense provided by the court-appointed attorney, in part because of the ridiculously low amount of money the court allocated the defense for litigating the case (\$850, as opposed to the \$1,800 Philadelphia usually granted at that time, and the \$6,000 to \$60,000 other municipalities around the nation granted). This is just some of what you will discover if you read the record yourself.

When you review the record of the initial appeal to the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, you will find Chief Justice Nix at first sternly taking the prosecution to task for the egregious constitutional violations in the way in which this case was prosecuted. But then Judge Nix and two other justices will inexplicably absent themselves from the final decision denying the appeal in this case. Furthermore, the denial of the appeal will involve going against several major precedents on state and federal constitutional law. In cases that have followed Mumia's case, where prosecutors have attempted to use these precedent-overturning decisions as new precedents, the courts have reverted back to old precedents.

When you try to figure out why Mumia's case is being treated so exceptionally, what will then impress you is the fifteen years that the FBI and Philadelphia Police Department amassed surveillance files on Mumia prior to his arrest on this murder charge. The court would not permit these records to be submitted as evidence in his trial.

The authorities began surveillance on him when, as a teenager, he joined the Black Panther Party in the 1960s and became a writer for its newspaper. From there, Mumia went on to study journalism in college and to become a Peabody Award-winning radio and print journalist in Philadelphia. *Philadelphia* magazine in 1981 described him as one of the bright, upcoming young Black persons to watch.

During his career, Mumia did eloquent and powerful exposés and critiques on the pervasive racism and corruption in the Philadelphia Police Department and Philadelphia judicial system. During that whole fifteen years, these surveillance records show that he never committed any violent or criminal acts of any kind. Indeed, the writer of one report complains that Mumia "makes the Panthers look too good because of his positive approach." The picture that emerges is one of a gentle, articulate, highly principled activist and political dissident.

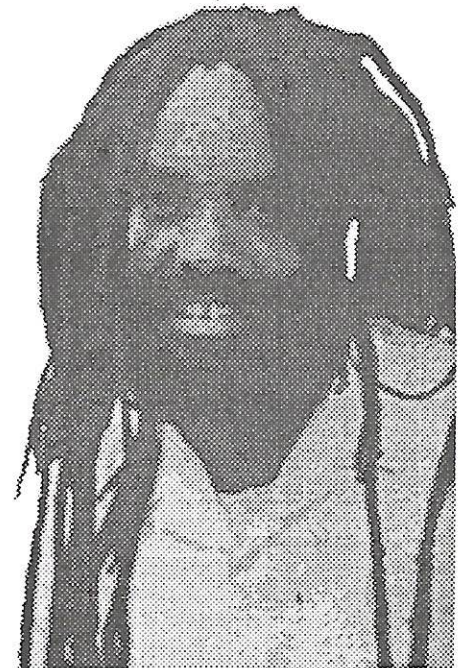
On the other hand, it also becomes clear from the reports that the Philadelphia police are frustrated that they cannot find something not only to tarnish his image but also to silence him permanently. It becomes clear that the Philadelphia authorities are concerned that, due to his

articulatness and thoughtfulness, Mumia has the capacity to mobilize the public to take action against the corrupt and racist criminal justice there. But Mumia doesn't stop with Philadelphia. He goes on to show how the situation in Philadelphia is part of a wider national picture of racist and economically driven corruption within the criminal "justice" system. Thus Mumia is a serious potential threat to the political system in this country. This is the reason he is in jail and on death row. And it is because he is a persecuted political dissident that the world has rallied to his cause.

It is interesting to note that in the 1990s the Philadelphia Police Department, the New York City Police Department, the Los Angeles Police Department, the Chicago Police Department, and the Atlanta Police Department are all under investigation for pervasive and rampant corruption. The FBI's national crime lab is also being investigated for charges of tampering with evidence to the advantage of prosecutors. This confirms much of what Mumia has been contending in his articles and commentaries.

The reason all of us need to actively and openly demand justice for Mumia Abu-Jamal should now be clear. If a political dissident who criticizes the corruption and bankruptcy of the system can be silenced and even put to death for exercising his supposed constitutional rights to do so, then the Bill of Rights is a sham. Our so-called constitutional rights are just empty words on paper if any of us risks incarceration and state-sanctioned murder for exercising those rights. Execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal is, in essence, execution of our rights. As long as Jamal is not free, neither are we. Thus, justice for Jamal is justice for us all. □

October 12, 1995



Mumia Abu-Jamal

"Not One Step Back!" Say Teamsters for a Democratic Union

by Charles Walker

TDU is a rank-and-file movement. The word movement describes TDU better than "party" or "caucus." Although we have a 10-point program, our broader vision is really what animates people to join and give of their time.

—Ken Paff, TDU national organizer

Five hundred delegates at the 20th annual Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU) convention in St. Louis this October voted unanimously to accept Teamster President Carey's decision to expand his 1996 electoral slate for the General Executive Board (GEB) of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) to include former opponents. The convention's single major resolution states:

Our immediate goal is to give Hoffa Junior and the old guard a knockout blow in 1996. Toward that goal we resolve to: Respect the need for a broader reform coalition to support positive union programs and to win a majority of delegates at the 1996 IBT Convention. Work within that reform coalition and put hundreds of TDU delegates on the floor of the July IBT Convention, building a strong TDU presence and influence. Our delegates will nominate the Ron Carey Slate, protect the Right to Vote and other reforms in the Teamster constitution, and support an initiative to fund \$200 per week strike benefits and a progressive program for our union...At the same time, TDU remains an independent grass-roots movement, dedicated to educating and mobilizing the Teamster membership and to training more Teamsters as leaders.

Fifteen Carey slate candidates, including TDUs, spoke or otherwise participated in the convention's general sessions, trade division meetings, or workshops.

Carey's Speech

Carey addressed a dinner session, ripping corporations for their "vicious attacks on workers" who see "their good jobs becoming throwaway jobs...while corporate profits have doubled since 1980." Carey said that although strikes are labor's basic weapon, corporate campaigns add to the power of strikes, as in the just concluded carhaul strike. Carey said that as a result of the Teamsters' successful use of a corporate campaign in conjunction with the carhaul strike, corporations were seeking legislation to ban such campaigns. Corporations announced their support for the legislation the day after Ryder Corporation, the struck carhaul company, lost a key decision by the National Labor Relations Board, which dismissed Ryder's claim that the carhaul strike was illegal.

Hoffa Junior Soft on Gingrich

Carey stated that his opponent in the 1996 election for Teamster president, James Hoffa, Jr., has said that the Teamsters should get closer to the corporations and to Newt Gingrich(!). In June, Hoffa told *Heavy Duty Trucking*, a corporate magazine, "I'm afraid that Carey has tilted so far to the extreme left that he's isolating himself on the political scene, especially in Washington today, where the Republicans, the Newt Gingriches and the Phil Gramms, are running the show. I think that probably by that

isolation he's hurting the membership...There was some talk that some Teamsters might have been involved in storming Newt Gingrich's office in Atlanta. I don't think that helps communications."

Carey received jubilant applause when he stated that he favored amending the union's name to the International Brotherhood *and Sisterhood* of Teamsters. Carey praised TDU members for their militant dedication and hard work and called on them to continue with him the fight for a Teamsters union that puts the members first.

Carey's New Allies

A new Carey slate member, Secretary-Treasurer Sergio Lopez, told of his experiences with the Teamster hierarchy during the bitter Watsonville cannery workers' strike of 1985-86. Lopez was elected principal officer of the Watsonville local union three months into the strike. Lopez related that the Teamsters International "didn't care whether we won the strike or lost, only that it be ended." He said that the Teamster tops met with the employers and recommended

Teamsters Win National Carhaul Strike

Going it alone against the Teamsters has been a costly mistake.

— *Business Week*

On November 15, 15,000 Teamster carhaulers are expected to overwhelmingly ratify a new four-year contract with firms that deliver new cars to dealerships nationwide. In the meantime, 5,000 Teamster carhaulers suspended their 32-day strike against the industry's giant, Ryder Automotive Carrier Group, which controls about one-third of the market. Teamsters claim that the strike prevented Ryder from delivering over 500,000 cars and cost the corporation more than \$1 million a day.

General Motors, which ships about 60 percent of its cars and trucks with Ryder and pushed Ryder to take on the Teamsters, was hit hard by the strike. In Dayton, Ohio, GM turned baseball fields into parking lots for stranded vehicles. Wall Street analysts said that GM would have had to close assembly plants if the strike had continued much longer.

At stake for the Teamsters was job security. Unionized carhaul firms have been transferring work to their own non-union firms, or to industry middlemen who contract with non-union carhaulers, a practice called double-breasting. "The companies are prohibited," say the Teamsters, "from using *any* scheme — including freight broker companies — to evade double-breasting restrictions."

Other Gains for Teamsters

Employer contributions for pension and health benefits will set a new record for the industry, while hourly pay will increase \$1.35 over four years along with higher mileage rates. The proposed agreement contains a

new eight-point "Bill of Rights" for employees who file grievances. Workers will have the right to present arguments against the company along with union representatives and to receive company and union records and files. In many cases a worker will be considered "innocent until proven guilty" and stay on the job with full pay and benefits while a discharge or suspension appeal is pending.

The Teamsters defeated the companies' demands for concessions. What the companies did *not* get, included but was not limited to the following: two-tier wages for new hires; attempts to curb workers' right to follow their work when it's transferred to another Teamster-organized company; attempts to eliminate the right to strike over nonpayment of wages and benefits or the right to strike over noncompliance with grievance panel decisions.

The carhaul strike is the third nationwide strike authorized by Teamster President Ron Carey in 44 months [an unheard-of record for a Teamster president]. Carey's old guard opponents are sure to attack the settlement, and maybe the strike itself. James Hoffa, Jr., Carey's rival for the Teamsters highest office, routinely attacks the 1994 freight strike settlement and says at the same time that that strike should not have happened in the first place. On the other hand, *Business Week* writes that the carhaul strike was a costly mistake for GM and Ryder and that those companies will have to do "a lot of explaining to convince shareholders that it was all worth it."

— Charles Walker
October 28, 1995

to him that the strike be settled with 40 percent cuts. "They were looking for an excuse, any excuse to end our strike and put the local in trusteeship. When threats didn't work...they tried bribes." Lopez said that he was offered the 9,000-member Teamster local in nearby Salinas, California, if he would cooperate with the IBT representatives.

Finally, Lopez was shocked to go to a negotiating session with the struck firm and find that a former IBT vice-president was sitting with the bosses and advising them. "The attitude of the Royal Teamsters [the old guard] in those bad old days was that the union didn't belong to the workers, it belonged to the officials. Well, they were wrong. In Watsonville it was the workers' strike, and those women won it!" The Watsonville strikers were mostly Latinas, and not one striker crossed the picket lines.

Ovation for Labor Party Advocate Kornegay

Another new Carey slate member, Secretary-Treasurer Eddie Kornegay, provoked a rousing, standing ovation when he declared his passionate belief in the need for a labor party. Kornegay is a leading member of Labor Party Advocates (LPA) and a veteran Black Teamster official. Over the past few years, support for a labor party has been increasing among TDU activists and now seems to be favored by an overwhelming majority.

In all cases the convention delegates received Carey's new candidates for the IBT's General Executive Board politely, and in some cases, such as Lopez and Kornegay, very warmly. With the broader slate Carey may have boosted his delegate strength at the upcoming IBT convention to 35-40 percent, up from the 15 percent he had at the 1991 convention.

But if he can't muster a majority of convention delegates, the constitutional authority that has allowed him to strip a bureaucratic stratum of titles and perks which carried an annual cost of \$15 million and to freeze lavish pension payouts to top bureaucrats is certain to be stripped away by constitutional amendments. Hoffa Junior and his supporters are saying that they favor shifting power away from the office of general president and restoring the pensions.

If Hoffa were to win, there is no doubt that he would never call three nationwide strikes in 44 months, as Carey has. In fact, Hoffa claims that the 1994 freight strike was unnecessary. And his allies scabbed on the one-day UPS strike.

Need to Clean Up the Grievance Panels

Up to now Carey has not satisfied the rank-and-file Teamsters' need for grievance panel reform under the three major national contracts: UPS, freight, and carhaul. Even important grievance procedural changes under the UPS contract, the combining of grievance panels under the proposed carhaul agreement, and the appointment of a rank-and-file Teamster to the Southern region grievance panel fall far short of meeting members' needs.

Many of the officials dominating the panels are not reform-minded, and members resent decisions which still uphold arbitrary discipline, cost members pay, or are influenced by trade-offs between officers and companies.

The delegate election period is the right time for Carey to push harder for grievance panel reforms, including new panel appointments. Panel reform would be the same as opening a second front against the old guard, who have not been won over by Carey's "olive branch" policy of trying to work with the experienced, but

bureaucratic officialdom. At the same time, rank-and-file Teamsters would welcome grievance panel changes that affect their daily lives — and would vote accordingly.

Election Battle Under Way

TDU's battle to protect and extend Carey's reforms by contesting local union delegate elections and gaining the critical IBT convention majority is under way. Many of TDU's convention workshops directly addressed the nuts and bolts of winning delegate elections, while other stressed general grass-roots organizing techniques such as organizing on the shop floor and producing flyers and newsletters.

To date, the Carey-TDU coalition has survived Carey's attempt to harness the bureaucracy, or the larger part of it, to his vision of the New Teamsters. Carey's "olive branch" policy has been only a minor success, and has muted the effectiveness of his call for an active, aggressive membership. If ever there was a time when TDU might badly split and lose its critical mass as a force for rank-and-file reform, the period since Carey's election would have been that time.

While many rank-and-file Teamsters have been frustrated over the lack of an immediate change in their day-to-day experience with the union, TDU has patiently and wisely sought to influence where and when it could, and left other matters for another day. Carey's inclusion of former opponents in his coalition is a crucial test that TDU has passed. In the local unions TDU delegates and activists will be at the core of Carey's reelection campaign, while Hoffa Junior must make do with sand-box jousters who see no further than their grasp. □

October 26, 1996

Editors' Note: Changes in Organized Labor

Continued from page 1

by Angaza Laughinghouse, also a leader of BWFJ. Their articles in the November 1995 issue of the BWFJ paper *Justice Speaks* were unfortunately received too late to reprint here. (To order the November issue of *Justice Speaks*, or to subscribe, write to: P.O. Box 26774, Raleigh, NC 27611; one year, individuals, \$10; organizations, \$15.)

Middle East, Russia, Cuba, Vietnam

On international developments, Tom Barrett discusses the Rabin assassination in connection with the continuing struggle of the Palestinian people for their rights; Aleksei Gusev provides background on this month's elections in Russia; Marilyn Vogt-Downey announces plans for the second Russian conference on Leon Trotsky, to be held this month; and Sarah Springer and Michael Smith provide reports related to the ongoing struggle to defend the Cuban revolution and end the U.S. blockade.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the defeat of U.S. military intervention in Vietnam. We mark that anniversary with two articles

("War Crimes in Vietnam — and Elsewhere" by Frank Lovell, and a review by Evelyn Sell of Robert McNamara's book *In Retrospect*). These articles also take a look at U.S. foreign policy in general, especially at how it is used by the corporate elite.

No U.S. Troops to Ex-Yugoslavia!

Next month we hope to have continuing coverage on the proposed "peace settlement" in the former Yugoslavia. For now let us say only that it is not in the interests of working people in either the United States or ex-Yugoslavia to have U.S. troops sent there to carry out the policies of the ruling rich, whose interests are served by NATO and the U.S. military machine.

We also hope next month to continue our coverage of developments in Mexico, Haiti, Brazil, Nigeria, and the Canadian state, as well as major strike struggles and anti-austerity protests in France and important elections in Germany and Poland as well as in Russia.

Veteran American Trotskyists

In this issue we carry an obituary about a veteran American Trotskyist who died recently in the Los Angeles area — Dave Cooper. But there is another veteran Trotskyist who, since our last issue, also died in Los Angeles — Genora Johnson Dollinger, who organized the Women's Emergency Brigade in the first sit-down strikes (Flint, Michigan, 1936-37) and whose interview with Kathleen O'Nan we carried in our March 1995 issue. An article about Genora by Kathleen did not reach us in time for this issue. We plan to print it next month, together with personal reminiscences about Genora by Evelyn Sell and Jean Tussey and a reprint of a statement about Genora by the noted author Studs Terkel (whose most recent book includes an interview with Genora).

As we go to press, we also receive word of the death of another prominent American Trotskyist, Ed Shaw, former national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party; and the death of Black activist and civil rights attorney Conrad Lynn. In future issues, we hope to have articles about those two significant figures as well. □

Detroit Newspaper Strike

by Charles Walker

For more about this strike, see the accompanying document, "A Strategy to Strengthen and Win the Detroit Newspaper 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.

—Robert Giles,
editor and publisher,
Detroit News

In labor circles there's an emerging apprehension that the Detroit newspaper strike is a loser. If so, say some mainstream and left-wing labor analysts, the newspaper unions' defeat will set back organized labor in the U.S. as drastically as did the 1981 defeat of PATCO, the air traffic controllers' union. But a more exasperating conclusion is that the mainstream trade union officialdom is simply stumped and at a business-unionism dead end when it comes to beating back determined corporate bosses presenting take-it-or-leave-it terms or demanding unconditional surrender, as the owners of the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* are doing.

These days, from Decatur to Detroit, in the industrial heartland and beyond, beating one union or a coalition of unions is almost like another day at the corporate office. This has to change.

In early October a circuit judge handed down an injunction limiting pickets to ten strikers at each gate at the Detroit papers' main printing plant. Before the injunction there was a growing, partly spontaneous mobilization of strikers and their supporters from the ranks of organized labor and, of course, idealistic youth and the left. "After a relatively quiet beginning, the six-union strike lit up the Detroit labor movement in early September when a series of massive all-night picket lines slowed — and nearly stopped — delivery of the all-important Sunday newspapers," reported the October issue of *Labor Notes*, adding that on September 2 "auto workers, electricians, steelworkers, students, carpenters, plumbers, and teachers joined the picket line, while police called reinforcements from 22 other cities."

For a few weeks before the injunction, scabs were fought and distribution curbed as the strike became a school for mass action and class struggle tactics.

Anti-Strike Injunction

After the injunction, according to *Labor Notes*, "strike leaders asked supporters to turn out. But instead of picketing, they asked them to drive around the plant in an unsuccessful attempt to clog traffic. Many supporters went home demoralized, clutching one or more traffic tickets" (emphasis added). As in other strikes, bureaucratic candy-asses turned their pessimistic assessments of the ranks' willingness to

struggle into a self-fulfilling prophecy. At the same time, the injunction provides a cover for the union's tops to sooner or later claim that the overall relationship of forces makes concessions to the employers' draconian terms unavoidable.

But even before the injunction, even 85 days into the strike, which began on July 12, the striking unions sent the papers' corporate owners a clear concessionary signal, when they offered to return the strikers to work under the terms of the expired contract and then, after 30 days of resumed bargaining, submit all unresolved issues to binding arbitration. The newspaper owners turned down the offer, even though it included a provision to save the papers \$15 million over three years, by agreeing to work rule changes and a reduction in the work force. "It was difficult for most observers, pro and anti-union alike, to read the unions' proposal as anything other than an offer to surrender" (David Finkel, *Against the Current*, November-December 1995).

Nevertheless, strikers are still fighting back, on weekdays with boycott flyers at shopping centers and on weekends with any means at hand at the satellite distribution centers away from the main printing plant, which is "protected" by the injunction. Obviously the corporations and the local union bureaucrats have not delivered a knockout blow to the striking workers' morale; so it's not too late for the six striking union locals to regain their momentum.

A Challenge for the Ron Carey Leadership

Clearly a sharp break with the current dead-end policy is required. In the Teamsters international union, which represents a majority of the original 2,600 strikers, the leadership team around General President Ron Carey has the material clout and the credibility to inspire confidence and lead a turnaround. In the past 43 months, Carey's team has led three successful national strikes, defied an injunction, and all the while kept at bay the bureaucratic Fifth Column of the old guard within the Teamster officialdom.

Carey would have to find a way around the local union autonomy that local and regional Teamster officials are sure to try and use as an inviolable wall to keep Carey "off their turf." Complicating the problem is that Detroit is the main base of James Hoffa, Jr., Carey's chief rival in the 1996 election of international officers. Any move by Carey would surely receive a knee-jerk opposition from Hoffa's backers, who control the Teamsters joint council in the Detroit area. Nevertheless, a recent poll indi-

cates that Carey's high popularity with the ranks, if not with the officialdom, would give Carey leeway to directly talk to the ranks and sympathetic officers and offer them a different brand of leadership.

Carey Intervention Would Inspire Strikers

A high-profile intervention by the international union and the Ron Carey leadership would surely fire up the strikers and their supporters. Of course, that's not enough to win. To turn the losing strike around, Carey would need to prepare the strikers and their supporters for a battle equal to the challenge of two corporations who claim the strike has cost them over \$45 million and boast they are prepared to spend more.

The strike cannot be won unless the injunction is fought and defeated, as the miners did with the Pittston Coal Co. in 1989-90. There's more at stake in Detroit than a lost strike. More and more, workers view unions as ineffective protectors of their wages, benefits, and working conditions. More and more, unions are seen as autocratic elites, with a bureaucratic hand in the members' wallets and pocketbooks. At stake is the opportunity to lift the weight of two decades of union retreats and defeats, and the anxiety that is weighing down upon and shaping the consciousness of all workers, in and out of organized labor.

No Need to Reinvent Wheel

Carey need not reinvent the wheel to beat back the Detroit press lords. A paragraph written by a veteran of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamster strikes sums up the underlying premise of a time-tested strike strategy: "There is only one way to win a strike: Shut the operation down. If it is a factory or other business, it cannot operate. If it is a transportation industry, it cannot move. A strike means all work must stop. It means that supervisors cannot be permitted to keep things going. It means scabs must be prevented from taking over the workers' jobs. Today, a strike cannot be won with a handful of pickets. It requires mass action in the street, led by the striking union." (From the pamphlet *How to Win Strikes* by Harry DeBoer.)

In October, a Teamster official intervened in a strike of the St. Paul-Minneapolis public transit system. He threatened a statewide Teamsters strike if the Minnesota governor brought non-union suburban buses into the metropolitan system or used the National Guard to protect non-union buses. This threat was widely publicized. Within a few days of this threat by the Teamsters, an agreement was reached between management and the transit union leaders.

In Detroit, Carey need not give up the use of supplementary corporate campaigns, boycotts, and solidarity actions. But to prevail, he must raise the stakes beyond what the corporate number crunchers have budgeted for their Detroit labor war. □

November 17, 1995

A Strategy to Strengthen and Win the Detroit Newspaper Strike

Statement of Labor/Community/Religious Coalition in Support of the Striking Newspaper Workers

The following recommendations to strengthen and help win the strike were presented to the striking newspaper unions and the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO. They were submitted on October 24 by the Labor/Community/Religious Coalition in Support of the Striking Newspaper Workers. The Coalition meets every other Tuesday night at 7 p.m. at UAW Local 174, 6495 West Warren, Detroit. For more information, call the Coalition at (313) 896-2600, or write, c/o Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, 2550 W. Grand Blvd., Detroit, MI 48208.

For more background on the Detroit newspaper strike, see the article "A Key Test for Organized Labor" by Jerry Gordon in *BIDOM*, October-November 1995.

The Role of the Coalition

Our Coalition was formed July 27, 1995, two weeks after the strike began. The Coalition's main function from the beginning has been to build support for the strike among trade unionists, the community, and religious groups.

The Coalition has helped turn people out for the Saturday night mobilizations, participated in picketing, promoted the ad campaign, backed the "adopt a picket" program, circulated petitions, pushed the drive to cancel subs to the scab papers, got community leaders and clergy to speak out publicly against the Detroit News Association's (DNA) striker replacement threats, raised funds for strikers, and contributed in numerous other ways to the overall effort to sustain and win the strike.

The Coalition has had an additional function. It has served as a vehicle for activists to convey their ideas and suggestions as to how they believe the strike can be strengthened. They do so out of concern for the newspaper workers but also because they understand that all of labor has an enormous stake in the outcome of this fight.

The Coalition is quite clear that only the striking workers and their unions can decide the strategy and tactics for the strike. We are also keenly aware that the objective here is to restore the striking newspaper workers to their jobs under a decent union contract. It is within the context of these considerations that we make the following recommendations regarding what we think should be done to bring the strike to a successful conclusion.

Recommendations

We urge the following:

1. The Metro Detroit newspaper workers strike be treated as a national strike. For a national labor march on Detroit!
2. A consistent mass action strategy to win the strike.
3. The Metro Detroit AFL-CIO, based on a vote of its affiliates, call a one-day work stoppage of area unions as a solidarity action in support of the striking newspaper workers.

These three recommendations are discussed below.

1. Treat the Newspaper Workers' Strike as a National Strike and Organize a National Labor March on Detroit

The strike by Detroit newspaper workers has huge implications for the entire labor movement.

A victory will encourage organized workers all over the country to fight harder to beat back the employers' union busting attacks. A defeat will see those attacks escalate, and expose the union movement's weakness and vulnerability.

The strike by Detroit newspaper workers must be fought nationally. Unionists around the country should be urged to organize demonstrations in their communities at Gannett and Knight-Ridder facilities. [Gannett and Knight-Ridder are the newspaper chains that own the two Detroit papers.] Detroit newspaper workers should be featured speakers at solidarity demonstrations.

Plans should be launched without delay, in conjunction with the national AFL-CIO, for a massive labor march on Detroit.

2. For a Consistent Mass Action Strategy to Win the Strike

We need continuous marches, rallies, demonstrations, and especially mass picketing as the key strategy for winning the strike.

Consider the experience of three recent labor battles. First, there was the 1989 United Mine Workers (UMW) strike at Pittston. The miners made this a national strike and reached out for support from the whole labor movement. Trade unionists poured into Virginia from all over the country to demonstrate their solidarity (in fact they stayed at "Camp Solidarity"). *The miners massed their forces, defied laws and injunctions, occupied a plant, conducted sympathy strikes, and prevailed — saving health and welfare programs for retirees which the company had sought to eliminate.*

Then there was the February 1994 strike by the Teamsters against United Parcel Service (UPS). The strike took place in response to UPS's attempt to violate its contract with the Teamsters by ordering truck drivers to single-handedly pick up and deliver packages of up to 150 pounds. (The UPS contract limited loads carried by individual Teamsters to no more than 70 pounds.) Close to 70,000 workers walked out — defying a court injunction — forcing the UPS bosses to capitulate after the first day of the strike.

Finally, there was the struggle, just now concluded, of the Steel Workers Union against Warren Consolidated Industries (WCI) in Warren, Ohio. Months before the Steel Workers' contract with the company was scheduled to expire, WCI hired paramilitary goon squads. They built chain link fences. They installed surveillance cameras and floodlights. They made the plant look like a prison camp. They trained supervisors and clericals to run equipment. They put ads in newspapers for scabs. Then, on August 31, 1995, they locked out 1,700 workers and attempted to run the plant with scabs.

But the Steel Workers and their allies in the labor movement and the community responded with a powerful campaign of their own directed at getting the scabs out. Militant rallies and mass picketing at the plant gate raised the demand, "Scabs must go!" Thousands of Warren residents began wearing "Stop Scabs" buttons. Five thousand workers and their families marched on Courthouse Square. UAW Local 493 members, as an act of solidarity, refused to unload and process WCI steel at Bellevue Manufacturing. Confronted by a united labor movement and the overwhelming support for the strikers by the community, the company capitulated. The scabs were sent packing. The company returned to the bargaining table, and a good contract was negotiated. It was a clear-cut victory for the union.

There are obvious differences between these three situations and the current newspaper workers' strike in Detroit. But what the three

Continued on page 32

The AFL-CIO Convention

by Frank Lovell

Advance publicity predicted that the 1995 convention of the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), held in New York City, October 23–26, would be different from all others. And so it was. But in different ways than expected by many observers and more than a few delegates. Everyone knew that a contest was on for the presidency of the federation for the first time since the merger of the old AFL craft unions and the CIO industrial union movement back in 1955, and now convention delegates would decide the outcome. Both contestants were longtime members of the Executive Council, and for many years had been part of the leadership group.

Previous AFL-CIO presidents were George Meany, for 24 years (1955–1979), and his hand-picked successor Lane Kirkland, for 16 years (1979–1995). Neither had ever faced serious opposition. But suddenly this year, Kirkland did. In fact, during the summer Kirkland was forced to retire by a dissatisfied and rebellious bloc in the federations's 33-member Executive Council, and was replaced by Secretary-Treasurer Tom Donahue, one of his close political associates.

AFL-CIO History

During its 40-year history the AFL-CIO has weathered episodes of dissatisfaction and distrust among the top leaders. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, under Meany's administration, the East Coast longshore union, the Teamsters, and one or two smaller unions were kicked out of the federation for racketeering, the result of federal investigations and prosecutions and demands by the government that the unions "clean house." In 1968 Walter Reuther led the United Auto Workers (UAW) out of the federation, claiming that Meany lacked social vision and the necessary political subtlety in response to the civil turmoil caused by the Vietnam war and student protests at the time. Both the Teamsters and the UAW subsequently returned to the federation. None of that compared in depth of dissatisfaction to the present crisis of leadership in the AFL-CIO.

Most delegates to the convention this year were more or less familiar with AFL-CIO history. And nearly all of them knew that the leader of the opposition in the Executive Council, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) President John Sweeney, was prepared to challenge and promised to reverse some of the conservative policies of labor-management collaboration embraced by the Kirkland leadership. Donahue was pledged to defend Kirkland's 16-year tenure.

What they did not know and could not have anticipated was the openness of the convention, the seeming all-inclusiveness of the agenda, the

scope of discussion and debate, the prevailing spirit of solidarity with all unorganized workers and especially with workers on strike, the enthusiastic identification with Blacks and other minorities and with women workers, the declared determination to organize the millions of low-paid unorganized workers, and the specific measures taken to enlarge, diversify, and reeducate the leadership of the labor movement at all levels, from local unions through state and city central labor bodies and including the federation's Executive Council as well.

1. An Open Convention

The convention center was open for registration of delegates and visitors during the afternoon and evening before the first day, and rooms were available for caucus meetings. This offered an opportunity for socializing and for speculation about what changes would be made by the convention and what could be accomplished.

Long before the convention was called to order at 10 a.m. literature tables, display booths, and information stations were in place, attended by knowledgeable and courteous staff people. Union masters-at-arms were easy to spot and always helpful when asked questions. Obviously this convention was organized differently from past AFL-CIO conventions — for example, in the days of protest against the Vietnam war, when unknown visitors outside official leadership circles were suspect and all credentials were carefully examined before any passes were issued. Back then the duties of masters-at-arms were usually confined to checking the authenticity of passes, and civil questions were treated as insults.

Almost a Carnival Air

The convention atmosphere this time was the exact opposite, broaching that of a carnival. It was a happy occasion and everyone was glad to be there. A few hundred delegates who had never before attended a national AFL-CIO convention may have contributed to the friendly good-time feeling. They came from city and state labor bodies around the country, all expenses paid.

Several long tables lined the entrance to the convention hall. Some had free literature, stacks of welcome notices, copies of the General Rules of convention proceedings, and of the day's agenda. A daily edition of the *AFL-CIO News* carried reports of talks by invited speakers, committee reports, and floor debates. Copies of resolutions were available on literature tables and in the press rooms.

Other tables had piles of T-shirts with union slogans and logos. Joe Glazer, the folk singer, had a table with his tapes of union songs. Display booths had photos and models of AFL-CIO labor

advancement schemes and education activities — for example, the American Labor Museum.

Labor Museum Promoted

This museum is headquartered in the Botto House National Landmark, Haledon, New Jersey, the 1908 home of immigrant silk mill workers. Convention delegates and visitors were urged to visit this historic site, described as "a haven for the rights of working people." Promotional literature explained that "in the winter of 1913 more than 24,000 men, women, and children marched out of Paterson, New Jersey's silk mills calling for decent working conditions, an end to child labor, and an eight hour day."

Clearly all this was a far cry from the days when the only display outside an AFL-CIO convention hall was a Union Label banner and a sign telling where to go to buy a souvenir necktie.

Strikes and Labor Party Publicized

Stacks of leaflets and other literature on the A. E. Staley lockout in Decatur, Illinois, the Caterpillar strike, the Detroit newspaper strike, the Machinists strike at Boeing's airplane production facilities in the Seattle area, and others were handy on free literature tables. All this indicated a progressive change in attitude toward use of the strike weapon and solidarity in struggle against anti-union employers. So much attention to strike activities must surely have been an eye-opener to veteran convention-goers when they arrived on opening day at this convention.

Other leaflets on literature tables announced a post-convention meeting on "Struggles, Solidarity and the Future of the Labor Movement," sponsored by Labor Party Advocates. Advertised speakers for that meeting included convention delegates, local union presidents, and strikers from Decatur and Detroit. Another widely distributed leaflet announced an evening meeting during the convention, "Fighting for Labor's Future," a Socialist Worker Forum, at Martin Luther King Labor Center, Local 1199 Hospital Workers. This was sponsored by the International Socialist Organization (ISO), featuring workers on strike in Detroit, Seattle, and Decatur.

A leaflet, widely distributed during the convention, urged union activists to "Construct a Party of Labor to Renew the Movement." It referred specifically to the convention agenda: "Much of the Sweeney/Trumka reform program is a step in the right direction," it said. "But the most crucial element for the resurgence of the labor movement has not been squarely confronted — the question of independent political action, so desperately needed right now on the eve of the '96 elections." This was distributed by members of Freedom Socialist Party and Radical Women attending the convention.

Another handout copied a resolution, "That the 1995 AFL-CIO National Convention instructs the incoming AFL-CIO leadership to work vigorously to promote this convention, and to assist Labor Party Advocates monetarily and with human resources to ensure that it is a success." The resolution was reproduced in full on the letterhead of the Inland Boatmen's Union of the Pacific, marine division, International

Longshoremen's & Warehousemen's Union, Seattle, Washington, with the notation, "passed unanimously at the Sept. 12, 1995, San Francisco region of the IBU General membership meeting." It never found its way through the convention Resolutions Committee, but like all the other literature it received friendly interest from convention delegates.

Two LPA Leaders Elected

Although the resolution to support LPA was not adopted, two leaders of LPA were elected to the new 51-member AFL-CIO Executive Council. The November-December 1995 issue of the newsletter *Labor Party Advocate* reports: "Bob Wages, President of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, and Mac Fleming, President of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees were part of a slate backed by new AFL-CIO President John J. Sweeney."

In keeping with the general friendly, easy-breathing climate of the convention a series of leaflets appeared on successive days urging the election of Harry Kelber, candidate for AFL-CIO vice president. Kelber is widely known in New York labor circles, having been a member of the International Typographical Union and associated with Empire State Labor College. He edits and publishes an occasional 4-page giveaway, *The Labor Educator*, highly critical of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy. Although he was not a convention delegate, his name appeared on the candidates list, as required by the constitution and convention rules.

Also, throughout the convention the veteran union activist, Paul Rasmussen, worked the crowd for joiners and contributors to his "Order of the Blade and the Whet Stone," which distributes small sums to strikers and publicizes critical strikes, emphasizing the need for international solidarity. Its publication, *Blade and Stone* (January 1995), with honorary reference to the peasant uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, received general interest and assurances of solidarity from delegates and staff.

This convention recorded the largest attendance in AFL-CIO history — 1,068 delegates, representing 78 international unions, 9 trade and industrial departments, 48 state federations, and 454 central labor councils. Another 317 alternates were credentialed. Several hundred visitors attended.

2. Convention Agenda

After adopting the convention rules and concurring in the customary procedure of invocation and greetings from union heads of the host city and state, the convention settled down to the important business at hand — the election of a new leadership and slight modification of the federation's organizational structure. These things were on the minds of most delegates. Although never specifically stated as the goal of the convention, some necessary changes had been generally agreed upon by the contending caucuses, the Tom Donahue/Barbara Easterling caucus and the John Sweeney/Richard Trumka/Linda Chavez-Thompson slate.

Preparations for the convention and the organization of the convention itself reflected this agreement between the contending forces that this convention must be perceived as a new beginning, and must project an image of change and labor solidarity.

Donahue's Keynote Speech

The main agenda point on opening day was the keynote speech by AFL-CIO President Donahue. His talk began with a clear statement of his basic understanding of the union movement: "We have come to New York for one fundamental purpose," he said, "and that is to set the course of the future of the Federation, for the revival of America's working middle class, and for the restoration of America as the leading economic power in the world."

In the course of his remarks Donahue noted that the union movement must grow in numbers and in social influence. He said, "This federation will raise and spend millions of new dollars for massive, multi-union organizing drives that will target entire industries and geographic regions." He promised "to double and redouble the recruitment and training of new organizers..."

Reviewing labor history he said, "The struggles of 60 years ago — the great sit-down strikes and the mass organizations of those on industrial assembly lines — are shining moments in labor history. But I tell you we are living in a fool's paradise if we think for a moment that we can simply tear a page out of that book and use it to set the course of the remainder of the 1990s and beyond."

Opposed to militant mass action, Donahue offered the following: "We must worry less about blocking bridges and worry more about building bridges to the rest of society. We must enlist the support of members of the public, not inconvenience as many of them as possible. Our purpose," he said, "is not to break down the system, but to make it work for working families."

He concluded with the hope that the union movement can, "through our legislative action, reform this nation and make it one in which the rich will pay their fair share, and the young and the sick and the old will be cared about and be cared for."

This was applauded by all delegates, most vigorously by the Donahue supporters.

3. Test Vote

Following the keynote speech by Donahue a sharp debate developed over when to vote on a constitutional amendment to create a new executive position, that of vice president. This amendment was submitted by SEIU and 23 co-sponsoring unions, the purpose being to make room at the top for the woman candidate, Linda Chavez-Thompson, on the Sweeney/Trumka slate.

As maneuvering for delegate support intensified, the Sweeney camp feared that this question of voting to create the new post of executive vice president was being used against them. Consequently, Steelworkers President George Becker, a Sweeney supporter and secretary of the Constitution Committee, asked the convention to postpone voting on this issue until after

the election for president. The Constitution Committee chairperson, Bricklayers President John Joyce, said the committee had considered the matter and voted 8-5 against changing the AFL-CIO constitution and urged concurrence. He opposed postponement of discussion.

"Shock Troops for Change"

Sweeney then spoke at length for postponement, prompting Donahue, who was still chairing at that point, to threaten to cut off Sweeney's microphone. The exchange was indicative of the personal relationship between the two, and of the relationship of forces each represented. "John, I hope you won't force me to cut off that mike," said Donahue. "No I won't, Tom," said Sweeney as he continued his remarks to the cheers of his supporters and jeers of opponents. This showed the Sweeney supporters better organized and far more spirited. Calling themselves "A New Voice for American Workers" and wearing red T-shirts for Sweeney/Trumka/Chavez-Thompson, they responded as a solid convention bloc, drowning out all opponents. Led by James Gibbs of the United Mine Workers and other veterans of militant strike actions, they were described by the media as "shock troops for change."

When the question was called and the roll call taken Sweeney's forces tabled the Constitution Committee recommendation and postponed the vote on the executive vice president post, by a substantial majority of 7.2 million to 5.8 million. The different unions voted for the most part along more or less traditional lines. The building trades and the small craft-minded unions nearly all fell into the Donahue column. Sweeney voters consisted of the old CIO industrial unions — steelworkers, auto, coal miners, etc. They won the support of the revitalized Teamsters. And the rail unions were all solid behind Sweeney. This first roll call indicated what the outcome of the convention was likely to be. As things turned out, this early line-up remained intact.

Debate over Size of Executive Council

Another contentious question, also introduced by Steelworker delegate Becker at the same time as his motion to postpone voting on the new post of vice president, was the size of the new AFL-CIO Executive Council. The Sweeney caucus had introduced a constitutional amendment to increase the size of the Executive Council from 33 to 45 members, but Becker now moved to table the matter. He argued that this too had become entwined with the campaign for federation president. Debate over the size of the Executive Council carried over into the second day of the convention. This debate revealed contrasting attitudes and conflicting interests among top officials, also the petty organizational trickery and transparent demagoguery typical of union politics.

4. Union Politics

To counter the Sweeney caucus proposal to enlarge the Executive Council by a limited num-

ber, the Donahue majority on the Constitution Committee recommended that the Council consist of one representative of each affiliated union, a total of 78 members. Arguments for this proposition were that it guaranteed democracy and diversity. The democracy argument ran as follows: all affiliates should be equal partners in the AFL-CIO. If only some are represented on the Executive Council, those not represented will be the victims of discrimination. The only guarantee of democracy and safeguard against discrimination is an all-inclusive Executive Council.

The other argument was that diversity of gender, ethnicity, and opinion is essential. This is assured only if all affiliates are represented. One delegate, Evelyn Dubrow, a veteran of many conventions and now vice president of the newly merged needle trades, argued that the federation would be ill-served if all the small unions were not given a voice and vote on policy matters because good ideas and helpful suggestions can come from small unions as well as big ones.

Albert Shanker, head of the large, dictatorially structured teachers union, also argued strongly for "democratic principles," claiming that the convention must correct a bad mistake the Executive Council had made in this regard. He said the Council had earlier opened its doors to heads of all affiliated unions who wished a presence at its meetings, but had failed to grant them voting privileges, thus depriving them of their democratic rights.

Nearly all delegates had been active in the union movement long enough to know that these kinds of arguments sometimes serve as useful debater points. But most also knew that the Donahue caucus had something more in mind. The early test vote proved that their chances of winning the presidency were slim, and the maneuver to get a 78-member Executive Council was a transparent attempt to gain control of that body. On the Council each member has one vote and the small unions far outnumber the large ones. So if the Sweeney forces should win the presidency, it would only be fair (in the interest of labor unity and harmony within the federation) — so the argument went — to let Donahue's forces control the Executive Council.

"Too Male, Too Pale, Too Stale"

This motivation of Donahue's supporters was never explicitly stated as the debate continued. But Bill Lucy, secretary-treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and president of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, came close. He hinted at what the Donahue caucus was up to when he argued against their claim that the large body would give minorities a greater voice. "This is a process which in fact will dilute diversity," Lucy said. "It does not require new math to understand that five or six or seven out of 33 is better than five or six or seven out of 78." He granted that women and minorities may occasionally be elected to head unions and qualify for a seat in the near future, "but that will be about as rare as chicken teeth."

Leon Lynch, vice president of the Steelworkers, said the 78-member Council idea was poorly conceived and would stifle change rather than encourage it. He said, "81 members (including the three top executive officers) are just too many and too cumbersome as an Executive Council." Besides, it would consist of 73 mostly elderly white men, three African American men, and two white women, he said. And this is no way to change the image of the AFL-CIO as presently perceived, "too pale, too male, too stale."

When the roll call on this question was taken the 78-member council was defeated, 5,686,152 for and 7,315,388 against. For the second time a test of strength showed a clear majority for the Sweeney slate. The size and composition of the new Executive Council was referred to a parity commission representing both caucuses, its recommendations to be voted on after election of the president and other executive officers.

5. Debates Between Candidates

The debates for the presidency and vice-presidency were carefully organized and well presented. Each debate lasted two hours, moderated by a panel of journalists and others who directed questions to the candidates following their campaign talks.

There were no surprises.

In the Sweeney/Donahue debate Donahue repeated the basic concepts he had presented in his keynote speech to the convention. He said that he was among the first to realize that change in the AFL-CIO is badly needed, that its image must be improved. "Everybody in this room shares the broad vision of growth and strength," he said.

Sweeney vs. Donahue

Sweeney looked to the current political situation for answers to the problems workers face. "Workers look at their paychecks, the political system and the public debate and wonder why is nobody speaking for me? Then, in fear and frustration, they look for leadership to the Rush Limbaughs who seek scapegoats rather than solutions for the problems of stagnant wages, corporate greed and a fractured society," he said.

On the need of an ideological labor movement, Sweeney said, "our movement should be opened up and the dialogue should be as wide as we possibly can make it. I think this campaign [inside the AFL-CIO] has produced some of that spirit in bringing more movement back into the labor movement."

Donahue, on the other hand, contended that workers are not now prepared for struggle because they recognize that the odds are not in their favor. "They are not answering the call to arms because the war is too dangerous for them, because the laws are lousy. Those laws are only going to be changed through effective political action, they're going to be changed in voting booths and legislative assemblies," he said. Paraphrasing the political philosophy of Gompers, Donahue said, "the union movement is worker-based, directed at workers' needs on the job...to improve their conditions of life, their

conditions of work. Secondly, we are forced to change society...for the benefit of all."

Against Donahue's caution and misgivings Sweeney argued for action now. "The Federation must commit massive resources to organizing," he said. "I favor creating a separate department of organizing to coordinate and focus the Federation's organizing activities. I favor creating the special Southern Organizing Program."

Much of these differences over how to achieve the economic and social goals of organized labor were brought out in response to questions by the panelists. But throughout the debate the basic difference between action now and cautious conciliation with the employing class was expressed by both candidates, each in his own way.

Easterling vs. Trumka

The second debate, that between Barbara Easterling for vice president on the Donahue ticket and Richard Trumka with Sweeney, dealt more specifically with the union records and personal qualifications of these candidates than with union policy and the future course of the AFL-CIO. Both candidates have family backgrounds in the miners union and early struggles in the coal fields. Both were on-the-job workers and union activists from an early age. And both won election to top positions in their respective unions, she as a telephone worker who became secretary-treasurer of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and he as current president of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

In reviewing her union experience, Easterling said, "As a woman, and as women in this room know, I had to work twice as hard as the men, be twice as tough and all the while look twice as good. Fortunately, it wasn't that difficult."

Trumka recalled the 1960s and the struggle in the miners union when Jock Yablonski, a candidate for president of the union against the entrenched Tony Boyle machine, was murdered. He said, "Hardly a day goes by when I'm not reminded how some of the same attitudes we took on back then are still in the labor movement today, because now, as then, there are those who see only the risk of division in an open and honest debate."

"There are those who tell us it's better to run from fights we're not sure to win rather than take a stand because we can't afford to lose," he said.

Trumka: "Workers Are the Majority"

He said the AFL-CIO has failed to deliver the message that workers are a majority in this society, not a minority. He said the employers and their politicians, the enemies of organized labor, have defined the workers as a minority group and as irrelevant politically. "Well, we're not irrelevant," he said. "We're the last hope and the last defense of the American worker, and we're the only hope that the middle class has right now."

In response to questions framed by the panelists, Easterling and Trumka both addressed the problem of organizing workers in the service industries, a high percentage of women,

most without job security, health care, vacations, or pensions. "I will speak for them," said Easterling. "We have great resources to determine what corporations and companies are not organized. We should be in those places. I intend to get in there. I intend to get in that employer's face. I intend to deliver the goods for the women that are in those plants."

Trunka said that the convention will decide. He expressed the belief that this problem called for some readjustment in the federation structure, and that the new post of executive vice-president is badly needed, a post to be filled by AFSCME Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson. She will be going out to reach these low-paid workers, he said, to direct organizing campaigns across the country.

Results of the roll call vote were later reported (*AFL-CIO News*, special edition 4) as follows: "John J. Sweeney of the Service Employees was elected the fourth president of the AFL-CIO in an historic vote that saw both top offices change hands, and the later creation of a third executive office." Sweeney received 7,341,669 votes to 5,716,165 for Donahue. Trunka defeated Easterling by a slightly wider margin. The maverick candidate for vice president on the list of candidates for Executive Council, Harry Kelber, received 2,044 votes. Creation of the new office of Executive Vice President and election of Linda Chavez-Thompson to that post was accomplished by acclamation.

6. Reconciliation

A "unity slate" of candidates to constitute a 51-member Executive Council, as recommended by the parity commission representing the opposing caucuses, was endorsed by convention vote, each candidate receiving more than 13 million votes. The new Executive Council (including the three newly elected executive officers) has on it 15 women and people of color, making 27 percent minority membership as compared to 17 percent on the old Council (6 out of 35).

Sweeney, in his capacity as newly elected AFL-CIO president, praised the election of the new 51-member Executive Council. He called it "a great step in binding up the wounds that have been inflicted over the past few months."

Solidarity with Strikers

The penultimate session was devoted entirely to a rousing demonstration of solidarity with workers on strike. It began on the convention floor with a display of strike banners and picket signs and calls for solidarity by a hundred or more strikers from around the country, appealing for support from the delegates. This preceded the introduction of a resolution which cited the lockout of Paperworkers at the A.E. Staley plant in Decatur, Illinois, the newspaper workers at the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit News* who were being replaced by scabs, the fired workers at the Bridgestone/Firestone rubber plant in Decatur, the strikes at American Signature, Bayou Steel, Boeing, Bell Atlantic, Caterpillar, Frontier Hotel, Alitalia, and more.

Reports and discussion on the resolution, participated in by many strikers who told about

Resolution on Independent Political Action

The following resolution was adopted by the October 21, 1995, convention of the New Jersey Industrial Union Council (successor to the CIO).

Whereas, we live in a time when more and more Americans are alienated and cynical about the political system and view it as increasingly the property of the wealthy and powerful; and

Whereas, the history of the past 15 years has been one of unrelenting union busting, the consolidation of the corporate political agenda, and an increasing disparity in wealth between the very rich and the rest of society; and

Whereas, this assault on working people has been spearheaded by the Republican Party and its conservative Democratic allies who have succeeded in controlling the political agenda; and

Whereas, with limited exceptions, Congress has failed to be responsive to the needs of working people and, in the past three years has promoted the policies of corporate greed by its support of NAFTA, its compromises and its failure to pass national health care, its failure to support labor law reform and its surrenders on Welfare and Medicare reforms; and

Whereas, there probably never was a time when so many Americans have reacted with indifference and disgust towards our political system; and

Whereas, a dangerous political vacuum exists and we are seeing signs that groups promoting racism and anti-worker programs are beginning to fill that vacuum, and

Whereas, organized labor cannot allow that vacuum to continue unchallenged because we have a historic responsibility to

resurrect our finest moments as a social movement and promote a new social, political, and economic agenda for working people; and

Whereas, the New Jersey Industrial Union Council has demonstrated in the past that we are not hesitant to step out and institute a debate about what we consider to be national problems facing working people; and

Whereas, many rank and file workers as well as many constituent organizations of the IUC have concluded that the time has come to explore independent, worker-based political action; and

Whereas, Labor Party Advocates is a national, labor-based organization advocating such an alternative and is having its founding convention in June of 1996;

Therefore, be it resolved, that this Convention of the Industrial Union Council supports and encourages the debate and discussion among our members for a new social, political, and economic agenda for working people that includes an independent political role for labor; and

Be it further resolved, that, in addition to its other political action activities, the New Jersey Industrial Union Council supports and encourages the activities of Labor Party Advocates and asks that all affiliates participate in a constructive debate about independent labor political action.

*Respectfully submitted,
Mark Dudzic
President, Local 8-149 OCAW*

strike-breaking activities of hired thugs and local police, brought home to the delegates the broad sweep of the anti-union campaign launched several years ago by the employers and now taking the form of armed assaults on strikers.

The convention resolved: "These companies [engaged in strike-breaking activities] shall be made to pay a price every bit as dear as that which they seek to impose on their workers. Standing together, in solidarity, we shall prevail."

Dan Lane, a striker at A.E. Staley, made a special appeal to the convention for financial assistance. He worked at Staley for 19 years before being told that his job was finished, that he was no longer needed. He has been on a hunger strike since September 1, trying to call attention to the suffering of the 760 locked-out workers at the Staley plant, and to help convince Staley's biggest customer, Pepsico, to stop buying corn sweetener from Staley. He said a boycott by AFL-CIO unions and other pressure on Pepsico will help convince that company that it will be better off to find other sweetener sources.

Problems Workers Face

These first-hand reports from victims of employer greed and violence brought home to delegates the real meaning, in terms of personal suffering, of data on the worsening state of the U.S. economy, in which the rich are getting richer and the workers are getting poor.

In that discussion, speaking to an omnibus resolution on the economic situation which calls for full employment, lower interest rates, public investment, fair taxes, higher labor standards, a safety net for the unemployed, an end to the export of jobs, harnessing technology, and addressing the problems of the inner cities, among other things, Machinists President George Kourpias directed attention to the causes of the strike by his union at Boeing aircraft.

"The issue of our whole strike at Boeing is about the future of this country," he said. "Right now, the back end of the 737 is being built in China... Thirty percent of the 777 is being built in Japan. There's a factory in China with 30,000 people doing this work for McDonnell-Douglas and for Boeing [—they're] making \$50 a month.

Aerospace workers in America are being asked to compete with them." This problem of jobs being lost to the globalization of capital investment was not addressed by the convention, and it remains for the union movement to find solutions.

7. A Perspective of Mass Action and Organizing

The Sweeney leadership team wasted no time before demonstrating in the most immediate and practical way possible that they intended to carry out their campaign promises of mass action and union organizing. Upon taking over the presidency Sweeney set the course of action. "If anyone denies American workers their constitutional right to freedom of association, we will use old-fashioned mass demonstrations and sophisticated corporate campaigns to make their labor rights the civil rights issue of the 1990s," he said.

As if to concretize this idea on the spot, a demonstration of all convention delegates and visitors was called for noon of the final day of the convention, led by the newly elected officials. The demonstration began at the convention site, 53rd Street and 7th Avenue and marched to 38th Street and 8th Avenue, a center of garment district sweat shops. About 2,000 marched, carrying union banners and shouting "sweat shops have got to go." Also some marchers introduced the new union song, "We are the union, the mighty, mighty union," and this refrain was picked up and repeated by hundreds of other voices. At the sweat shop center, union officials and immigrant garment workers who had been robbed of wages and otherwise victimized denounced the garment industry's greedy bosses, calling for fair treatment and threatening legal reprisals.

Back at the convention hall the closing session completed some unfinished business, adopted noncontroversial resolutions, and adjourned. Since then, in the weeks immediately following the convention, the top AFL-CIO officials (Sweeney and Trumka) have appeared at mass demonstrations in Ohio for labor legislation and in the Seattle area to endorse and support the strike against Boeing.

8. Speculation

During the convention groups of delegates and others gathered almost constantly between sessions to discuss the issues on the floor of the convention at any given time and to speculate on the meaning and consequences of decisions being taken. There were never signs of rancor. Delegates, for the most part, remained in good humor even when difficult and sometimes embarrassing questions came up.

How to explain what seemed to be a sharp change, in some ways even a reversal, of established AFL-CIO policy, which since the merger 40 years ago has been to encourage close collaboration with employers, especially those under union contract, and with the government, especially the Democratic Party? Of course, there have been exceptions. In the 1972 presidential election (when Nixon was running for his second term, not knowing the consequences

of Watergate) George Meany refused to support the Democratic presidential candidate, George McGovern. And it often has happened that good employers long considered "pro-union" have had fallings-out with their unions, and this has led to strikes which more often than not were settled amicably. But not recently. So what has changed?

Some delegates commented that the change really began several years ago. (These points were made in private or informal discussion, but were not brought up in the discussions on the convention floor.) There had been a noticeable change on the part of the employers. Back in 1978 the employers began to resist union pressure for closer collaboration, becoming more distant and stand-offish. At that time George Meany said that the employers seemed to be asking for "class war" and that if that's what they wanted, that's what they should get.

Years of One-Sided Class War

It was later realized by Lane Kirkland and others on the Executive Council that the employers did in fact get class war, but it was all one-sided, directed against the union movement by the employers and successive government administrations. That led to strike defeats and decline in union membership.

In 1982 Lane Kirkland called in several "experts" (labor historians, economists, sociologists, and others) for advice on how to revive and expand the union movement, how to win new members. In August 1983 a preliminary report was issued, titled "The Future of Work." The trouble was that there were few unions in this future. A second report prepared by many of the same "experts" in early 1985, titled "The Changing Situation of Workers and Their Unions," recommended "new approaches" to the problem of union building. But these did not help much to organize new unions or win new members to old unions. So members of the Executive Council have been saddled with this problem for the past decade and have finally come up with this solution: that something must be done to change the AFL-CIO image and start moving.

Some delegates with long memories and some curiosity about the history of the modern union movement, especially the beginning of the CIO movement in 1934, wondered if there was something similar now in the changing consciousness of working people to what happened in the 1930s during the depression. Millions of workers are convinced that this country today is in the midst of a depression. Maybe this, as well as the mean-spirited attitude of most employers today, has influenced the thinking and the decision of some top AFL-CIO officials to strike out on a new course of action. However, not many thought of John Sweeney as another John L. Lewis (founding leader of the CIO).

Contrast with Rise of CIO

One difference between what was happening at this convention and the changes in the union movement at the time of the rise of the CIO is that the organizers of the CIO had a clear idea about how they would realize their goal. They were convinced that to revitalize the union move-

ment in the 1930s the mass production workers in basic industry would have to be organized into industrial unions. This form of industrial organization was essential to success. The old craft union structure of the AFL was inadequate. So the debate then was over how to win the workers: industrial unions vs. craft unionism.

At this 1995 AFL-CIO convention no such debate occurred because there never was any consideration given to *how* this union movement will be revitalized. It sounds good to say "\$100 million organizing plan launched" (*AFL-CIO News*, September 25), but questions remain: How will this "organizing plan" be launched? What exactly is the plan anyway?

Several delegates discussed this question at different times during the convention. Some Labor Party Advocates thought it will eventually be resolved by the movement within the unions to build a labor party. But for now, there is still hope that somehow Clinton will help the unions grow, as promised by representatives of the Clinton administration who were guest speakers at this convention.

Clear Class Language

One guest speaker who made a profound impression on some delegates came from the mine pits of Wales. This was Tyrone O'Sullivan, of the British Trade Union Congress. He described how in the last three years 35 of the 51 mine pits in the United Kingdom have been closed by the government. But when Tower Colliery (where O'Sullivan works), which had been mining coal since 1830, was shut, its 244 miners refused to leave. He said they raised the equivalent of \$3 million and took possession of the pit. "The only worker-owned pit, 100 percent owned by the miners, not only in Britain but in Europe," he said. "That's an extraordinary achievement for a group of miners who were down and out." His message to the convention: "Working people have got to solve our own problems in our own workplaces, in our own communities, because nobody else is going to do that."

He spoke in clear class language, the working class against the employing class. "No matter how bleak the future may seem, you must never give up the struggle," he said.

"We Will Learn As We Go Along"

One of several delegates who had been much impressed with O'Sullivan's talk said the situation of the AFL-CIO is something like that of the Welsh miners. Who knows how we will manage to revitalize the union movement and mobilize and organize millions? "They don't know," he said. Who is "they"? The union leaders, Sweeney and Trumka and Chavez-Thompson; and the rest of us, all the delegates here. Nobody knows yet how it will be done. But the decision to make a start in that direction is good. We are on the road and we will learn as we go along.

Whatever happens in the future it will be remembered that this 1995 AFL-CIO convention made the start. It began the break with the past. □

Social Justice and the O.J. Simpson Trial

by Marilyn Vogt-Downey

On Monday, October 2, after a trial that lasted nine months, the jury in the case of "The People vs. O.J. Simpson" took less than four hours to reach a verdict. They found the defendant not guilty on two counts of first degree murder.

The case was a media event from beginning to end, with the entire trial televised. As the *New York Times* put it, the country nearly "stood still" from 1 p.m. to 1:10 p.m. on Tuesday, October 3, as millions awaited the reading of the verdict from the Los Angeles courtroom. In fact, the *Times* reported on October 5 that according to a survey commissioned by the Cable Network News (CNN), which televised the entire trial, as many as 107 million people, or 57 percent of the U.S. adult population, watched the live telecast of the reading of the verdict.

The verdict was a well-deserved and resounding rebuke to the case presented by the Los Angeles prosecutor's office, to its method of functioning, and to the methods employed by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and its criminal investigative units. It showed the prosecutor's office and the Los Angeles County court system — and by implication, the U.S. judicial system in general — that if a Black defendant obtains skilled defense counsel, the procedures that the U.S. "justice system" routinely uses for railroading Blacks and other poor people to prison don't work.

The Issue of Racism

The importance of the issue of racism in this case was dramatized by polls like the one conducted by CNN on the eve of the summations by the prosecution and the defense. The CNN poll showed that 77 percent of the whites polled thought the defendant was guilty, while 72 percent of the Blacks polled thought he was innocent.

The issue of racism was also dramatized in the public responses to the verdict. In the media coverage, most whites were shown to be disappointed with the verdict, while most Blacks seemed to feel anything from relief to jubilation. In truth, if one were to apply the U.S. judicial system's own professed dictum — that a defendant is innocent until proven guilty — the 72 percent of Blacks who considered him innocent were right, even before the jury's verdict was announced. The jury's verdict simply endorsed this.

The Prosecution's Shoddy Evidence

The most glaring aspect of the case was that the prosecution, with all the resources at its disposal, built its case on tainted, planted, and circumstantial evidence. Johnnie L. Cochran, Jr., the eloquent Black lawyer who became the chief attorney for the defense team, rightly described the prosecution's initial summary as

"speculative" and "cynical." It speculated on what *might* have happened on the basis of circumstantial evidence, and it was cynical in the way it interpreted the defendant's behavior.

Much is made of the fact that the defendant was rich, that he was able to "buy" justice, as if this were a new phenomenon in the United States. Reports of expenses incurred in the case, as televised on the Fox network on October 3, put this question in better perspective. It is true that the defendant apparently spent a great deal, roughly \$3 million (\$1.2 on Robert Shapiro, \$500,000 on Johnnie Cochran and his entire team, \$50,000 each for legal specialists Peter Neufeld and Barry Scheck, and \$500,000 on various laboratory, travel, and other expenses). However, the Los Angeles County Prosecutor's Office spent even more — \$4 million! — in prosecuting the case. The jury, which was "sequestered" (confined) for 262 days, 24 hours a day, really paid the price: at a rate of \$5 per day, the jurors received only \$1,310 each for their trouble!

The media pundits like to claim that this verdict — by a jury of eight Black women, two white women, one Black man, and one Hispanic man — ignored a "mountain of evidence" allegedly presented by the prosecution. However, on September 29, 1995, at the time of summation, the prosecution had a case no more convincing than the one it had in July 1994 when it undeservedly obtained murder indictments against the defendant. In July 1994, the decision was made by a California judge after preliminary hearings. In September 1995 the prosecution's case was even weaker than it was in July 1994. Unfortunately for the prosecution, by September 1995, the defendant's "dream team" of defense lawyers had been able to locate evidence that the prosecution's key witness (LA policeman Mark Fuhrman) had lied on the witness stand and much worse: the defense was able to demonstrate that Fuhrman is a violent and dangerous racist, a criminal cop who had long been allowed to abuse his position to beat people up, frame them up, plant evidence against defendants, and destroy evidence proving them innocent in order to get them convicted. (More on Fuhrman below.)

Domestic Abuse

The defendant O.J. Simpson may or may not have been responsible for the deaths of the two victims — his estranged wife Nicole Brown Simpson and an acquaintance Ronald Goldman — on the night of June 12, 1994. Despite the verdict, the media is still filled with charges and promoting assumptions that O.J. Simpson is guilty, and Nicole Brown's family and Ronald Goldman's family have a civil suit against O.J. Simpson charging him with responsibility for those deaths. But what is clear is that once the

defense team completed its case, Prosecutor Marcia Clark and her entire team were left with no reliable material evidence to prove Simpson's guilt. To complete the prosecution's final rebuttal, Marcia Clark was forced to resort to an audio-visual montage for the jury of the 911 tapes of Nicole calling for police help in earlier wife-abuse cases, along with pictures of Nicole after she had been physically abused by O.J. in 1989 and 1993.

No one can deny that these cases of physical abuse of Nicole Brown Simpson by O.J. Simpson were sickening and reprehensible. However, technically, the defendant had already been charged and had completed his sentence in connection with those cases. It was not fair that the prosecution was allowed to proceed with this cheap appeal. While the corporate media was quick to charge Johnnie Cochran with resorting to the "race card" when focusing on the racist character of the prosecution's chief witness, the prosecution's playing of the "wife abuse" card has received little media comment, although this "play" was much more offensive. It was obviously calculated to appeal to the emotions and not the logic of the jury. However, the jury — which included 10 women! — was not fooled.

Police Misconduct

A central issue highlighted by the trial concerns the shoddy practices that pass for "investigative procedures" at the LAPD. Similar conditions prevail in other U.S. cities. That was the source of the vast sympathy for the defendant and rejection of the prosecution's case among most African Americans and other people of color as well as among many whites who are race and class conscious.

While this case was being tried, many instances of police brutality, criminality, and corruption have been exposed. For example, in Philadelphia there are the cases of Mumia Abu Jamal and many others in which the Philadelphia police department framed up, brutalized, imprisoned, and/or sent to death row innocent Blacks; in New Orleans, police are actually involved in robberies and murders while on duty; in New York City — in the 30th precinct in the Bronx, for example — dozens of police officers have been involved in extortion, drug dealing, and robbery. This, of course, is aside from "routine" practices of police brutality and often outright murder, usually against Black and Hispanic victims.

A Black LAPD cop on the "Geraldo Rivera Show" the night the verdict was announced got to the heart of the matter when he observed that the cops purely and simply treat Blacks far worse than they do whites. That is one reason for the split along race lines that has characterized the response to this verdict: many whites

Making Sense of the O.J. Verdict

Whether you believe O.J. Simpson was guilty, innocent, or have no opinion, you certainly can agree that the verdict handed down by the jury has stirred enormous controversy among Americans of all walks of life as they struggle to make sense of it within the context of all the publicity the case has received and the reality of race, gender, and class in America. Indeed, the import and impact of this verdict are precisely due to the issues they raise around race, gender, and class in America, historically and in the 1990s.

The verdict in the O.J. case is all of the following (and more):

1. a protest against the pervasive, racist-driven corruption in the American criminal "justice" system, resulting in its lack of credibility for a substantial portion of the American population;

2. a disturbing example of how issues of race and gender are often unnecessarily, divisively, and even tragically pitted against each other; and

3. a troubling confirmation of how "money buys justice" in America.

In their everyday lives, most white Americans have experienced the police as protectors. On the other hand, most law-abiding Black Americans (including this author) have had multiple experiences in which either they themselves or close family members were harassed or brutalized by the police and yet could not get help from the police when they legitimately needed protection.

Because of these differing life experiences, white jurors in the courtroom rarely, if ever, question the veracity or credibility of the police. Thus, a person victimized by police corruption has little or no chance of receiving justice at the hands of such a jury. Corrupt

and racist officials count on this fact to allow them to act with impunity.

On the other hand, because of their life experiences, Black jurors are more likely to seriously consider the possibility and impact of police misconduct. If the credibility of the officials involved is in doubt, then rationally the findings of those officials cannot be trusted, leading logically to reasonable doubt in any case (regardless of what one's personal suspicions regarding the defendant may be).

In regard to gender, historically, there has been a long legal tradition in the British system we inherited of considering women to be less credible than men and, until very recently, valuing their human rights less than men's, especially in the areas of intramarital conflict and sexual relations. In our society, issues of racism and sexism are often counterposed to each other. However, the separate impacts of racism and sexism are often integrally intertwined, as perhaps best exemplified in the experiences of Black women. But white women and Black men need to be aware of the ways in which they are respectively oppressed and demeaned by racism and sexism.

Class is a difficult issue to address in American society, because we like to pretend it doesn't exist. The reality is that the rich have always had the resources to get good legal representation, whereas the poor have to depend on an overworked, underfunded, and understaffed public defender system (or occasionally the good graces of a few altruistic lawyers). This disparity in resources accounts, in large part, for the disparity in conviction rates and severity of sentencing for defendants of differing socioeconomic status who have been accused of the same or similar crimes.

In fact, the fundamental purpose of the criminal so-called "justice" system is *not* to ensure the public safety of individual citizens but to protect the property rights of the rich. The massive incarceration of African Americans has not significantly decreased the amount of crime suffered by African American victims. Simple observation demonstrates that the judicial system fails *all* working people, both defendants *and* victims, and that is especially true in the communities of color.

The question is, under such circumstances, with such varying perspectives, experiences, and resources, how can all working people in this country unite to ensure a fair and just judicial system for all working people, regardless of race or gender?

Instead of falling into the trap of counterposing racism and sexism, persons of all races and genders need to acknowledge and validate our diverse life experiences and the lessons they teach us, no matter how foreign those experiences are to our own. Then we need to act in earnest to root out the cancers of racism and sexism from the very core of our society and put an end to the economic domination of one class by another, which puts severe limits on justice and human rights in this country.

If the verdict in the O.J. Simpson case leads the overwhelming majority of Americans to better recognize and understand the damaging impact of social injustice in our society; if it spurs a concerted effort to seriously and fairly address the inequities and disparities in the system; then it will have had a positive and unifying impact and the controversy will have been well worth it.

—Claire M. Cohen

simply do not want to believe the depth of the police (and judicial system's) abuse and corruption — because they have not experienced these the way most Blacks, and poor people in general, have. U.S. Justice Department figures reported in the *New York Times* October 5 show that one-third of Black men between the ages of 20 and 29 are presently imprisoned, on parole, or on probation in the United States. Five years ago, the figure was one-fourth.

The U.S. government's capitalist consultants estimate that in light of the deteriorating economic opportunities for young people in the United States, particularly for Blacks, during the next decade the number "will go to half"! The racism of the police, the courts, and the entire judicial system, as well as of the capitalist society they serve, is turning into a genocidal war against an entire people.

The "Mountain of Evidence"

During the trial, Denver molecular biologist and forensic expert Dr. John Gerdes, was called by the defense team to review the operations of the LAPD forensic laboratory as he had many others. Dr. Gerdes's opinion was that its procedures and personnel were so sloppy that "it should have been shut down." The lab had no effective rules for procedures (a "draft" book of rules had been lying on a supervisor's desk for four years!), there were minimal rules to document evidence collection, there was no serious supervision of personnel, there was no effective procedure to document testing, there was no inspection of procedures, the personnel was not properly trained, the evidence for criminal proceedings was not properly handled by any police personnel, and it was not kept secure from tampering or contamination once processed, to name a few of the reasons Gerdes cited for his conclusions.

In the defense summary, Barry Scheck, an attorney specializing in DNA testing and forensic science, for 15 years a professor of criminology at Columbia University, referred to Dr. Gerdes' opinion and systematically demolished the credibility of the prosecution's evidence. The defense had demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that the LAPD lab is a "black hole" as far as reliable evidence gathering and testing is concerned. Anything that passes through that lab is likely to be contaminated. Thus even if samples are actually tested by other, more reliable labs, the results cannot be trusted if the samples had first passed through this "cesspool of contamination" which is the LAPD laboratory.

This opinion is corroborated by the noted LA defense attorney Leslie Abramson, a legal expert hired throughout to comment for Fox 5, media mogul Rupert Murdoch's network.

Furthermore, as Scheck and the defense proved, even before "evidence" makes its way

to the LAPD lab, what passes for "police procedures" at a crime scene as far as evidence collection are concerned are so negligent as to be themselves criminal. Materials that need to be tested for fibers, hairs, and blood are thrown together into plastic bags or boxes and then handled carelessly, turned over to personnel who are not even told what they are handling. Crime scenes are subject to heavy traffic; bodies (and this was the case with the bodies of Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman) are dragged over crime areas, mixing up materials and destroying what could be vital evidence before it has been properly examined.

Far-Reaching Implications

The implications of this are far reaching. It would seem only just in light of all such revelations in connection with the Simpson case that the State of California should declare that *all* defendants convicted on the basis of LAPD "forensic evidence" deserve a new trial. An acquittal in the Simpson case adds considerable social weight to such a proposition. If the state of California does not volunteer to do this, a class action suit should be filed on behalf of all such prisoners.

The same is true for prisoners all over the country. Media reports since the trial have indicated that it is not only prisoners in Los Angeles County who have been wrongfully convicted.

The *New York Times* on October 11 reported that as regards blood testing procedures "although no other laboratory has been subjected to the scrutiny that the Los Angeles one has, a number of experts believe that other laboratories engage in similarly sloppy practices... forensic work is rarely challenged in court — most defendants plead guilty when faced with DNA evidence — so labs may feel that they can risk continuing to do business as usual."

By rights, the prosecution ("The People") should have bowed in shame, apologized for wasting public funds, promised never to do this again, and asked the judge to discontinue the case until such time as proper evidence could be gathered. After all, prosecutors aren't supposed to prosecute for the sake of it. What the case dramatized was the brutal measures that the system of "justice" in capitalist America resorts to in order to get a conviction.

Mark Fuhrman

From what I have observed of the coverage of this case, it seems obvious that the injustices that characterized the preliminary hearings in June 1994 were augmented by new ones. In this article I will take up only one of them, the matter of Mark Fuhrman.

One of the key persons initially in charge of the investigation for the LAPD, Fuhrman was the person who first climbed over a wall and entered the defendant's premises without a search warrant in the early morning hours of June 13, the morning after the murders and

conducted a search of the defendant's residence; he was the man who then first interrogated a key witness (Kato Kaelin); he is the man who allegedly found the infamous bloody glove in a narrow walkway behind the defendant's home; and the man who allegedly found blood on the defendant's Ford Bronco.

Fuhrman of course was revealed to be a liar and a racist cop long accustomed to abusing Black prisoners and planting and fabricating evidence. He lied on the witness stand while under oath, claiming that he had stopped using the term "nigger" ten years ago. However, the defense was able to produce a series of taped interviews this sick individual gave to a prospective screenwriter, Laura Hart McKinny, in which he used "the N word" 41 times. In the taped conversations with McKinny, Fuhrman also proclaimed his contempt for Blacks and his feelings that they should all be put in a pile and burned. This statement is what prompted defense attorney Johnnie Cochran in his summary to equate Fuhrman with Adolf Hitler. In the tapes, Fuhrman speaks gleefully about instances when he brutally beat up Blacks in his custody, planted evidence on them or framed them up, and destroyed exculpatory evidence.

These revealing remarks were played in court and broadcast to millions of viewers. This spoke volumes about the nature of the LAPD, where such a person is not only tolerated and promoted but entrusted with major police investigations. (Far from being a "rogue cop," Fuhrman is typical of the mentality promoted by large-city police departments in the United States — to "ride herd" on Blacks and the poor in the service of the ruling rich.) The Fuhrman tapes also speak volumes about the prosecution team. The character of this man and all his accomplices must be a regular feature of life down at the Los Angeles court, where the defendants are disproportionately African American and Hispanic.

Prosecutor Marcia Clark must be accustomed to condoning such personalities and cooperating with (and relying on!) them. In both the preliminary hearings and at the trial itself, the prosecution was determined to convict Simpson and use Fuhrman as its chief witness.

While the public was allowed to hear the Fuhrman tapes, *the jury was not!* Worse yet, Presiding Judge Ito did not even allow the defense to read to the jury selected sections from transcripts of the tapes where Fuhrman bragged about his crimes. All Judge Ito allowed the jury to hear were two relatively innocuous sentences where Fuhrman used "the N word" in passing, leaving out all his other vicious statements and admissions.

Thus, in order to help ensure that the jury would somehow find out what a scoundrel the prosecution was relying on to build its case, the defense team called to the stand other victims of Fuhrman's racist behavior or witnesses to it. In her final summary, Marcia Clark was forced to totally dissociate herself from Fuhrman, de-

claring not only that such persons should not be in the LAPD but that they should not even be on the planet! That was her chief witness!

Judge Ito allowed the defense to recall Fuhrman to the stand after the tapes became known. Fuhrman refused to answer any questions, exercising his Fifth Amendment right to remain silent so as not to incriminate himself. However, the jury was not present for all this. The judge denied a defense request to recall Fuhrman before the jury and even denied the defense the right to tell the jury that their request had been denied or that Fuhrman had taken the Fifth Amendment.

The decision by Judge Ito to suppress the Fuhrman tapes from the jury was a blatant act of prejudice against the defense. Although the public could learn how unreliable Fuhrman was and why, the jury deciding the fate of the accused was not to know the depth of this witness's depravity until after their verdict was announced and they had returned to the world outside.

U.S. Judicial Process on Trial

What was really on trial in the case of "The People vs. O.J. Simpson" was the entire U.S. judicial process. Since the case first came before the courts, the issue for many people, especially African Americans, was whether or not this Black man, who was very rich, could do what the millions of poor Blacks can rarely do: take on the rotten, racist police and court system and beat it. The *New York Times* on October 11, 1995, reported that it was not only the oppressed who understood this: "Many experts say the Los Angeles Police Department's apparent mishandling of evidence in the Simpson trial may typify what happens in lower-profile cases nationally, but those defendants are generally too poor to mount a counterattack that scrutinizes the quality of the genetic evidence against them."

The fact is that the defense team and the jury in the Simpson case did deal a small but effective blow to the system, from which it will be reeling for some time to come. The media pundits and many racist whites will for a long time try to turn the tables and charge the defense attorneys and the jury with wrongful behavior — to take the heat off the LAPD, the LA Prosecutor's Office, Judge Ito, and those like them. The corporate media coverage tends to imply that the defendant is guilty anyway, regardless of the verdict.

But the African Americans who cheered at the verdict got a small vindication, a small victory that day. The system is not, after all, invincible. This verdict could begin a campaign that could some day become a flood to wash away cops like Fuhrman and the police and state institutions that promote his type. That will take organization, conscious planning, and consistent work. □

October 11, 1995

An Antiwar Activist Responds to Robert McNamara

In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam by Robert S. McNamara (with Brian VanDeMark). Published in the United States by Times Books, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto, 1995, \$27.50 U.S.A. and \$34.95 Canada. Reviewed by Evelyn Sell

As an antiwar activist, I had some frightening experiences: when I was part of the security team to protect Detroit demonstrators from attack by an ultraright-wing group in 1966; when U.S. Army troops used tear gas against protesters near the Pentagon during the 1967 mobilization in Washington, D.C.; and when belligerent prowar residents of Killeen, Texas, screamed at and threatened marchers during a GI-organized demonstration on May 15, 1971.

I felt a different kind of fright while reading Robert S. McNamara's *In Retrospect*. It was scary to hear "from the horse's mouth" that the men who directed the Vietnam war — and these were the same men who had the power to initiate planetwide nuclear destruction! — did not know what they were doing or what consequences would result from their decisions. According to McNamara's account: we didn't know enough about Southeast Asia; we were misled by the South Vietnamese government and by our own military leaders; we were too busy with other problems to pay sufficient attention to the war in Vietnam. And these were among the best and brightest in the ruling circles of U.S. society!

In his first chapter, "Journey to Washington," McNamara establishes his own credentials as a very intelligent and highly moral person as well as a top-notch executive capable of running a huge enterprise. He outlines his first 44 years of life before becoming the youngest ever Secretary of Defense in 1961. After graduating from the University of California at Berkeley, he attended the Harvard Graduate School of Business, worked as a civilian consultant to the War Department during World War II, served in the Army Air Corps, and was personally chosen by Henry Ford II in 1960 to become the first non-family president of the Ford Motor Company. Barely two months later, McNamara was asked to serve as secretary of defense by President-elect John F. Kennedy.

"Throughout the Kennedy years," McNamara explains,

we operated on two premises that ultimately proved contradictory. One was that the fall of South Vietnam to Communism would threaten the security of the United States and the Western World. The other was that only the South Vietnamese could defend their nation, and that America should limit its role to providing training and logistical support. [p. 29]



Defense Secretary Robert McNamara describes Hanoi-Haiphong area bombing at a July 1966 news conference.

Why didn't U.S. leaders recognize this contradiction as events unfolded? Why were misjudgments made and erroneous policies pursued? McNamara blames ignorance, misinformation, and the multiplicity of world problems confronting government officials.

We Didn't Know

In his second chapter, which covers 1961 through late summer 1963, McNamara briefly describes the little he knew about the recent history of Indochina. "I had never visited Indochina," he explains,

nor did I understand or appreciate its history, language, culture, or values. The same must be said, to varying degrees, about President [John F.] Kennedy, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, National Security Adviser McGeorge Bundy, military adviser Maxwell Taylor, and many others. When it came to Vietnam, we found ourselves setting policy for a region that was terra incognita.

Worse, our government lacked experts for us to consult to compensate for our ignorance. [p. 32]

This absence of appropriate specialists is blamed on the fact that the most knowledgeable

East Asia and China experts in the State Department — John Paton Davies, Jr., John Stewart Service, and John Carter Vincent — had been purged during the McCarthy hysteria of the 1950s. Without men like these to provide sophisticated, nuanced insights, we — certainly I — badly misread China's objectives and mistook its bellicose rhetoric to imply a drive for regional hegemony. We also totally underestimated the nationalist aspect of Ho Chi Minh's movement. We saw him first as a Communist and only second as a Vietnamese nationalist. [p. 33]

According to McNamara:

Top government officials need specialists — experts — at their elbows when they make

decisions on matters outside their own experience. If we had had more Asia experts around us, perhaps we would not have been so simpl-minded about China and Vietnam. [p. 117]

In late 1963, McNamara "stated the conventional wisdom among top U.S. civilian and military officials" in a memo to newly-sworn-in President Lyndon B. Johnson. With the help of hindsight, McNamara comments that his memo showed

how limited and shallow our analysis and discussion of the alternatives to our existing policy in Vietnam — i.e., neutralization or withdrawal — had been...we never carefully debated what U.S. forces would ultimately be required, what our chances of success would be, or what the political, military, financial, and human costs would be if we provided [U.S. military force]. Indeed, these basic questions went unexamined.

We were at the beginning of a slide down a tragic and slippery slope. [p. 107]

This slide was accelerated by an admitted failure to ask necessary questions and demand answers. For example, after quoting from a January 22, 1964, memo from the Joint Chiefs, who proposed "bolder actions," McNamara muses,

But at what cost and with what chance of success? This memo, and subsequent ones given to me over the next four years, contained no answers to these crucial military questions.

I criticize the president, his advisers, and myself as much as the chiefs for this negligence. It was our job to demand the answers. We did not press hard enough for them. And the chiefs did not volunteer them. [p. 108]

Within months, McNamara notes, "under the pressure of events and without clearly recognizing where our actions might lead, we had begun to change course" (p. 110). In the chapter entitled, "The 1964 Election and Its Aftermath," McNamara writes:

The Joint Chiefs agreed we should prepare plans for U.S. air strikes against North Vietnamese targets and the Ho Chi Minh Trail with the objective of destroying Hanoi's will to fight and its ability to continue to supply the Vietcong. That, in conjunction with our later ground effort, eventually became the military strategy we followed in subsequent years. Neither then nor later did the chiefs fully assess the probability of achieving these objectives, how long it might take, or what it would cost in lives lost, resources expended and risks incurred. [p. 152]

From 16,000 "Advisers" to 550,000 Combat Troops

Readers are given a "we didn't know" explanation for the still-controversial events in the Tonkin Gulf during the summer of 1964. Trying to refute the charge that the Johnson administration provoked an incident in order to escalate U.S. military actions, McNamara presents a scenario which appears to be like a Keystone Cops script, full of mistaken identities and confusing chases — but without any laughs.

McNamara outlines two military operations, Plan 34A and DESOTO, which apparently stumbled over each other to produce a major turning point in U.S. military actions. Plan 34A involved two aspects: South Vietnamese agents equipped with radios were dropped into North Vietnam to carry out sabotage and intelligence operations; and South Vietnamese or foreign mercenaries used high-speed patrol boats to conduct hit-and-run attacks against North Vietnamese shore and island installations. DESOTO was part of a global electronic reconnaissance system carried out by U.S. naval vessels with special equipment. "Although some individuals knew of both 34A operations and DESOTO patrols," McNamara writes,

the approval process for each was compartmentalized, and few, if any, senior officials either planned or followed in detail the operational schedules of both. We should have. [p. 130]

Indeed they should have! A 34A mission attacked two North Vietnamese islands in the Tonkin Gulf on July 30, 1964. The U.S. destroyer *Maddox*, carrying out a DESOTO patrol, steamed into the gulf the following morning. Several days later, the *Maddox* reported that it was attacked by torpedoes and automatic weapons fire — with no injuries or damage. Two days later, the *Maddox* radioed that it faced imminent attack from unidentified vessels. Although further information from the *Maddox* cast substantial doubt on whether a real attack had actually occurred, a top-level decision was made to launch U.S. air strikes against North Vietnamese patrol boat bases and a supporting oil complex. The Tonkin Gulf Resolution, giving the president authority to employ armed force in Southeast Asia, was approved on August 7 by Congress (88-2 in the Senate, 416-0 in the House). In McNamara's words, the Tonkin Gulf Resolution "did serve to open the floodgates" (p. 141).

We Were Misled

A rising tide of U.S. military force followed the 1964 election of President Johnson. McNamara repeatedly notes that he and other top policy makers were hampered by the information and evaluations given to them by the military chiefs. For example, the chiefs "downplayed" the

high risks of a major conflict in Asia, which could not be confined to air and naval action but would almost inevitably involve a Korean-style ground action and possibly even the use of nuclear weapons at some point. [p. 160]

In the spring of 1965 a decision was made to directly employ U.S. ground troops in Vietnam. The number of troops rose from 33,000 to 82,000. In June, General Westmoreland urged an increase to 175,000 troops. During a meeting to discuss this proposal, President Johnson directed that General Westmoreland

be asked what military strategy should be followed; how the Vietcong and North Vietnamese would respond; how many casualties the United States would suffer; what responses could be expected to U.S. actions, and when they would occur. *The lack of answers to such questions handicapped our decision making in the months ahead.* [Emphasis added; p. 189.]

Meeting with General Westmoreland and his staff in Saigon during July 1965, McNamara questioned their fundamental assumptions about the sure military victory of U.S. forces "if we do everything we can" about the expected military strategy of enemy forces, and about the ability of U.S. and South Vietnamese troops to wage effective antiguerrilla operations. "Looking back," McNamara writes, "I clearly erred by not forcing — then or later, in either Saigon or Washington — a knock-down, drag-out debate over the loose assumptions, unasked questions, and thin analyses underlying our military strategy in Vietnam" (p. 203). Comparing Westmoreland's military strategy with actual developments in the war, McNamara concludes:

All these assumptions proved incorrect. We did not force the Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army to fight on our terms. We did not wage an effective antiguerrilla war against them. And bombing did not reduce the infiltration of men and supplies into the South below required levels or weaken the North's will to continue the conflict. [p. 211]

Obviously, McNamara did not learn from his earlier experiences with the U.S. military chiefs during the Kennedy administration. In Chapter 2, "The Early Years," McNamara informs readers about the "overly optimistic" reports about military progress. For example, in 1962, "General Harkins and his staff reported that South Vietnamese forces were pushing back the Vietcong and loosening their grip on the countryside." McNamara was told by Harkins, "There is no doubt we are on the winning side" (p. 47). McNamara asserts that the primary reason for this "mistaken optimism" was the false picture provided by the South Vietnamese government. "It is now clear they were receiving

very inaccurate information from the South Vietnamese, who tended to report what they believed Americans wanted to hear" (p. 47).

This type of blame is repeated later in Chapter 9, entitled "Troubles Deepen: *January 31, 1966 – May 19, 1967.*" McNamara acknowledges,

From the beginning of our involvement in Vietnam, the South Vietnamese forces had been giving us poor intelligence and inaccurate reports. Sometimes these inaccuracies were conscious attempts to mislead; at other times they were the product of too much optimism. And sometimes the inaccuracies merely reflected the difficulty of gauging progress accurately. [p. 237]

To assess progress, McNamara explains,

we measured the targets destroyed in the North, the traffic down the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the number of captives, the weapons seized, the enemy body count, and so on.... We tried to use body counts as a measurement to help us figure out what we should be doing in Vietnam to win the war while putting our troops at the least risk. Every attempt to monitor progress in Vietnam during my tenure as Secretary of Defense was directed toward those goals, *but often the reports were misleading.* [Emphasis added; pp. 237-8.]

General Westmoreland had one set of figures and concluded the U.S. was winning, but the CIA contended:

The Vietnamese Communists have continued to *expand* their Main Forces, both by infiltration and by local recruitment.... It appears that the Communists can continue to sustain their overall strength during the coming year. [Emphasis added; p. 238.]

Writing some thirty years after the fact, McNamara asks, "How were we to decide which interpretation to accept?" As we know, at the time when it counted, McNamara and other top government figures chose to publicize Westmoreland's "we're winning!" reports. Pessimistic but accurate information about vital subjects — such as the corrupt and tyrannical South Vietnamese government regimes — were kept secret or denied.

We Had Other Problems to Solve

"Readers must wonder," McNamara writes in Chapter 10,

...how presumably intelligent, hardworking, and experienced officials — both civilian and military — failed to address systematically and thoroughly questions whose answers so deeply affected the lives of our citizens and the welfare of our nation. Simply put, such an orderly, rational approach was precluded by the "crowding out" which resulted from the fact that Vietnam was but one of a multitude of problems we confronted. [p. 277]

McNamara details one such problem: a possible Egyptian invasion of Israel. Earlier, in Chapter 4, he gives the same excuse:

our failure [to ask military chiefs the necessary questions and demand truthful answers] was partially the result of having many more commitments than just Vietnam. Instability in Latin

America, Africa, and the Middle East, and the continued Soviet threat in Europe all took up time and attention. We had no senior group working exclusively on Vietnam, so the crisis there became just one of many items on each person's plate. [p. 108]

No Praise Deserved for Confessed Errors

Are these plausible explanations? Not in my opinion or experience. I was certainly no expert on Vietnam — but a little research was all I needed during the early 1960s to find out about the history of the long Vietnamese struggle for liberation, the dictatorial nature of the South Vietnamese government, the true role of U.S. “advisers,” and other matters. The war was the major focus of my 1964 campaign as the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. senator in Michigan. My understandings were deepened and broadened when I attended the first teach-in against the war in Vietnam; it was held on March 24, 1965, at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Lectures were presented by well-known experts such as Professor Robert S. Browne, an economist who had been a State Department adviser in Vietnam for six years.

McNamara cannot legitimately claim that misinformation from U.S. military leaders and the South Vietnamese government or lack of expert knowledge led him and others to misjudge the situation and make incorrect policy decisions during his tenure as secretary of defense (1961–67). Sprinkled throughout this book are proofs that McNamara and other policy makers were well aware of the internal situation in South Vietnam, the failed military programs, and deliberate falsehoods being offered to the U.S. public. Here are a few examples:

- “[President Ngo Dinh] Diem, those around him, and the political structures that he built lacked a connection to the South Vietnamese people; he never developed a bond with them” (p. 412). This was made abundantly clear to McNamara when he was in South Vietnam during September 1963. He met with P.J. Honey, an expert on Vietnam who had close contacts with leaders of South and North Vietnam, and who had been a supporter of Diem. Honey informed McNamara that South Vietnamese civilians and the military openly criticized Diem, and that the population had been especially shocked by Diem's attacks on Buddhists.

The next day, the CIA's Saigon station chief told McNamara that the regime's treatment of Buddhists had galvanized widespread discontent. Three days after this meeting, McNamara interviewed the papal delegate, who told him that the South Vietnamese regime “had established a police state and perpetuated widespread torture.” McNamara presents excerpts from the report he helped draft for President Kennedy: “There are serious political tensions in Saigon (and perhaps elsewhere in South Vietnam) where the

Diem-Nhu government is becoming increasingly unpopular” (pp. 76–77).

- In November 1963 a military coup replaced the Diem regime with an even more repressive government. Within a few weeks, Kennedy was assassinated and President Johnson “inherited a god-awful mess eminently more dangerous than the one Kennedy had inherited from Eisenhower” (p. 101).

In December 1963, McNamara held more meetings in South Vietnam and returned with a “gloomy” report to President Johnson — but in his *public* statements, McNamara emphasized, “We reviewed the plans of the South Vietnamese and we have every reason to believe they will be successful” — a pronouncement which McNamara terms “an overstatement at best.” He calls this being “less candid when I reported to the press.” His justification for this dishonesty is: “how, in times of war and crisis, can senior government officials be completely frank to their own people without giving aid and comfort to the enemy?” (p. 105).

- There was a sharp escalation in U.S. military actions during 1965. Massive bombing of North Vietnam took place, and the number of U.S. military personnel rose from 23,300 “advisers” to 184,300 combat troops by the end of the year. “We had no sooner begun to carry out the plan to increase dramatically U.S. forces in Vietnam than it became clear there was reason to question the strategy on which the plan was based. Slowly, the sobering, frustrating, tormenting limitations of military operations in Vietnam became painfully apparent” (p. 208).

Toward the end of 1965, McNamara sent President Johnson memoranda informing him: “guerrilla war continued at high intensity; Vietcong attacks, sabotage, and terrorism showed little signs of abating; the Thieu-Ky government had survived but accomplished little; and, worst of all, Saigon's political control over the countryside — where most South Vietnamese lived — had weakened” (p. 219).

- The “gloomy” facts about the war were not shared with the U.S. population. Summarizing the attitude of the special advisers to the president (called the Wise Men), McNamara notes that “with respect to how to unite the American people, they advised emphasizing ‘light at the end of the tunnel’ instead of battles, death, and danger” (p. 309).

We Were Wrong

By the end of 1967, McNamara's personal views and proposals differed greatly from those of most U.S. military leaders and civilian advisers to the president. He explains that a November 1, 1967, memorandum to President Johnson “raised the tension” between him and the chief executive. “Four weeks later, President Johnson announced my election as president of the World Bank...I do not

know to this day whether I quit or was fired. Maybe it was both” (p. 311).

In the last chapter of his book, McNamara presents his answers to the questions: Was it wise for the U.S. to intervene militarily in Vietnam? What were our mistakes, and what lessons can we learn? How can we apply what we learned to today's world and to the future?

U.S. military intervention *was* necessary, according to McNamara. In his “final word on Vietnam,” he writes:

Let me be simple and direct — I want to be clearly understood: the United States of America fought in Vietnam for eight years for what it believed to be good and honest reasons. By such action, administrations of both parties sought to protect our security, prevent the spread of totalitarian Communism, and promote individual freedom and political democracy....Although we sought to do the right thing — and believed we were doing the right thing — in my judgment, hindsight proves us wrong. [p. 333]

Looking back, McNamara offers eleven major causes for the U.S. military disaster in Vietnam. These points include:

- misjudgments about the North Vietnamese, Soviet Union, and China which led to an exaggeration of the dangers posed to the U.S.;
- profound ignorance of the history, culture, politics, motivations, objectives, etc., of the people in that region;
- a failure to recognize the limitations of sophisticated high-technology military resources;
- failure to involve Congress and the U.S. population in discussion and debate about large-scale U.S. military activity in Southeast Asia — leading to a failure to maintain popular support;
- failure to appropriately organize the top echelons of the executive branch in order to cope with the complexities of the war in Vietnam; and
- pressing forward unilaterally rather than involving other countries.

How does McNamara apply these lessons to present-day realities?

In the postwar years, the United States had the power — and to a considerable degree exercised that power — to shape the world as we chose. In the next century that will not be possible.... While remaining the world's strongest nation, the United States will live in a multipolar world, and its foreign policy and defense programs must be adjusted to this emerging reality. In such a world, a need clearly exists for developing new relationships both among the Great Powers — of which there will be at least five: China, Europe, Japan, Russia, and the United States — and between the Great Powers and other nations. [p. 324]

Arguing against the doctrine of power politics, McNamara urges more reliance on the United Nations and collective security, main-

taining “the capacity to protect ourselves” militarily while cutting back U.S. defense expenditures, and a vision of a new world “in which relations among nations would be based on the rule of law” (pp. 327–8). Military conflicts will continue, according to McNamara, even in this better-than-before new world. It is at this point in his book that McNamara slips in the key lesson for readers: “We must learn from Vietnam how to manage limited wars effectively” (page 331).

Better Late Than Never?

McNamara stuck to a code of silence for over thirty years — during his tenure as secretary of defense and for decades after. Some reviewers have praised him for belatedly providing an insider’s picture of developments during the Vietnam war. Others have berated him for not airing the information at the time. A number of articles have speculated about his motives for going public now.

The account offered by McNamara does not, in truth, present substantially new information nor profound insights. In fact, he is

still dishonest about widely-known features of the Vietnam War. For example, his repeated use of the label “advisers” continues to conceal the true activities of U.S. military personnel. The U.S. pilots who were flying missions in Vietnam in 1962–63 were not advising! He perpetuates governmental dishonesty when he refers in passing to “pacification” and to “the strategic hamlet program.” These were, in reality, murderous methods utilized by the U.S.-backed Diem regime to combat popular opposition and to force Vietnamese peasants into concentration camps.

Throughout his book, McNamara presents an elitist attitude about government and about military and political decision making. His discomfort with democratic processes is shown by the scant attention he gives to the changes in policy demanded by the antiwar movement, which represented a majority of the U.S. population. He does not write that it was a mistake to ignore these demands — on the contrary, the only mistake he sees is that the government leaders did not adequately

prepare the public to accept the goals and strategies of the nation’s ruling elite.

The value of *In Retrospect*, in my opinion, is that it helps focus attention once again on significant developments which continue to reverberate to this day. The anecdotal material and quotations from memoranda and reports confirm what antiwar activists were saying during teach-ins, rallies, speeches to massive demonstrations, and other public events protesting U.S. government policies. In making this point, I am not happily proclaiming, “I told you so!” My purpose is to underline the understandings reached by millions during the war: we can’t trust this government; we can’t trust what these leaders tell us; we must search out the truth for ourselves; and we must mobilize the power we have in order to stop the criminal actions carried out by the U.S. government. This self-reliance and rejection of ruling powers remains the best formula for forging a truly new world — far different from the prescription written by McNamara. □

“We Need a Mass Political Movement to Challenge the Power Structure

Continued from page 4

sense that, I could hear that, I could feel that spirit of unity, that sense of power in numbers and in single-mindedness of purpose. And that was a very powerful thing.

But I also saw how the crowd (and I was in the middle of the crowd) resonated very positively to the more political points made in several of the speeches. Unfortunately the speeches were a mixed bag. Some were very backward and reactionary. Some were progressive. Some were a little of everything.

It seemed as though there were two realities taking place that day. One on the stage where the speakers and the leaders of the march were expressing themselves, and another among the million men who were there. They came looking for powerful leaders. They didn’t find them on the stage. They found them among themselves.

They found leadership in their ranks and I think that’s going to be a very positive thing in the months ahead as they return home and get involved in the civic and political life of their communities. New grassroots leadership will emerge.

How progressive that leadership will be remains to be seen. This is, I think, a challenge for those of us on the left, not only to monitor it closely but to get involved at the local level and help to give guidance and direction to that emerging leadership, particularly among young people.

Q.: Many Black elected officials, Jesse Jackson, entertainers, etc., endorsed and/or participated in the march. What is Farrakhan’s relationship now with these more “mainstream” elements in the Black community?

A.: Unfortunately most of them played second fiddle to Farrakhan on this thing. His marathon speech — two and a half hours — was far too long. It was rambling and lacked any sharp focus. There wasn’t enough emphasis on public policy issues, too much mysticism and numerology. Just the length of the speech itself was a violation of the privilege of being the keynote speaker and did reflect, in my view, a kind of megalomania in Farrakhan.

Hopefully that can be brought into check if structures of accountability emerge in the months ahead that will make the NOI and Farrakhan more accountable to African American communities around the country.

I thought that the most powerful part of his speech was where he dealt with white supremacy, when he said, “White supremacy must die in order for humanity to live.” I think that’s a very powerful point. I was hoping that he would develop it more, but he didn’t. The bourgeois media’s interpretation of this was that his old anti-white racism was expressing itself again, which of course is nonsense. A critique of white supremacy does not translate into anti-white racism.

Farrakhan’s emphasis on self-help, self-improvement, self-reliance, all solid values in themselves, hark back to the days of Booker T. Washington’s accommodationist position *vis-à-vis* segregation in the South. This was vehemently opposed by W.E.B. DuBois. Farrakhan has been called the Booker T. Washington of the 1990s. In my view while these values are good in themselves they are not necessarily an antidote to racial and social inequality.

Inequality is systemic; it is structured into all the social, political, and economic institu-

tions of U.S. capitalism. And I don’t think that Farrakhan and his people in the NOI understand it in those terms.

So in order to destroy the structures of inequality we need more than self-help and self-improvement. We need a broad-based mass movement that is political in nature, one that challenges the power structure.

Clearly Farrakhan’s stakes have gone up. He is now in the ranks of major Black leaders in this country — for better or for worse. Farrakhan is not, despite what many think, a flaming radical given to anti-Semitic speeches, at least he isn’t any longer. His effort to enter the mainstream has also had an affect on him. He learned something from the fiasco of Khalid Muhammad’s vile speech on a New Jersey campus. He is trying very hard to clean up his image, and has particularly sought the assistance of Chavis, when he was still head of the NAACP, and Kweisi Mfume, when he was chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

The attempt by the mainstream media to demonize Farrakhan is something positive in the eyes of most Black Americans. Given the hatred of the white power structure they will turn out in massive numbers to hear him speak as a simple act of defiance. And despite his sexism and homophobia he has the keen ability to capture the essence of the Black condition. He provides a voice for the voiceless, expressing the profound resentment that exists within the community. Clearly, he isn’t afraid of what white people will think of him. That is why he has gained the ear of the masses in a way that no other Black leader can even hope to match at the present time. □

War Crimes in Vietnam — and Elsewhere

by Frank Lovell

Since the publication in April of Robert McNamara's book *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, it seems as if nearly everyone still living who wrote about that war at the time, or who was in some way involved with those supposedly in charge of government policy in the Johnson administration, has commented, either to praise or condemn McNamara for confessing at this late date the crimes of the U.S. government in that particular situation more than a quarter century past. And this flurry of judgmental evaluation and retrospective analysis has in turn spawned further comment and analysis of the personal and political motives behind it all.

An article in the May 8 *New Yorker* magazine, by Sidney Blumenthal, recaps the media scene. Both the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times* had excoriated McNamara. In its lead editorial on April 12 the *New York Times* reminded its readers that the war in Vietnam had once been called "McNamara's War," and blamed him for the 3 million Vietnamese and 58,000 Americans who died. The *LA Times* was no less severe, publishing a lengthy review of McNamara's book by David Halberstam, who is thought by many to be an authority on the subject. He called McNamara "a man so contorted and so deep in his own unique self-delusion and self-division that he still doesn't know who he is and what he did at that time."

Halberstam vs. McNamara

Blumenthal points out that Halberstam figures as "a minor character in McNamara's memoir," implying a consequent animus on Halberstam's part. McNamara quotes at length the hawkish views of Halberstam when he was a *New York Times* reporter in Vietnam in the early 1960s. According to McNamara, those hawkish views "reflected the opinion of the majority of journalists at the time." McNamara's argument is apparently that that kind of reporting influenced public opinion and helped pressure the government into adopting its war policy. Later Halberstam became a critic of government policy on the war — at about the same time that McNamara, as one of the responsible policy makers, was questioning the policy and had commissioned documentation that later became famous as the Pentagon Papers.

This history of the ill-advised U.S. entry into war in Vietnam, and the players involved in the process (both major and minor), is fairly well known, and what McNamara's memoir adds is very little in fact. So the question arises, Why does he write about the barbaric event at this late

date? And why is he so roundly condemned for doing so?

McNamara's Defenders

Not surprisingly McNamara has defenders, including Blumenthal, who submits that serious controversy is bound to ensue when an apolitical man becomes a decision maker in a political vortex like the Vietnam war. (This is the thesis of the Blumenthal article.) Others, too, quickly came to McNamara's defense. Blumenthal quotes from a letter by authors William Styron and William Manchester, published April 26: "No *mea culpa* deserves such contempt," they said. "It is true that his comes late — very late — but it should be saluted, not scorned... America can never be damaged by an act of contrition."

A more vigorous defense appeared in the May 25 *New York Review of Books*: "The Abuse of McNamara" by historian Theodore Draper. In a footnote Draper explains that he holds no brief for McNamara's role in the false policy of the U.S. government, having criticized that policy in his book *Abuse of Power* in 1967, but that he is "dismayed by the abuse of Robert McNamara."

Draper's target is the "vitriolic and protracted campaign in the *New York Times*," conducted by that paper's editorial staff and columnists Max Frankel, Frank Rich, and Anthony Lewis. The main line of attack from these sources, according to Draper was, "Why didn't he speak up sooner?" (a motif also taken up by Robert MacNeil on the MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour in an interview with McNamara).

Draper Corrects the Record

Draper is determined to set the record straight. He shows that McNamara did in fact speak out in 1971 and that the *New York Times* was complicit in making his protest heard. "The oddest thing about the highly censorious references to McNamara's book," Draper says, "is the fact that the *Times* published the Pentagon Papers with McNamara's knowledge and approval." He goes on:

The *Times* writers could have read McNamara's account in his book of how he knew of and approved publication. McNamara tells how the *Times*'s then Washington bureau chief, James ("Scotty") Reston, was dining at McNamara's home on June 24, 1971. A telephone call came for Reston telling him that Attorney General John Mitchell was trying to prevent publication of the papers. Reston asked McNamara what he thought. "I said," McNamara writes, "the *Times* should continue printing them but should

hedge its position by making clear it would obey any order issued by the Supreme Court."

"Thus," Draper comments, "McNamara knew in advance that he was going 'to share his policy disagreement with the country' (Frankel) and that he was not one of those who 'swallowed their doubts' (Lewis)."

McNamara's 1967 Memorandum

In his defense of McNamara's memoir Draper reminds contemporary readers of what was revealed nearly a quarter century ago about McNamara's role as a policy maker in the Johnson administration. On May 19, 1967, McNamara sent Johnson a crucial memorandum, parts of which cover seven pages in the Pentagon Papers. Draper quotes passages from this memorandum, which, he says "reveal the tenor of McNamara's thoughts and feelings at the time." These quotes bear repeating here:

The Vietnam war is unpopular in this country. It is becoming increasingly unpopular as it escalates — causing more American casualties, more fear of its growing into wider war, more privation of the domestic sector, and more distress at the amount of suffering being visited on the noncombatants in Vietnam, South and North. Most Americans do not know how we got where we are, and most, without knowing why, but taking advantage of hindsight, are convinced that somehow we should not have gotten this deeply in. All want the war ended and expect their president to end it. Successfully, or else.

The use of tactical nuclear and area-denial — radiological-bacteriological-chemical weapons would probably be suggested at some point if the Chinese entered the war in Vietnam or Korea or if U.S. losses were running high while conventional efforts were not producing desired results.

There may be a limit beyond which many Americans and much of the world will not permit the United States to go. The picture of the world's greatest superpower killing or seriously injuring 1,000 noncombatants a week, while trying to pound a tiny backward nation into submission on an issue whose merits are hotly disputed, is not a pretty one.

(1) Our commitment is only to see that the people of South Vietnam are permitted to determine their own future.

(2) This commitment ceases if the country ceases to help itself.

These, then, were some of McNamara's "thoughts and feelings," as he expressed them to the president of the United States in early 1967. They became public knowledge in 1971 with publication of the Pentagon Papers. And now they are repeated almost verbatim in his

book, released in the highly charged political atmosphere of 1995.

Events Since 1967

Twenty-eight years have passed since McNamara drafted his memorandum to Johnson, urging reassessment of the government's war policy, and in the interim much has happened. In 1968 Johnson got rid of McNamara by sending him off to become president of the World Bank. Then Johnson himself decided not to run for reelection, recognizing that his war policy had made him too unpopular. It made his party, the Democrats, too unpopular as well, and they lost the 1968 elections to the Republicans.

The war continued, however, and was intensified through the first term of the Nixon administration (1969–1972). It continued through Nixon's second term, which was cut short by the Watergate scandal (itself an indirect product of the struggle over the war). After Nixon's departure in August 1974, the war continued under Gerald Ford. On April 10, 1975, the Ford administration asked Congress for another \$1 billion for the war, but by the end of the month the last American troops were airlifted from the roof of the U.S. embassy in Saigon.

The debate in U.S. government circles over the Vietnam war policy did not end with military and political defeat. General Westmoreland, who had been in charge of military operations, suffered only defeats and was recalled in March of 1968 to be made army chief of staff in the Pentagon, far removed from the scene of battle. McNamara was replaced as secretary of defense by Clark Clifford, a top political strategist of the Democratic Party at the time.

Such personnel changes failed to change the fortunes of war or the course of U.S. politics. The generals continued to hold out the promise of eventual victory and demanded more troops for the slaughter. And the politicians in both the Democratic and Republican parties tried to appear as if they favored withdrawing U.S. troops (in response to massive popular antiwar sentiment and huge demonstrations in which students played the leading role). At the same time the politicians pursued an ill-defined win-the-war policy.

To this day Westmoreland and his generals claim the war would have been won if the Congress had not failed them and if the antiwar movement had not sapped the will of the American people. The politicians, for their part, have kept the debate alive by refusing to recognize the defeat and pretending to continue the struggle against Vietnamese "totalitarianism" by supporting demands that the postwar Vietnamese government return the remains of all U.S. troops "missing in action."

This unresolved acrimonious debate over war policy in Vietnam and who should be blamed for its failure has smoldered for three decades, initially igniting the country and recently flaring up anew in the distorted form of right-wing religious bigots accusing the antiwar movement of the 1960s and '70s of "moral defection," while some opportunist politicians

in the Republican and Democratic parties continued to claim that the war could have been won if "declining values" in this country had not undermined the will and courage of the American people. In this partisan political atmosphere President Clinton was pilloried as a "draft dodger" and an unfit American because he did not serve his country in Vietnam. This may have been one of the reasons McNamara decided to publish his memoir at this time, simply to set the record straight. It was welcomed by Clinton, and for the moment some of the latter-day Vietnam warriors were quiet.

McNamara, the Corporate "Hero Technocrat"

Speculation as to why McNamara decided to publish his memoir at this time goes on. Blumenthal suggests that perhaps McNamara expected to "stimulate calm discussion of the nature of policy making — something like a leisurely afternoon seminar at the Council on Foreign Relations," but comments that if so, "he has been disappointed."

More useful than such speculation is Blumenthal's brief but insightful description of the way McNamara was perceived within top circles of the ruling class in 1960, when he was tapped to become secretary of defense in the Kennedy cabinet. "The tensions of the Depression years were no longer to be resolved by class conflict," Blumenthal writes.

In the postwar prosperity the university-trained manager, not the robber baron, presided. He ruled not by primitive force but by neutral problem solving. McNamara was the greatest of these hero technocrats, the most successful, the first president of Ford not to bear the Ford name... He had subdued the world of the modern corporation, and he would now conquer government.

Realities of the Postwar World

To speak only of "postwar prosperity" is simplistic, in view of the international tensions of the early years after World War II, which exploded in colonial uprisings, revolutions, and wars. In a few years the Chinese revolution of 1949 changed the face of Asia and the world. In the mid-1950s the Korean war ended in stalemate, the first war since 1812 in which arrogant U.S. military power had been unable to triumph. Around the same time French imperialism was defeated in Vietnam at Dienbienphu. Anticolonial struggles continued in Africa, especially Algeria, and in 1959 the Cuban revolution fired the imagination and hopes of the poor in Latin America and elsewhere, inspiring an emerging radical U.S. student movement which had already been stirred by the civil rights struggle of African Americans, an echo inside the U.S. of the worldwide revolution against colonialism.

This was the context in which the new, untested Kennedy administration assumed office in 1961, with the consummate corporation man, Robert McNamara, in charge of the war machine. Even with so much turmoil throughout the world, the U.S. ruling class in those days felt confident and assured that its armies, its eco-

nomie power, and its varied agencies could protect its economic and political interests, and that "police actions" wherever necessary would succeed in containing revolution.

The reason for this optimism on their part was the fact that they were growing rich by rebuilding the war-torn world, expecting to rebuild it in their own image. In some respects this has come about. But not quite the way they thought.

Why the Attacks on McNamara?

This review of the historical background helps explain the mean-spirited reaction to McNamara's book. With what they imagine to be the worldwide "defeat of Communism" and the "triumph of the free market economy," some sectors of the ruling class and their political hangers-on don't like to be reminded of the ignominious defeat they suffered in Vietnam. They have no taste for a careful review of that experience, to try and understand its causes and consequences. The tenor of attacks on McNamara's book is that he is a foolish man and has always been, and his memoir proves it, because anyone interested in government policy making should know when to let sleeping dogs lie.

Theodore Draper ends his slashing defense of McNamara with a caveat. "Whatever McNamara's shortcomings, it is bizarre to attack him now for the wrong reasons." He contends that "McNamara was not the arch-villain of the war, and he deserves credit for trying to make amends for the damage that he and his colleagues in the administration did thirty years ago."

What Went Wrong with U.S. Policy

For a better understanding of what was wrong with U.S. foreign policy, why the Vietnam war policy was flawed, and how the U.S. government's self-contained political culture conditioned Lyndon Johnson to think McNamara had gone mad and prevented McNamara from making a clean and open break with the Johnson administration in 1967, it is useful to consult what has been written by participants in the antiwar movement and other critics at the time of the Vietnam war. One such source has already been mentioned, *Abuse of Power* by Theodore Draper. Another is a collection of reports, commentaries, polemics, and critiques written by Mary McCarthy.

Between 1967 and 1972 Mary McCarthy produced three first-hand (and first-rate) reports on the war in Vietnam and related events. In February 1967 she went to Saigon and wrote an extensive and perceptive report on the war from the American side. The following year she went to Hanoi and reported "from the other side." In August 1971, as a reporter for the *New Yorker*, she covered the trial of U.S. Army Captain Ernest L. Medina, charged with premeditated murder of an unknown number of unidentified Vietnamese persons, not less than 100, at My Lai in Quang Ngai Province, Republic of Vietnam, on or about March 16, 1968. These three reports were each published separately as pamphlets.

Mary McCarthy also reviewed the highly praised book-of-the-day, *The Best and the*

Brightest, by the ambitious young writer David Halberstam. Her review appeared in 1973 in the *New York Review of Books*, which had published her reports from Vietnam. In discussing the Halberstam book, unlike nearly all other reviewers, she found it carelessly written and the subject matter (the Kennedys and their advisers, including McNamara) neither good nor bright. Her review, "Sons of the Morning," together with her Vietnam reports and report on the Medina trial, with commentary and a lengthy introduction by the author, were all subsequently brought together in a 451-page volume entitled *The Seventeenth Degree*.

Mary McCarthy on the War's Opponents

Mary McCarthy managed to catch and expose the corruption and deceit of the U.S. political apparatus that provoked and prolonged the war in Vietnam. In a section entitled "Solutions" (p. 149), she asks what should be done to end the slaughter. This was 1967 and the so-called doves were hot on the heels of the Johnson administration to find a way out. "What emerges, when all the talk is over," said McCarthy, "is that none of these people opposes the war." After running through a list of the most prominent critics of the war, including Senator William Fullbright, Arthur Schlesinger, J.K. Galbraith, "even" George Kennan, she explained that this was "an opposition that wants to be statesmanlike and responsible, in contrast to the 'irresponsible' opposition that is burning its draft cards or refusing to pay taxes." She added: "To make sure that it can be told apart from those undesirables, it behaves on occasion like a troop of Eagle Scouts." Through it all, Mary McCarthy continued to identify with the serious opposition and expose the fakes.

McCarthy's biographer, Carol Brightman (*Writing Dangerously*), has entered the fray surrounding McNamara's memoir, together with her collaborator Michael Uhl. (From 1965 to 1968, the two edited the antiwar publication *Viet Report*, and traveled to North Vietnam in 1967.) The Brightman-Uhl contribution appears in the June 12 issue of *The Nation*. They say of McNamara's book, "*In Retrospect* can be read as a sequel to the Pentagon Papers, an appendix of material that McNamara kept from the original record." True in a sense, but the essential record is in the Pentagon Papers. What McNamara adds is his recollection of how it all came about and how he tried to slow it down.

Now comes the Brightman-Uhl team to explain that what McNamara remembers "is a case study of what Hannah Arendt, in her 1971 review of the Pentagon Papers, 'Lying in Politics,' called the 'defactualization' of the policy-making process." They hasten to add that "it is also a reconstruction of four major turning points of the war, and demonstrates that on each occasion not only was the decision to escalate made without illusions about the odds for success but evidence of the progressive *deterioration* of the American position was invariably near at hand." What follows is a brief overview

of the history of the war in Vietnam and U.S. involvement after the French were forced out.

This is familiar territory to Brightman and Uhl. Besides editing *Viet Report*, Uhl helped organize veterans to oppose the war and document American atrocities. The two authors must be included in the ranks of Mary McCarthy's serious opponents of the war. They must have been on the FBI's "enemies list." They have now interviewed McNamara since publication of his book, to get his opinion on a war crimes trial for him, McGeorge Bundy, Walt Rostow, Dean Rusk, and others supposedly responsible for this criminal warfare against a civilian population. He was not expected to express enthusiasm for this prospect, at least not in his lifetime. His curious response (according to Brightman and Uhl) was that he and his associates were "not 'criminals' but 'misguided individuals.'" This is reminiscent of Nixon's, "Your president is not a crook." The implication is that we couldn't possibly have crooks or criminals in government, and therefore those in government should not be accused and tried as criminals.

A War Crimes Tribunal?

Brightman-Uhl say, "McNamara has opened the door to a serious examination of the motives and working methods of the governing elites responsible for the war." They are not clear about what social forces would be needed to call into a being a meaningful War Crimes Tribunal at this late date or any time in the future. It would require a mass movement similar to that which mobilized for antiwar demonstrations in the 1960s and '70s to help end the war and bring U.S. troops home.

A tribunal under different circumstances, without the moral pressure and sobering controls of a popular mass movement demanding justice, would most likely resemble the military court trial of Captain Medina at Third Army headquarters, Fort McPherson, Georgia (reported by Mary McCarthy), which lasted one month and ended in acquittal. It would be more like that than like the trials conducted by the International Tribunal for War Crimes, held at Nuremberg after World War II. At Nuremberg it was the victors of war who sat in judgment on the vanquished, and justice was served, but only for the moment. The victors in war were not ready to try themselves for their own war crimes (like the fire bombing of Dresden and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki), and they never would be, even though there is an ample record of atrocities committed by them. It must have been known to many at Nuremberg, including the judges, that such atrocities as the bombing of civilian populations would be repeated by the unnamed perpetrators (as they were in Korea, Vietnam, Panama, and the war against Iraq in 1991).

Truly Democratic Decision Making: The Experience of the Antiwar Movement

For a better appreciation of the social forces at work in this country during the Vietnam war, it

is necessary to review the history of the organized antiwar movement of that time. There is no better source than the documented record by Fred Halstead in his book *Out Now*. This is the detailed description of the emergence of a conscious direction in the struggle to end the war. It found expression in the ranks of those whom Mary McCarthy referred to as the "irresponsibles," the demonstrators who were uninterested in the face-saving problems of military advisers and foreign policy experts. Their single goal was to end the war, and their slogan was "Out Now!"

Halstead's book was published in 1978. In an "Afterword," reviewing the process by which the antiwar movement became an effective factor in U.S. politics, he wrote:

The procedure of democratic decision-making was best exemplified at the periodic national and regional antiwar conferences, open to all. There the issues were publicly debated and reported. These were also important arenas for the presentation and exchange of ideas on a wide variety of issues. Any group was welcome to set up literature tables, distribute circulars, hold workshops, and so on. There were those — like Dave Dellinger — who disparaged parliamentary debate and large decision-making bodies and preferred small gatherings of selected leaders. Even these were never secret but were open to observers and publicly reported. The mainstream antiwar movement conducted its affairs and arrived at its proposals for action in a gold-fish bowl.

By contrast the Washington war-makers made their decisions behind the backs and without the concurrence of the people.

Halstead also recalled the minor crimes of government policy makers (minor compared to what why were doing in Vietnam and elsewhere), perpetrated by their police agencies on the home front.

It would take another volume to outline the victimizations, break-ins, thefts, illegal surveillance, provocations, including violent ones, FBI-fabricated forgeries designed to foment hostility between groups and individuals, arrests, jailings, frame-ups, beatings, kidnappings, shootings, court-martials, bad-conduct discharges, and assorted "dirty tricks" that were used against the antiwar forces — and not just by Nixon. The antiwar movement was "Watergated" from the beginning, and with a vengeance.

Undemocratic Decision Making

We now have expert testimony, quite aside from the Pentagon Papers and McNamara's explanations and clarification, on how the foreign policy of the U.S. government is made, interpreted, and applied. This comes from one of the highest sources — George F. Kennan, who is generally recognized as the author of the "containment policy," the main official rationale for the Cold War that developed in the wake of World War II. Ostensibly the aim was to contain what was claimed to be the "expansionist tendencies" of the former Soviet Union. On the occasion of Kennan's 90th birthday, the Council on Foreign Relations gave a celebration party to honor him. It was held in New York City on February 14, 1994. Kennan spoke about the making of U.S.

foreign policy and his role in it in the post-World War II period, beginning in 1946. "What I was then advocating for our government was a policy of 'containment' of Soviet expansionist pressures, a policy aimed at halting the expansion of Soviet power into Central and Western Europe."

He continued:

I viewed this as primarily a diplomatic and political task, though not wholly without military implications. I considered that if and when we had succeeded in persuading the Soviet leadership that the continuation of these expansionist pressures not only held out for them no hopes for success but would be, in many respects, to their disadvantage, then the moment would have come for serious talks with them about the future of Europe.

But when, some three years later, this moment had arrived — when we had made our point with the Marshall Plan, with the successful resistance to the Berlin blockade, and other measures — when the lesson I wanted to see us convey to Moscow had been successfully conveyed, then it was one of the great disappointments of my life to discover that neither our Government nor our Western European allies had any interest in entering into such discussions at all. What they and the others wanted from Moscow, with respect to the future of Europe, was essentially "unconditional surrender." They were prepared to wait for it. And this was the beginning of the 40 years of cold war.

Kennan was replaced as a key adviser and policy maker by the war-hawk Dulles brothers, who in the wake of the Chinese revolution of 1949 got the U.S. into war in Korea in 1950.

Costs of the Cold War

The "40 years of cold war" brought Vietnam and many other atrocities visited on defenseless peoples in small countries through U.S. intervention (military, economic, and "covert," i.e., CIA-organized). The defenders of this history of U.S.-imposed sorrow and suffering still proclaim gleefully, "We won the Cold War." To this Kennan replies:

But we did pay a great deal for it. We paid with 40 years of enormous and otherwise unnecessary military expenditures. We paid through the cultivation of nuclear weaponry to the point where the vast and useless nuclear arsenals had become (and remain today) a danger to the very environment of the planet. And we paid with 40 years of Communist control in Eastern Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, the damage of which to the structure of civilization in those countries we are only now beginning to observe. We paid all of this because we were too timid to negotiate.

Could the course of history have been different? Kennan is philosophical:

The one course was tried. Its consequences, good and bad, are now visible. The other course remained hypothetical. Its results will never be known.

The Policy-Making Confines of Government

This limits the historical perspective to the confines of the policy-making institutions of government, which has been George Kennan's world for his entire adult life. He knows no

other. In his retrospective summary of this life in the U.S. diplomatic service, *Around the Cragged Hill*, he concludes with a recommendation to refer policy making to a Plato-model "Council of State," consisting of nine members to be selected from a panel of wise men and women of outstanding ability and accomplishment, and to be appointed by the U.S. president (as the U.S. Supreme Court is appointed).

Anything larger than [nine] would invite fragmentation of effort, overspecialization, division into committees and subcommittees, formalization of internal discussions — bureaucracy, in short. And that would be fatal.

The truly fatal results of government policy made by a select few, regardless of how the selection is made, are well known. The more fundamental question raised by McNamara's book on "the Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam," is, How can such tragedies be avoided in the future?

What are the lessons of this controversy? For those determined to avoid past tragedies and help create a world without war, the policy-making process of the U.S. mainstream antiwar movement, open to participation and discussion and majority control by the entire body politic, produced the best results. At the end of the debate this is the best answer. □

Learning from the Million Man March

Continued from page 5
of the Coalition" included: Torchlight Institute, Black Shield Club, Zulu Motorcycle Club [who reportedly served as an escort for buses from Cleveland and took charge of directing traffic at crowded intersections], Black Trades Council, Nubian Black Police Officers (of the Cleveland Clinic Police Force), the Nation of Islam, Christian Youth Fellowship, Carnegie [Avenue] Roundtable, Pan African Development Corporation, African American Student Society of Case Western Reserve University, and Trans-Africa, Cleveland Chapter."

Opened to Women

"The brothers [Ronald Leigh and Samuel Rashada, who chaired the meeting] let it be

known that the organization is open to women, who were also there in attendance..."

"Sister Justine Lott was given a standing ovation by the audience after urging the Black Men to stay focused and realize the importance of what the Million Man March means now since we have returned to our communities and families."

Following an open discussion of the needs of the community, "Brothers Ronald and Samuel passed out membership forms to the people and asked them to seriously select one of the committees on which to work and to establish goals and strive to attain them as soon as possible." Three main committees were Voter Registration, Economic Empowerment, and Education.

The *Call and Post* account concluded: "Since last week's meeting, Ronald Leigh...re-

ported that the Nation of Islam has pledged its full support to the Coalition as being representative of the various groups and individuals who participated in the October 16th historic event and beyond. **However, he states, 'this coalition is apolitical, non-gender, and non-religious...THERE WILL BE NO SELLOUTS THIS TIME, WITHOUT A COST!'**" (Boldface and capitalization in original.)

Photos taken at the march by participants in the Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Million Man March feature, not just the mass, but faces in the crowd, thoughtful human beings. And banners like "JOBS!!! NOT GUNS/DRUGS" and "WATTS GANG TRUCE." □

*Kennan tactfully omits discussion of the grassroots socialist revolution in Yugoslavia (1945-46), the role of the Stalinized Communist parties in Italy and France (1945-48) in helping stabilize capitalist rule there, instead of following the Yugoslav example, and the military role of the Western powers in the Greek civil war (1945-48), in which popular aspirations for fundamental social change were forcibly suppressed.

Fidel Returns to Harlem

by Michael Steven Smith

Thirty five years after Fidel Castro's historic visit to Harlem in 1960, he returned on October 22 to speak to 1,400 supporters who packed the historic Abyssinian Baptist Church. Rev. Calvin Butts recalled the church's founding 140 years ago and its consistent support of the Black liberation struggle from then through modern times, when Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. once presided.

Rev. Butts related an anecdote about when he first met Fidel some years ago at a Liberation Theology Conference at a church in Havana. He bluntly asked Fidel, "Do you believe in God?" Fidel answered, "I like this church." Then Fidel added: "If there is a God, he is a God of justice, peace, and equality."

Fidel elaborated on the exchange after he was introduced by Rev. Butts, who told the assembly and the vast media apparatus in the balcony that "the people of Harlem support the people of Cuba." "Why don't I believe?" asked Fidel. "I answer in all humility. I was not lucky enough to have such a good pastor as Reverend Butts. So I became a priest with a different message."

When Castro arrived for the evening there was a tremendous, thunderous 10-minute ovation that nearly took the roof off the church. Fidel told the audience, "As a revolutionary, I knew I would be welcome in this neighborhood. You are the best representatives of the virtue of the American people."

Earlier, New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani had said with characteristic petulance, when asked why he had not invited Castro to a dinner party given for the other 183 heads of state who came for the United Nations 50th anniversary celebration: "It is my party and I will invite who I want to." Recalling that this was the 35th anniversary of his first visit to Harlem, Fidel said, "the funny thing is — I am still expelled. It's as if nothing has changed."

Fidel pointed out that Cuba has more doctors and teachers per capita than any other country in the world and, given the cutbacks in medical care for the poor and for children, he offered to send Cuban doctors to the United States. He talked about the sense of solidarity of the Cuban people. He said that 2,000 teachers, mostly women, went to aid in the literacy drive in Nicaragua; 30,000 had volunteered. He reminded people that after an earthquake in Peru in which 70,000 people died, the Cuban people donated 100,000 pints of blood. After the earthquake in Armenia, they donated 50,000 pints of blood. "Those are the moral values we have created," said Fidel. "We contributed, regardless of ideology."

He said that the infant mortality rate in Cuba has declined from 60 per 1,000 live births to less than 10. And this he emphasized was a country which is under a rigorous blockade.

Fidel spoke of the 55,000 volunteer Cuban troops who, in Angola, fought the racists of

South Africa for 15 years. "We have shed our blood to fight against colonialism." "South Africa was not blockaded," Fidel said, pointing out the hypocrisy of the United States. Despite apartheid, South Africa was not prevented from purchasing food and medicine. Cuba, the only country that was fighting South African racism, was not allowed to buy even one aspirin. On the American blockade against Cuba, he said no other such operation "has been as rigorous. It is a weapon against ordinary people, a noiseless atomic bomb which kills people, particularly children and the very old."

Fidel reported that he said he had been told not to "interfere" in American politics but still he was going to venture his opinion. Recalling the gains of the civil rights movement, he remembered that it was here in Harlem that he had met Malcolm X. Many of the conquests of Blacks and Hispanics are in danger today, he said, and "some would like to sweep away those conquests."

He said the Spaniards came with a cross and a sword. He said that "plots are being hatched today to murder leaders of our country. That has not changed." Fidel concluded by telling the story of a South American native who was being tortured by the Spaniards. They were burning the native and told the poor fellow that in the end he would go to heaven. To this, the nearly dead man replied, "I do not want to go to heaven if there are Spaniards there." Fidel concluded saying he wanted to have a heaven here on earth, a place we can easily get to. "A place where there is justice, brotherhood, and dignity. And for that cause I am willing to give up my life." □

October 22, 1995

Demonstrations Demand End to Blockade of Cuba

The National Network on Cuba (NNOC), a coalition of organizations from around the country that are working to end the illegal U.S. embargo on Cuba, held its first national demonstrations on October 14 in Chicago and San Francisco and on October 21 in New York.

The demands of the demonstrations were:

- End the US economic blockade of Cuba;
- Lift the US travel ban;
- Normalize relations with Cuba;
- Respect Cuba's self-determination.

October 14 was chosen for the date of the demonstrations in Chicago and San Francisco because that day was set as an International Day of Solidarity with Cuba by an international conference held in Cuba last year, but October 21 was chosen for the New York action to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the United Nations (and the presence of Fidel Castro in New York to address the UN; see the related story on this page).

In New York, as heads of states from around the world gathered to address the UN on October 22, supporters of an end to the U.S. embargo against Cuba marched from the UN building to Columbus Circle to add their voices to the worldwide chorus of nations that oppose the U.S. policy.

For three consecutive years, the member nations of the UN have condemned the embargo on humanitarian and legal grounds, with two exceptions: the United States and Israel (which itself trades with Cuba). Despite the worldwide condemnation, the U.S. government's most recent response has been to intensify its commitment to isolate Cuba, depriving Cuba's citizens of access to much-needed resources, such as medicine, food, and fuel.

Heavy rain and wind did not deter thousands of people (CNN reported 2,000; one of the event's organizers reported 5,000) from participating in the spirited and lively march. The participants — whose numbers included a sizable group of Cuban Americans, many

young people, and many people of color — received shouts of support from onlookers and passing motorists.

The demonstration culminated in a rally at Columbus Circle. Among the speakers were Leslie Cagan, a co-chair of the NNOC and head of the Cuba Information Project; Andrés Gomez, founder of the Antonio Maceo Brigade and a leader in the Cuban American community in Miami; Angela Davis, writer and activist; and Ignacio Mendes, national director of the U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange. A number of musicians kept up the spirits of those who continued to brave the elements. But the rally, unfortunately, was cut short because of the continuous rain.

On the whole, the event was a huge success, bringing people from as far away as Toronto, Minnesota, and Indiana and demonstrating the nationwide opposition to Washington's cruel and inhuman treatment of Cuba.

— Sarah Springer
October 24, 1995

David Cooper: A Lifetime in the Cause of Justice and Socialism

by Mark Harris

David Cooper, a veteran socialist and member of Socialist Action, died on September 29, 1995, after an eight-month fight against cancer. He was 76 years old.

Cooper's active career as a socialist spanned 61 years. He was a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1938 and of Socialist Action (SA) in 1983. As a young man, Dave was a witness to the historic 1934 teamsters' strikes, the socialist-led struggle that turned Minneapolis into a union town. When Dave was barely a teenager, his older sister, Goldie, and her husband, Max Geldman, were already socialists and supporters of the exiled Russian revolutionary Leon Trotsky. Their influence on Dave was enormous and lasting. They introduced him and his brother Jake to many of the Trotskyist leaders of the strike, thus initiating their lifelong education in the politics of class struggle.

It was an education that began with drives into Minneapolis from the Coopers' nearby home in Chaska, Minnesota. The two teenage boys would participate in union events and attend meetings of the Young People's Socialist League. As Cooper later wrote in *My Brother, My Comrade* (Walnut Publishing, 1994):

One of the first events I attended was a memorial service called by the union to honor two strikers killed by the cops. Over 10,000 workers massed in the streets to hear their trade union leaders eulogize the two men who gave their lives for the union...Minneapolis in 1934 was a city where the workers had confidence in their leaders and the leaders had confidence in the workers. There was a kind of electricity in the air. Imagine the effect such an environment had on Jake and me, two young men trying to make sense out of this peculiar world.

An Early Hatred of Injustice

Dave's parents were Ukrainian Jews who had left tsarist Russia around 1905 — to eventually settle in Chaska. They were the only Jewish family in that Minnesota town and were often the victims of prejudice. More than once the boys in the family defended themselves against anti-Semitism with their fists. A pivotal event occurred when Dave was 13: he lost his right leg to a football injury. For a time he had to get around without a prosthesis.

During this time a boy at school physically attacked Dave, calling him anti-Semitic names. In his memoir of Jake, Dave recalled how his older brother insisted that he confront the boy. Together the two returned to the school, where Jake helped Dave stay up on his one leg while Dave exacted justice from the bully. Such early experiences help explain not only his deep hatred of injustice but the tremendous loyalty he

felt toward his older brother. Jake was, indeed, Dave's lifelong protector and comrade.

In high school, Dave took a lively interest in debate and one year achieved first place for extemporaneous speaking in the State Oratorical Contest. Later he attended the University of Minnesota, where he became president of the campus Socialist Club. He was also a member of the executive committee of the Minneapolis branch of the Socialist Workers Party. This was an education too. One time he missed a meeting with insufficient cause and Vincent Ray Dunne took him aside to emphasize the responsibility that went with his position. That left an enduring impression.

Dave Cooper graduated in 1942 with a degree in education. For a year he taught social studies and American history in Litchfield, Minnesota. Once he pointed out to his students that in years to come they would be ashamed of the cartoon distortions of the Japanese that were being promoted at the time. An anonymous letter to the school board identified him as a socialist, and he was fired. The next year he moved to Chicago, where he married Eleanor Hirsch, whom he had met during his last year at the university.

Civil Rights Activist

During his days in Chicago, Cooper was active in the SWP and in the civil rights movement. He became vice-president of the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and was centrally involved in the Grace Hardy case. Hardy was an African American woman whose home was burned by residents of the predominantly white neighborhood she had moved into. Cooper was also active in a movement in the Chicago area to open all-white skating rinks to Blacks. On one occasion, Cooper was arrested during a demonstration against the Rev. Gerald L.K. Smith, a notorious racist and reactionary of that era. Cooper was quickly released, but news of the incident reached the principal and school board of the school where he was teaching, and once again his politics cost him a job.

Cooper then became a salesman at Weibolds, a Chicago-area department store. He joined the fight of the retail clerks for representation by a genuine union instead of the existing company union. When the company union won the election, he joined it and waged an extraordinary campaign from within to promote the goal of joining the American Federation of Labor (AFL) through the Building Service Employees International Union (BSEIU). His efforts proved successful, and another election was held that resulted in a majority of employees voting for membership in the BSEIU. Cooper was also elected president, which

prompted the leadership of the International Union to raise a red scare campaign — the Cold War was beginning — with the result that Cooper was eventually expelled from the union.

In 1951 Dave and Eleanor moved to Los Angeles with their two sons, Paul and Peter. (Their daughter Rachel was later born in Los Angeles.) Cooper became a manufacturer's representative in the women's wear garment industry, a position he held for many years. He was elected to the board of directors of Pacific Coast Travelers and eventually became the organization's president. He was not a typical board member and was often considered a controversial figure, but the membership voted him in year after year. In recent years Dave became a commodity broker, an uncommonly honest one.

Long an Active Socialist

For many years Cooper was an active member of the Socialist Workers Party, participating in the movement against the Vietnam war and other causes. With many other SWP members, he opposed the leadership course charted by National Secretary Jack Barnes in the early 1980s as a turn away from the principles of revolutionary Marxism and was subsequently bureaucratically expelled from the SWP.

Cooper became a founding member of Socialist Action and a member of its National Committee. He was instrumental in Los Angeles in organizing the Labor Alliance Against Concessions, an umbrella organization supported by many local unions that actively aided striking pilots, retail clerks, flight attendants, teamsters, and others. He remained politically active to the end of his life, dedicating much of his time to the fight against Proposition 187, the racist anti-immigrant California ballot measure of 1994.

A Principled and Gentle Optimist

Everyone who knew Dave knew him as a friendly and sociable person. There was a steadfastness in him, a sense of principle — just like his brother Jake. His optimism was profound, yet gentle, steered as much in his natural empathy for other human beings as in his socialist principles.

He was what some would call a "people person." Throughout his life he took it upon himself to promote and encourage other individuals. Years ago he found a home for a trouble adolescent boy who worked for him. The boy, now a man, remained devoted to Dave to the end. Dave's wife, Eleanor, described how one day he mentioned to her that the new manager at the bank (he called her by her first name) had feminist sympathies. Eleanor hadn't even known there was a new manager, let alone her name or political philosophy. Dave was simply a man who was passionate about justice and always ready to assist anyone who needed help.

Sharing Trotsky's Legacy

Trotsky was once described as one of those "unreasonable" human beings who, despite everything, believe the world should be a just place, believe in the dignity of human beings and their essential solidarity. Everything

Trotsky's life became was rooted in that foundation. Dave Cooper was also such a man.

In this regard, the South African writer Ronald Segal's summary of Trotsky's legacy stands as an appropriate tribute to the essential humanity of a man who shared Trotsky's cause for 61 devoted years. Segal wrote, "In an era of so much separate futility: when so many intellectuals sit whining on the sidelines of events, and so many artists turn their heads to play patience with their sensibilities; when politics is a special form of white-collar employment, and soldier-

ing asks for all the moral investment of warrior ants: Trotsky bears witness to the creative force of that essential revolutionary, the integral man. ...In the long aftermath of his fall, Trotsky remained true to himself, answering to so much death around him with his ardour for life, so much despair with his faith. And in this, he speaks for that joy and that defiance in humanity which no defeat can contain."

The 20th century has proven itself a century of extremes. It has been the century of scientific slaughter and mass destruction. It is also the

epoch in which the majority of human beings, for the first time in history, entered the stage of world events with the potential to remake their world as a place of peace, justice, and genuine economic democracy. That is the historic task of the working class. That is the goal of the socialist revolution. And that was the guiding perspective that gave meaning to the life of Dave Cooper.

Research for this article was provided by Eleanor Cooper. □

A Strategy to Strengthen and Win the Detroit Newspaper Strike

Continued from page 13

have in common is a winning strategy of mass action and a willingness to do whatever was necessary to win the fight.

It is sometimes said in regard to the Detroit newspaper workers' strike that even if production and distribution of scab papers is stopped at one plant, the DNA will simply move their operations to another plant. But if and when that happens, the struggle will have to widen, with a call going out to the labor movement in the area of the other plant to mobilize and shut it down as well. After all, the DNA can run, but they can't hide — not when we have a mass action strategy and the perspective of treating the Detroit newspaper workers' strike as a national strike.

We cannot allow the strike to be defeated by injunctions. Such injunctions violate human and constitutional rights, including free speech rights under the First Amendment, and the right not to be deprived of life, liberty, or property (which includes a job) without due process of law, under the Fourteenth Amendment.

The United Auto Workers owes its existence to sit-down strikes in Flint, Detroit, and elsewhere, and to mass picketing in defiance of injunctions. The UMW, led by John L. Lewis, won several strikes after ignoring injunctions.

Civil rights marchers openly defied injunctions in the 1950s and 1960s in a successful effort to bring down the vicious Jim Crow laws.

To be sure, the kind of mass action strategy proposed here, if adopted and implemented, will provoke a hostile and repressive reaction by the employers, courts, and cops.

There is nothing new about this. Injunctions, fines, and jail sentences have been applied against workers throughout the history of labor's struggles. But these punitive actions have been countered and defeated where sufficiently large numbers of workers have been mobilized. In this situation, we need to mobilize workers not just from Metro Detroit but from throughout the Midwest, and wherever else we have to go to prevail. That is the most effective weapon available to us to counter employer and governmental repression.

3. Organize a One-Day Work Stoppage

The argument for a one-day work stoppage in support of the newspaper workers' strike is this:

the mass demonstrations, mass picketing, ad campaign, and all the other activities under way may not, by themselves, be enough to win. That's because the parent corporations of the *Detroit News* and *Free Press* — Gannett and Knight-Ridder — are huge multinationals with investments and income from around the world. These companies have made a strategic decision to break the unions. This was clearly indicated by Giles's statement: "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."

Gannett and Knight-Ridder may be willing to lose millions of dollars in the local market in pursuit of their aims. The banks and other corporate bigwigs are carefully watching the situation to see if these tactics of union busting can succeed in the Detroit area. They are actively or tacitly giving support and approval to the DNA. We can assume that these anti-union attacks will be repeated over and over again to the detriment of the entire union movement and workers everywhere if this conspiracy succeeds.

How can this "experiment" in union busting be stopped? Only by the whole labor movement gathering our forces to show not just Gannett and Knight-Ridder, but all the bankers, GM, Ford, Chrysler, and the rest of the business community that we support the strikers through a one-day stoppage, and that if the employers pursue their union busting drive, the result will be the steady escalation of the struggle into a generalized confrontation. If the bosses fear a vast radicalization of the labor movement and losses to their own pocketbooks, they will put pressure on the DNA to back down.

The one-day work stoppage would, of course, have to be voted upon by the Metro Detroit AFL-CIO affiliated unions. With proper preparation, education, and motivation, we believe organized workers in the Metro Detroit area will understand why a general one-day work stoppage is needed to win the newspaper workers' strike, and why this will benefit all workers.

Concern has been voiced over possible damage suits in the event of a one-day work stoppage. There are legal arguments available to counter such suits based on language in many union contracts. But that is not the main point.

If the whole area labor movement agrees to a one-day work stoppage — which would be an extremely powerful mass action — it would be

much harder for any employer to take reprisals. The magnitude of the action would determine what penalties, if any, were exacted. (It is interesting to note that the miners union in the Pittston situation was fined over \$64 million for widespread, ongoing violations of injunctions. That did not stop the miners from pursuing their strike until it was won. And given the miners' militancy and determination, the U.S. Supreme Court chose to vacate the fines.)

There Is No Alternative to Mass Action to Win the Strike

We are greatly concerned that if a consistent mass action strategy is not adopted, the newspaper workers' strike will drag on and erode (which has happened to so many other strikes, particularly in the past two decades). That would be catastrophic for the newspaper workers who could lose their jobs, and it would be a disaster for the labor movement as a whole. But it doesn't have to happen. If a carefully thought through plan of action — the centerpiece of which must be mass mobilization — is adopted and put into play by a unified labor movement, the strike can be won.

Unity depends on the strikers' remaining firm in their resolve not to allow the DNA to play one union off against another. Unity also means rejecting all attempts to pit workers against each other because of race, color, gender, creed, nationality, religion, age, or sexual orientation. Bigotry and prejudice are employer weapons designed to divide and conquer. They must be fought to ensure not only unity among the strikers but also unity between the strikers and our allies in the community.

Workers all over the country are watching this struggle. They will be greatly inspired if they see workers in the union stronghold of Detroit acting decisively to protect their jobs against the union busting DNA, the scabs, the goons, and all the forces arrayed against us.

There is a tremendous reserve army of workers out there who support the newspaper workers and will mobilize in solidarity with them if asked to do so. All that is required is a call to action. That call should go out without delay. That is the way — and we believe the only way — for the strike to be won. □

October 24, 1995

The Middle East "Peace Process" and the Fragmentation of Zionism

Continued from page 1

oppression of South African apartheid — the brutality of the Zionist occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, and they demoralized the rank and file Israeli soldiers.

The inability of Yitzhak Shamir's Likud government to cope with the Intifadeh cost them their parliamentary majority. The Labor government leaders, foremost among them Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, recognized that continued occupation would have only disastrous consequences for the Jewish state, and that they would have to divest themselves of Gaza and the West Bank on the most favorable terms possible. It was therefore in their best interests to sit down at the bargaining table with Arafat at a time when the PLO's fortunes were at a low ebb.

The agreement negotiated in Oslo and signed on the White House lawn in Washington reflected the PLO's weak bargaining position. To this day there is no independent Palestinian state. The Israelis conceded autonomy for the Gaza Strip and the West Bank city of Jericho — essentially turning over to the PLO the responsibility for suppressing the Intifadeh. However, the Arab masses refused to see it as a defeat — recognizing that the departure of the Zionist occupying forces was better than their continued presence. And for whatever reason, the PLO has not attempted total repression of the Islamic militant organizations which compete with it for leadership — Hamas and the Islamic Jihad.

Continued negotiations have resulted in an agreement for a phased withdrawal of Israeli forces from the entire West Bank. Whereas there is continued dissatisfaction among super-revolutionaries in North America and Europe who are ready to fight to the last Arab and among desperate young Palestinians who have known nothing in their lives but violence, most Arabs in the Occupied Territories are tired of death and tired of occupation. If the Israelis go and the killing stops, they will be grateful, at least for now. How long it will be before poverty and continued domination by the capitalist class — both foreign and domestic — overtakes war-weariness remains to be seen.

Contradictions in Israeli Society

The original Zionist dream, as articulated by Theodor Herzl, was of a state "as Jewish as England is English," which would gather in the Jews of the Diaspora and distribute them in all sections of the economy. The German-born Herzl reflected the colonialist attitudes which prevailed in his time, the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He believed, as did nearly all Europeans, that European society and culture were superior to all others and that it was their responsibility to colonize and "modernize" the "backward" and "underdeveloped" regions of Africa and Asia (Latin America being the exclusive "property" of the United States).

The original founders of the state of Israel, among them Yitzhak Rabin, continued to believe in Herzl's ideals, even in the twilight of the colonialist era. In the aftermath of the Nazi Holocaust, they sought to gather up the displaced Jewish refugees huddled together in wretched

conditions in Europe or depending on the hospitality of fortunate relatives in the United States. Of his generation of Zionist leaders, Rabin was one of the only *sabras*, those who were actually born in Palestine, which had been opened by Britain to Jewish settlement under the terms of the Balfour Declaration of 1917.

The popular view of Israel during the 1950s was of an idealistic society, where *kibbutzim* (collective farms) "made the desert bloom" and where politicians in open-neck shirts engaged in vigorous democratic debate in the Knesset (parliament). The Israelis were popularized by such authors as Leon Uris and James Michener as biblical heroes, defending themselves from hostile neighbors intending to continue Hitler's genocide.

The reality never conformed to the image put forward by the Israeli government's public relations department. In fact, the state's founders were all, to some degree or another, guilty or complicit in acts of terrorism against Arab civilians during the last years of the British Mandate. Rabin himself supervised the expulsion of 50,000 Arab men, women, and children from coastal areas of Palestine during the 1948 war.

Most Israeli agricultural production continued on land previously cultivated by Arab peasants, who were displaced by force. Only a small minority came from land reclaimed from the desert, where no consideration was ever given to environmental and social consequences, especially regarding the diversion of water resources.

And democracy was the exclusive property of the *Ashkinazi* (European) elite. Jews of Middle Eastern origin occupied lower levels on the Israeli social ladder — a social ladder which was not even supposed to exist. In spite of attempts to break out of the ghetto industries, Israel's largest export was cut diamonds; its main supplier of raw materials — South Africa, where, concurrent with Israel's formation, the Nationalist Party put into place the most brutal system of racial segregation on earth.

Image began to catch up with reality after the 1967 war; in addition, Israel's occupation of the West Bank (including Arab East Jerusalem), Gaza Strip, and Golan Heights led to dramatic changes in Israeli society, which have led directly to the current political situation and to Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. The most important evolution has been Israeli society's dependence on Arab labor — and conversely the dependence of West Bank and Gaza Arabs on the Zionist economy for jobs. In spite of the idealistic notion that Jews would be dispersed throughout the state of Israel's economy, the reality has been that educated immigrants from Europe or North America are not willing to do unskilled labor. Furthermore, poor Jews, especially from the Arab countries of the Middle East or North Africa, came to Israel looking for upward social mobility, and many found it. A chronic shortage of cheap labor forced Israeli business to turn to the Arab residents of the occupied territories and offer them jobs. Palestinians who had depended on United Nations charity for nearly a generation were more than happy to oblige.

At the same time, the Arab birth rate, both in

the Occupied Territories and within the original borders of the Israeli state, far exceeded the Jewish birth rate, as it has continued to do up to now. The Zionist leaders were faced with the possibility that Jews might become a minority within the Jewish state, as Jews of European origin have already become. What was required was either increased Jewish immigration or exclusion of Arabs from Israel. In fact, there has been consensus among all sections of the Zionist leadership to do *both*. The question has been *how* to remove the Arabs, how to provide Jewish immigrants with housing and jobs, and how to prevent Jewish *emigration*. The disagreements between Labor and Likud, and the smaller groups to their respective left and right, have had to do with the best means for achieving goals on which all agree. In fact, in spite of accusations of treason against Yitzhak Rabin by right-wing fanatics, Rabin's policies may very well have been in the best long-term interests of Zionism and imperialism in the region. Bill Clinton and John Major certainly thought so.

The most extreme Zionist fanatics, including Rabin's confessed assassin, have a simple solution: ethnic cleansing. They openly call for the expulsion of all Arabs not only from Israel's recognized borders but from the Occupied Territories as well. They oppose the hiring of Arab laborers to fill unskilled jobs in the Israeli economy, and they favor annexation of the Occupied Territories for settlement of new Jewish immigrants. In their emotional zeal, they give no thought to the cost in both money and lives that such a campaign would carry. They are unconcerned with the international condemnation which would justly come down on the Israeli state if it were to carry out such a campaign overtly — and what that might cost in terms of financial support from the United States and other governments and from foundations, trade unions, and individual donors. They assume that Jewish families will be perfectly willing to raise their children in a war zone.

In contrast, Rabin and his colleagues recognized that continued strife has meant net *emigration* of Jews from the Israeli state, to the United States and other countries where they can live in relative peace and security. They understood that the survival of the Zionist project meant attracting immigrants other than right-wing fanatics. Furthermore, they recognized the reality that Israeli society will continue to depend on Arab workers. They simply cannot be replaced by Jewish workers — if they could, they would have been by now.

Rabin's answer to the question of the Arab population was to recognize that the Israeli state could no longer continue its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. The PLO's isolation in the aftermath of the Gulf War gave Rabin the opportunity to negotiate a favorable agreement, and he was eminently successful. He managed to extricate the Israeli army from an ultimately untenable position without conceding the formation of a Palestinian state, let alone any alleviation of the oppression of Arabs within Israel's pre-1967 borders.

How Will the Rabin Assassination Affect the Arab Struggle?

At this writing Israeli authorities are indicating that in all likelihood Yigal Amir did not act alone. Five right-wing extremists are already under arrest, and repressive laws which had previously been used only against Arabs are now being used against Israeli fanatics. It appears that not only the far right but the Likud party as well has been discredited by the Rabin assassination. Leah Rabin, the prime minister's widow, has openly blamed Likud for "creating the climate" which led to her husband's assassination, and she pointedly snubbed Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu at the funeral. Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres, has reaffirmed his commitment to the "peace process," which will not guarantee Arab self-determina-

tion, nor will it solve the deeper social and economic issues, but as long as the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Occupied Territories continues, Arabs' lives will improve.

No revolutionary movement can sustain a high level of struggle permanently; furthermore, tactical retreats are often necessary. Even so, by abandoning military activity at this time, the PLO has taken away from the Zionists a unifying factor and thus driven a wedge into them.

The PLO is not a proletarian political movement; its bourgeois nationalist program is insufficient to carry the Palestinian Arab people beyond winning a quasi-independent state in the West Bank and Gaza. The religious fundamentalists of *Hamas* and Islamic Jihad are more inclined to continue violent activity, but their program is not materially different from Ara-

fat's: unity of Muslims of all classes is no better than the unity of Arabs of all classes, for such unity can only exist if the bourgeoisie is dominant. However, at this time no proletarian leadership has emerged from within the Palestinian masses. Revolutionists in other parts of the world can help such a leadership to grow in strength and influence within the Arab communities, but only if they are sensitive to the masses' needs and desire at this time for an end to Israeli occupation and the killing of Arab youth. The departure of the Zionist troops from the territories is not the final victory. It will be a victory nonetheless. □

November 8, 1995

No Choice for Working Class Voters in Russia

Continued from page 3

Russian salad whose ingredients include Russian religious philosophy, clichés from Stalinist "agitprop," and terms used by Western "political science." His party program includes: promises of price controls; a struggle to return to "the power of the Soviets" (the Stalin-Brezhnev type, of course) and to restore the USSR; tax cuts; the strengthening of discipline and order; a struggle against the mafia and the criminals; guaranteed "social security" for Russian citizens; and so on — including lofty phrases about the accumulation of national capital and a greater role for the state in the economy, echoing *Our Home Is Russia*.

The "opposition's" main aim, in a word, is to drive out the "Chernomyrdinite" part of the establishment. This would also entail a partial revision of the privatization program, in those cases where the interests of the management caste have been damaged, and greater privileges for various sections of industry, above all those connected with the military-industrial complex.

CPRF Position on Chechnya

The character of the CPRF's "opposition" was clearly revealed in its attitude toward the war unleashed against Chechnya by Russian imperialism. The Zyuganovites saw the invasion of Chechnya as an occasion to attack the government and the executive power. And what for? For mistakes in military planning, for "delay" in dealing with "separatists," and for the fact that when federal troops withdrew from Chechnya they left behind "mountains of weapons" which were taken by the Chechen militia. The CPRF fraction in the Duma, declaring themselves "defenders of the Russian army," blocked even the timid attempts by some "democrats" to express moral condemnation of the empire's soldiers, who they compared to Nazi war criminals.

A similar line was taken by newspapers sympathetic to the CPRF. One of these, *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, earlier this year published a short story, "In Grozny's Trenches," in which the positive hero is a Russian army lieutenant who shows no mercy to the Chechen enemy. He is contrasted to negative characters, such as a young soldier whose unit is serving in Grozny

and who tries to desert, and his mother who comes to take her son away from the front. The tale ends with the "patriotic" soldiers, led by the lieutenant, killing the young "traitor" and his mother — who, by the way, look like Jews. The author — and his "Communist" newspaper — approve of this "courageous" deed. The appearance of such proto-fascist material in the "opposition press" tells us far more about the soul of Zyuganovite Communism than dozens of demagogic declarations by the CPRF bosses.

The Agrarian Party

The CPRF's closest ally is the Agrarian Party of Russia headed by Mikhail Lapshin. It consists of bureaucrats from the agricultural sector — directors from various types of co-operatives, kolkhozy (collective farms) and sovkhozy (state farms), most of which have now been renamed joint stock companies. Having resisted the encroachments of the towns, and other bourgeois forces in general, these elements are determined at all costs to preserve their monopoly over the land. Proclaiming themselves "defenders of the peasantry," the Agrarians demand higher state subsidies for agriculture — that is, a larger proportion of the national income for the ruling layers in the countryside. The rest of the Agrarian Party program, including the political part, does not differ from that of the CPRF. And so the Agrarian fraction in the Duma has been the most militant defender of "our Serb brothers" and of the [Bosnian Serb] regime of Radovan Karadzic.

The "Congress of Russian Communities"

The third considerable force in the opposition camp is the Congress of Russian Communities. Its leaders are Yuri Skokov, former secretary of the state security council, who refused to support Yeltsin in his confrontation with the Supreme Soviet in October 1993 [when the "rebels" led by Rutskoi and Khasbulatov were suppressed by Yeltsin]; General Aleksandr Lebed, former commander of the 14th Russian army in Pridnestrovyia [or the Trans-Dniester region, the territory with predominantly Russian population claiming the right to secede from Moldova]; and Sergei Glazyev, a former minister of foreign trade.

Originally a small organization founded to

support Russian companies abroad (hence its name), the Congress has taken on political significance with the entry of Skokov and Lebed into its leadership. Skokov is well known for his wide connections in industrial circles. Lebed, a popular personality, rose to prominence after halting the war between Pridnestrovyia and Moldova and making searing criticisms of the Pridnestrovyia leadership's corruption; he has also attacked "incompetence" at the top of the Russian army, including that of the defense minister, Pavel Grachev. Glazyev is an economist, author of yet another "alternative" economic program, every bit as mysterious as Yavlinsky's.

The essence of the Congress's program is the same patriotic call as is made by Chernomyrdin and Zyuganov — to defend "the nation's industry" (meaning the ruling elite). But it is flavored with a strong criticism of "monetarist radicalism," in contrast to *Our Home Is Russia*, and has no call to restore "Soviet power," one of the central demands of the CPRF. Those bourgeois-bureaucratic layers rallying to the Congress occupy a position between the Chernomyrdinite and Zyuganovite factions of their class.

Lebed — Man on a White Horse

Lebed is the Congress's most colorful and outstanding leader. Paradoxically, he has sympathizers among "patriots," among some sections of the liberal intelligentsia, and even among workers. The "patriots" are attracted to his image as a brave general and defender of the "fatherland"; the intellectuals like his criticisms of Grachev, who fell out of favor as a result of the Chechen campaign; the workers see him as a fighter against corruption. Lebed himself has hardly any clearly-defined political views — Skokov and Glazyev lend a helping hand with those — but his clear priority is "restoring order."

[Lebed is likely to stand in the presidential election next summer.] In the event of his winning power, he would surely not hesitate to use the most drastic measures, for example, against "disruptive" strikes. It is no accident that he has pointed to Pinochet's regime in Chile as an example of his beloved concept: "restoring order." But today Lebed poses as an "opponent" of the government, and his party can expect some success in the parliamentary elections.

Zhirinovskiy

Also in the "opposition" camp stands Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Russian Liberal Democratic Party. Its supporters include considerable layers of the petty bourgeoisie; bureaucratic, military, and declassé elements; and — as has been shown by sociological surveys — backward sections of unskilled workers. These people are impressed by Zhirinovskiy's shameless demagoguery and his promises of all sorts of bribes to his voters, including cheap vodka. Significantly, the Liberal Democratic Party is supported by several financial groups and commercial structures with criminal or mafia connections. (In the 1993 elections, several candidates clearly associated with the mafia got into parliament on Zhirinovskiy's list.)

Zhirinovskiy's position is well known and there is no sense in repeating it. As for its prospects in the Duma elections, the Liberal Democratic Party is certain to win considerably less votes than it did in 1993. Then, it practically monopolized the "non-Communist patriotic" niche in politics, but now there are at least ten other nationalist parties and blocs of various shapes and sizes. As a result, Zhirinovskiy's potential support is sure to be divided.

Anpilov and the Labor Russia Bloc

The most uncompromising opposition force is the Communist-Labor Russia-For the Soviet Union bloc, an alliance based on a pro-Stalin movement called Labor Russia (Trudovaya Rossiya). Its backbone is the Russian Communist Workers Party led by Victor Anpilov. Socially, Labor Russia represents those very stagnant layers of the former bureaucracy and ideological establishment, who won nothing from the reforms and could not get involved in Russia's "new reality."

All their hopes are concentrated on the resurrection of the Stalinist system — that is, not Brezhnev's or Khrushchev's, but exactly Stalin's version, with the undivided supremacy of the "Communist" Party, purges, and, at the top of their agenda, "regulated reductions in prices."

Demanding the return of a completely state-ized economy and "planned" control of resources ("just like under Stalin"), the Anpilovites try to enlist the support of enterprise directors who are dissatisfied with the present regime. In return for supporting Labor Russia, the latter are guaranteed that they will keep their positions if the "Communists" gain power.

Nonetheless, Labor Russia's admirers of Stalin and Kim Il Sung cannot inspire confidence in the more prominent circles of the bureaucracy, let alone among the voters in general, and cannot count on any sort of success at the polls.

Voice of an Oppressed Nation

Continued from page 7

offer, if — following George Breitman's example — they can learn to speak with, rather than denounce, the participants and followers of an ascendant mass movement.

Nation of Islam Earned Its Leadership Role

Without doubt, the Nation of Islam has in-

Interests of Working Class Not Represented

In the spectrum of election platforms, does there exist a single one that represents the interests of the Russian working class and all the laboring masses? The simple answer is no.

The former official trade unions, the Federation of Independent Trades Unions of Russia (FITUR), will go to the polls in alliance with two management groupings — the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs [which came to prominence in the Duma in 1992, led by Arkady Volsky] and the United Industrialist Party. Justifying the need for such an alliance, the leader of FITUR, Mikhail Shmakov, claims that "trade union interests completely coincide with those of the vast majority of industrialists." And this is true — because these trade unions are nothing more than a mechanism to discipline the work force on behalf of the industrial management. This is the role played by the trade union committees at the enterprises, and no amount of "radical" rhetoric by the top trade union bosses can hide this fact.

It would be quite wrong to imagine that there are "rank and file activists" in the FITUR who can put pressure on their leadership and push it to the left. The notorious "rank and file activists" in the factories — who as a rule are proteges and agents of management — will only do anything when it is profitable for "the industrialists," as Shmakov calls them. Trade union deputies in the Duma would carry out exactly the same function, as a support mechanism for industrial management — if this bloc should happen to pass the 5 percent barrier. But that is extremely unlikely.

Ideology of FITUR

As for the FITUR's "ideology," it is expounded in its principal publication, the newspaper *Solidarnost*, whose editor is Andrei Isayev, former anarcho-syndicalist and one of the founders [with Boris Kagarlitsky] of the still-born Party of Labor. *Solidarnost* is busy trumpeting the virtues of "social partnership" with enterprise directors, expressing solidarity with the actions of the Russian army in Chechnya, and with Radovan Karadzic's "just war" in Bosnia. One recent issue proclaimed that the trade unions' credo coincides with the doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church!

The situation in the so-called alternative trade union camp is little better. Its right wing has dispersed into various small liberal-bourgeois blocs. The left, in the shape of the alliance of workers' unions, Zashchita [Defense], has merged with the CPRF. The leader of Zashchita, the former "Marxist revolutionary" Yuri Leonov, has decided to turn his organization into a propaganda shop window for Zyuganov's party. Leonov is at present a Duma deputy and hopes to

regain a seat, by asking workers to vote for the CPRF. He recently took part in a television talk show and declared: "We have to work things out so that workers have no desire to go on strike. To this end we must put deputies in the Duma in whom people can really believe." It's a simple recipe: vote for Zyuganov's crowd, and things will be so wonderful that you will never feel like striking or campaigning!

Another electoral alliance claiming to represent working people is the Party of Workers' Self-Management, led by Svyatoslov Fyodorov, a noted ophthalmologist and director of the Co-operative Institute of Ophthalmological Surgery. This party's credo is based on workers' ownership of stocks, plus the "free market," plus parliamentary democracy. Its utopianism is obvious to many people — after all, it is one thing to run a commercially successful cooperative doing eye operations, using state-of-the-art technology and know-how, but quite another to run Russian industry, the greater part of which exists in a state of permanent crisis. There are few people who today believe in the magic force of the "free market" seasoned by "self-management."

"Party of Workers Self-Management"

What Can Be Expected from the December Elections?

The principal battle — both for the seats elected from the party lists and for those based on territorial constituencies — will be between the three main representatives of the ruling class: the Our Home Is Russia bloc, the regional elites, and the CPRF-Agrarian Party alliance. They will be the most powerful forces in the new parliament. The elections may shift the balance of forces slightly, but are extremely unlikely to bring about any radical changes. And the majority of working people in Russia understand this. Certainly no more than 50 percent of eligible voters will go to the polling stations. This sort of absenteeism reflects the spread of distrust in the political institutions of the system.

What Can Be Expected from the December Elections?

According to sociological surveys, 67 percent of the population, fully or partly, have no confidence in the Duma; 64 percent have no confidence in the political parties.

Illusions in bourgeois democracy are now in the process of being overcome — and this is part of the development of the class consciousness of the Russian proletariat. The time when the working class transforms itself into a "class for itself" is still far off. For now, significant experiences are being accumulated by the workers — negative experiences of the ruling class's political activity, and positive ones of struggle, although these are still very limited. This is the preparation for a future active upsurge of the masses. □

increased its visibility and influence within the Black community and in America as a whole. In a poll published in *Time* on October 30, a third of the Black respondents gave a positive evaluation of Farrakhan before the March. After the March the approval rating rose to 50 percent. The negative rating rose only one percent (from

16 to 17 percent). These figures are confirmed in accounts and polls published in different newspapers all over the country. The NOI's success was not accidental and not merely the consequence of catastrophic social conditions that affect the Black community.

The Nation of Islam issued the call for this

March more than a year ago. For most of that time it gathered little support, and hardly any notice was given in the bourgeois media. However, the Nation consciously adopted a united front type of strategy, and did succeed in forging broad alliances within the Black community. Significant steps forward were taken last summer in Houston at the National African American Leadership Summit (NAALS), whose convener, Rev. Ben Chavis, the controversial former director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), became the director of the March, and the NAALS actively joined in the building effort. From that point on it became clear that the March would not be draped under an exclusively Islamic banner, but would be a more inclusive, more broadly based event. The polls bear this out. The October 17 *Washington Post* reported that out of a sample of more than 1,000 Black men polled at the March, 52 percent gave their religious affiliation as Protestant, 7 percent Catholic, 6 percent Muslim, 5 percent Nation of Islam, and 14 percent "none."

The Issue of Exclusion of Women

Farrakhan was largely successful in deflecting the potentially crippling conflicts over the male definition of the March. A march intended only for men looked to be divisive, and it raised doubts in the minds of many men and women. There was no guarantee that this problem would be resolved. The Nation of Islam wrongly dismisses feminism as a white woman's issue of no interest to Black women, whom it portrays as "African Queens." Black feminist bell hooks is right to regard this kind of language as an example of patriarchal thinking. The September 27, 1995, issue of *The Final Call*, the NOI's fortnightly newspaper, includes an article by Abdul Allah Muhammad entitled "Abortion equals genocide." It compares shrill white feminists to goats leading sheep to the slaughter.

Nonetheless, Farrakhan's explanations received a favorable hearing: "This march is not against females...it's not to say we don't love our women. But we feel we must do something to atone for what we have done to our women" (September 27 *Final Call*). March organizers obtained the support of Coretta Scott King, widow of Martin Luther King. The Black feminist poet Maya Angelou, who read at President Clinton's inauguration, was a speaker at the March. Rosa Parks, a living symbol of the civil rights struggle (whose refusal to "sit in the back of the bus" sparked the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955), was also an endorser and speaker. Perhaps most significant was that Dr. Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's widow, was a featured speaker on October 16.

Many Black Women Supported the March

In an article in the October 15 *Boston Globe*, Amy Alexander wrote that "black women should — and many do — support the march, even if they are not invited to attend. We hope the march builds strength and spirit in a community sorely in need of both. As [Maya] Angelou told National Public Radio last week, the march holds the potential to heal."

The next day *Boston Globe* columnist Patricia Smith poetically described her personal reaction:

I'll admit I initially bristled at the brusque exclusion of women from the march. Black women should be equal partners in the struggle, I ranted. This will only spark division in the community, I raved. I even chomped at the dangled bait and denounced the oft-denounced Farrakhan, blaming him for driving a wedge into already scattered ranks. But when I was recently invited to New York to officially raise my voice along with a group of naysaying sisters — including such heavy hitters as Angela Davis — I realized I didn't want to be an agent for division. For heaven's sake, let the brothers march.

Still, it is difficult to argue with the logic of Amiri Baraka, who is quoted by Henry Louis Gates in the October 23 *New Yorker*. "First of all, I wouldn't go to no war and leave half the army home...Logistically, that doesn't make sense." It does appear that women will be involved in the next steps and in the planning of an agenda for the Black community. (In the end March organizers decided not to turn away Black women who came to Washington. A fair number of women were in the March, along with some Hispanics and whites who joined to show support for Black men.)

Farrakhan was also largely successful in minimizing the controversy over his own role in the March. The Nation of Islam did not demand agreement with its program as a prerequisite for participation, but those who did attend heard a good deal more about that program. No doubt, as a result of the March, the Nation will sell more copies of its paper, draw larger crowds to its rallies, and increase its overall influence.

What Socialists Can Do

Realizing the Nation of Islam's preeminent position is the starting point for analyzing what to do next. (Of those interviewed at the March for the *Washington Post*, 88 percent had a favorable view of the Nation of Islam, 87 percent viewed Farrakhan favorably, 81 percent liked Jesse Jackson, and 77 percent Ben Chavis. Of March participants surveyed, 80 percent thought Farrakhan would "become more influential in the African American community" and only 14 percent thought he would not; in contrast, 47 percent of Blacks nationally thought he would, and 27 percent thought he would not.)

Refusal to support the March reveals a refusal or inability to think politically. No doubt it would be preferable if an organization like the National Black Independent Political Party existed to lead the struggle and organize the demonstrations. But this is not the situation we confront. The Nation of Islam has earned its leadership role in the Black community, and socialists must grapple with that reality, whether they like it or not.

In the *Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution*, in describing "sectarian moods" and sectarian thinking, Trotsky pointed out: "At their base lies a refusal to struggle for partial and transitional demands, i.e., for the elementary interests and needs of the working masses as they are today. Preparing for the revolution means, to the sectarians, convincing themselves of the superiority of socialism."

Today's Socialist Workers Party no longer grasps these points, although that organization

understood them in the 1960s and '70s. The SWP now argues: "Today, the only effective answer...is to join the communist movement. It is also the only alternative to Farrakhan's reactionary course" (*The Militant*, June 27, 1994). In other words, Blacks are urged to ignore the NOI and join the SWP. Of course this is nonsense — an imaginary solution that exists only on paper. In real life, neither the SWP nor any other existing socialist organization is seen by the Black masses as a real alternative. The pressing question is, How can revolutionary socialists interact positively — in a way that will encourage movement toward radical social change — with those who follow the leadership of Louis Farrakhan because they want to fight against their oppression?

In Boston, revolutionary socialists have worked successfully with supporters of the Nation of Islam for several years, beginning with joint opposition to the Gulf War. This year revolutionary socialists and NOI supporters collaborated on forums in defense of Qubilah Shabazz and Mumia Abu-Jamal. Over a period of years public meetings have been organized in which leaders of the Nation of Islam have participated together with leaders from the South African organization WOSA (Workers Organization for Socialist Action). And this year NOI leaders met with Ben Petersen, leader of South Africa's 20,000-member Turning Wheel Workers Union, which grew out of a rank-and-file opposition group of Black truck drivers that has led militant strikes during the past year. Socialists are also becoming active in committees that have sprung up in various cities following the March.

The Nation of Islam may not be the ideal organization to lead the Black struggle, but the Black masses themselves will decide that question. The NOI is the organization that has emerged at this time (along with the National African American Leadership Summit, still in its infancy). The NOI is the organization that has shown it is able, as Trotsky put it, to "draw the masses to a certain extent into active politics," and it embodies the hopes of a great many in this country's most oppressed national minority.

When it is raining it is good to have an umbrella, but a newspaper held over the head will suffice, if necessary. Only a fool would refuse to keep dry with a newspaper because it is not an umbrella. Leave it to today's Socialist Workers Party and the Spartacist League to end up all wet.

Hundreds of thousands attended the March and many more thousands supported it as an effort to create positive change for Black people in America. On that basis, we should join hands with those who marched. Of course, to support a struggle does not require uncritical endorsement of its leadership. Trotsky told us this long ago: "Without supporting and without sparing illusions, it is necessary to support with all possible strength the progressive distrust of the exploited against the exploiters." The March on Washington helped deepen that progressive distrust. Despite the weaknesses of Louis Farrakhan and the Nation of Islam, we must show solidarity with the fight Black people are undertaking for a more humane and just life. □

October 27, 1995

Information, Education, Discussion Bulletin

In Defense of Marxism

- 1 year — \$24
- 6 months — \$15
- 3-month introductory — \$5

- 1st Class U.S./Air Mail to Canada & Mexico — 1 year — \$37
- World Surface Mail — 1 year — \$40
- Europe Air Mail — 1 year — \$54
- Africa, Asia Pacific Air Mail — 1 year — \$64

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Mail and make checks payable to Bulletin IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009

International Viewpoint

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

- Single trial issue: \$4.50.
- 1 year: \$48 surface mail — or \$57 airmail.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

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

BOOKS & PAMPHLETS

Materials for a History of Trotskyism in the United States

- Trotskyism in America, the First Fifty Years*, by Paul Le Blanc \$3.50
- Organizational Principles and Practices*, Edited with an introduction by Evelyn Sell \$3.50
- Revolutionary Traditions of American Trotskyism*, Edited with an introduction by Paul Le Blanc \$5.00
- Full Set of All Three: \$10.00**

Other Literature

- The Fourth International: Fifty Years*, Talks given at the New York City celebration, October 1988, plus other relevant contributions \$10.00
- Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua*, by Paul Le Blanc \$3.00
- Our Bodies! Our Choice! Winning the Fight for Reproductive Rights*, by Evelyn Sell \$1.00

Order from and make checks payable to:
Bulletin IDOM, P.O. Box 1317, New York, NY 10009
☞ SPECIAL DISCOUNT FOR BULK ORDERS ☞
Write to Bulletin IDOM

Second Conference on Leon Trotsky's Legacy to Be Held in Russia in December 1995

A symposium on the theme "The Fate of Soviet Democracy" will be held in honor of the 90th anniversary of the St. Petersburg Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies on 3-5 December 1995.

Participating organizations include the International Association "Scholars for Democracy and Socialism," the Center for Problems of Democracy and Socialism of the Economic Institute of the Russian Academy of Science, and the History Department of St. Petersburg University.

The aim of the symposium will be to discuss the historical and present-day problems of the origin and development of representative and direct democracy, systems of soviet power, and the possibilities of their existence in Russia. There will be a special session on the activity of L.D. Trotsky as president of the Petersburg Soviet.

The symposium will take place on December 3-5 at the History Department of St. Petersburg University.

For more information, contact:

Professor M.I. Voyeikov, Institute of Economics of the Russian Academy of Science, ulitsa Krasikova 27, 117218 Moscow. Tel: (095) 332 4525; Fax (095) 310 7001

or

The Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy, P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009; tel: 718-636-5446; fax: 212-807-1832; e-mail: mvogt@igc.apc.org

On the Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy

The Committee was organized at the International Scientific Conference "The Ideological Legacy of Trotsky: Its Historical and Contemporary Significance," held in Moscow, November 10-12, 1994. It was founded for the purpose of furthering a deeper and broader study and understanding of the ideological legacy of L.D. Trotsky and how his ideas relate to problems of social development. The Committee shall undertake the following measures:

1. To publish in Russian and English the materials of the international scientific conference "The Ideological Legacy of Trotsky: Its Historical and Contemporary Significance" held in Moscow in November 1994, where the Committee was formed.
2. To create in Moscow an International Scientific Center for the organized collection and study of materials linked with the political and theoretical activity of L.D. Trotsky.
3. To facilitate the scientific publication of the works of L.D. Trotsky, above all in the Russian language. It is proposed to include among these the expeditious publication in Russian of the hearings of the Dewey Commission *The Case of Leon Trotsky* and the Commission's verdict *Not Guilty*.
4. To continue to hold conferences and seminars on problems of understanding and applying L.D. Trotsky's theoretical legacy.

President: Pierre Broué,
Cahiers Leon Trotsky

International Coordinators:
Alexei Gusev (Moscow),
Marilyn Vogt-Downey (New York)

Initial Advisory Council*:
(Russia and Belarussia)

Alexander Buzgalin, Professor,
Moscow State University

Nadezhda A. Joffe, Daughter of
Bolshevik leader Adolf Joffe,
Survivor of Stalin's camps, author
of *Back in Time*

A. Kuryonyshv, Historian, State
Historical Museum, Moscow

Vadim Lugatenko, Worker,
Committee for Workers Democracy
and International Socialism, Belarus

Aleksandr Pantsov, Historian of
Trotsky, Sinologist, Visiting
Professor, DePaul University,
Chicago

Vadim Rogovin, Professor, Russian
Academy of Sciences

Mikhail Voyeikov, Professor, Institute
of Economics, Russian Academy of
Sciences, Moscow

Jim Miles, Railworker, Bulletin in
Defense of Marxism, USA

Carlos Olivera, Student, Moscow State
University, League for International
Trotskyism, Brazil

Bertell Ollman, Professor, New York
University

Bennett Satinoff, Railworker, Assistant
District Chairman, Local 1043
Transportation Communications
International Union

George Saunders, Translator of many
of Trotsky's writings

Paul Siegel, Socialist Action; Professor
Emeritus, Long Island University

Morris Slavin, Professor Emeritus,
Youngstown State University, Ohio

Hillel Ticktin, Critique magazine,
University of Glasgow

Esteban Volkov, Leon Trotsky's
Grandson, Curator of Trotsky
Museum in Mexico

Alan Wald, Professor, University of
Michigan

Barry Weisleder, Ontario Public
Service Employees Union

David Loeb Weiss, Film maker

Nobuo Yukawa, Trotsky Institute of
Japan

*Organizations listed for identification
purposes only.

Partial List of Sponsors

Charles K. Alexander II
B.L. Artz

Louis Becker

Elizabeth A. Boerger

Miriam Braverman

Bill Breihan

Phyllis Calech

Joseph Carroll

Dr. Ralph Colp, Jr.

John Daniel

David Eisen

Franklin E. Fried

Jonathan Garfield

Earl Gilman

Richard Glance

Dayne Goodwin

Rose Mary & Douglas Gordon

Richard Greeman

T.A. Hanna

Asher and Ruth Harer

Esmail Hosseinzadeh

Joseph D. Johnson

David Keil

Andrew Levine

Jack Lieberman

Wolfgang Lubitz

Arthur Maglin

William M. Mandel

Tom Mayer

Irving Mondrus

Kenneth Croose Parry

Cheryl Peck

Lillian G. Pollak

Eric G. Poulos

Ronald Reosti

Roy Rollin

Alan Sawyer, Jr.

Justin K. Schwartz

Rita Shaw

Aaron Siegfried

Matt Siegfried

Michael Steven Smith

Ben Stone

Eva Tam

Linda Thompson-Lancz

Jean Y. Tussey

Suzi Weissman

Rev. and Mrs. Hugh Weston

Vera Wigglesworth

Kent Worcester

(International)

Robert J. Alexander, Professor,
Rutgers University

Geoff Barr, Professor, Exeter Univ. in
Devon, Workers Revolutionary Party

Terrance Brotherton, Professor,
University of Aberdeen

Elizabeth Clarke, The Militant
(Britain), residing in St. Petersburg

Robert V. Daniels, Professor,
University of Vermont

Stephen Durham, Freedom Socialist
Party

Frank Lovell, United Auto Workers
Local 160, retired

Savas Michael-Matsas, General
Secretary, Greek Workers
Revolutionary Party

Make checks payable to Committee for the Study of Leon Trotsky's Legacy; send to the Committee at P.O. Box 1890, New York, NY 10009
Tel: 718-636-5446; e-mail: mvogt@igc.apc.org

I wish to be a sponsor of the Committee

Please send me materials from the 1995 conference (\$5 is enclosed for postage and handling).

I am enclosing \$ _____ to help with the Committee's work.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Organization (for identification purposes only) _____