



Founding Convention of Ohio State Labor Party

Reports by Jean Tussey and Cheryl Peck

U.S. Unions Today

Fair Play for Ron Carey

by Charles Walker

AFL-CIO Convention

Report by Frank Lovell

Labor Party Electoral Policy Committee Holds First Meeting

Report by Bill Onasch

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From the Managing Editors

This issue reports on key developments in the American labor movement: the important changes in the unions reflected at the AFL-CIO convention, described by Frank Lovell; and Charles Walker's comments on the suspenseful waiting as the courts and politicians consider trying to remove Ron Carey as president of the Teamsters after the tremendous record he has set as a reformer of his union and as a class struggle leader in the UPS strike.

In addition to the material on the Teamsters that we print here, readers are urged to see the November issue of *Labor Notes* for the testimony of Darryl Sullivan, a rank-and-file Teamster from Dallas, Texas, on what reform has meant for the union. Sullivan spoke at a Congressional hearing sponsored by House Republican Peter Hoekstra, who is campaigning to cut off funding for the government-monitored Teamster voting. The members' ability to vote unimpeded for the top union posts has been key to reforming the union. Darryl Sullivan was the only rank-and-file Teamster to give testimony at the Hoekstra hearings.

Hoekstra, just by chance, is the recipient of the largest amount of money legally permitted as a campaign contribution from none other than — UPS! This was reported in a first-rate article by Alexander Cockburn exposing the Hoekstra hearings (*Nation*, October 27).

(The November *Labor Notes*, incidentally, has an interesting report on the AFL-CIO convention by JoAnn Wypijewski, a senior editor at the *Nation* magazine. And it carries a valuable article entitled "UAW Ford Local Takes Mid-Term Concessions" by Ron Lare, a UAW member who works at Ford's Rouge plant in Dearborn, Michigan. Ron Lare is also a member of the rank-and-file New Directions caucus in the UAW and a *BIDOM* Editorial Board member.)

Also of great significance to the class struggle in the U.S. is the report coming as we go to press that up to two million Black women rallied in Philadelphia on October 25, two years after the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. We hope to have more on that in our next issue.

International Coverage

We are honored to have a first-hand report from Chiapas by W.T. Whitney, Jr., along with other news from Mexico —

the struggle for union recognition of *maquiladora* workers at a Hyundai-connected plant in Tijuana (thanks to Dan La Botz's *Mexican Labor News and Analysis*, labor writer David Bacon, and others); and developments around a proposed new labor federation.

Deepening class struggle moods in France and Germany are described in articles from *International Viewpoint* and the British Trotskyist publication *Socialist Outlook*. These articles highlight the social struggles and uncertainty all over Europe, including Britain, related to the corporate-dominated attempt at a European Union.

As we go to press we receive reports of significant struggles in Canada and Russia, which we hope to cover in our next issue. Also requiring attention in our next issue are the late-breaking developments in Asia. It seems that major financial turbulence in Hong Kong, Thailand, and elsewhere reveals once again the deepening instability of the worldwide capitalist system.

From the Arsenal of Marxism

This issue features a talk by former Socialist Workers Party leader Tom Kerry on American labor history that is rich in lessons for understanding the reviving labor movement today. Especially valuable are Kerry's observations on the Seattle general strike of 1919, its sources and its legacy. Among other things, that general strike was followed by a right-wing counteroffensive that included attacks on the IWW in Centralia, Washington. Material in this issue from Rita Shaw and Mike Alewitz shows how the Labor Party and others are honoring the class struggle fighters of Centralia nearly 80 years later.

Similarly, Paul Le Blanc takes a look at the lessons of the Russian revolution on the 80th anniversary of the Bolsheviks' epoch-making action in November 1917. The Bolsheviks took power in behalf of the working class, both the Russian workers organized in their own councils (Soviets) and workers everywhere who were being slaughtered in one of the capitalist system's greatest "gifts" to humanity: world war.

A lifelong fighter against the capitalist system was Myra Tanner Weiss. We carry only a brief note about her by Ed Kovacs, but we call on our readers who

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Fair Play for Ron Carey and the Teamsters

by Charles Walker

The court of final resort is the people and that court will be heard from in due time.

— Eugene V. Debs, the great American labor leader and socialist

As this is written, it's still not known if Ron Carey will be allowed to be a candidate for the Teamsters presidency in the government-ordered rerun of the international union's 1996 election. Needless to say, Carey loyalists throughout the labor movement are sitting on pins and needles, awaiting the fateful decision by a court-appointed election referee, a retired federal judge. On October 20, federal authorities announced a five-week delay before the decision will be made. Consequently, all dates for the election schedule have been pushed back, and the balloting will not be completed until March 17, 1998 (rather than the February 6, date established under an earlier schedule).

So how is it that after winning the 1996 Teamsters election by an absolute majority (52 percent for Carey to 48 percent for James Hoffa Junior), Carey could be barred from the rerun election and, if so, then probably barred from the union? At the heart of this turn of events is a terrible lack of fair play for Ron Carey, his supporters, and all Teamsters.

The government-appointed overseer of the 1996 elections, Barbara Zack Quindel, committed a blatant injustice when she refused to investigate the sources of at least some of the \$1.8 million that was funneled to Hoffa Junior's campaign by employers and gangland sources. Quindel refused to track down the origins of the donations on the grounds that Hoffa Junior had lost the election and therefore his violations were "immaterial."

If Quindel had investigated and found that Hoffa Junior's campaign benefitted from employer and mob money in an amount at least equal to the \$220,000 that Carey's former campaign manager admits raising illegally, then at a minimum the violations might justifiably have been ruled to offset each other and the 1996 vote results could be certified.

Where Did Hoffa Junior's \$1.8 Million Come From?

Hoffa Junior claims that part of the \$1.8 million came from contributions under \$100, and the balance came from "bake sales" and buttons and bumper-sticker proceeds. Is it really likely that more than 18,000 Teamsters shelled out \$1.8 million in amounts of \$99 each at the job gate? Is that probable? Or if \$500,000 are deducted for "bake sales" and the like, how plausible is it that 26,000 Teamsters gave an average of \$50 each, or that 52,000 kicked in an average of \$25?

To ask such questions is to answer them. Pass the hat on the job for almost any political cause, and few, if any, tens or twenties will be mixed in with the ones and fives. On the face of it, Hoffa Junior's story of where the \$1.8 million came from would have warranted an investigation, no matter what the margin of Carey's victory.

A Betrayal of Trust

Whatever the reason for Quindel's failure to follow the dictates of common sense, it's the disloyalty to Carey's cause by those Carey trusted that's so painful. The ones he trusted were Jere Nash, his recently fired campaign manager, and two professional fund raisers — Martin Davis and Michael Ansara. Their schemes, in effect, channeled \$220,000 of union money to outside donors, then to a Carey campaign finance committee, and then to firms the three themselves owned or worked for. Their actions, not Carey's, provided the grounds for voiding Carey's victory.

Carey spoke to the press at September's AFL-CIO convention about the betrayal: "I don't think any one man can know everything that's going on in a large organization. I didn't rely on crooks. I relied on what I thought were capable, trusted people."

The Corrupt Link with the Democratic Party

The three men pleaded guilty to federal charges arising from their illegal fund-raising activities. They are professional

political consultants and fund raisers with many longstanding ties to the Democratic Party. Nash previously was chief-of-staff for a Democratic Mississippi governor. He says he also worked part-time for the Clinton-Gore campaign during the Carey campaign. But Carey says he wasn't told about Nash's moonlighting for the Democrats.

Nash was a consultant with the November Group, owned by Martin Davis and Hal Matchow, a principal direct-mail operator for the Democratic National Committee and for the Clinton-Gore campaign. Previously, Davis worked for then-Mayor of Los Angeles Tom Bradley, also a Democrat. Davis is a partner in a Massachusetts telemarketing firm together with Michael Ansara, who was formerly assistant press secretary for Democrat Eugene McCarthy's 1968 presidential campaign. After pleading guilty, Ansara turned over control of his firm to a former Democratic candidate for governor of Massachusetts.

Give Consultants the Boot — Look to the Ranks

A former union consultant wrote in the July 1997 *Labor Notes*: "Unlike the hundreds of Teamsters who did grassroots voter turnout for Carey in 1991 and 1996 — making a real difference in both elections — Davis, Ansara & Co. had a big financial stake in the outcome. They wanted to get more Teamster-related business and maintain the union ties that enhanced their appeal to political clients [in the Democratic Party]. Consultants are a direct pipeline to the Democrats. As such they have divided loyalties and little commitment to any form of independent political action by labor...It's time to give them all the boot!"

Unfortunately, that writer's excellent advice came too late to help Carey. But ask any advocate of union democracy or any labor militant how Carey should proceed, no matter how the government's agent rules, and the answer invariably will be that Carey must look to the ranks for fair play. □

October 20, 1997

“The Real Scandal Is Corporate Power over Government”

Text of Ron Carey's Speech to the National Press Club

The struggle now going on in the Teamsters union — for full workers democracy, for the right of workers to use their unions to fight back against the employers offensive — is of overriding importance. That is why we are publishing, for our readers' information, the full text of Ron Carey's defense of his record. The speech was given in Washington, D.C., on October 20, 1997. Subheads have been added.

The last time I spoke to the National Press Club was five years ago, shortly after I was elected general president of the Teamsters. I had been a UPS delivery driver and local union leader before being elected as the members' choice to lead this union in reform.

It's been a long, difficult struggle. We've faced attacks from big corporations, antilabor politicians, the mob, and corrupt officials in our own union. But we've made enormous progress.

We've installed temporary trustees at 75 local unions to clean out corruption and build democracy. We've recovered millions of dollars of workers' pension money that had been misused. We've saved millions more by eliminating bureaucracy and extra benefits that were paid to top officials. And we've made it clear that our clean-up of corruption applies to everyone — no exceptions.

In the name of my reelection campaign last year, a few individuals — the campaign manager and two other individuals — abused our members' dues money. What they did was a betrayal of all that I have worked for since 1955 when I first came out of the Marines and went to work at UPS (United Parcel Service). We have worked closely with federal authorities to make sure that kind of wrongdoing is investigated and punished.

As I said at this podium five years ago, our task was to change a whole culture within our union. We had to root out corruption at the very soul. We had to bring back the fighting spirit of the Teamsters union.

New Energy and New Strength

You could see the Teamsters' new energy and new strength this summer when we were forced into a strike by UPS. We faced a so-called “final offer” from UPS that would have shifted more

good jobs to low-wage, part-time positions. It would have meant more subcontracting of good full-time jobs. And it would have let the company dip into workers' pension plans.

The world saw a union that fights that kind of corporate greed and stands up for working families. With our victory, we sent big corporations a message that Americans are tired of the part-timing, the downsizing, the subcontracting, the shifting of jobs to exploit workers overseas.

But UPS — they still don't get it. From the moment a settlement was reached, UPS has engaged in attacks on our members that hurt everyone, including the company's customers. Members were brought back very slowly in spite of the fact that customers were waiting for their packages to be delivered. On the job, management has wasted valuable time and goodwill harassing workers just to show them who's boss.

“Operation Good Jobs” at UPS

To counteract the company's wasteful behavior, we're launching “Operation Good Jobs” at UPS. We'll be conducting training throughout the country to help our locals make sure UPS lives up to the agreement we won. Our locals and members will be monitoring the creation of new good full-time jobs. We'll be watching for subcontracting violations and pressing hard for the major improvements in pension benefits to go into effect.

With the recent purchase of R.P.S. (Roadway Package Systems) by Fedex (Federal Express), we'll also be training our members to help Fedex workers organize. During the UPS strike, Fedex workers in many locations were on our picket lines. They recognized that we were fighting for them as well. Now our members are reaching out to Fedex workers to talk about common goals.

We expect that we will continue to face strong opposition from companies like Fedex and UPS — not just on the job but also here in Washington. UPS gave \$2 million in campaign contributions during the 1996 federal elections. It's not surprising that the Republican leadership tried hard to stop OSHA's (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) federal inspectors from making companies like UPS protect workers on the job.

UPS gave campaign contributions to House Speaker Newt Gingrich and at least four Republicans on the House subcommittee headed by Representative Peter Hoekstra of Michigan. Republican members of that subcommittee received more than a quarter-million dollars in campaign contributions from corporate special interests. Their contributors included UPS, Fedex, the American Trucking Associations, Northwest Airlines, and “Americans for Free International Trade.”

In 1995, Congressman Hoekstra held a news conference with the American Trucking Associations, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the National Association of Manufacturers. His purpose was to urge Congress to outlaw new strategies by the Teamsters and other unions that expose corporate wrongdoing in this country.

Hoekstra Hearings Echo UPS

A few weeks ago UPS injected itself into the Teamsters elections by publicly attacking the court-appointed officer who was responsible for a fair election. Last week, Hoekstra's subcommittee held hearings echoing UPS's attacks.

It's not surprising that the politicians UPS finances want to prevent fair union elections. In addition to getting corporate money, anti-labor Republicans used to receive millions of dollars from the corrupt old-guard leadership of this union. Since reform began, that pipeline has been cut off. Today, when politicians of either major party attack working families, our union lets the whole country know about it.

Some members of Congress don't like that. They want to go back to the good old days when old-guard Teamster officials, big corporations, and anti-labor politicians were all in bed together behind closed doors.

Fedex is another big player in both major political parties. Its president doesn't have to attend White House coffees or Capitol Hill breakfasts. His money gets him one-on-one private meetings with the President [Clinton] where he can argue for his special interests.

Fedex gave nearly a million dollars in corporate funds — so-called “soft money” — to political parties for the 1996 campaign. That's a million dollars that was generated by hard-working Fedex employees. At the Fedex shareholders meeting in September, pension funds that own stock proposed that the company disclose to the shareholders its soft money contributions to political parties. You know the answer to that: management refused.

Corporate Influence Peddling

Corporate influence peddling is normal practice in this city. Union Pacific gave over a million dollars in PAC donations and soft money — and when Union Pacific demanded that Congress cut funding for the National Labor Relations Board, the Republican leadership was eager to assist. Union Pacific's trucking subsidiary, Overnite Transportation, had been charged by the Labor Board with hundreds of violations of workers' rights. But instead of investigating the violator, the leaders of Congress attacked the agency that was enforcing the law.

The press has paid a lot of attention to where fund-raising phone calls come from — “were President Clinton or Senator Gramm in their offices or in a phone booth when they solicited big contributors?” That's not the issue. The real scandal in Washington is the power that big corporations have over our government, over our major political parties, over our economic future.

If Abraham Lincoln were giving the Gettysburg Address today, he could not say that we have a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” He would have to say we have a government “of the corporations, by big business, and for the special interests.”

In the 1992 federal elections, corporations contributed *nine* times more to candidates and parties than workers did through their unions. In the 1996 elections, corporations contributed *eleven* times more than workers did through their unions.

Some politicians ought to wear the logos of their corporate sponsors on their suits, just like athletes wear them on their uniforms.

Corporate Campaign Money 19 Times That of Workers

If you look just at so-called “soft money” that comes from corporate or union treasuries, corporations outspent workers by sixteen to one in 1992 — and by 1996 that had grown to *nineteen to one*. Looking just at the Democratic Party, corporations gave six times as much as labor in the 1992 elections — and that grew to nine to one by 1996. Only 7 percent of the soft money raised by the Democratic National Committee for the 1996 elections came from unions.

From these figures you might think that the real issue for investigation by Congress and the news media would be — “Why is corporate domination of politics growing so fast? Where is all that corporate money going — 677 million dollars in the 1996 elections? What are corporations getting for their money?” You might think that news reports about corporate money in politics would outnumber stories about workers' influence by eleven to one. You might think that subpoenas to corporations about their political contributions would outnumber subpoenas to labor by eleven to one.

But as usual, the opposite is true. The leaders of Congress have issued subpoenas for thousands and thousands of documents from unions — deliberately tying up staff and resources that the members' dues pay for. Yet the Republicans have issued not one subpoena to corporate America.

Corporate contributions are given for a specific reason. While unions fight for a higher minimum wage, job safety, health care, and retirement income, corporate contributions are designed to win special-interest tax breaks, subsidies, and other favors.

\$50 Billion Tax Break

Tobacco companies Phillip Morris and RJR Nabisco gave a combined \$6 million for the 1996 elections. Recently, Republican leaders Newt Gingrich and Trent Lott secretly inserted into the budget bill a *\$50 billion tax break* for the tobacco giants. I haven't noticed any hearings about that.

I also haven't noticed much digging into the special interests that are behind the attempt by President Clinton and Newt Gingrich for “fast track” expansion of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). They're trying to get approval to negotiate an expansion of NAFTA to help U.S. companies move operations to other countries besides Mexico. They want it done under so-called “fast track” rules that prevent Congress from changing a new trade deal even if it hurts American workers, American families, consumers, and the environment.

There is only one group that wants to put NAFTA expansion on the fast track in Congress — and that's big business.

Against “Fast Track”

Working families don't want an expanded NAFTA. The trade deal has already cost more than 400,000 American jobs. Many American workers have had to accept lower wages, pensions, or health benefits because their employer threatened to take advantage of NAFTA and move that facility south of the border.

People in Mexico who work for U.S. corporations don't want an expanded NAFTA. Under the trade deal, their wages have actually gone down by about 30 percent — to a level below \$4 per day. Big corporations make millions of dollars per year in extra profits by exploiting workers in Mexico. But American consumers still pay the same price for those goods.

Under NAFTA, corporations have increased by 45 percent the import of Mexican fruit that is not produced under the same health standards required in the U.S. Just ask the schoolchildren who got hepatitis earlier this year after they ate strawberries imported from Mexico by a U.S. company.

Americans who care about our environment don't want an expanded NAFTA either. In the first year that NAFTA was in effect, hazardous waste brought across the border into the U.S. increased by 30 percent.

Hazards of NAFTA

Parents trying to keep drugs out of our schools and our communities — they also don't want NAFTA. The Drug Enforcement Administration says more
Continued on page 48

Teamsters Notebook

by Charles Walker

For twenty years the rank-and-file watchdogs, Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), have been going over the yearly financial paperwork filed with the government by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) central office and the nearly 500 locals to see how the members' dues are spent. TDU says that the "number of officials drawing outrageous salaries and benefits is declining," and 14 fewer officers made the \$100,000 Club in 1996 than in 1995. *Indeed, the IBT has come a long way since Jackie Presser, like Ali Khan, was paid his weight in gold, \$588,353.*

Tom O'Donnel and his son are sure living up to their hometown's name, Lake Success, NY. The two Teamsters officers are the ramrods of tiny Local 817 — only 258 dues payers. *Nevertheless, O'Donnel Senior is 27th from the top of the list of highest-paid Teamsters officials.* O'Donnel Senior knocks down \$142,186, while O'Donnel Junior makes do with \$105,323, or so they reported to the feds. Not surprisingly,

old man O'Donnel is on Hoffa's slate to take the union back to the "good old days."

Chicago locals have 7 officers of the top 20 Teamsters moneymakers, with Local 710 shelling out about \$800,000 to 3 officers. Does that include the benies, limos, and chump-change extras? Afraid not! Local 710 is headed up by Frank Wsol, who was put back into the union by Hoffa Junior and friends at the 1996 Teamsters convention. President Carey ousted Wsol because the officer ganged up with UPS to blacklist a Local 710 rank-and-file member who complained about corruption in the local union. *Wsol and other Local 710 officers poured \$80,000 into the Hoffa Junior campaign, according to reports filed with the election office.*

Teamsters Vote Yes on UPS Contract

Rank-and-file Teamsters ratified the new national United Parcel Service contract by more than 4 to 1. The overwhelming vote in favor was 75,412 to 17,206, or 81 percent. The Teamsters

said the vote set a record for membership support of a new UPS contract. In 1993, the contract received 67 percent support, and in 1990, the vote to approve was only 54 percent.

The new contract was won of course after the 15-day strike in August by more than 185,000 Teamsters. The strike victory was preceded by a five-month membership mobilization campaign of parking lot rallies, petition drives, and on-the-job actions that built unity and community support for the contract battle.

"This contract was a victory for every Teamster and for all working families. Millions of Americans watched our fight with UPS and saw what working people can win when we stick together," said Teamsters President Ron Carey.

A week after the end of the UPS strike, a package car driver stopped at a Sacramento, California, diner for lunch. He barely got through the front door before folks at three tables stood up and gave him a rousing ovation!

□

October 15, 1997

Democracy vs. Bureaucracy in the Teamsters Union

by Charles Walker

I believe the backbone of any union should be union democracy.

— Harry DeBoer, veteran leader of the 1934 Minneapolis Teamsters strike

Today's Teamsters can take great pride in defeating United Parcel Service (UPS) in their 15-day strike. But they can also be proud that the strike sharply revealed the American working class's hunger for a real victory against Corporate America.

Big Business pundits are "astounded" that American workers have not been reduced to brown-nosing grunts after more than two decades of job losses, downsized living standards, and

union-led retreats. The *Wall Street Journal* worries that the "strike appears to fly in the face of conventional wisdom that job insecurity is keeping workers from demanding more money and benefits."

Clearly, the widespread support for the UPS strikers means that American workers want to fight back, that their so-called passivity hasn't meant their meek acceptance of the dirty end of the economic stick, but their need for a union leadership they can rely on, that will really lead them.

Until recently, not even cockeyed optimists thought that the Teamsters Union would turn out to be the pacesetters of labor's turnaround. But now the

revitalized Teamsters union is the focus of countless union activists' hopes for a rebirth of militant unionism. That's largely because of the union's victorious fight against UPS, but also because of the relative erosion of the bureaucracy's power over the Teamsters rank and file that preceded and continued after Ron Carey's stunning triumph in 1991 over a divided old-guard bureaucracy.

Relations with Old Guard Union Officials

While campaigning for the union's presidency, Carey repeatedly stated that he believed that most Teamsters officials were hard-working, honest leaders who would do right by the membership

when free of the old guard's control from the top. At Carey's inauguration in 1992, he vowed to root out the corrupt elements, but he also extended an "olive branch" to all other Teamsters officials.

Many officials spurned Carey and backed UPS during a one-day safety strike in 1994. The bulk of the officialdom also campaigned to defeat Carey's proposal to raise the dues in order to replenish the near-empty strike fund. Finally, Carey announced, "I've tried real hard to build relationships with local union officers, whether they were with my team or not. I want them to know that Ron Carey represents all Teamsters. But the reality is that the olive branch approach is not working."

Carey backed up his words when he abolished a unionwide, mid-level union structure that yearly drained off \$14 million, mostly for multiple salaries, pensions, and perks for fewer than 100 officials and their staffs. Soon after, bitter officials attempted to undermine the 1994 nationwide 24-day freight strike.

This betrayal reinforced Carey's belief that the olive branch approach had reached a dead-end. Still, he continued to appoint old-guard supporters as heads of trade divisions within the international union and to key grievance panels that enforce the three national contracts covering freight, UPS, and the carhauling industry. Carey did set up a rank-and-file volunteer organizing program, but the volunteers were kept under the jurisdiction of the local union officers.

As the 1996 election neared, it was clear that Carey was still opposed by the larger part of the officialdom. To bolster his reelection chances, Carey added officials to his slate who in 1991 had backed one or the other of his old guard opponents. Carey's move increased his delegate strength at the 1996 nominating convention, but the James Hoffa Junior forces had the majority. Fortunately, Hoffa Junior and the old guard fumbled away their chance to amend the union's constitution and cripple the Carey administration.

Carey Wins 1996 Election

Carey went on from the convention to win the government-supervised 1996 election with an absolute majority of the rank's votes, defeating a reunited old guard slate headed by Hoffa Junior. But

the government's election overseer overturned Carey's election, ordered a rerun election, and opened the door to the possibility that Carey might be disqualified from running again.

In the 1991 and 1996 elections, the ranks rejected the political leadership of the old guard convention majorities. So who can doubt that there is a wide chasm between the ranks and the fossilized bureaucracy that for decades failed to lead a defense against the bosses' attacks on the members' standard of living and that opposed (sometimes with force) all attempts from the ranks to turn the union around.

Just a Few Bad Apples?

By now it's impossible to accept the argument that Carey's diehard bureaucratic opponents are merely a few bad apples in the barrel or are capable of self-reform. If that were so, then at the 1991 convention far more than 15 percent of the delegates (who in 1986 were forced to stand at a mike and individually announce their votes) would have used their secret ballot to vote, if only in protest, against the candidates that in 1986 had backed Jackie Presser a poster model for labor racketeering and a fink for the FBI.

In fact, there was little anger by the delegates (mostly local union officers) that the top old guard leadership allowed the government's intrusion into the union — in order to escape prosecution for labor racketeering. The overwhelming majority at the 1991 convention backed rival slates headed by men who had signed the government's consent decree.

At least by the 1996 convention, a right-thinking, if slow-thinking, majority should have been ready (you would think) to take the severest actions against the ringleaders of the betrayal of the 1994 UPS and freight strikes. Instead, the convention majority reinstated into the union Frank Wsol, an old guard leader whom Carey ousted because Wsol had collaborated with UPS to fire a rank-and-file member who protested against corruption in his local union.

Fighting Corruption Not Enough

Since 1992, Carey has put 75 local unions racked with corruption in tempo-

rary trusteeship. Some of the local unions were mobbed-up, using the members' dues as a personal piggy bank. Others never had membership meetings, had no by-laws, or hadn't had a contested election in living memory. Carey has said that he "will never, ever, apologize for rooting out corruption wherever it raises its ugly head in the Teamsters union."

However, even if all vestiges of organized crime and petty tyranny were wiped out of the Teamsters union, still it would be a sure bet that the privileged elite of union officers would continue to oppose Carey. This elite, as long as it controls the apparatus and treasury of most of the local unions, will never yield to a mere electoral majority. The continued existence of the careerist officer caste threatens the progress that Carey has achieved and that has inspired so many unionists throughout the labor movement.

Ask any advocate of union democracy or any labor militant how Carey should proceed, and you will invariably hear that Carey must look to the ranks. For some purposes Carey has done that. He has sought to mobilize members through their local unions, and that has helped the union's organizing campaigns. In the 1997 UPS negotiations he went directly to the ranks, which may partly explain why there was no repeat of the officers' 1994 collaboration with UPS during the strike. And of course the ranks have twice elected Carey as Teamsters president.

The Goal: A Self-Acting Membership and Anti-Bureaucratic Leadership

Nevertheless, the bureaucracy remains entrenched, and the ranks are far from being a self-acting body with an antibureaucratic leadership from top to bottom. No doubt Carey would judge that goal as extremely visionary. That's understandable. But he should be prepared to acknowledge the need for an organized rank-and-file counterforce to the bureaucracy.

That's never been done, so it's difficult to conceive the first steps to take. One suggestion is to form a unionwide rank-and-file organizing auxiliary dedicated to carrying out the international's most challenging organizing drives. Of

Continued on page 21

AFL-CIO Convention, 1997

by Frank Lovell

The 1997 AFL-CIO biennial convention in Pittsburgh, September 22–25, was in almost every respect a continuation of the federation's historic 1995 New York convention. The New York convention addressed the deepest crisis of the labor movement since the merger of the old AFL craft unions and the CIO industrial unions in 1955.

Back in 1955, the newly formed AFL-CIO retained for the most part, in its leadership bodies, the craft-conscious business union philosophy of the old AFL. Under its longtime president, George Meany, the AFL-CIO and its affiliated unions seemed to prosper as a result of what appeared to be a mutually beneficial policy of union-management collaboration. But collaboration was terminated by the employers in 1976. At that time the employing class launched an attack on the unions designed to destroy the union movement.

Incapable of adjusting to the new situation, Meany and his successor Lane Kirkland sought ways to restructure some form of "labor-management collaboration" with the result that the unions lost millions of members and most of their once formidable political influence. This was the situation in 1995 which delegates to the New York convention attempted to resolve by electing a new leadership with a new policy to fight back against the employing class offensive.

This magazine (No. 129, December 1995), reporting on that convention, summarized: "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."

Record of the New AFL-CIO Leaders

The new AFL-CIO leadership (John Sweeney, president; Linda Chavez-Thompson, vice-president; Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer) began immediately to implement the new policy: to allocate massive resources to union organizing (the first priority), to identify with the needs of the Black community and other minorities, to

address the needs and enlist the support of women and young people, to restore an alliance with academia that had largely atrophied during the era of Cold War prosperity. The gap between the campuses and the official labor movement widened during the student anti-Vietnam War demonstrations of the 1960s and 1970s.

One of the first projects of the new AFL-CIO leadership was the 1996 Union Summer program, which recruited more than a thousand university undergraduates to help in union organizing drives, become acquainted with union values, learn the techniques of organizing, and gain some practical experience in the world of labor. In October 1996, one year after taking office, the three top AFL-CIO leaders participated with nationally prominent academics, labor historians, and others, in a two-day teach-in at Columbia University (see *BIDOM* Nos. 134 and 135), the first of several such teach-ins around the country.

Throughout their first two years in office the new AFL-CIO leaders traveled extensively, almost continuously, to strike areas, such as Detroit, where newspaper workers are victims of a vicious anti-union attack by the publishers, and to demonstrations against non-union conditions and racial discrimination, such as prevail in California agricultural fields. They also mobilized the union movement in support of an "issue-focused political educational campaign" to defeat anti-labor Republicans in the 1996 congressional elections, and help elect Democrats, their way of trying to regain union influence in government.

This, then, was the broad background against which the Pittsburgh AFL-CIO convention was held, the theme being a message to the delegates and (by implication) to the working masses: "You have a voice. Make it heard."

Community-Labor Teach-in Precedes Convention

As a kind of prelude to the convention, "A Community-Labor 'Teach-In' (about living wages and social justice),"

was organized at the University of Pittsburgh on Sunday afternoon, September 21, the day before the convention. This event, sponsored by a long list of local unions and several community and religious groups, was patterned after the Columbia University teach-in, but was much less ambitious. It recalled the history of labor struggles in the Pittsburgh area in the steel and coal industries and addressed the continuing oppression of workers.

Introductory remarks by Professor Charles McColleston, labor historian, reminding the audience of Pittsburgh's shameful past (referring to the brutal use of armed might by the ruling class against the 1877 rail strike, the Homestead strike of 1892, and the 1919 steel strike) but also of the glory days (the rise of the industrial union movement and the founding of the CIO), followed by music and union songs, defined the character of the teach-in and the intention of its organizers to introduce the concept of class struggle.

Linda Chavez-Thompson and Richard Trumka both addressed the main session of the teach-in on the subject "Labor is Back," about recent activities and goals for the near future of the new AFL-CIO leadership. Rosemary Trump, a young woman union leader (president of her SEIU local in Pittsburgh and vice president of the international union), also spoke. Obviously talented and an able speaker, she seemed to symbolize an aspect of the emerging movement that the new AFL-CIO leadership seeks to nurture, projecting an image of youth and vitality.

Six panel sessions to choose from provided discussion opportunities on as many subjects, ranging from "Living Wage Campaigns" to "Working Women and Unions." Prominent community activists, union organizers, and labor educators from around the country participated, including Elaine Bernard from the Harvard Trade Union Program, Linda Lotz from Los Angeles Clergy and Laity United, Tony Lack, a University of Pittsburgh student who participated in Union Summer '96, Rick Adams from Alliance for Progressive

Action/Rainbow Coalition, Bill Serrin from New York University Department of Journalism and former labor reporter, and Staughton Lynd, who is presently labor education coordinator, Teamsters Local 377 in Youngstown, Ohio. One workshop on labor political action featured Tony Mazzocchi, speaking for the Labor Party, along with representatives of the New Party and other populist or "progressive" groups.

The closing session of the teach-in was chaired by Frank Wilson of the Pittsburgh Metro Chapter of the Labor Party and included labor songs by the Pittsburgh Solidarity Chorus, an essay by a young person from Canada on "Free the Children International," and remarks by Bill Fletcher, director of education, AFL-CIO. Approximately 400 attended the teach-in, mostly from the liberal and radical sectors with a smattering of students. A literature display had books from several university presses as well as Monthly Review Press and Pathfinder Books. Almost everyone participated in the panel sessions and enthusiastically applauded the efforts of the organizers of this event.

Convention's Top Priority: Organizing

There could be no doubt when the AFL-CIO convention opened in Pittsburgh's cavernous convention center that organizing the unorganized is the federation's top priority. One hundred new union members stood on the dais behind federation president John Sweeney when he delivered his keynote speech. In it he gave content and special meaning to the new leadership's slogan, "Organize, Mobilize, Energize."

Sweeney began with a short list of accomplishments. "We've created a new culture of organizing and begun devoting substantial new resources to organizing," he said. "We've developed an exciting new program that is helping local unions across the country change in order to organize," this to make the admonition to mobilize meaningful. And to provide the necessary energy, "We're training more young people through our Organizing Institute and we're helping our unions take on entire industries and geographic areas."

He pointed to the new union members with him on the dais and said, "Our membership numbers are beginning to

"Get Back to the Mainstream"

***Wall Street Journal* Worried by AFL-CIO's "Leftward Drift"**

The right-wing ideologues and crude apologists for corporate power who write the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal* are disturbed by the links the new AFL-CIO leadership is forging with the campuses, the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the gay rights movement, and so on.

An October 17 *WSJ* editorial entitled "What's Become of Labor?" deplores what it calls the "increasing role of the 1960s Left in the affairs of U.S. labor unions." The editorialists complain that "John Sweeney's election as AFL-CIO president in 1995 led to moving out the more moderate, anti-Communist leadership of Lane Kirkland."

Oh, for those good old days — they seem to say — when "anti-Communism" was entrenched and resistance to the bosses' one-sided class war against workers was not to be thought of. The united labor support for the UPS workers' fightback would have been inconceivable under Kirkland.

The *WSJ* editorialists charge that Sweeney is a member of Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) — unlike Kirkland, who was linked with the reactionary Social Democrats USA — and that "DSA advertises itself as the largest 'openly socialist presence in American communities and politics.'" (No mention, of course, that the DSA "socialists" supported Clinton in the last two elections and are intimately entangled, like most of the union bureaucracy, with the subtler and craftier of the two bosses' parties, the Democrats.)

The October 17 *WSJ* editorial also made this comment: "Rep. Peter Hoekstra has been holding useful [?] hearings this week into the invalidated 1996 Teamsters election. One watches the proceedings and comes away with the impression of a U.S. labor movement and its leadership simply drifting leftward and away from the mainstream of the country's life..."

creep back up because of more than 2,000 organizing victories won by workers like those who are with us on this stage." He added, "We have more membership drives underway than at any time in my memory." These include the strawberry campaign in California, apple pickers in Washington state, construction workers and hotel workers in Las Vegas, auto parts workers and airline clerks all over the U.S., and low wage workers in garment and other industries in the South.

The fact is that organized labor must continuously recruit new members to keep even with downsizing and layoffs. Since 1995 union membership increased less than one half of one percent. But what this says is that the new leadership has managed to reverse the downward drift.

"We have to continue to change and reach to find ways to organize on a bigger scale and at a faster pace," Sweeney said, "because the employers we are confronting are raising the stakes by spending millions of new dollars to deny workers their legal right to organize, and because our enemies in the political arena are doing everything they

can to choke off our new movement before it has a chance to live and breathe."

2,000 Union Candidates by the Year 2000

Turning attention to the general anti-labor political climate, Sweeney recommended less support to professional politicians and more direct participation by union members as candidates for public office. "In this country, there is a gigantic cultural disconnect between professional politicians and working families," he said. "The politicians live in a cocoon of privilege and power while we wrestle with the realities of paying the bills and finding time for our families. They attend thousand-dollar-a-plate dinners while we worry about the cost of a loaf of bread and a quart of milk." He urged the replacement of professional politicians with working men and women in seats of government — 2,000 union candidates by the year 2000. But he failed to say what their party ticket would be.

Sweeney likewise urged a big voter registration drive — "4 million new union family voters by the year 2000."

But he failed to mention how these newly registered voters can vote to improve their lives. Instead, he recommended a 3-question litmus test for every candidate: "Will you vote to support the right of workers to organize to improve their lives? Will you take a stand against employers who violate our laws and interfere with a worker's free choice to join a union? When a worker is fired for union organizing, will you stand with us, will you march with us, will you go to jail with us?" Almost all elected officials in this country (and both Democratic and Republican parties) have answered these questions many times by their actions. Their answer always is a resounding NO.

Become a Social Movement

Sweeney went on to suggest that the union movement must strive to become a social movement, a movement of social protest and militant action. "We also have to sink our roots back deeply into our communities and begin drawing power and support from the wellspring of our democracy, from our local unions and our churches and synagogues and allies in the movements for women's and civil rights, because in the final analysis, we must revitalize our movement from the ground up."

From the 880 delegates and alternates and a larger number of others among those attending the convention, this perspective outlined by Sweeney received enthusiastic and sustained applause and loud shouts of approval. There was not a single voice of open opposition from the delegates at any time during the convention. But it was clear from casual conversations and caucus meetings among them that there are many incumbent union officials who discount what is said at conventions as mostly rhetorical, having little to do with the daily operation of union business.

Teamsters a Powerful Presence

From start to finish the convention was alert to the presence and the newly won prestige of Teamsters President Ron Carey and the Teamsters delegation. The strike victory over UPS was almost universally recognized as a significant turning point in labor history, proof that the strike weapon is powerful and that labor once again can win with it.

The daily reports of government investigations and rumors of AFL-CIO complicity in illegal financing of Carey's re-election as Teamsters president failed to resonate at the convention. In their speeches on the convention floor and in casual conversation, delegates frequently invoked the UPS strike victory as an example of what the union movement needs. But it was clear that something should be done to dispel the rumors about the mishandling of finances during the Carey campaign for the Teamsters presidency. Carey, Sweeney, and Trumka all answered relevant questions raised by reporters.

Carey called a press conference on the second day of the convention which made front-page news in the local papers. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* said, "He denies knowing of aides' scheme on campaign cash, seeks Hoffa probe." It said, "The denial came in Carey's first news conference since court-appointed election officer Barbara Zack Quindel on Aug. 22 invalidated his victory over challenger James P. Hoffa in a bruising election campaign that took place last year." It reported that Carey said, "If there's a victim here, I certainly am the victim." Carey suggested a thorough investigation into the source of the \$2 million spent on the Hoffa campaign which he said unquestionably came from "employers and organized crime." Sweeney was later asked if the vendetta against Carey was in retaliation for the UPS strike. He said he had his own opinion about that but thought it inappropriate to comment.

On the third day of the convention under the agenda point in celebration of recent strike victories and recognition of strikers, UPS workers in company uniforms (their brown work clothes) came down the aisles of the convention and ran onto the dais. This brought the convention to its feet. They were strike leaders and they sang the songs they learned on the picket lines. Ron Carey welcomed them and gave a short talk on how the strike was organized. He praised those who answered the strike call, hailed the solidarity within the Teamsters ranks, and thanked the union movement (especially the AFL-CIO leadership) for its solid support. His message was that strikes today are unavoidable against recalcitrant employers, and strikes can be won when

properly organized with the involvement and participation of the union membership.

Election of Officers, Adoption of Resolutions

The final point on this session's agenda was "Nomination for AFL-CIO Offices." The Sweeney/Chavez-Thompson/Trumka leadership team was duly nominated for re-election, each nomination duly seconded. This was done with fulsome laudatory speeches, like they do at Democratic and Republican party conventions when it comes time to nominate the candidate for president. The AFL-CIO's top executive officers were unanimously re-elected, their terms of office extended to four years instead of the previous two years.

The main business of the convention was discussion and action on a long list of 22 resolutions and nine constitutional amendments, dealing with everything from the AFL-CIO's political and social policy to its organizational structure. Much of the time of the convention was devoted to these serious matters, making clear and formalizing until the next convention the leadership's social policy and its organizational responsibility. These discussions, which must have seemed tedious to many delegates, were sandwiched in between appearances of politicians, clergymen, community leaders, union officials from abroad, special guests representing victims of persecution and police torture in foreign lands, and musicians to lift the spirits.

Some resolutions were not acted upon, but instead were referred to the incoming Executive Council or withdrawn. They included those having to do with the blockade against Cuba, one to endorse the Labor Party, and another on the use of union dues for political education. Those resolutions that were discussed on the convention floor dealt mainly with social policy, the purpose being to begin the education of the delegates and call their attention to these particular issues for further education and implementation at the local union level and in central labor bodies around the country. These bore identifying titles, indicating their content: Building a Broad Movement of America's Workers, Making Government Work for Working Families, Workers

and the Global Economy, Civil and Human Rights, etc.

Anti-Communist Clause, Campaign Finance Reform, Etc.

The proposed constitutional amendments were all submitted by the Executive Council. One was a new preamble to the constitution. Another is a meaningful correction of the AFL-CIO's non-discrimination policy. Another eliminates the anti-Communist clauses of the Cold War era and substitutes new words. Typical is a passage that speaks of the need to "protect the labor movement from any and all corrupt influences and from the undermining effects of authoritarianism, totalitarianism, terrorism and all other forces that suppress individual liberties and freedom of association and oppose the basic principles of democracy and of free and democratic unionism."

Probably the most far-reaching change in the constitution is the expansion of the president's and Executive Council's power to appoint committees. This is likely to affect the structure and functioning of AFL-CIO central labor bodies in many cities.

The convention was strong for "campaign finance reform," an issue which the union officials seem aroused about, and when Clinton referred to campaign reform, during his address to the convention, that drew applause. Sweeney in his keynote speech had stressed:

"Our political system is awash with dirty money, corporate money, and foreign money. It is corrupting our elected officials and it is corrupting the soul of our nation. And it is crowding out the participation and power of workers and their families."

Clinton's "Fast Track" Not Well Received

Among the politicians from the U.S. Congress who addressed the convention were Tom Daschle, Richard Gephardt, Arlen Specter, and Edward Kennedy; Labor Secretary Alexis Herman was also a guest speaker.

President Clinton received a polite welcome, but a negative response to his effort to sell "fast track," the buzz word that usually sets off boos in union halls. He claimed that more trade with foreign countries creates more jobs in the U.S.,

and that his trade negotiators need a free hand to make agreements which Congress can approve or reject. The so-called fast track rule prohibits Congress from making changes in negotiated agreements, thus speeding up the legislative approval process. But the delegates had heard all that before; and even though they were more restrained in their opposition than usual, they weren't buying those excuses. Later in the day they adopted a resolution condemning "fast track." Clinton won back some points when he talked about education and health care, and called for racial reconciliation.

Gephardt was the outstanding political star. He came to the convention armed with photos of the miserable health conditions, environmental pollution, primitive hovels of Mexican workers employed in the modern American industrial plants on the Mexican side of the border, the *maquiladoras*, where hourly wages are a fraction of the U.S. minimum scale. Gephardt promised to fight in Congress to include environmental protection and guarantees of workers' rights in all trade agreements. He is pledged to oppose "fast track."

All political guest speakers at AFL-CIO conventions are routinely introduced as friends of labor; otherwise they presumably would not be invited. This aspect of the federation is one that remains unchanged since the days of George Meany, going back even to the time of Gompers at the turn of the last century.

Specter was the only Republican invited, perhaps because the convention was held in his state. He expressed appreciation for support from some unions in past elections and said he plans to vote against "fast track" this time.

Politicians were not the only guest speakers. Kweisi Mfume, head of the NAACP, Bill Jordan, general secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and Reverend Jesse Jackson were in most ways welcome contrasts.

Last Day: Young Activists Speak Out

The final day of the convention seemed to be a well-planned departure from the usual exit path at union conventions. Traditionally the convention disinte-

grates on the last day. The delegates are leaving, having elected (usually re-elected) the executive officers for the next term and made whatever deals they thought might be personally beneficial. They pay little attention to what is supposed to be happening at the podium. And before anyone can remember how the convention adjourned or what business was transacted on the last day everyone is gone, and it remains for the convention secretary or some official record keeper to fill in the name of whoever it was that made the motion to adjourn.

Not so this time. It was as if the leadership had decided to save the best for last. Youthful activists from organizing projects and from model central labor councils were brought to the dais to talk about how the policies of the new leadership are being implemented. Emphasis was on coalition building, uniting with racial and national minorities, and with the gay and lesbian communities, to help liberalize society and transform established institutions, including the labor movement itself. Many of the young activists repeated what was often said in the heat of organizing drives, "The face of the labor movement must change to look like the face of the American working class; it must become younger, darker, and more female."

Many activists, recruited from Union Summer projects, are women. They hope to become the union leaders of the future.

The "Union Cities" Program

The final day's agenda outlined in terms of first steps and early encounters what the leadership calls the "Road to Union City," a community organizing effort led by the union movement.

Jesse Jackson was the final speaker. The convention adjourned at noon. The AFL-CIO officers and Jackson held a street rally outside the convention hall, a small sample of what they mean when they call for "Street Heat"—mass demonstrations in the streets to help create Union Cities.

The plan is specific, already in operation. "With American workers hurting as never before, our unions have to respond as never before, and that's what our new 'Union Cities' program is all about. It sets out eight steps toward

rebuilding our movement from the bottom up.” How? “Working through their central labor councils, and with their national unions, local unions across America will be taking these steps together: educating and motivating their members, defending the right of workers to join unions, organizing thousands

of new members and creating a powerful new political voice that speaks for working families from county courthouses to the White House.”

Brave words. But how the plan materializes will depend upon the continuing radicalization of the working class and its ability to transform the union move-

ment, no small undertaking. Still, this convention took several decisive steps that can, given the creeping stagnation of capitalism, lead on to the pursuit of a class struggle program, including the eventual organization of a labor party based on a substantial section of the unions. □

From the Managing Editors

Continued from Inside Front Cover
knew her to contribute more about her life in the American Trotskyist movement. (The *New York Times* ran a fairly long article about Myra, but tended to focus unfairly, though not surprisingly, on her origins in a wealthy Salt Lake City Mormon family, the Tanners.)

Continuing Discussion on the Labor Party

Commenting on an article by Jane Slaughter that first appeared in *New Politics* and more recently in the Fourth International's monthly publication, *International Viewpoint*, David Jones here restates a case that most readers will be familiar with. It is a position that David Jones has consistently taken. Most *BIDOM* editors agree with that position and have argued for it, along with other contributors, since Labor Party Advocates got under way in 1991.

Many left-wing critics of the union leaders of the labor party have been quite vociferous — in print, on computer network conferences, at meetings. Some of that has been echoed in our pages, but we prefer to keep it to a minimum.

More attention and space needs to go to reports on the building of the Labor

Party, such as the ones in this issue from Bill Onasch on the LP's electoral policy committee, from the Ohio State LP founding convention, and from the Seattle LP chapter on the mural commemorating the Centralia massacre. In a future issue we hope to have a report on the upcoming establishment of a New York state LP organization, scheduled for November.

Rather than have a continual back-and-forth between two authors, issue after issue, with essentially the same arguments being restated, we will print further discussion on these and related labor party questions in future issues, especially as occasioned by new developments in the class struggle. We urge readers to study all of our back issues, which are quite rich in discussion of the current labor party initiative since its beginning.

Labor Party Discussion in Other Media

For those who want more discussion, we recommend the videotape of the Labor Party workshop at the Labor Notes conference of April 1997. It is available for \$15 plus postage. Contact *Labor Notes*, 7435 Michigan Ave., Detroit MI 48210, phone (313) 842-6262, on how to order

the video; and to subscribe, send \$20 for one year. We hope to run excerpts from the videotape discussion in a future issue, and to comment on it further.

There has been an interesting discussion on the computer network conference “labr.party” over the alleged withdrawal by the LP leadership of a pro-Labor Party motion from the San Francisco Central Labor Council at the recent AFL-CIO convention. Particularly impres-

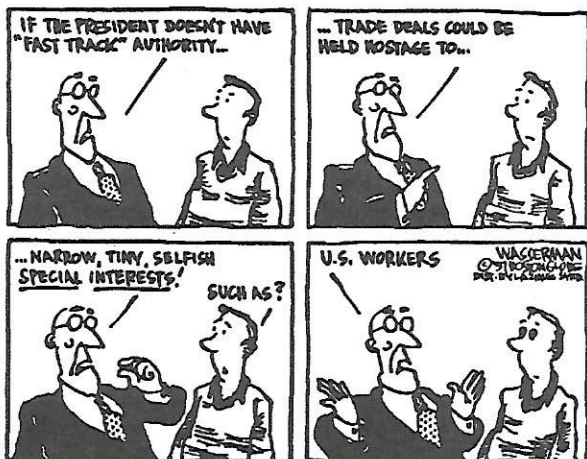
sive, as we see it, are the arguments of Sam Bottone against the criticisms leveled by Steve Zeltzer, one of the most unremitting of the “left” critics. Zeltzer blasted the LP leaders for not pushing the motion harder, even if that might have caused a counterproductive confrontation.

Cogent disagreements with Zeltzer's view were also posted by Andrew English of the Arizona LP chapter and Daymon Hartley, the locked-out Detroit newspaper worker, whose greetings to his 2-year-old son, together with his wife, Margaret Trimer-Hartley, appear in this issue.

The Detroit Newspaper Battle, and a New Government “Spy Scare”

The Hartleys make clear that the Detroit newspaper workers are not giving up despite the court ruling favoring the corporations. In addition to their statement, we are reprinting two articles from *Battleground Detroit*, a newsletter produced in Detroit by ACOSS, the Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters, telling how the newspaper workers view the present situation and what further actions they are considering.

In our next issue we hope to comment on the Stand case. Rudi Stand, a member of the national council of DSA (Democratic Socialists of America), and his wife, a member of the Committees of Correspondence in Washington, D.C. — both of whom had government jobs — are accused by the FBI of having funneled state secrets to former East Germany and of trying to spy for the South African government...of Nelson Mandela. Ominously, the right-wing columnists of the *Wall Street Journal* have tried to use this case to discredit “left-leaning” AFL-CIO head John Sweeney, who they charge is a DSA member. □



Detroit Newspaper Workers Discuss Next Steps

From *Battleground Detroit*

This article and the following one are from Battleground Detroit, a newsletter put out by ACOSS (Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters). For more on ACOSS, see our previous issues.

On August 14 U.S. District Court Judge John Corbett O'Meara denied a request by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) for an injunction under section 10(j) of the National Labor Relations Act.

A 10(j) injunction, if upheld by the higher courts, would have forced Gannett and Knight-Ridder to reinstate the locked-out workers — other than those of us they accused of misconduct or said they didn't need — and to displace the scabs who had taken our jobs.

The NLRB says it will appeal O'Meara's decision, but the best chance for a 10(j) injunction was at the district court level. Now it seems that the legal proceedings are right where Gannett and Knight-Ridder want them: tied up for years in motions, hearings, briefs, and appeals.

As a speaker at a recent ACOSS meeting said, "The legal system is in the hands of the bosses. If you have expectations [of a legal solution], you'd better have a long life expectancy."

We may yet win reinstatement. But unless something changes dramatically, it will come too late, long after most of us have had to get on with our lives and too late to deter Gannett, Knight-Ridder, and other union-busting corporate criminals.

Council's Strategy Falls Short

The "bold new" strategy the union leadership has been following since last February has yet to bring us any closer to victory.

For the first nineteen months of the strike, the Metropolitan Council of Newspaper Unions hoped that the work stoppage plus the circulation and ad boycotts, the publication of the *Detroit Sunday Journal*, and NLRB action

would win the strike, without stopping production and distribution of the newspapers.

When that failed, the national leaderships of our unions imposed an unconditional offer to return to work. The unconditional offer plus the June 21 march and rally were enough to get the NLRB to rule that the strike was an unfair labor practice strike. But they were not enough to get us reinstated.

At this point our union leadership is still relying on the courts. We know, as we've always known, that you cannot rely on the courts to win a strike.

Activists Meet to Discuss Strategy

On Monday, August 25, more than 40 locked-out and fired workers and our supporters met to discuss strategies for keeping the struggle alive and getting the newspaper workers back on the job. Attending the meeting were members from ACOSS (Action Coalition of Strikers and Supporters), Shut Down Motown '97 (the Action Planning Committee), Friends of Labor, and Readers United.

The majority of the active strikers want to continue the corporate campaign already in place (the advertising and circulation boycotts, the *USA Today* boycott, publication of the *Sunday Journal*, visits to company figures), but there is widespread sentiment to broaden these campaigns. There is also a need for an "inside" campaign to assist and support those of us who have been called back.

The meeting also discussed nonviolent civil disobedience at the North Plant and Riverfront plant. Actions are necessary to escalate into an area-wide general strike or work stoppage and

national actions against Gannett and Knight-Ridder.

Determining a Plan of Action

In spite of the setback we suffered when the 10(j) was denied, we haven't given up. In Monday's discussion, we identified many actions that might be undertaken to keep our struggle going and win a return to work with a union contract. The problem, though, is how to organize locked-out and fired workers for a new strategy despite the Council's opposition and the unconditional offer, even though that whole strategy has not been successful.

In many ways, the situation facing us now is similar to the one we faced a year ago while trying to organize for a national labor march on Detroit. In order to replace the Council's strategy with one that can win, we need an agreement among the activist locked-out and fired workers that is supported by the rank-and-file in our unions. With that, we could organize support in the labor movement and the community that could turn around the policy of the leadership, from the Council and the Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO to the national Teamsters and CWA and the AFL-CIO.

We want to extend a special invitation to those locked-out, fired, and "locked-in" workers who have not been part of our discussion so far. We need your input and support. Please join us and help find a way to defeat Gannett and Knight-Ridders' attacks against us.

Our meetings are at 7 p.m. Mondays at Central United Methodist Church, 23 E. Adams (Adams & Woodward) in Detroit (next to locked-out headquarters). [When you plan to attend, call first to confirm that a meeting is scheduled that week.] □

We Need to Win the Right to Strike!

From *Battleground Detroit*

As with Gannett and Knight-Ridder in Detroit, employers everywhere are increasingly resorting to lockouts, production by scabs during strikes, and the permanent replacement of strikers.

Anti-labor laws like the Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin Acts are unjust. They outlaw the measures we need to make strikes effective (including mass picketing, workplace occupations, secondary boycotts, solidarity strikes, and general strikes) and help shift the balance of forces in favor of the corporations.

The labor movement needs to win the right to strike by forcing the government to repeal the Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin Acts and all the other anti-labor laws and to prohibit any interference in the right of workers to strike, picket, or occupy our workplaces, on our own behalf or in solidarity with other workers. We need legislation that will guarantee the right to strike, and prohibit employers from hiring scabs as temporary or permanent replacement workers or operating their businesses during a strike.

One way to accomplish this is to mobilize direct action by the unions to make the anti-labor laws unenforceable, particularly organizing political strikes as necessary to back off the government.

Corporate Attacks on Workers
Corporations like Gannett and Knight-Ridder have tried to maintain their profitability by automating, speeding up, and laying off workers in the industrial centers, gutting health, education, and social welfare programs, attacking the legal rights and social position of women, racial and national minorities, and immigrants, and shifting production to low-wage regions like the southern U.S. and low-wage countries like Mexico, Brazil, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Korea, China, etc., where repressive governments often add to the "favorable business environment."

A central problem for the labor movement is that the corporations have again

made strikebreaking and union-busting key elements of their strategy, not only in poor countries and regions, where this has always been the case, but also in the industrial centers. Driven by their own competition and taking advantage of the competition among workers, the corporations increasingly are trying to crush all resistance.

In the U.S., the corporations, with government support, more and more often reply to strike threats with lockouts and to strikes with continued production by scabs and the permanent replacement of strikers. From PATCO to Hormel to the Decatur "war zone" of Staley, Firestone, and Caterpillar to the Detroit newspapers, strikebreaking and union-busting are becoming the norm for U.S. labor relations.

Militant Tactics Still Can Win

There are exceptions to this pattern. Where workers are able to stop highly profitable production, even a very large corporation may decide that a lockout or strike is not worth the cost, as in the recent UPS Teamster strike and the UAW strikes at GM and Chrysler. But in most cases, if the corporation is big enough and determined enough, the traditional strategy of withholding labor in a particular bargaining unit, even supplemented by a consumer boycott or "corporate campaign," is not enough to win.

The labor movement is still quite strong, however. Key components of industry are still organized, and the unions have tactics that can win against even the biggest, most determined employers. These are the tactics that built the industrial unions in the 1930s and 1940s: mass picketing, workplace occupations, secondary boycotts, solidarity strikes, and general strikes to back off the government when it tries to interfere.

If the Staley workers had been able to stop the scabs with mass picketing, occupy the Decatur plant, threaten Tate & Lyle with secondary boycotts and solidarity strikes at all its operations worldwide, and block government inter-

ference with the threat of escalating general strikes, they would have won within 72 hours. The same applies to the Detroit newspaper strike.

Not surprisingly, all these tactics are illegal. Having been forced to make major concessions to the unions in the 1930s, reflected in the 1932 Norris-LaGuardia Act and the 1935 Wagner Act, the employers moved as soon as they could to outlaw the unions' most potent weapons. The 1947 Taft-Hartley Act and the 1959 Landrum-Griffin Act codified the employers' key victories, supplemented since then by a stream of court decisions, administrative rulings, and arbitration awards tracing the labor movement's retreat into business unionism.

Unions today must win the right to strike by nullifying the anti-labor laws and redressing the balance of economic forces. We must learn from the employers. Their method is to divide and conquer by bringing their concentrated economic, legal, and police power to bear on separate groups of workers. They begin with the more vulnerable sectors of the working class: African Americans, Latinos, women, youth, the unskilled, the unorganized, and the unemployed.

When they take on the unions, they try to limit the conflict to one bargaining unit at a time, although behind that employer stands the corporate empire of which it is part and behind that the employing class as a whole and the government that serves it.

The unions must overcome the divisions the employers exploit by organizing the unorganized, starting from the current base of industrial, government, and skilled workers and reaching out to workers in the South, service workers, the unskilled, Black and Latino workers, women workers, youth, and the unemployed.

We must rebuild the labor movement from the ground up, with a strong presence on the shop and office floors and

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The Detroit Struggle Continues

Happy Second Birthday, Nikolas Daymon Hartley!

by Margaret Trimer-Hartley and Daymon J. Hartley

Margaret Trimer-Hartley addressed the Labor Party founding convention in June 1996, speaking for the striking Detroit newspaper workers and carrying her infant son, Nikolas, in her arms. (See the text of her remarks then in the July-August 1996 BIDOM.) Margaret now works for the Michigan Education Association, and Daymon works full-time for the lockout. Nikolas was born October 5, 1995, and was one of the first babies born to strikers.

We're among the lucky ones, Nikolas.

We're not on strike anymore — technically. We are healthy. Our family is whole.

And we're not on the brink of losing our home, our cars, and our ability to put food on the table, as we were for so many months.

But that doesn't mean that our battle against Detroit's newspaper villains is over.

Far from it.

Now, 27 months into this war, we are technically locked out and fired. Your mom has been fired from the *Free Press* once; your dad is fighting three separate firings from the same paper. The bosses we once worked beside, joked with, and tried our damndest to please concocted a list of egregious lies about us that's as long as you are.

They were particularly rabid toward your dad. They said he did such things as "coercively videotape" scabs going to and from the jobs they stole from us. They said their Nazi-like security goons captured him on videotape. Yet when he

viewed the tape, it was clear that he was the man carrying and photographing a small child — you!

The lies don't hurt like they used to. We actually can joke now about how it seems those bosses are trying to kill us, bury us, and dig us up so they can kill us again and again and again..

We just won't die. We may be battle-scarred. But we will prevail. Sadly, it could take years.

That's OK. You've shown us how quickly the years pass. And you've taught us to soak up every moment of every day — even the most difficult ones.

We talk often about how it seems like just a moment ago we were planting big welcome to the world kisses on you. Now, you're eagerly telling the world that "Strikers are good. Scabs are bad — very, very bad."

That's partly because we've mixed a lot of labor lessons in between "Stelaluna" and "The Prince and the Pauper" and "Miss Spider's Tea Party." We want to be sure you grow up with an understanding and an appreciation of your working-class roots. We want you to

know who really built this country and created all the wealth.

And yet working men and women have never earned their fair share. Instead, they've been beaten and killed for trying to get back what they put into the system. In the newspaper strike alone, some 70 strikers have been injured by company thugs and police officers; and 20 have died — many, no doubt, from stress-related illnesses.

That's why we keep fighting. Every generation needs someone to stand up for honest, decent, hard-working men and women and against ruthless capitalists driven only by the power of the dollar.

We were so lucky to have inherited lessons, strength and pride from the struggles of your great-grandparents and grandparents who fought before us and who stood by us — if only in spirit — every step of the way.

We hope this fight we are waging will carry on that legacy. As you can see, it isn't merely an event in our lives. It is an expression of our love for you and our hope for the future of your generation. □

We Need to Win the Right to Strike

Continued from page 12

active democracy in the union halls. And we must bring the power of all the unions and all the workers to bear in any struggle, making a reality of the principle, an injury to one is an injury to all.

The right to strike will be won first of all on the picket lines and in the streets.

The bosses will not give up their power voluntarily. The workers will win their rights only by exercising their power. The labor movement must free itself from the illusion that it can overcome unjust laws by obeying them. So long as the employers and the government can keep the unions fighting bargaining unit

by bargaining unit and obeying the anti-labor laws and injunctions, they can continue to inflict defeats which rob us of the public support we would need to repeal the laws and end the injunctions.

The unions will repeal Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin and end injunctions only by making them unenforceable. □

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Supports Forced Overtime

by Joe Auciello

Joanna Upton would have worked overtime if she could. After all, as a divorced, single parent, she needed the money. But as the mother of a young son, she also needed to be home at a reasonable time. So when her employer, JWP Businessland, increased her hours, changing the end of her workday from 5:30 p.m. to 9 or 10 p.m., plus Saturdays, she had to say no.

For that, she was fired.

As a “product manager,” Joanna Upton was not part of a union. In legal terms, Ms. Upton was a worker “at will,” meaning that she — and an estimated 2.5 million other workers in Massachusetts — was not protected by a union contract but was “free” to negotiate a separate, verbal arrangement with her employer.

In such a negotiation a worker is overpowered; all the advantages are in the hands of the boss. (A typical management ploy is to redefine a job by adding responsibilities with little or no increase in pay or benefits). Of course, the company can demand new arrangements whenever it wishes. It’s like trying to negotiate interest rates on a loan owed to the Mafia.

Not a Crusader

Joanna Upton was neither a crusader nor a troublemaker. She had no history of problems on the job; she had never been written up or reprimanded. She even tried to adapt to the company’s demands. Instead of staying late at the office, she offered to take work home. The company denied her request. The worst her employer could say of Joanna Upton was that she missed a day of work once to care for her son when he was ill. She had no intention of quarreling with the boss and never imagined going to court.

However, JWP Businessland picked a fight with her, and she was boxed in a corner. Child care was no option because — when available — it’s gener-

ally not affordable for working women. The only choice was to quit or fight back.

Ms. Upton took her case to the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court, where she pointed out that state policy requires parents to care for and protect their children. Had she complied with the company’s demands to work 60 hours a week, she would have been forced to leave her son unattended at home, thereby neglecting him. Neglect is a form of child abuse. Therefore, she argued, the company was ordering her to break the law, so her noncompliance was justified.

Court Rules on Day of Teamsters Victory

This past August, the Supreme Judicial Court threw out Joanna Upton’s case. On the day that UPS caved in and the Teamsters Union scored a much-needed victory for the working class, the highest court in Massachusetts decided against Joanna Upton and in favor of the company. The judges concluded that she, and any at-will worker like her, could be fired “at any time for any reason or for no reason at all.”

In his written opinion, Chief Justice Herbert Wilkins stated, “We sympathize with the difficulties of persons in the position of the plaintiff who have faced the challenges of reconciling parental responsibilities with the demands of employment. However, employer liability under common-law principles is not an appropriate means of addressing the problem.”

The court may have sympathized with the plight of Ms. Upton, but the court supported the privileges of the employer.

A Defeat for 2.5 Million Workers

The court’s decision meant a defeat for the 2.5 million workers in Massachusetts who have no more legal protection

than Ms. Upton had. In the celebration of the Teamsters’ triumph, this case received little notice, but its results are significant nonetheless. A blow or setback to one part of the working class invariably harms all of labor since the bosses will try to drive wages, working conditions, etc., down to the lowest possible level.

Had Ms. Upton won, her case would not only have benefitted her and some millions of other workers in Massachusetts — in itself no small thing! It would also have encouraged workers in other states to seek legal and legislative redress against high-handed, corporate injustice.

If the state courts are not the “appropriate” means of changing the law, then what of the state legislature? Those legislators who spoke on the record made it very clear that they wanted no part of the issue. That is, they would not even consider proposing laws for workers’ rights.

Democratic State Senator’s Comments

Commenting on Joanna Upton’s case, State Senator Therese Murray, a Democrat and co-chairwoman of the Mass. Joint Committee on Human Services, said, “Just because it’s not fair doesn’t mean it’s not legal.” Murray’s meaning is clear enough, though her statement, with three negatives, requires some grammatical untangling. Murray means to say, “It is wrong, but it is legal,” though she cannot bring herself to say that the policy of a company and the decision of the Supreme Judicial Court are wrong. Here, bad grammar reflects even worse politics.

Of course, if a business practice is wrong, then the legislature has the opportunity — the obligation! — to declare such practice illegal and ensure that the law is enforced. But passing legislation against corporate interests and to protect workers is exactly what the

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First-Hand Report from Chiapas

Laid Ghosts Walking

by W.T. Whitney, Jr.

Statistical data for this article come from two books: *Para Entender Chiapas — Chiapas en Cifras* (Mexico City, 1997); and Brian Willson, *The Slippery Slope* (Santa Cruz, 1997).

Hotels and restaurants in San Cristóbal de las Casas were filled with vacationing European tourists apparently unperturbed by the proximity of political unrest. In August 1997, two of us (a pediatrician and a nurse) were visiting Chiapas, Mexico's southernmost state, to learn more about the social and political context of the Zapatista rebellion that came to the world's attention January 1, 1994.

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Spanish initials, EZLN) operates in the Lacandón jungle, about 150 kilometers southeast of San Cristóbal. Their name of course honors Emiliano Zapata, the preeminent defender of indigenous and campesino rights during the Mexican revolution of 1910–1920. (Zapata was treacherously killed by the Mexican government after being lured to a “negotiating session” in 1919.)

The first person we visited in Chiapas, Carlos, observed that once again “there’s a revolution in this country.” He related the prophecy from the North American nation of his childhood that deliverance would come in 500 years, ending in the present era. Carlos is a Native American who has lived in Chiapas for two decades. His friend Josefina added that ancient mathematicians of her Mayan people had calculated that the European yoke would start to be lifted in 1987.

Racism Against the Indigenous People

Carlos spoke of racism. Only recently have indigenous people been allowed to walk on the sidewalks of San Cristóbal, while shop owners and hotel people there still discriminate against them. The federal government provides schools and hospitals for indigenous people, but according to Carlos, the people's suspicion and fear make them

reluctant to use the facilities, the only ones available.

As medical workers we joined some doctors and nurses on pediatric rounds at the regional hospital. They had just finished a bedside discussion of treatment for a desperately ill girl suffering from tuberculosis and malnutrition. She had been lying almost naked, surrounded by stony-faced Tzotzil-speaking family members whom the ward team ignored. As the doctors and nurses turned to the next bed, one of us motioned to the child's father to cover her with the sheet. His smile pierced the gloom of the ward, making palpable the barriers between the family and the hospital staff.

Racial divisions are paralleled by a wide gap between the economically well-off and the abjectly poor. Josefina said that power lies in the hands of ranchers, operators of large farms, and the *coletos auténticos*, a group of old San Cristóbal families intent on preserving the status quo. Most inhabitants of the highlands of central Chiapas are indigenous, do not speak Spanish, and are unable to provide for their basic needs. From 25 to 50 percent of the adults do not earn any income, and in the ten poorest districts of the highlands no more than 3 to 7 percent earn the minimum daily salary (US\$2.70).

Rich in natural resources, Chiapas produces over 50 percent of Mexico's hydroelectric power, while two-thirds of its homes lack electricity. Hardwood forests have been devastated by foreign-owned lumber companies. Agribusiness exports corn, beef, sorghum, and much more to the rest of Mexico, the United States, and even Europe, while people in Chiapas starve. Large farm operations have taken over land that in the hands of small farmers used to feed local people. A tiny per-

centage, 0.01 percent of the population, now own 15 percent of the land. Campesinos have to plant corn on fields so steep that erosion, seen everywhere in our travels, is removing the topsoil.

Poverty

Poverty in rural Chiapas has the dimensions of an economic holocaust, and extreme suffering is the norm. Statistical data do not communicate the poignancy of hordes of small, unattended children begging in the streets. Nor do they express the hopelessness of village hovels that have no drinking water and that are home to malnourished children.

But some numbers do stand out: “58 New Cases of Cholera in Ocosingo,” proclaimed one headline. In the highlands and the Lacandón jungle, 80 percent of the people are malnourished. In the most destitute of the villages, only 1 to 10 percent have attended post-primary school, and illiteracy ranges from 60 to 70 percent. The number of Chiapas children not attending school ranges from 47 to 58 percent, boys being twice as likely as girls to attend school.

The infant mortality rate (number of first-year deaths per 1,000 births) is 67 in Chiapas (higher in the highlands), 34.8 percent for Mexico nationally, but in Cuba — by contrast — it is only 7.9



Emiliano Zapata

Teamsters Oppose "Fast Track"

Denounce Falling Wages Paid to Mexican Workers

Teamsters in southern Arizona are sending the following postcard message to U.S. Congressional Representative Ed Pastor, who represents a largely working-class and Mexican-American district in Tucson. Pastor, a Democrat, was voted in with labor support after campaigning against NAFTA. Once elected, he switched and voted with Clinton and the big corporate money that was pushing NAFTA.

The NAFTA trade deal has been a disaster for working families. It threatens the safety of our food. It has created a new pipeline for drugs into our schools and communities. It has increased air and water pollution, and it threatens safety on our highways.

Under NAFTA, U.S. companies have destroyed more than 400,000 American

jobs. Many American workers have been pressured to accept lower pay and benefits under the threat that their jobs will be moved to Mexico, too. Meanwhile the basic wage for Mexican workers has fallen below \$4 a day.

We need trade deals that put people first, not big corporations. Please stand up for working families by voting against Fast Track authority for a bigger NAFTA.

percent. Chiapas ranks first in Mexico in deaths from tuberculosis, cholera, and malnutrition. Sister Anna Maria Orozco, trained as a physician, said that when she came thirty years ago to San Andrés Larráinzar in Chiapas seven out of ten babies died; now three out of ten die.

From my point of view as a physician, suffering in Chiapas is epitomized by the story told by Dr. Jorge Rosquillas. As the pediatrician at the regional hospital he has cared for 25 children with tuberculous meningitis in the past five years, but during this time he has dealt with only five cases of the far more common, and more easily curable, bacterial meningitis. (In rural New England for twenty years, I cared for 3 to 4 cases of the latter each year.) Tuberculous meningitis reaches its fatal conclusion over several weeks, allowing enough time for the sick child's family to overcome barriers and bring the child to the hospital. Bacterial meningitis has a brief course, a few days, and most children die before receiving care.

Constant Tension and Police Surveillance

With the emergence in rural Chiapas of an indigenous resistance linking human suffering to government oppression, conflict and tension have become part of the lives of people we met. Carlos, for example, is apprehensive; he said that he is followed in downtown San Cristóbal, and occasionally photo-

graphed. He attracts attention as a director of a small nongovernmental organization (NGO) that is part of his community. Passing us by chance on the street the next day, he barely nodded, not wanting to be seen talking with North Americans.

Dr. Marcus Arana, a leader of CONPAZ, a large, activist NGO, told us that CONPAZ administrators have been kidnapped and its headquarters burned four times. While CONPAZ doctors are traveling in the villages, their families at home have received death threats. Shannon Speed of Global Exchange (a California-based solidarity organization) is certain that her telephone calls are monitored.

As we were leaving in a minivan for the Zapatista-oriented village of San Andrés, 20 miles outside San Cristóbal, an intent, non-indigenous man got into the minivan with us. Later, he surprisingly materialized near the small hillside church outside the village that we were viewing alone. Sister Anna Maria, whom we had come to visit, suggested that he was probably a police agent. As we stood in front of her house, presumably under surveillance, she motioned for me to stand beside her so that when she pointed out a Zapatista radio tower, my head would not be seen to turn.

Mexican Government's Approach

What is the Mexican government's approach to Chiapas? For ten years,

government largesse — schools, clinics, roads, public buildings — has descended upon Chiapas, more so since the Zapatista uprising. "Solidaridad," the name of the government program, appeared conspicuously on billboards and walls in several of the villages we visited. Unfortunately, according to Shannon Speed, such programs are funneled through the PRI, the longstanding, dominant political party in Mexico. The faithful are rewarded, and villages controlled by the PRI, such as Zinacatán, have a more prosperous appearance than others.

We learned from the Fray Bartolome Center for Human Rights that the government applies the policy of divide and rule. The PRI recruits city-dwelling indigenous people, those more likely to have been educated and have money, to return to their native villages. There they are set up in power to administer federal projects and carry out vengeance against PRI opponents. Because of the resulting conflicts in San Andrés, for example, *Continued on page 50*



Ernesto "Che" Guevara

Zapatista Community Appeals to Army Troops

Text by Enlacivil

The following text was posted on the Internet by Nuevo Amanecer Press, a "volunteer nonprofit organization of civil society," based in Mexico, the United States, and Spain. The translation, slightly edited, was done by Susana Saravia Ugarte for Nuevo Amanecer Press.

Thirty years ago El Comandante of the Americas, Che, died." Under such slogans, in all the rebel territory of Chiapas, the Zapatistas commemorated the anniversary of Ernesto Guevara's death. For the EZLN, October 8 is the Day of the Guerrilla Fighter. The towns get together and organize a party to celebrate the insurgents, those young people of both sexes who live in the mountains and who serve as their army.

Thus, after the march [by bus] to the nation's capital by 1,111 representatives of the peasant bases of support for the EZLN, the towns gathered together to give thanks to the armed sector of their revolution — that is, the part that has made it possible for them to be heard, for their voices and indigenous steps to arrive in Mexico City and even in other continents.

That same day in La Realidad, the marimba was still sounding and the dance was going on, when about 500 people, men, women, and children, started to walk down the dirt road that cuts through town toward the jungle. It had been four days since the Mexican Federal Army had installed a new camp only 7 kilometers from this Aguascalientes [cultural center built by the Zapatista community]. This community is also the place where Subcomandante Marcos was seen for the last time on September 8, when he sent off a Tojolabal contingent on its way to Mexico City.

So on October 8, the Zapatista base communities were going to risk their lives, one more time, as had been done in San Cayetano, and to ask the soldiers to leave. Immediately the overflights started with helicopters and military planes that went on all night and the fol-

lowing days, alarming the people and creating great tension.

The new military installation has the supposed objective of "protecting" the construction projects on the road that will unite Las Margaritas and Ocosingo, going through the canyons of the Lacandon jungle. Once the road is done and the bridge over the Euseba River completed, San Quintin will be linked with Las Margaritas, the road passing through La Realidad and through the huge military barracks of Guadalupe Tepeyac.

They Came after Honoring Che

The indigenous Mayan people, the Tojolabal, with ski masks, bandanas, and a sound system, walked through what is still an unusable muddy airstrip until they got to the Euseba River, which in the dry season can be crossed with no problems, but which on October 8 formed an abundant barrier of water between the two sides of the canyon.

The Zapatistas crossed it via a fabulous hanging bridge and entered an area of military installations. The military took combat positions.

The only speaker on the part of the rebels requested the army to leave: "You have this night to lift your camp; otherwise, we will evict the construction company from our lands." The protesters were in the military barracks for just ten minutes, among tanks and high-powered weapons. Some peasants had sticks because they were afraid the soldiers would release the dogs. They surrounded a military tank armed with a machine gun and later they advanced through the installations until they reached the parked construction vehicles, yelling "Army out" and "Soldier, if

you have dignity, do not occupy the lands of our community."

The man with a ski mask read a message directed "fraternally to the federal soldiers." It said, "Why don't you tell your supreme commander to come relieve you, or to send the great and the money-powerful, who are the ones who purchase your lives to defend their multimillion economic profits and soft living?"

Soldiers Nervously Listened

The soldiers listened in shock, with their faces paled, obviously nervous.

"Let those others come take up the positions you occupy, let them come to dig the trenches or carry the water every morning, or to be on guard at night, to patrol kilometers of dirt and dangerous road. Let them come to take pictures and film people to try to detect the leaders of the movement... Let them come to risk their lives. Why you? Because you too are exploited and, worse, because you have to die for money."

In the name of the "towns in struggle," the rebel speaker appealed: "Do not follow the road of an unjust death. If you decide to follow the dignified way of the people's struggle, time and the people will make room for you in history as 'defenders of the country' and not as 'traitors to the country.'"

The indigenous children, women, and men who were facing the soldiers made their exit toward La Realidad peacefully, leaving the construction company on the road. Soon after that the workers on the construction road, the trucks, and the tow trucks abandoned the area and went to Las Margaritas. Work is at a standstill from the Euseba River to the main part of this municipality, one of the most important ones in this "conflict zone." □

Maquiladora Workers Elect Their First Independent Union: FAT

by David Bacon

The following three articles are from Mexican Labor News and Analysis (MLNA) for October 16, 1997 (Vol. II, No. 19). MLNA is produced in collaboration with the Authentic Labor Front (Frente Auténtico del Trabajo — FAT) of Mexico and with the United Electrical Workers (UE) of the United States and is published the 2nd and 16th of every month.

MLNA can be viewed at the UE's international web site: <http://www.igc.apc.org/unitedelect/>. For information about direct subscription, submission of articles, and all queries contact editor Dan La Botz at the following e-mail address: 4.2651@compuserve.com or call in the U.S. (513) 961-8722. The U.S. mailing address is: Dan La Botz, Mexican Labor News and Analysis, 3436 Morrison Place, Cincinnati, OH 45220.

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The UE Home Page which displays MLNA has an INDEX of back issues and an URGENT ACTION ALERT section.

Staff: Editor, Dan La Botz; Correspondents in Mexico: Sarah Livingston, Dag MacLeod, Jorge Robles, Sam Smucker.

In regard to the following article, MLNA stated: "David Bacon is a free-lance journalist based in the San Francisco Bay area. We thank him for permission to reprint this article." The accompanying article with follow-up news on the struggle at the Han Young maquiladora and a possible boycott of Hyundai is also from the October 16 MLNA, which credits Labor Alerts/Labor News, a service of Campaign for Labor Rights, 1247 "E" Street SE, Washington, DC 20003; e-mail address: igc.apc.org; phone, (541) 344-5410; website: <http://www.compugraph.com/clr>. The subsequent article on the May First Inter-Union Group is also from the October 16 issue of MLNA.

TIJUANA, BAJA CALIFORNIA (September 10, 1997) — Beating off a last-minute attempt to destabilize the election process, employees of the Tijuana factory of Han Young de Mexico on Monday became the first maquiladora workers on the U.S.-Mexico border to vote in favor of an independent union. In the traditional open voting system used by the Mexican labor board (the National Conciliation and Arbitration Board — JNCA), 55 workers publicly declared their support for the Metal, Steel and Allied Workers Union (STI-MAHCS) — which is affiliated with the Authentic Labor Front (FAT), Mexico's most independent labor federation — while 32 favored the existing company union.

"This is the beginning of the independent labor movement in Tijuana," declared José Angel Peñaflor Barron, a local attorney who acted as FAT's lawyer during the proceedings. "This is the beachhead for democratic unions on the border."

Although the election was scheduled to begin at noon in the tiny offices of the JNCA in a dilapidated building in downtown Tijuana, by 11:00 a.m. dozens of workers had already formed a long line in front of the door to the conference

room where voting was to take place. Over half of those present were wearing tee-shirts emblazoned with the FAT union's logo. Fearing the company wouldn't release them to vote, the Han Young workers had stopped work that morning, and had traveled to the labor board office as a group.

As the procedure finally began, they trooped into the room, one by one, and presented themselves at a table, behind which sat JNCA secretaries and officials. Each was asked for a photo ID, and then another identification paper documenting their employee status at Han Young. Finally they were asked the question: Which union did they prefer?

A packed crowd of representatives of both the FAT and the existing company union, the so-called Revolutionary Confederation of Workers and Farmers (CROC), surrounded the workers listening intently.

Observers from U.S. Churches and Unions

Numerous observers from U.S. churches and unions jammed into the small room as well. Their delegation had been assembled by the San Diego-based Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers (SCMW), to ensure a fair and clean election.

As secretaries typed furiously, the workers openly declared their choices. When the waiting line of workers had been exhausted, 52 had voted for the FAT, and only 7 for the company union.

New Group Shows Up to Vote

As the process ended, angry shouts broke out from the waiting area outside. A heated confrontation erupted, as a new group presented themselves to vote. To the outrage of Han Young workers, they recognized their supervisors, and saw others they had never seen in the plant before.

The labor board representatives reopened the election procedure. After police were called, the new group was escorted into the conference room, and began voting. Many had no papers identifying themselves as Han Young employees. Some didn't remember the name of the company where they supposedly worked, until reminded by others.

At least one was not asked for an ID at all. Another admitted that he had gone to work in the factory just days before. Still another, Manuel Uribe Vasquez, admitted after voting that he was a foreman, and therefore ineligible to vote under Mexican law.

As this group voted, angry Han Young workers outside chanted "Fraud,

Fraud." In the end, however, the votes of the second group proved insufficient to defeat the FAT, and the total stood at 55 for the FAT, and 32 for the CROC.

If its victory is certified, the FAT will take over the existing contract of the company union at Han Young, becoming the workers' representative and the first independent union at a factory on the border.

Labor Board Won't Certify Results

Three days later, on October 9, the labor board opened a hearing to determine the eligibility of challenged voters. FAT questioned the eligibility of 25 votes, including supervisors and workers hired only days before, and the CROC questioned two votes. The challenged votes are clearly not sufficient to overturn the FAT victory. Nevertheless, the labor board refused to certify the results, and instead postponed the hearing for two weeks.

The board's impartiality was thrown into question last week when the company union met with the governor of Baja California, Hector Teran Teran, the Thursday before the election. The governor then forced the resignation of the JNCA chief in Tijuana, Antonio Ortiz. Tijuana newspapers quoted sources inside the labor board, saying that Ortiz was punished for allowing the election to take place at all.

During the voting, the board's previous chief, José Mandujano, showed up representing Han Young. For many years, he was the lawyer for the Maquiladora Association, an organization of factory owners. The October 6 election was administered by his protégé, Carlos Perez Astorga, who denied that any voting irregularities had occurred.

At the October 9 hearing, operatives from the Mexican Interior Ministry showed up looking for Mary Tong and Jim Clifford, leaders of the San Diego support committee, SCMW. They told one reporter that Tong and Clifford would no longer be allowed to enter Mexico.

Link to Huge Hyundai Complex

The Mexican government is very nervous about the Han Young fight because the company is a feeder factory for the huge Hyundai Corp. manufacturing complex, one of the largest in Tijuana's vast industrial network. It builds chassis

for truck trailers and huge metal shipping containers, which are then finished in the main Hyundai plant. According to workers, Han Young turns out 26 chassis a day, each selling for US\$1800.

The October 6 election capped a long organizing effort by employees dissatisfied with poor working conditions and low wages. "The company doesn't give us gloves, jackets, or other safety equipment, and there's no ventilation," explained Armando Hernandez Roman, a welder with three years in the plant. "I make 54 pesos a day (US\$5.50), and there are no raises to compensate for the rising inflation." Prices have more than doubled for basic groceries in Mexico in the last three years.

Han Young de Mexico has had a company union contract with the CROC since its factory opened five years ago. According to Peñaflor, "It is the kind of protection contract maquiladora owners sign to ensure labor peace." Han Young workers say CROC representatives never called meetings, or came to the factory to help with their problems.

Last spring, employees contacted the workers' center in the Tijuana barrio of Maclovio Rojas. For nine years, Hyundai has been attempting to take this community's land to expand its factory and develop industrial parks. When residents refused to abandon their homes, three barrio leaders were arrested, spending months in prison.

Activists in Maclovio Rojas, assisted by the San Diego committee, started their workers' center last year to support a wave of labor unrest sweeping through Hyundai factories. The company has subcontracted out its most troublesome operations to plants like Han Young. At one contract plant, Daewon, 16 workers were fired in industrial unrest in July 1996. At another, Laymex, 91 workers walked out the following month.

Han Young Workers Struck Last June

With the center's help, Han Young workers elected an organizing committee, and went on strike for two days last June. While calling for immediate improvements, they also demanded that company managers recognize and bargain with their own elected representatives, rather than with CROC.

Faced with a costly halt in production, the factory's managers acceded to

the demands. According to Enrique Hernandez, president of the Popular Alliance, another workers' support organization in Tijuana, maquiladora owners have become worried that the independent union effort might spread. "If workers succeed here, the formation of independent unions could sweep like a wave through the city's factories, where conditions are much like those at Han Young," Hernandez said. "That would increase pressure to raise workers' poverty wages."

Following the strike, Han Young hired a personnel director, Luis Manuel Escobedo Jimenez, who fired eight strike leaders before the election. One leader, Emeterio Armenta, accuses him of being "an expert in psychological warfare." U.S. unions are familiar with anti-union consultants like Escobedo, but they have rarely been used in Mexico.

Company pressure on workers escalated. According to Armando Hernandez, Han Young Lee, his supervisor, called him into a private meeting at the beginning of September. "He offered me a raise of 6 pesos a day and told me that if I didn't accept it, and stop the effort to organize an independent union, I'd lose my job." Hernandez refused and was fired.

Other workers report that plant manager Won Young Kang called a meeting at lunchtime on September 25, in which he told them that the factory would close if they voted for the independent union.

"It's not possible that the company would close," Won said, denying the charge. "The company doesn't favor any union."

TV Ordered Not to Cover the Struggle

On September 3, a state government representative ordered all TV stations in Tijuana to stop covering the Han Young situation. FAT's general secretary, Benedicto Martinez, credited the presence of U.S. observers with breaking the media blackout, and shining a light of publicity on the election process. "I'm glad they were here. They call them outsiders, but there are times when people need outside support," he said. "We even had support from unions in Korea."

Just before the election, the AFL-CIO moved to get Hyundai, which contracts all the work in the Han Young factory, to

insist that its managers respect the election results. AFL-CIO representative Ed Feigan contacted the union for Hyundai employees in Korea, the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, which wrote a letter to Han Young warning against any efforts to intimidate its workers. The unions have also discussed possible demonstrations at Hyundai's U.S. car dealerships.

Meanwhile, the Interfaith Committee on Corporate Responsibility and Progressive Asset Management, shareholder action groups, contacted the Korea Fund

of Scudder, Stevens and Clark, a major investment house, to pressure Hyundai.

Mary Tong of SCMW points out that such cross-border actions benefit U.S. as well as Mexican workers. "In a global economy, the jobs and livelihood of people north of the border can depend on the outcome of the struggles of workers south of it, at factories like Han Young," she says.

The Fight Against Low Wages
If FAT's Tijuana victory holds, it could influence Mexican labor and economic

policy nationally. The FAT's Martinez was instrumental in forming a new labor federation in Mexico City, the National Union of Workers (UNT), last month. Its affiliated unions have announced their intention to break their relationship with Mexico's governing party, PRI (Party of the Institutionalized Revolution). They say they will oppose government policies of using low wages as an attraction for foreign investment, especially in the maquiladora sector.

"This election will lead them to pay more attention to workers on the border," he concludes. □

More Workers Fired at Maquiladora

Supporters Consider Hyundai Boycott

From Campaign for Labor Rights Bulletins

Two more vocal pro-union workers at the Han Young parts plant in Tijuana were fired after the union certification election on October 5, making a total of nine workers fired for their union activities.

Management told the two workers who were fired that the company plans to bring in 50 more workers from Veracruz to replace the entire current pro-union workforce. On September 3, the day on which the union certification election originally was scheduled, the company brought in 20 Veracruz work-

ers, who now reside in housing paid for by the company and who are kept apart from the rest of the Han Young workers.

So far, the Board of Conciliation and Arbitration has refused to rule on the election. Observers who monitored the election are unanimous in stating that the workers voted overwhelmingly in favor of the independent STIMAHCS metal workers union affiliated with the Authentic Labor Front (FAT).

Lawyers for the union are seeking to have criminal charges brought against those who committed perjury during the union election by falsely stating that they were employees of Han Young or who lied about their date of hire. Some of those bused in by the company could not even state who their supposed employer was.

Han Young and the Fight over "Fast Track"

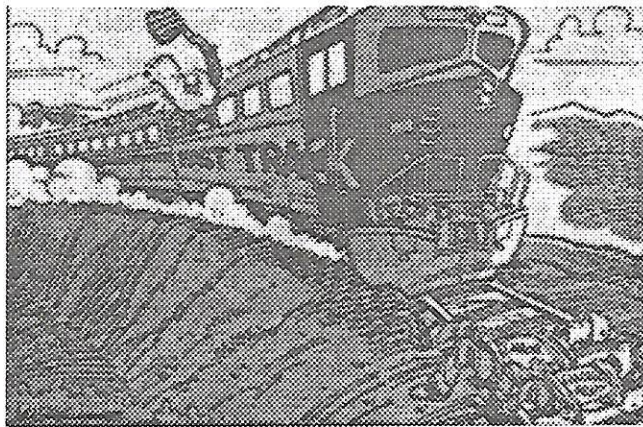
The San Diego-based human rights organiza-

tion, the Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers (SCMW), has a videotape made during the union certification election. SCMW intends to show the video to officials in the Mexican and U.S. governments. This struggle is taking place during a high-profile fight over "fast track" trade legislation in Congress, and the video could influence the outcome of that struggle.

At a press conference in Tijuana on October 8, officials from the powerful Ministry of the Interior (Gobernación) privately told reporters that they were looking for staff of the Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers, to serve papers barring them from Mexico. Mary Tong of the Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers noted: "So far, they have carried out every threat that they [the company executives] have made."

The Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers is asking that local organizations make preparations for a possible boycott of Hyundai Motors.

To send letters or money to the Han Young workers contact: Support Committee for Maquiladora Workers at scmw@juno.com or (619) 542-0826. □



May First Group Won't Join New Labor Federation

The May First Inter-Union Group, a left-wing labor federation, has decided it will not join the new National Union of Workers (UNT) to be founded in November, arguing that the new federation will continue the bureaucratic and conservative practices of the [government-controlled] Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) and the Congress of Labor (CT).

Fernando García Guzmán, a spokesman for the May First group, said that "given that the conditions don't exist for the formation of a new workers' center, any new federation would only represent a continuation of the old-style unionism."

Heron Rosales, former president and coordinator of the National Council of Workers (CNT), which participates in the May First group, told reporters that Francisco Hernandez Juarez, head of the Telephone Workers Union and one of the major figures in the new National Union of Workers, just wants to become "...the new Fidel Velazquez." Velazquez headed the CTM for fifty years and came

to symbolize Mexico's conservative, corrupt, and violent labor bureaucracy.

The congress called for a "general strike" as a protest against the government's neoliberal economic programs, its militarization of the society, and the continuing poverty of the Mexican working people.

At its first national decision-making congress held on September 3-5, the May First federation decided that it would continue to maintain its independence both from the CT and the new UNT. The May First congress was attended by 253 voting delegates and 102 fraternal delegates and guests from 86 labor unions, social movements, and political parties.

Congress Adopts Radical Program

The May First group called for:

- Jobs for all and an end to poverty.
- An end to attacks on social welfare programs.
- Respect for workers' rights.

- Repudiation of the foreign debt.
- Expropriation of the fortunes made by businessmen and politicians through corruption.
- A stop to government neoliberal economic policy.
- An end to the militarization of Mexico.
- A Constituent Assembly to write a new Constitution.

The groups participating in the congress included: The Independent Proletarian Movement (MPI), a left-wing political organization; the Francisco Villa Popular Front, a community organization; the National Coordinating Committee of the Teachers Union (la CNTE); the Union of Workers of the National Autonomous University (STUNAM) and the Independent Union of Workers of the Metropolitan Autonomous University (SITUAM), the Fishing Industry Workers Union (STP), the National Council of Workers (CNT), and the Broad Front for the Construction of a National Liberation Movement (FAC-MLN). □

Democracy vs. Bureaucracy in the Teamsters Union

Continued from page 5

course, many officials would oppose such a venture, if only because of the risk that active members might become competitors for union office.

Nevertheless, if such an organization were backed by the international union's prestige and staff, serious-minded Teamsters would recognize it as a serious undertaking, deserving of their energies and dedication. Why wouldn't such an organization, by its very nature, be an obstacle to the bureaucracy's maneuvers with the bosses and at least a curb on the bureaucracy's antidemocratic instincts?

Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU)

TDU's accomplishments over the past 20-25 years show how practical it is to attract and activate gifted volunteer rank-and-filers to build the union and serve as a bulwark against bureaucracy. Before Carey was elected, TDU created

a tradition of democratic opposition and stimulated a fightback atmosphere. It was TDU's 20-year struggle for rank-and-file democracy that first weakened the grip of the bureaucracy on the ranks, not merely the problems that stemmed from the end of postwar prosperity.

The proof of that assertion is the number of unions that are no less bureaucratic than the Teamsters and that went through the same tough economic times of the last 20 years. Yet the ruling elites in those unions remain insulated from the ranks' anxiety and anger and have not been challenged from below.

Underlying TDU's progress is the conviction that today important results are possible even in the absence of a general working class upsurge like that of the 1930s and the postwar strike wave of 1945-46. TDU successfully attacked the bureaucracy's power with dogged, day-to-day organizing around issues as diverse as getting a single fired worker

returned to his job, challenging crooked local union elections, winning the right to vote for part-timers, opposing concessionary contracts, and successfully insisting, in the face of a threatened government takeover of the union, that the members have the right to elect the union's top leaders.

TDU has never claimed more than 10,000 of the union's 1.4 million members. Yet at critical times TDU was a gear that turned a much larger gear of several hundred thousand Teamsters. This is not to say that TDU is an organizational model for the Teamsters union as a whole to ape. After all, a caucus is not a union. But clearly, TDU's accomplishments, including tipping the electoral scales in Carey's favor, are persuasive evidence of the capacity of the Teamster ranks for democratic self-organization — and of the progress that a democratically organized rank and file can achieve. □

October 12, 1997

France's Socialist Government

by Raghu Krishnan

The following is excerpted from the author's article in the September 1997 issue of International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the Fourth International. (To subscribe to IV, use the subscription blank at the back of this magazine.) Footnotes that appeared in the IV version have not been included here. Raghu Krishnan is a Canadian freelance journalist and translator currently studying in Paris. He welcomes e-mail at: raghu@medhunters.com.

Unlike Britain's New Labour, France's Socialist Party actually made some radical promises before winning last May's parliamentary election. But over the summer, action on these promises has been mixed at best.

French President Jacques Chirac and his outgoing right-wing alliance government were handed a major defeat in legislative elections held on May 25 and June 1. The rightist alliance (made up of the neo-Gaullist *Rallie pour la République* [RPR] and the center-right UDF) received only 36 percent of the vote (the lowest mainstream right-wing score since the late 1950s). Their parliamentary presence fell from 484 to 255 in the 577-seat lower house, the National Assembly. The neo-fascist National Front (FN) improved on its 1993 score, polling just under 15 percent and winning one seat in the new Assembly.

The left-wing alliance, led by new Prime Minister Lionel Jospin's Socialist Party (PS), returns to power after suffering a major defeat in 1993. This time, the Left alliance includes the Green Party (making its first appearance in the Assembly) and relies on the French Communist Party (PCF) for its majority.

Strange as it seems, Jacques Chirac called these elections nearly a year before the required date. The Right felt it had a much better chance of winning elections now than in 1998. Polls taken in late April after the dissolution predicted they would win, albeit with a reduced majority. The free fall of Chirac and Prime Minister Alain Juppé in the polls since late 1995 seemed to be leveling out.

The right wing and its big business backers thought the time was ripe to renew the government's mandate. Delaying such a renewal, they argued, would mean going another year without implementing aggressive austerity measures. They knew that it would be utter folly to go the polls in 1998 after implementing such measures in 1997.

Chirac was preparing to use a new streamlined right-wing majority government, over which he would have more control, to carry out a major "neoliberal" turn. Public sector cuts and labor market restructuring are increasingly demanded by employers and financial circles, to say nothing of the letter and spirit of the 1991 Maastricht Treaty on European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Maastricht deadlines for the single currency, to be adopted in 1999, were approaching fast. The sooner a shock therapy could be applied, the better. Chirac also wanted to cut short investigations into corruption involving his party, the RPR, especially in the ranks of the Paris party machine he built up over many years as the city's mayor.

On all counts, Chirac's cynical and monarch-like maneuver has failed. His stature has been diminished accordingly as the country settles for the first time into a "cohabitation" between a right-wing president and a left-wing lower house.

Thanks to France's 1958 Constitution, Chirac will have the right to dissolve the National Assembly again in April 1998. The Right sees this as an opportunity to take advantage of the crisis it expects will soon engulf the new Left government. Alternatively, Chirac could call new presidential elections, which would have the same effect, since a reelected right-wing president could then organize new legislative elections. Many right-wing leaders are leaning toward the presidential option, in the hope of getting rid of Chirac and the Socialists.

New Mood Since the Strikes of 1995

The victory for the Socialist Party (PS) alliance can be seen as a direct if rather "imperfect" extension of the strike and social movement that rocked the country in November and December 1995.

That movement — the biggest since May 1968 — forced the Juppé government to abandon parts of a reform package aimed at attacking public sector pensions and cutting back the railway and health care systems.

Most of all, however, December 1995 was a major boost for social movements, trade unions, and critical left-wing economic and political thinking. A striking feature was the majority support these protest actions received in opinion polls.

This new volatile social and political climate was exemplified by the outbreak through 1996 and 1997 of confrontational struggles in atypical sectors, such as among truck drivers, actors and musicians, bank workers, and hospital interns.

Another example was the mass movement that developed earlier this year against the second wave of draconian immigration legislation introduced since the Right's victory in 1993 (the Debré laws preceded by the 1993 Pasqua laws).

Debate and passage of this xenophobic legislation coincided with municipal election gains for the FN. This sparked another round of protests and organizing — against both the FN and government complicity with it. The movement signaled the beginnings of a break with 15 years of failed attempts to weaken the FN's appeal by toughening immigration and citizenship legislation. For this rebirth of a radical anti-fascist and anti-racist consciousness in a significant minority of the population, the French owe a great deal to the courageous struggle of organized groups of undocumented immigrants, the *sans-papiers*, which began in earnest in 1996.

A further example of the new climate was the success of a feminist organizing conference attended by 2,000 women and men earlier in the year.

Can Jospin Deliver?

How well does this new government represent the aspirations and dynamism

French Struggle Inspires German Workers

Reprinted from *Socialist Outlook*

This article is from the October 1997 Socialist Outlook, publication of the British section of the Fourth International. It was posted on the Internet, but without indication of author or authors.

European economic integration hinges on Germany. But there is growing resistance to the deficit-cutting program of the Christian Democrat coalition of Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Two years of working-class struggles in neighboring France seem to be making many German workers feel more confident of struggle.

“There is a new period here after the struggles in France,” boasts Nick, one of the editors of *Avanti*, the magazine of Germany’s Revolutionary Socialist League (RSB). “It’s really reflected in some of the factories. We had a demonstration recently where one of the banners read, ‘We must speak French to our bosses.’ It is that sentiment which has come out repeatedly in recent years, saying that we have to fight.”

Christian, a Bavarian member of the RSB’s political secretariat, adds that “one of the first signs was at last year’s May Day demonstration organized by the Social Democratic union federation, the DGB. The leader was denounced and the crowd chanted ‘No Pact with Capital!’ One of the radical student federations called a demonstration against social cuts in Bonn. The DGB gave it support with the aim of taking it over and excluding all signs of real struggle. The mood, however, was very militant and the DGB was forced to promise a

general strike. There was a strong vanguard, though not so much in Bavaria. Here, many advanced workers did not see the need for a general strike.”

The economic policies of the ruling coalition members, especially outgoing finance minister Theo Waigel, are likely to cause a repeat of last year’s experiences. “Next time, things can be different,” hopes Christian. “Those protests were not coordinated. There were no forces on the left to draw them together. Now there is the chance that we can use the network built up by the European marches to centralize the struggles.”

German revolutionaries face the challenge of a pro-capitalist party, the SPD, which is based on the trade union bureaucrats. [SPD stands for Social Democratic Party of Germany, which was originally founded by revolutionary-minded workers in the 19th century, including such Marxist workers as Bebel and Liebknecht.]

Attitudes on Left Toward SPD

The German wing of Britain’s Socialist Workers Party helps build the SPD, while another group, linked to England’s Socialist Party (formerly Militant) is reassessing this approach. Christian continues: “Most workers see the SPD as their political party. When the miners were in struggle they wanted

to attack the Christian Democrats’ offices and the parliament building. Rudolph Scharping, then SPD leader, was able to calm the workers. Miners listen to him, and there is a difference between the way he is seen, as a so-called workers leader, and the other capitalist politicians.”

While the struggles of the French workers have inspired Germany’s working class, France’s new, rightward-moving, Socialist Party (PS) government has had an impact in the discussions around choosing between the SPD’s candidates for Chancellor. So has Britain’s Tony Blair. “Gerhard Schroeder, the premier of the state of Lower Saxony, wants to be the new Tony Blair,” says Nick, “while Oskar Lafontaine, currently the party leader, looks to Lionel Jospin’s PS as a model.”

The outcome of the selection campaign depends on the level of radicalism in the labor movement. According to Nick, “the best people in the SPD support Lafontaine. We said a victory for Lafontaine had to be turned into a fight for open borders, to start the fight against unemployment, and so on. The first job is to build up support for these sorts of demands, and for a program of action on the left. Elections come second.” □

of the different forces that have burst onto the scene since late 1995?

How far can it be expected to accompany and lead the dynamic of December 1995 and the election victory, rather than disappoint and break it? In answering these questions, the first error to avoid is that of drawing hasty comparisons between the PS victory in France and the Blairite Labour victory in Britain.

In the first place, the social and political situation in France does not resem-

ble that of post-Thatcher Britain. It was precisely in response to the beginnings of a Thatcherite turn that the French unleashed the December 1995 protest movement and threw the Right out of office.

In the second place, the PS has not made a Blairite turn, although it did oversee France’s neo-liberal shift from the mid-1980s onwards. The Blair victory against the Tories was also his victory over “old Labour” and the critical Left.

This is not true of the PS victory in France. The difference between the two leaders’ approaches was apparent at the meeting of European social democracy held in Sweden in early June. Jospin is on the left — and Blair is on the right — of a “social democratic” movement that looks more and more like Clinton’s Democratic Party.

In recent times, the PS has been nursing its wounds from its 1993 electoral drubbing and adopting a more humble

Continued on page 54

Report on Founding Convention of Ohio State Labor Party

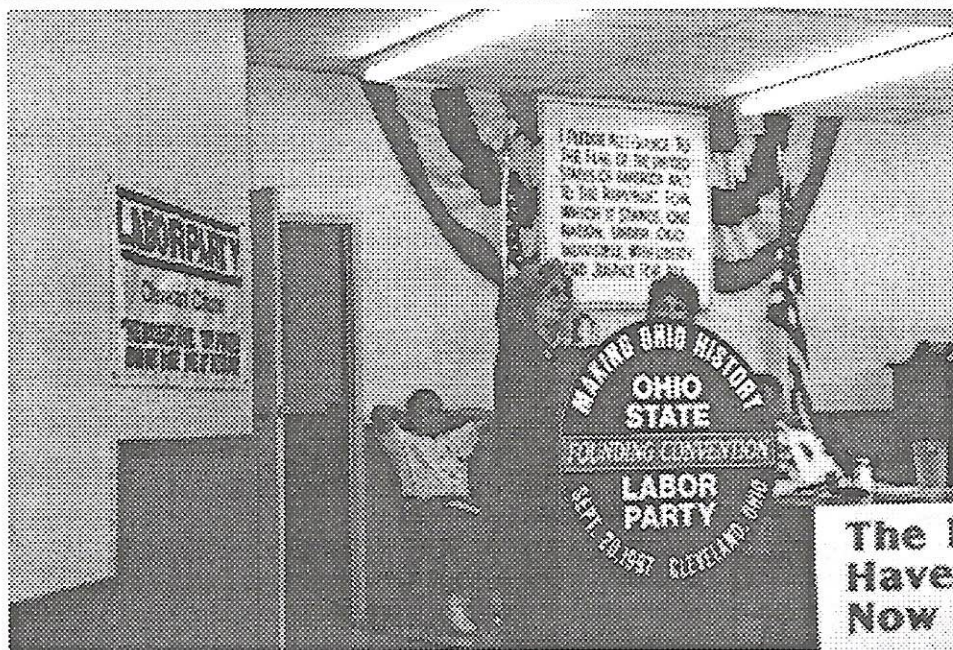
by Cheryl Peck

The founding convention of the Ohio State Labor Party was held on Saturday, September 20, 1997, at the Bakers Union Local 19 hall in Cleveland, Ohio. Under the LP's new guidelines for chartering state parties, the convention qualified as a "stage one" meeting; "stage two" requires 1,000 members in the state. The convention was attended by 68 people, including 32 registered delegates and 18 registered observers.

Officers elected include: Chair — Jerry Gordon (Cleveland), staff representative, United Food and Commercial Workers; Vice-Chair — Sherri Nelson (Montpelier), president, United Turnpike Workers (UE Local 791); Secretary — Barbara Walden (Cleveland), president, Bakers Local 19; Treasurer — Shirley Pasholk (Cleveland), member, United Steel Workers Local 2265; and four Trustees: Virginia Robinson (Cleveland), trustee, Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers District 7; Perry Rapiere (Greenville), vice-chair, Pennsylvania Federation, Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE), Phillip Schick (Columbus), member, Web Pressmen's Local 15N, Graphic Communications International Union (GCIU); and Martin Campbell (Toledo), member, District 1199, Service Employees International Union.

The convention heard welcoming remarks by Barbara Walden and John Ryan, executive secretary, Cleveland AFL-CIO. Baldemar Velasquez, the head of FLOC, addressed the morning session, and Ed Bruno, New England Regional Director of the Labor Party, was keynote speaker.

Ohio labor organizations affiliated with the Labor Party include: AFSCME Local 3360, Bakers Local 19, BMWE Local 888, BMWE Local 1562, BMWE Local 3061, Cleveland AFL-CIO, Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 4340, Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), GCIU Local 15N, GCIU Local 546M, Ironworkers Local Union 55, OCAW Local 3-689,



Barbara Walden, Bakery Workers Local 19 president, reports for presiding committee at morning session of OSLP convention. Baldemar Velasquez, Farm Labor Organizing Committee president and Labor Party national co-chair, seated behind her, waits to give opening remarks.

OCAW Local 7-346, OCAW Local 7-912, Office and Professional Employees International Union Local 1794, Painters District Council 6, Painters Local 867, Carpenters Local 639, UE District Council 7, Utility Workers Local 270.

Workers Compensation Referendum Most Urgent Issue

Eight resolutions were recommended by the Resolutions Committee and passed by the delegates, as follows:

1. The Ohio State LP declared the campaign to VOTE NO ON ISSUE 2 (a new workers compensation bill which slashes or denies benefits) its top priority issue through the upcoming November 4 election and resolved to join with the Committee to Stop Corporate Attacks on Injured Workers to defeat SB45. (For the full text of the resolution, see sidebar in accompanying article by Jean Tussey.)

This first resolution dealt with the most urgent political issue facing Ohio labor. William Burga, president of the Ohio State AFL-CIO, addressed the convention on this point. The entire labor movement in Ohio is mobilizing to defeat the attempt by the bosses' parties to cut back on injured workers' rights to compensation.

2. The Ohio State LP demands repeal of Ohio State Senate Bill 102 (which eliminates the prevailing wage on school construction projects)...and will support all efforts by the Ohio Building and Construction Trades Council and the Ohio AFL-CIO to get this anti-worker legislation repealed. (This resolution was submitted by Bruce Wolff, Labor Party member-at-large.)

3. The founding convention of the Ohio State LP commits itself to the fight to defeat privatization of public services in all its forms in the State of Ohio. (Submitted by April Stoltz of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Branch 40.)

Against NAFTA and "Fast Track" Expansion

Resolutions 4 and 5 took up the question of NAFTA and the expansion of NAFTA. Clinton has made a strong commitment to seeking "fast track" authority to expand NAFTA — to Chile, for example. (Both resolutions were submitted by Jonathan Garfield.)

4. The founding convention of the Ohio State LP commits itself to the fight against NAFTA and the extension of NAFTA through the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA) and to work with groups throughout Ohio, the nation, and the Western Hemisphere that are fighting NAFTA and its extension...and demands from the Clinton administration and the U.S. Congress a full and *honest* accounting of the effects of NAFTA.

5. The founding convention of the Ohio State LP commits itself to the fight against "fast track" authority for Clinton to negotiate new trade agreements and will support and participate in all labor mobilizations designed to defeat "fast track."

Public Education

6. The Ohio State LP will work to implement the LP's national program with respect to education issues and specifically affirms: (1) Every child has the right to a free and equal public educa-

tion, including 4 years of post-secondary-school training. (2) Funding for schools should not be based on property taxes, as this results in a disparity in providing education for Ohio's children. (3) The curriculum in Ohio public schools should include courses in labor history, women's issues, the history of African Americans, and other groups which have faced special forms of discrimination. (4) Public funds should be used for public education only, not to provide vouchers for students to go to private, mostly religious-based, schools. (Submitted by Jonathan Garfield and Joan Natko, both members of the Cleveland teachers union, AFT Local 279.)

7. The founding convention of the Ohio State LP endorsed the decision by the founding convention of the national LP that the LP be an independent party that does not endorse or support candidates of parties we have called the "bosses' parties"; and it resolved that while adoption of this resolution would constitute the sentiment of this founding convention of the Ohio State Labor Party, it would not preclude affiliates which send delegates to the Labor Party's second national convention in October 1998 from holding their own views on this matter and voting accordingly at that national convention. (For full text

of resolution, see sidebar on last page of Jean Tussey's accompanying article.)

8. The Ohio LP founding convention calls for debate and discussion about how corporations came to usurp rights intended only for natural persons under the Constitution, and about the proper role of corporations in a democracy. Be it resolved that this conference establish an ad hoc committee, charged with investigating these issues and making appropriate recommendations to the Ohio LP for ways to include its findings in the party's educational and organizing efforts. (Submitted by Mike Ferner, Toledo.)

One resolution, not recommended by the Resolutions Committee, was discussed and voted down. It stated: "The founding convention of the Ohio State LP calls on the Electoral Strategy Committee to develop a viable electoral strategy for the LP; and be it further resolved that the Committee develop this strategy around clear political, organizational and legal criteria; and be it further resolved that this criteria make it mandatory that LP candidates be completely independent of the Republicans and Democrats; now, therefore, be it finally resolved that the founding convention of the Ohio State LP urges the upcoming second National Convention to debate and adopt a viable electoral strategy for the LP." (The resolution was submitted by Philip Locker, Cleveland Chapter member at Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio.) □

Union Base Builds Ohio State Labor Party

by Jean Tussey

The September 20 founding convention of the Ohio State Labor Party demonstrated the correctness of building the independent workers party on the basis of the unions and their struggles. It also continued the effective traditional method of combining local "bottom up" and national "top down" organizing.

From its beginning in 1991, Labor Party Advocates (LPA) in Ohio consisted of active union members who formed chapters in Cleveland and Toledo, and others throughout the state

recruited through their national or international unions. Some were veteran organizers with experience in earlier labor party efforts, and others were younger workers inspired by the initiative taken by the August 1991 convention of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, which established LPA as a national organization.

The June 1996 national founding convention of the Labor Party in Cleveland, Ohio, strengthened both the national and local organizations of the party by deepening their base in the unions. The

structure and program adopted by the delegates provided a framework for continued local initiative in choosing the issues and activities on which they could build support for the party in their unions and other workers organizations belonging to their community chapters.

The action of the national convention in joining the local union rally at Cleveland City Hall to protest the Democratic mayor's attacks on state labor rights laws also helped build significant support for the Labor Party in Ohio.



William Burga, president, Ohio AFL-CIO, addresses Ohio State Labor Party founding convention. He spoke for support of united labor campaign to "Vote NO on Issue 2" referendum in order to defeat cutbacks in injured workers compensation law.

Ohio AFL-CIO Leaders Welcome Delegates

John Ryan, executive secretary of the Cleveland Federation of Labor, welcomed the delegates "on behalf of the 250,000 members of the Cleveland AFL-CIO." He expressed appreciation for the support action of the national convention of the Labor Party. He also applauded the Ohio party and its program "pushing for better representation for working people," and said he was "proud that the Cleveland Federation signed on last year" as an affiliate of the Labor Party.

Ohio AFL-CIO President William Burga spoke to the delegates in support of the united labor campaign VOTE NO ON ISSUE 2. The labor movement's aim is to defeat the major legislative attack this year on injured workers' rights to compensation. The Ohio Labor Party voted to make this campaign its priority through the November balloting. (For more on this, see the sidebar and article by Cheryl Peck.)

Barbara Walden, president of Bakers Union Local 19 and secretary of the Cleveland Chapter of the Labor Party, in chairing the opening session of the state convention, expressed her delight "that we have made the next step in our march toward a real, genuine Labor Party."

Walden served on the state convention organizing committee appointed in January by the Cleveland and Toledo chapters of the Labor Party. The committee held meetings in Columbus and Cleveland that expanded consultation and participation in planning and issued the convention call to the list of Ohio members provided by the national office

Organizing Plan Focused on Labor Bodies

Jerry Gordon, secretary of the committee, reported to the convention on the "Organizing Plan to Build the Ohio State Labor Party." It was adopted unanimously by the delegates.

The introduction to the plan notes: "While there are several facets to building the Ohio State Labor Party (OSLP), the centerpiece of our efforts will be focused on recruiting unions at all levels to the party — locals, districts, regions, and state organizations. The benchmark of the strength of the OSLP will be pri-

marily the extent to which we are able to secure the affiliation of these labor groups."

Action-oriented, the OSLP will engage in solidarity and support actions in strikes and other struggles in addition to "actively supporting Ohio labor's battles on a state and local scale around such issues as the referendum on workers compensation, the fight to preserve the prevailing [union] wage, and the fight against privatization of public services."

Other sections of the organizing plan deal with recruiting members of affiliated union bodies, workers facing special discrimination in the workplace and in society as a whole, and young workers and students. It also provides for community chapters, a newsletter, and an immediate membership drive.

The executive board that was elected to implement the decisions of the Ohio convention includes a combination of experience in organizing and represent-

Ohio Labor Party Convention

Text of Resolution on Workers Compensation Referendum

Whereas the current Ohio State Legislature passed and the Governor signed a new workers compensation law, Senate Bill 45, that strips injured workers in this state of rights and benefits that have been in effect for more than 80 years; and

Whereas this law would: limit temporary total disability benefits; prevent injured workers from submitting evidence at permanent partial disability hearings; practically eliminate permanent total benefits; make it virtually impossible to win compensation for repetitive-motion injuries, including carpal tunnel; cut non-working wage loss from 200 to 26 weeks; make Safety and Hygiene records secret; and

Whereas SB 45, supported by Big Business, would take \$200 million in benefits each year from Ohio's injured workers and give it to corporate employers that have already received a 30 percent premium reduction over the last three years, in addition to a 20 percent premium credit this year; and

Whereas a coalition of unions and injured-workers organizations turned in more than 400,000 signatures on petitions to the Secretary of State on July 21, stopping the implementation of SB 45 by forcing a referendum on the so-called workers compensation reform bill, now Issue 2 on the November 4 ballot; and

Whereas a massive VOTE NO ON ISSUE 2 campaign has been launched by the Committee to Stop Corporate Attacks on Injured Workers — a committee co-chaired by William Burga, President of the Ohio AFL-CIO, and Warren Davis, director, Region 2 of the United Auto Workers — to defeat the threat to all injured workers, both union and unorganized; now therefore be it

Resolved that this founding convention of the Ohio State Labor Party declares the VOTE NO ON ISSUE 2 campaign its priority state political issue in the November 4 election and will join with the Committee to Stop Corporate Attacks on Injured Workers to defeat SB 45.

— Submitted by Jean Tussey



Jerry Gordon, reporting for the Rules Committee at Ohio State Labor Party founding convention.

ing workers, as well as gender, racial, and union diversity, and a geographic distribution that provides nuclei for additional chapters.

Electoral Policy

The Ohio convention adopted a resolution on electoral policy that endorsed the decision by the founding convention of the national Labor Party to be an independent party that does not endorse or support candidates of parties we have called "the bosses' parties." Further discussion of electoral policy was deferred, leaving members free to hold "their own views on the matter" and participate in the national preconvention discussion.

On October 3 a report on the founding convention of the OSLP was sent to the almost 500 members on its mailing list. The process of solidifying a statewide paid-up membership of 1,000 has begun. □

Resolution on Electoral Policy

Submitted by: Jerry Gordon, Delegate, Cleveland Chapter Labor Party; Staff Rep, UFCW; Jean Tussey, Delegate, Cleveland Chapter Labor Party; Member, CWA Local 4340, an affiliated local of the Labor Party; and Barbara Walden, Secretary, Cleveland Chapter Labor Party; President and Delegate, BC&T Local 19, an affiliated local of the Labor Party

Whereas the Labor Party was established in June 1996 as an independent political party to represent the interests of working people, the overwhelming majority; and

Whereas the reason for forming the Labor Party was capsulized by the slogan "The bosses have two parties. We need one of our own"; and

Whereas the founding convention of the Labor Party decided that the Party was to be non-electoral for the first two years of its existence; and

Whereas as part of this decision covering the two-year period, it was agreed that the Party would not endorse or support any candidates, including those put forth by the Democratic and Republican parties; and

Whereas nothing in this decision precludes any affiliate or member of the Labor Party from endorsing or supporting any candidate from any political party so long as this is not done in the name of the national Labor Party or any of its subordinate bodies or chapters; and

Whereas the second convention of the Labor Party, scheduled for October 1998, will further discuss and decide electoral questions before the Party; and

Whereas if the Labor Party is to enter the electoral arena it should do so on the basis of running its own candidates for political office who would be directly accountable to the Labor Party's membership and who would run on the basis of the Party's program; and

Whereas the political independence of the Labor Party would be seriously compromised and jeopardized if the Party were to begin promoting candidates of the major political parties; and

Whereas whatever views individual candidates of these parties may hold, the fact remains they are supporters and representatives of parties dominated by Big Business, whereas the Labor Party seeks to build a movement totally independent of such interests; and

Whereas candidates put forth by the major parties could not and would not be fully accountable to the Labor Party's membership and would feel free to cast votes as they saw fit on an individual basis; and

Whereas if the Labor Party begins to endorse or support candidates from the major parties, this would divert us from the true purpose of our existence, which is to build our own party on the basis of our own program and with our own candidates pledged to support that program; and

Whereas since the Labor Party affiliates and individual members are free to support the candidates of their choice outside of the Labor Party, there is no reason to bring the question of the Labor Party's supporting Democratic or Republican Party candidates into the Labor Party; and

Whereas this would only be divisive and counterproductive; now, therefore, be it

Resolved that the founding convention of the Ohio State Labor Party endorses the decision by the founding convention of the national Labor Party that the Labor Party be an independent party that does not endorse or support candidates of parties we have called the "bosses' parties," and be it further

Resolved that while adoption of this resolution would constitute the sentiment of this founding convention of the Ohio State Labor Party, it would not preclude affiliates which send delegates to the Labor Party's second national convention in October 1998 from holding their own views on this matter and voting accordingly at that national convention.

September 20, 1997

Class-Struggle Policy in the Rise of the Labor Movement

A Lecture on Art Preis's History of the CIO: Labor's Giant Step

by Tom Kerry

The following is the first of three talks given in New York in 1965. Tom Kerry was born in 1901. In 1934, he joined the Communist League of America, the American Trotskyist organization led by James P. Cannon and others, which later developed into the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). He took part in union struggles as a member of the Marine Firemen's Union, Seafarers International Union, and the National Maritime Union.

*When Kerry gave these lectures he was national organizational secretary of the SWP and editor of *International Socialist Review*. Nearly 20 years later, he was one of those who resisted the retreat from Trotskyism by the younger-generation "leadership team" around Jack Barnes. At the SWP's 1981 convention Tom Kerry was a leader of the Trotskyist Tendency. For an indication of his views at that time, see *The Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party 1979-1983*, edited by Sarah Lovell (New York: Fourth Internationalist Tendency, 1992), pp. 54-56.)*

Kerry's talks on American labor history are still vitally alive more than 30 years later, and packed with lessons for understanding and working in the union movement today.

The text for this series of lecture-classes is the book by Art Preis entitled *Labor's Giant Step: Twenty Years of the CIO*. The book was published in 1964 by Pioneer Publishers, the forerunner of Pathfinder Press, and is listed as a standard item in the catalog of the latter publisher.

It is, without doubt, the best history of the Congress of Industrial Organizations up to the merger of the CIO with the American Federation of Labor in 1955, which established the present AFL-CIO.

And, I might add, it is the only genuine Marxist account and analysis of the great labor upsurge of the 1930s out of which the CIO rose. Art Preis did an enormous amount of research in preparation for the writing of the work, and years of checking and rechecking of his material to provide an unassailable factual record of the events he describes.

It's rather difficult to use a book of this magnitude as a text for a short lecture series. That was my problem in trying to determine what form the presentation was to take.

I assume that almost everyone here has already read the book. If not, I would suggest that you do. Instead of following the chapters and divisions in the book, I intend in these talks to concentrate on some of the central problems raised in the book — its major thesis and its analysis of the dominant trends and tendencies. So you'll have to

read the book to fill in the details of the historical development.

Class Struggle: Motive Force of History

The central thrust of this study of the rise of the CIO, as I understand it, is once again to test the validity of the Marxist contention that the working class is in our epoch the fundamental instrument of social progress. That has been challenged by various and sundry tendencies, not only today but in the past.

We must be able to grapple with those tendencies that contest the Marxist premise — that is, that capitalist society is divided into classes; that the two major contending classes are the capitalist class and the working class; that between these two major classes in society there is an irreconcilable conflict of interests that constantly manifests itself in one way or another and to one degree or another; and that the resultant class struggle is the motive force of history. That's our basic premise.

Because of the position of the modern working class in capitalist society, it is compelled to enter into struggle on all social levels, culminating in the political struggle for power and the establishment of a workers state, the transitional regime to a socialist society.

Those reading the book will note that this is its central theme, its thesis. Preis begins with that affirmation in his introduction. The introduction sums up his evaluation of

the validity of the Marxist concept as tested in the actual experiences of the struggle. You'll note that the incidents related are actually tests of the validity of the Marxist concept of the class struggle as against the concept and practice of class collaboration.

A Critic Who Writes Off Labor

Among those I want to take up who have placed a question mark over the historical role of the American working class, and not the worst by any means, is Scott Nearing. Maybe some of you have read his comments on *Labor's Giant Step* in the January 1965 issue of *Monthly Review*. Nearing concludes with the following two paragraphs:

"*Labor's Giant Step*," he says,

was written before the 1964 election campaign during which the AFL-CIO unions gave almost unanimous support to the Johnson-Humphrey ticket, which had widespread backing from the military-industrial complex.

Labor officialdom has settled down into the camp of the military-industrial oligarchy which owns and manages the key sectors of the American economy — in the author's words "the camp of labor's enemies."

"If labor's giant step," Nearing concludes, "made the headlines thirty years ago, it merits little more than a footnote in 1965."

It's a rather cryptic conclusion, but if I understand Nearing, he's stating a variation on the theme that the union bureaucrats have become fat, satisfied, and contented; that there is therefore no profit in looking to the labor movement as a vehicle of social change, let alone social transformation. And although Nearing doesn't spell it out in so many words, the implication is that we must look to some other forces, unnamed and unidentified, to effect such change.

You will note that the criterion for his rather dolorous judgment rests on the fact that the labor officialdom supported the Johnson-Humphrey ticket in the 1964 campaign. This ticket also had the support of what he calls the military-industrial oligarchy. That is, class collaboration on the political arena makes some strange bedfellows. This may be disheartening, but it is nothing new. Nearing cannot claim originality in discovering this lamentable fact.

In *Labor's Giant Step* you will note that Preis time and time again pillories the leadership of the CIO for failing to recognize that the class struggle is as operative in the political as in the economic (trade-union) fields. Preis repeatedly flays the union officialdom for engaging in class-collaborationist policies in the electoral arena.

Also, Nearing apparently identifies the labor *movement* with the labor *officialdom*, which is a common error. It's true that the labor officialdom has settled down in the camp of the military-industrial oligarchy, but it

does not follow that the class struggle has thereby been eliminated as a factor, and the decisive factor, in social change.

James Weinstein: Nostalgia for Early Radicalism

In the same [January 1965] issue of *Monthly Review* there is also a review by James Weinstein, an editor of *Studies on the Left*, of Harvey O'Connor's recent book *Revolution in Seattle*. O'Connor's book, which is subtitled *A Memoir*, is an interesting and informative account of the radical movement in the Pacific Northwest from the turn of the century to the period immediately following World War I. The high point of the account is a detailed exposition of the Seattle general strike of 1919.

Weinstein's review of O'Connor's book consists of a nostalgic backward glance at the American socialist movement of the years before World War I, up to 1912, when the Socialist Party with Debs as its candidate polled some 800,000 votes in this country. He is convinced that the movement of that period was in every way superior to anything since and, I repeat, nostalgically voices the feeling that our problem today is to somehow get back to the model socialist movement that existed prior to 1912.

Weinstein is so enamored of that pre-1912 model that he tends to depreciate the tremendous advance made — both in consciousness and in organization — by the American working class in the 1930s, as he weighs the two on his scale of values. In his view, the pre-1912 radicalism was the period of revolutionary flowering, compared to which the '30s counted for very little. Here is his concluding paragraph:

"If there is anyone around who still thinks that the 1930s was the red decade of this century a reading of *Revolution in Seattle* will dispel that illusion." Preceding that sweeping observation is a rather ambiguous comment that I find quite puzzling. He says, "Even so, his [Harvey O'Connor's] book is valuable in giving the lie to those historians who assert the irrelevance of American radicalism in the years from 1912 to 1924."

I don't know what he means by that. I don't know why he selects the years 1912–1924 or who the historians are that contend that American radicalism was irrelevant in precisely those years.

If there's any one thing that we may accomplish in this discussion of the American labor movement, I hope it will be the understanding that the American labor movement developed dynamically from its very early period to the present day; that it established its capacity to organize and conduct class battles, the likes of which this world has seldom seen. And that far from exhausting its potential as the most powerful revolutionary factor in the historical development, the American working class is today the only decisive vehicle for basic social transfor-

mation. Rule that out and you rule out the perspective of socialism as a realistic alternative to capitalist barbarism.

So let's go briefly into the background of the development of the organized labor movement in this country and see if there's any connection between the early developments — long before 1912, the Seattle developments, World War I, the postwar period, the Great Depression, the organization of the CIO — and the present situation in the labor movement.

In case James Weinstein doesn't know it, the American labor movement, prior to the organization of the American Federation of Labor, engaged in some of the most violent, dramatic, and militant class battles ever seen.

During the great railroad strike of 1877, for example, the railroad workers attacked and burned the rolling stock on railroads up and down this coast. They actually put the torch to the city of Pittsburgh, and federal troops had to be called out in order to quell the uprising. That certainly rates with the great class battles of the century.

In 1886, there peaked the tremendous movement for the eight-hour day, fought from one end of the country to the other. This militant struggle for the shorter workday gave rise to the celebration of May Day as a workers' holiday throughout the entire world, when the Second International in 1894 established it as an official labor holiday.

Then there was the railroad strike of 1894, led by Debs, the big mine strikes in the West, and many other labor battles that certainly entered into the consciousness of the American working class in its most "primitive" period.

Gompers and the AFL

One of the characteristics of the labor movement in that period was its politicization. It was a political movement. It was organized to a great extent by immigrants from Europe and native political rebels from the United States.

When the AFL emerged successfully from its conflict with the Knights of Labor and established a national organization in 1896, it wrote this declaration, the preamble of its constitution:

A struggle is going on in all the nations of the civilized world between the oppressors and oppressed of all countries, a struggle between capital and labor, which must grow in intensity from year to year and work disastrous results to the toiling millions of all nations if [they are] not combined for mutual protection and benefit.

Now that's the language of class struggle! A division exists between capitalists and labor; this division will result in conflicts, and will become more intensified; therefore, it is necessary to organize to defend the working class against the onslaught of capitalism.

Now, ironically enough, this section of the preamble remained in the constitution of the AFL until the formal reunification took place between the AFL and the CIO in 1955. It was jettisoned in the unity convention. The retention of this preamble until 1955 did not mean that the leadership and philosophy of the AFL remained true to those principles. We all know that they didn't. And words in a constitution or its preamble, no matter how weighty, are not the determining factors in the development, evolution, growth, or decline of an organization.

From the beginning, the American Federation of Labor under Gompers eschewed the tactic, strategy, and policy of independent political action. They attributed all the difficulties, the schisms, the differences and disagreements in the labor movement, to the internecine struggles of the conflicting political tendencies: the Socialists, the Populists, the Greenbackers, and other political currents at the time. In reaction to this, the AFL established a policy of "reward your friends and punish your enemies," or as Gompers put it, "no politics in the unions and no unions in politics."

Gradually over the years the craft unions of the AFL won recognition from the employers, not only as representatives of a section of the union movement but also as a stabilizing factor in American class society. The tremendous expansion of American capitalism in the period following the Civil War enabled the American capitalist class to buy the support and adherence of a privileged section, the labor aristocracy. In return for this recognition the organized labor movement acted as a damper on the development of organized struggle by the vast majority of workers in the rapidly expanding industrial sector that arose in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

The shift from the concept of class struggle to class collaboration is set forth graphically in the biography of Samuel Gompers by Bernard Mandel, which is one of the best that's been written on the subject. It is not only a biography of Gompers, but encompasses a history of the American Federation of Labor. You may recall that Bernard Mandel wrote an article in the Spring 1964 *International Socialist Review* on the civil rights struggle. He has a much better grasp than any of the academic labor historians, and a much greater sympathy for the struggle of the workers than the so-called objective academicians.

From Class Struggle to Class Collaboration

Here I want to take note of the attitude expressed by Gompers on the question of organizing workers in the mass-production industries. This attitude was not peculiar to Gompers.

It became the common view of the whole AFL leadership and even of a section of the radical movement. Gompers had been sympathetic to socialism in the early stages of the labor struggle. He even went to Europe at one time as a representative of the AFL to a congress of

the Socialist (Second) International. Socialists were very prominent in the early American Federation of Labor and remained so until the outbreak of World War I.

Bernard Mandel notes the change in the Gompers philosophy. "In his colloquy with the socialist Morris Hillquit [in 1899] before the [U.S.] commission on industrial relations, Gompers refused to say that labor's struggle was directed against the employing class as a whole..." Prior to that it had been the position, as set forth in the preamble, that there existed a conflict between capital and labor.

Instead, Gompers insisted,

it was directed only against those employers with narrow social vision, and that group was becoming smaller and smaller. The others had learned — and more were learning all the time — that it was more costly to enter into prolonged strikes or lockouts than to concede labor's demands; their attitude toward the workmen changed so that their "sentiments and views are often in entire accord with the organization of the working people."

The expression of this changed sentiment which reconciled the interests of workers and employers, at least temporarily, was the trade agreement, the formal recognition of standard conditions arrived at through collective bargaining between the union and the company. When that was accomplished, Gompers said, the necessity for militancy on the part of labor passed; "constructive service" followed, based on the rule of reason. Instead of isolation, mutual suspicion, and antagonism, in which class conflict had its roots, there would be face-to-face discussions between employers and wage earners and mutual respect, making for orderly and peaceful industrial progress.

"Gompers' trade union policy for the twentieth century," Mandel concludes, "marked the end of the A.F. of L.'s youthful militancy and the beginning of its conservative middle age."

You see, there's nothing much that is new in the general views and outlook of today's labor fakers.

I might add that Gompers regarded the National Civic Federation [NCF] as a prime mover in fostering the policy of class collaboration between capital and labor.

Let me pause here for a footnote. The National Civic Federation was an organization of employers — presumably the more "progressive" employers — those willing to grant certain concessions to the craft unions in exchange for their political support and for their opposition to organizing the unskilled and semiskilled, Blacks, women, and unorganized workers.

It was the main class-collaborationist instrument of Marcus Alonzo Hanna, Senator from Ohio, who was boss of the Republican Party at the turn of the century. Hanna saw in the National Civic Federation a vehicle for involving the trade unions in collaboration with the employers to "avoid strikes and conflicts."

On the executive board of the National Civic Federation there sat representatives of the unions and representatives of the employers. On its conciliation board, there were equal representatives of each along with a Catholic priest who was supposed to represent the public. This was the model for the classic tripartite fraud, which became quite common during the subsequent periods of capitalist crisis — especially the war periods, when mediation boards, war labor boards, price-control and wage-freeze boards proliferated.

It was not long before the vaunted "impartiality" of the NCF was put to the test — with predictable results. In 1901 there was the first big general steel strike, which the employers smashed. The National Civic Federation, which was supposed to prevent class conflict, acted like most of these "mediation" boards do — it undermined and weakened the union, and helped the employers break the strike and smash the union.

Monopoly and the Aristocracy of Labor

Gompers's new attitude toward labor-capital relations was engendered by the same factors that had brought about his acceptance of the monopolies as right and inevitable, his abandoning of the organization of the unorganized, his concessions to craft unionism, his yielding to Jim Crow, his abdication of leadership in the eight-hour movement, and his shift from sympathy to hostility to socialism.

Most important, Mandel says, was Gompers's belief that big business was not only inevitable but practically invincible. The Homestead steel strike, the Coeur d'Alene mine strike, the Pullman railroad strike, etc., had convinced him that unionism could exist in the monopoly industries only at the sufferance of the employers. He held that they would tolerate unionism only if it confined itself to the skilled trades, treated compliance with contracts as a sacred duty of the workers, repressed labor militancy and radicalism, and was generally "reasonable" in its demands.

"This industrial policy," Bernard Mandel affirms,

was made possible by the rapid growth of industry and its tremendous strength. Business could afford to pay higher wages to a small number of skilled workers so long as the great body of unskilled workers was unorganized.

In no other country in the world was there such a large gap between the wages of skilled and unskilled labor, and the gap was constantly widening. From 1850 to 1910 some of the skilled trades increased their wages three-fold while reducing their hours from ten to eight, while common labor only advanced its wages fifty to a hundred percent without any reduction in hours.

Capital was thus able and willing to share some of its profits with skilled labor in order to eliminate guerrilla warfare and violence, while the conservative labor lead-

ers would cooperate to combat radicalism and keep the masses of workers unorganized.

In some cases this agreement was explicit, in others it was tacit, and in still others it was induced by bribery, corruption, and open collaboration. Gompers was personally incorruptible, but he closed his eyes to such policies when they were cloaked under the name of the American Federation of Labor.

So we see in the pre-AFL days the eruption of tremendous class battles when the employers resisted unionization, even by the craft unions. With the growth of industry and the violent struggles that erupted from time to time, the capitalists finally became reconciled to granting recognition to a very thin layer of the American working class, in exchange for collaboration on the political arena and in preventing the organization of the workers in the mass-production industries.

The material base of the labor bureaucracy is set down quite practically by Mandel. The wages of the skilled workers rose 300 percent and the hours were reduced from ten to eight, while the unskilled and semiskilled workers continued to work a ten-hour day and in the steel industry a twelve-hour day, and their increase in wages was only 50 to 100 percent. This growing disparity was the basis on which there developed the aristocracy of labor and the labor bureaucracy, which persisted and continued right down to the day of the formation of the CIO.

The growing conservatism of the AFL and its campaigns against the radicals in the unions, i.e., the socialists, led to the division in the early socialist movement between the reformists and the revolutionists, a division that took place throughout the world socialist movement.

The IWW: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism

It also led to another peculiar development, the birth of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), the Wobblies. The IWW at first was part of the socialist movement. It wasn't until 1905 that they went on record against what they called "political action." The big division in the early socialist movement was between the reformist parliamentarians, who placed their main emphasis on electoral activity, and the militants, who advocated more direct action. The militants favored participation in politics, but independent class politics of a more militant type.

In the IWW, the reaction against the opportunism of the reformist parliamentary socialists was so great that, combined with a revulsion against the conservative, hidebound AFL bureaucracy, it led not only to a rejection of all "political action" but to a decisive break with the existing trade-union organization, that is, the American Federation of Labor. The IWW then proceeded to form

its own independent, "revolutionary," industrial unions, in direct competition with the AFL.

While the Wobblies first tried to organize workers in the more industrially advanced sections of the country, they later abandoned such efforts and concentrated on the most exploited and oppressed workers in both East and West: the textile workers in the East; the lumber workers, maritime workers, and miners in the West.

One of the great historical contributions made by the IWW was the introduction of the industrial form of organization, that is, organizing every worker in a given industry into the same union. The early revolutionary socialists subscribed to this view. The industrial form of organization was the indispensable medium to organize workers in the new mass-production industries. Experience had driven home the lesson that trade unions could not be viable instruments of defense against the employer or effective instruments for the promotion of the interests of the workers if divided along craft lines.

Where the IWW went wrong, very wrong, was in their attempt to promote the concept of building *revolutionary* industrial unions. There was a fatal flaw in the basic concept, which served to nullify many of their most heroic exploits in the field of union organization and strike leadership.

To be effective, a union must open its doors to all workers in any given plant or industry. The trade union is the most elementary form of the workers' united front. The workers have one overriding interest in common: the sale of their labor power by the hour, day, week, or piece to the owners of the means of production at a rate high enough to maintain a decent standard of living. The capitalist owners seek to buy labor power at its cheapest rate, to depress wages to the subsistence level and even below.

In this conflict the unions are actually engaged in struggle with the employers over the division of the national income, i.e., over the wealth created by the working class as a whole. It's what the "progressive" Walter Reuther would often refer to as the struggle over the division of the pie. The larger the slice appropriated by the employers, the smaller the piece reserved for the workers, and vice versa.

Let me repeat: to be effective, a union must seek to organize all workers on the job, regardless of race, color, creed, level of class consciousness, or previous condition of servitude. The act of giving a worker a red card that automatically certifies him or her as a member of a "revolutionary" industrial union has little or no meaning to the worker involved. That is not how revolutionary workers are created.

It must have been a very frustrating experience for the talented and dedicated IWW agitators, propagandists, and organizers, who led and won some very important strike struggles. When they went off for other battles in

other areas of the class struggle, the union was left in the hands of workers recruited in the course of the strike-organizing fight, the overwhelming majority of whom were decidedly not revolutionaries. The inevitable result was that these unions would soon revert to the traditional reformist, AFL-type of conservative “bread and butter” unionism.

James Weinstein seems to exalt what he dubs the “militant nomads.” That’s what he says we have to back to — the “militant nomads.” The “militant nomads” who constituted the major base of the IWW were workers in those industries that employed casual labor, seasonal in character: migratory agricultural labor in the West, the logging industry in the Pacific Northwest, fishing, and maritime, both seamen and longshoremen, etc.

It wasn’t through choice that they became nomads. They had to conform to the working conditions imposed by their employment. As they do to this day. The migrant agricultural workers had to follow the crops from one area to another, up and down the coast and inland. Fishing took place in different seasons of the year. So did the harvesting of timber in the logging industry. And these were among the major industries in the West at that time; the West was not industrially developed until later in the twentieth century, with the outbreak of the First World War and the following period.

There is a grain of truth in Weinstein’s romantic infatuation with the so-called “militant nomads.” Because they had no ties, no family responsibilities, they tended to be more independent and aggressive. They had little fear of “losing” a job as they could always pick up and go on somewhere else. And they tended to be more rebellious. The IWW had its greatest success in organizing this sector of the American working class.

Impact of Russian Revolution

After the First World War, there occurred a development of enormous consequence in the history of the world labor and socialist movement, the Russian Revolution of 1917. With the Russian Revolution the Socialist parties throughout the world split right down the middle. In this country the split in the Socialist Party occurred in the year 1919.

The early Socialist Party in this country was a very primitive, nonconformist grouping that included all kinds of diverse elements. There were the genuine Marxists, who were a small minority. There were the reformists, the parliamentary cretins, the “sewer socialists,” who constituted the right wing. In the very early period the utopian socialists played a role. There were the vegetarians, the “Christian socialists,” free-love cultists, and all kinds of people in opposition to the capitalist system. They all flocked into the Socialist Party, where they found a sympathetic milieu in which they could function.

At that stage in its development the American Socialist Party was truly of the “all-inclusive” variety.

The Socialist Party was a decentralized party. Each state organization had virtual autonomy. The SP exercised very little control over its membership, especially over the activities of its membership in the unions — either union leaders or rank and file. Hundreds of “socialist” papers were published throughout the country in all areas and by the many diverse elements who operated within the general framework of the Socialist Party.

The crowning weakness was that the Socialist Party was never conceived of as an instrument for leading a socialist revolution, except by its Marxist left wing. The concept of a combat party, of a disciplined organization led by professional revolutionists, was first developed by Lenin. The greatest defect in the Seattle general strike, from which Weinstein evokes such nostalgic yearning for a return to the good old days of the “militant nomads,” was precisely the lack of a Leninist party. The reason that the strike developed as it did and ended as it did was the inability of the diverse radical groupings to fulfill the role of a disciplined, organized, Marxist revolutionary party, with a consistent line for the leadership of that tremendous struggle.

Following the Russian Revolution the dividing line in the socialist movement throughout the world was the position taken on the Bolshevik revolution. The reformist wing was against the Bolshevik revolution, although it sometimes dissembled its views on this. The revolutionists split and formed the early Communist parties.

The IWW was originally invited to become part of the Third International, the Communist International. They did send representatives to the Second Comintern Congress, if I’m not mistaken, and Lenin wrote a special appeal inviting the IWW to become part of the Third International. He appealed to them as the most aggressive, militant, combative revolutionaries in the radical movement in this country. But their ingrained doctrinairism over the question of politics led them to refuse to become part of this new, developing world revolutionary movement. Because they failed to recognize the tremendous example and importance of the revolutionary victory that established the first workers state, their subsequent collapse was inevitable.

Each of these conflicting currents, although not decisive in size or weight, played a tremendous role at crucial turning points in the history of the American labor movement. The Seattle experience of 1919 is an example.

General Strike in Seattle

Seattle was unique in many respects. The Seattle labor movement in the period leading up to the general strike of 1919 opposed the class-collaborationist policy and line of the national AFL. They were for industrial union-

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What Is “Wobbly Culture”? — Open Letter to the IWW Organization of Today

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

At the end of July [1997] I begin painting a mural in Centralia, Washington, to commemorate the events of Armistice Day 1919. On that day, members of the American Legion raided the Wobbly offices and met armed resistance. That night, Nathan Wesley Everest, a veteran and IWW member, was lynched by a right-wing mob. The attack was part of a national wave of repression directed against the IWW and other radical organizations.

A committee of activists in the town of Centralia and the surrounding area has formed a broad-based coalition to sponsor the mural. This committee — composed of miners, carpenters, businessmen, retirees, educators, and other community activists — has come under severe criticism from several IWW

are also demanding to be included as a “watchdog” over the mural group.

I cannot answer all of Jess’s charges in this letter, but would like to address myself to his central point. It is true I have appropriated Wobbly culture. I have painted murals about Joe Hill, helped make puppets of Big Bill Haywood, Gurley Flynn, and Carlo Tresca. I have participated in recreations of the Paterson Silk Strike Pageant. I have scrawled the words of Wobbly anthems on murals from Chernobyl, Ukraine, to South-Central Los Angeles. Would the IWW prefer that I not do this?

All culture is appropriated. The images of the IWW themselves come from the groups that preceded them, as well as the popular culture of the day. IWW culture, like all human culture, has deep religious, political, and artistic

antithetical to the aspirations of working people. Does Jess Grant, as a musician member of the IWW, need approval for song lyrics? I doubt it. Workers have nothing to fear from the experimentation of a free and lively art.

At every stage of its historic development the North American working class has created organizations for its defense and advancement. Just like the early Central Labor Councils, Working Men’s Parties, and Knights of Labor, the Industrial Workers of the World represented a specific method of struggle for working people. The conditions which gave rise to its birth have changed. Other organizations have arisen and declined.

The Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), for example, arose as the response to industrial capitalism in the 1930s and ’40s. I have no interest in romanticizing either the IWW or the CIO. I believe it is important for today’s workers to reclaim elements from all the truly militant moments in the varied history of our struggle. Naturally, I respect those who identify themselves as members of the IWW, since I identify closely with those traditions myself. However, it would be hard to convince me that they have some particular claim to be carrying out the Wob traditions over those who went on to give birth to the CIO, the Communist Party, Trotskyist organizations, AFL-CIO unions, anarchist groups, or a myriad of other formations.

All of us who identify with Wobbly traditions need to find ways to bring those into the class struggle of today. That is what I am trying to do. There is an objective need to combat the capitalism of today. In my opinion, working people need an independent political party to create the space to develop new weapons of struggle. The Labor Party represents that aspiration. As an independent expression of our class, we have every right to lay claim to the militant traditions of the IWW and every

Letter to Washington State Union Newspapers

September 5, 1997

Dear Union Newspaper Editor,

We are one of the many organizations and individuals working on the Centralia Union Mural Project. We would like to inform your membership about and seek support for the labor history mural that will be painted in downtown Centralia, Washington. It is scheduled to be started at the end of September. A public inauguration is being planned for Sunday, November 9, 1997.

The mural will portray a suppressed episode of Washington labor history known as “The Centralia War.” We believe

it is an important part of our history and will help support the resurgence of an active union movement. The enclosed article, [“Fairness Comes Late to Centralia...”; see next page] shows why. We hope that you will print it in the next edition of your newspaper.

In the coming months we will be contacting you about the interests and direction of the Labor Party, the new movement for working people. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at (206) 282-6659.

Thank you.

*Rita Shaw, Co-chair
Labor Party Seattle Chapter*

members in the area. Much of this criticism has been directed against myself. Writing in the *Industrial Worker* of November 1996, Jess Grant attacks me for having “appropriated Wobbly Culture.” The thrust of his criticism is that since I promote the newly formed Labor Party, I cannot use imagery made popular by the IWW. Local IWW members

roots. These images didn’t begin with the IWW, and they won’t end with myself. They belong to all of us, and I encourage all artists to help make them part of the language of our class today.

In a similar vein, I do not believe that any one group has the right to establish themselves as a political commission to oversee the creation of art. This smacks of a censorship which has always been

other class-conscious organization which preceded us.

Of course the Labor Party, like the IWW, has no lock on wisdom. For that reason, I believe a debate on our differing political views would be of benefit to all, and I challenge Jess or any repre-

sentative of the IWW to publicly debate these questions when I arrive in Washington to paint the mural.

In the meantime, it is my intention to have the fullest collaborative relationship with all the members of the mural coalition and the community of Centra-

lia, and I once again extend an invitation to the IWW to join us in making this vision a reality.

In Solidarity,
Mike Alewitz
Artistic Director,
Labor Art & Mural Project

Fairness Comes Late to Centralia Labor History

It is not just recently that labor hasn't gotten a fair shake. In 1919 members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), were intimidated, beaten, thrown out of town, threatened when they later returned, attacked, arrested, one of them lynched, and finally the others sentenced to long prison terms. Maybe a group of Centralia unions, community members, some local business groups and labor history supporters, called the Centralia Union Mural Project can do something to start changing that. The project proposes to create a new outdoor mural in Centralia, Washington, that tells a story.

Up until now this story has mostly been told from the side of the American Legion, which lost four of its members when it attacked the Centralia IWW hall during the Armistice Day parade of 1919. The four legionnaires who died in the attack are memorialized in a statue called *The Sentinel* in Centralia's Washington Park. In a society where the winners write history, labor's unfortunate heroes of "The Centralia War" have never been honored.

In the years and months leading up to the Legionnaires' attack, IWW organizers, known as Wobblies, were active in the Centralia area logging camps, working toward their goal of "one big union." One of the bigger IWW successes came in 1917 with the Northwest lumber strikes. Lumbermen struck for better working and living conditions, but the IWW's class analysis got them branded radicals and communists by the business community and government.

Already in May 1918 the Wobblies had been the targets of violence in Centralia. Their meeting hall was smashed up, and they were beaten and run out of town. In September 1919 they returned

to Centralia to reopen their hall and continue their work. In October a local newspaper urged employers to meet to work up a plan of action against the IWW. The Wobblies, concerned that another attack was in the offing, called on the police chief for protection when they learned that the Armistice Day parade would lead the Legionnaires right past their hall.

No protection was forthcoming and, advised by a local attorney that they were within their rights to protect their property, the Wobblies took up armed positions on the day of the parade in the hall, across the street, and on a nearby hill. As feared, the Legionnaires attacked when the parade reached the hall. Breaking windows and battering down the door, the Legionnaires were met by IWW gunfire, three of the Legionnaires dying in the assault. After regrouping, the Legionnaires captured all of the Wobblies in the hall, except for one who escaped out the back.

Nathan Wesley Everest fled his attackers through the town out to the Skookumchuck River, which he tried to cross. Finding the current too strong, he turned back to face a lone pursuer. The man demanded that Everest drop his revolver and surrender; Everest responded that he would give himself up to the police. The man charged; Everest shot and killed him. Other Legionnaires soon arrived and overpowered Everest. He was beaten as they took him to jail and nearly lynched in broad daylight once they got there.

That night the lights went out all over Centralia. Vigilantes came and took Everest from his jail cell. The police offered no resistance. As he was taken away, Everest said, "Tell the boys I died for my class." The next morning his

body could be seen suspended from the bridge over the Chehalis River. He had been castrated, hanged, and then shot.

No one ever answered for Everest's torture and death. Instead it was the Wobblies who were charged, indicted, and tried. After much legal wrangling and changing of judges, the trial got under way in Montesano. Unbelievably, the prosecutor asked the governor to send troops from Fort Lewis to "protect the jury." Even more unbelievably, the judge allowed this.

In this atmosphere of intimidation, the jury, who later said that they felt that the Wobblies had acted in self-defense, was instructed by the judge to return a verdict of guilty of first-degree murder or second-degree murder. The judge sentenced them to the maximum of 25 years.

It is this story of labor organizing that the Centralia Union Mural project wants to memorialize by financing the creation of a painting by labor muralist Mike Alewitz on a wall of Centralia's Antique Mall. Your support and the support of your union is needed to make possible this homage to the struggles and unity of working people. Now, as always, it is this unity which gives us our strength.

More than half of the nearly \$10,000 needed to complete this project has already been raised. Money will also be needed for the commemoration event in Centralia, to which the public will be invited, and for future mural maintenance. Please consider a contribution of \$250 from your union local or an individual one of \$25. Individual contributions are tax deductible. Make your check payable to: TESC Foundation (Centralia Union Mural Project). Send it to: The Evergreen State College, Labor Education Center, Olympia, WA 98505. For more information call Helen Lee: (360) 866-6000, extension 6326. □

Negative and Positive Lessons from the Bolshevik Experience

by Paul Le Blanc

The following is a presentation to be made by the author to a conference in Paris Nov. 14–16 for the 80th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. The revolution of November 7, 1917, marked the first time in history that a workers government, one based on workers councils (Soviets), was able to take and hold power for a substantial length of time — an event of world-shaking importance despite the later degeneration of the Soviet government. The Paris conference commemorating that event is sponsored by the Amsterdam-based International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE), the foundation Espaces Marx, and others.

When the Bolshevik Revolution swept Russia in 1917, many in the international workers' movement were inclined to agree with U.S. Socialist Party leader Eugene V. Debs, who echoed his German comrade Karl Liebknecht, proclaiming "the day of the people has arrived."

Debs asked: "Who are the people?" And he answered: "The people are the working class, the lower class, the robbed, the oppressed, the impoverished, the great majority of the earth. They and those who sympathize with them are THE PEOPLE, and they who exploit the working class, and the mercenaries and menials who aid and abet the exploiters, are the enemies of the people."

He added: "That is the attitude of Lenin and Trotsky in Russia and was of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg in Germany, and this accounts for the flood of falsehood and calumny which poured upon the heads of the brave leaders and their revolutionary movement from the filthy mouthpieces of the robber regime of criminal capitalism throughout the world."

Debs's comments — published in February 1919 — highlight the mood of many revolutionary-minded workers at that time. He added:

In Russia and Germany our valiant comrades are leading the proletarian revolution, which knows no race, no color, no sex, and no boundary lines. They are setting the heroic example for world-wide emulation. Let us, like them, scorn and repudiate the cowardly compromisers within our own ranks, challenge and defy the robber-class power, and fight it out on that line to victory or death!

From the crown of my head to the soles of my feet I am a Bolshevik, and proud of it.

"The Day of the People" has arrived!

Was Stalinism the Logical Outcome of Bolshevism?

The inspiring rise of revolutionary Communism gave way, however, to the consolidation, decay, crisis, and eventual collapse of the Stalinist variant of Communism. For many on the Left as well as the Right, it has been fashionable to locate the explanation for this bureaucratic-authoritarian disaster in the revolutionary socialist politics of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and the Bolshevik party, finding the "original sin" of totalitarianism in the very conception, principles, and nature of the Leninist party.

The Leninist conception of the party deserves to be defended from its critics and also from some of its would-be supporters. This does not mean that we can shrug off the terrible and negative lessons arising from the Civil War experience of 1918 through 1921. There is not time to offer even a brief

summary of what Lenin himself called the Bolsheviks' "criminal mistakes" that were part of the brutalization and degeneration of the Russian Revolution.

It can be argued that this process was in large measure brought on by the extreme brutality of the revolution's enemies: foreign military intervention and economic blockade, assassinations, bloody onslaughts by reactionary military forces within the country, not to mention the massive death and destruction wrought by the imperialist conflict of World War I. But the Bolsheviks themselves too easily were drawn into destructive directions, including:

1. ignorant, inhumane policies toward much of the peasantry, in part resulting from the rupture of the Bolsheviks from their knowledgeable peasant-based allies of the Left Socialist Revolutionary Party;
2. premature nationalizations of industry and utopian efforts to centralize the economy, which contributed to economic disruption and also to the growth of an immense state bureaucracy;
3. extreme, often murderous policies associated with the Red Terror, in which the line dividing the innocent from the guilty all too easily evaporated;
4. the ban on opposition parties and publications, which destroyed the possibility for "the most unlimited, the broadest democracy and public opinion," which Rosa Luxemburg (and Lenin himself in such earlier works as *State and Revolution*) had pointed to as necessary for genuine rule by the working class;
5. new and far-reaching theoretical justifications for such emergency measures, equating "dictatorship of the proletariat" not with political rule by the working class but with a repressive one-party dictatorship by the Communist Party.

Yet Hannah Arendt, in her classic *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, distinguishing Leninism from Stalinism, wrote: "There is no doubt that Lenin suffered his greatest defeat when, at the outbreak of the civil war, the supreme power that he originally planned to concentrate in the Soviets [the democratic councils of the working people] definitely passed into the hands of the party bureaucracy; but even this development, tragic as it was for the course of the revolution, would not necessarily have led to totalitarianism." She went on to explain:

At the moment of Lenin's death [in January 1924] the roads were still open. The formation of workers, peasants, and [in the wake of the New Economic Policy] middle classes need not necessarily have led to the class struggle which had been char-

acteristic of European capitalism. Agriculture could still be developed on a collective, cooperative, or private basis, and the national economy was still free to follow a socialist, state-capitalist, or free-enterprise pattern. None of these alternatives would have automatically destroyed the new structure of the country.

The Soviet Republic's continued economic backwardness and global isolation (the failure of other working-class revolutions to triumph and come to the aid of the Russian Revolution) created the context, however, in which the ruling bureaucracy moved further away from the revolution's liberating vision — despite the fierce objections and resistance of many Old Bolsheviks as well as younger revolutionaries. Internal and external pressures generated growing tensions and crises, and the brutally authoritarian weaknesses of the Civil War period once again came to the fore. A so-called "revolution from above" in the early 1930s pushed through the forced collectivization of land and a rapid industrialization that remorselessly squeezed the working class, choked intellectual and cultural life, killed millions of peasants, and culminated in bloody purge trials and mass labor camps.

This calamity — associated with the consolidation of the Stalin dictatorship — constituted a defeat for the Leninism of Lenin, a defeat with profound lessons for those who cherish the ideals of freedom and socialism.

Authentic Leninism Still Needed

But authentic Leninism constitutes a political approach which those genuinely desiring socialism cannot afford to abandon. It remains relevant to our time, because capitalism continues to exist. The oppression, destructiveness, and inhumanity of capitalist society must still be fought against, and the only force capable of effectively bringing this struggle to a successful conclusion is the working class — the majority of people on whose labor and life-activity society is totally dependent, and who bear the brunt of all that is wrong and vicious in the capitalist mode of production.

Lenin's approach to revolutionary politics can be usefully discussed by also making reference to other revolutionary theorists in the same mold, such as Rosa Luxemburg, Leon Trotsky, and Antonio Gramsci. But for any of this to be worth discussing, each of us must also make reference to our own reality, our own experience, developing our thinking about what we will be doing — not just talk, but practical activity — today and tomorrow, to give life to our socialist ideals. For Lenin, a brief term for this practical orientation to move from the actual reality to the desired reality is the political program, and as a Marxist his own programmatic fundamentals were that socialism must become rooted in the struggles and consciousness of the working class, that the working class must win its own freedom through its own efforts, and that such working-class liberation — and the liberation of all society — would be realized only when political power was in the hands of the working-class majority and utilized to replace capitalism with a socially-owned, democratically-controlled economy in which the free development of each person would be the condition for the free development of all.

Lenin emphasized the central importance of substantial working-class socialist educational and cultural work to counteract the immense predominance of capitalist and reactionary

ideology, but he believed that this must be integrated into practical political activity that would connect with the lives and struggles of masses of working people. In the years before 1917, some of his more sectarian comrades broke with him over this, because they viewed mass struggles for reforms as inconsistent with the struggle for socialist revolution.

"A Bolshevik, they declared, should be hard and unyielding," Lenin's companion Nadezhda Krupskaya later recalled. "Lenin considered this view fallacious. It would mean giving up all practical work, standing aside from the masses instead of organizing them on real-life issues. Prior to the Revolution of 1905 the Bolsheviks showed themselves capable of making good use of every legal possibility, of forging ahead and rallying the masses behind them under the most adverse conditions. Step by step, beginning with the campaign for tea service and ventilation, they had led the masses up to the national armed insurrection. The ability to adjust oneself to the most adverse circumstances [allowing only for reform struggles] and at the same time to stand out and maintain one's high-principled positions — such were the traditions of Leninism."

The "Vanguard": A Minority of Class-Conscious Workers

Lenin did not have a romantic notion of the working class as being born with a Marxist-influenced class consciousness or being instinctively ready for revolution. Rather, a majority of workers would have to be won to this by a minority of their class that had developed such revolutionary class-consciousness. The bulk of these initial Marxist revolutionaries were working-class intellectuals and activists from the more skilled occupations, working with intellectuals from university and professional milieus, who were interested not in becoming a privileged layer in society, but instead believed that their interests and the interests of all society were bound up with the fortunes of the working class as a whole, especially those more oppressed than themselves. Lenin believed that they must be interested not only in wages, hours, and working conditions, but also in broader social and political questions — especially questions of democracy, opposing the oppression of racial and national and religious minorities, opposing the oppression of women, opposing violations of academic freedom and of civil liberties, and so on. Concern for such "non-economic" issues should not be left to bourgeois liberals. Instead, the working class as a whole must see such things as essential elements of its own liberation.

Real, practical struggles around such things would increase the number of so-called "conscious workers," the vanguard layer of the working class that could provide leadership to the class as a whole in the struggle for a better world.

Gramsci on Working-Class Intellectuals

This raises the question of organization — how the most committed elements from this broad vanguard layer are to organize themselves to win a majority for the socialist struggle. To do this, a party was necessary "in order to construct an intellectual-moral bloc [as Antonio Gramsci put it] which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass and not only of small intellectual groups." A thoughtful Leninist, Gramsci offered a number of insights worth considering.

Although the party must absorb “traditional intellectuals” who have been won to Marxism, Gramsci stressed that it must facilitate the development of “organic intellectuals” who are (and remain) part of the working class, and the revolutionary organization must “work incessantly to raise the intellectual level of ever-growing strata of the populace, to give a personality to the amorphous mass element.” It must be “linked organically to a national-popular mass,” seeking to “stimulate the formation of homogeneous, compact social blocs, which will give birth to their own intellectuals, their own commanders, their own vanguard — who will in turn react upon those blocs in order to develop them.” Although the revolutionary party “is the decisive element in every situation” involving revolution, Gramsci warned, there is a danger of “neglecting, or worse still despising, so-called ‘spontaneous’ moments” of mass action among the workers and the oppressed.

In fact, “unity between ‘spontaneity’ and ‘conscious leadership’ or ‘discipline’ is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes, in so far as this is mass politics and not merely an adventure by groups claiming to represent the masses,” he added.

The essential organic working-class quality necessary for such revolutionary politics cannot be found in the bureaucratic centralism characteristic of Stalinism, and which has cropped up in all too many groups on the Left. Gramsci insisted that it “can only be found in democratic centralism, which is so to speak a ‘centralism’ in movement — i.e., a continual adaptation of the organization to the real movement, a matching of thrusts from below with orders from above, a continuous insertion of elements thrown up from the depths of the rank and file into the solid framework of the leadership apparatus which ensures continuity and the regular accumulation of experience.”

Luxemburg’s View

Gramsci’s perspective on the function of the party and the meaning of democratic centralism was consistent with that of Luxemburg, Lenin, and Trotsky. Rosa Luxemburg — closer to Lenin in temper and perspective than is often acknowledged — saw the party as (in her words) “the most enlightened, most class-conscious vanguard of the proletariat,” interacting with “every spontaneous people’s movement” to “hasten the development of things and endeavor to accelerate events,” and she called for a “social-democratic centralism” which would be “the ‘self-centralism’ of the advanced sectors of the proletariat.”

Lenin agreed that “the Party, as the vanguard of the working class, must not be confused...with the entire class,” arguing that a “varied, rich, fruitful” interrelationship with the working class as a whole must be facilitated by what he called “the full application of the democratic principle in the Party organization.”

He explained that “the principles of democratic centralism” involved “guarantees for the rights of all minorities and for all loyal opposition,...the autonomy of every [local] Party organization,...recognizing that all Party functionaries must be elected, accountable to the Party and subject to recall.” In his opinion “the workers’ Social-Democratic organizations must be united, but in these united organizations there must be

wide and free discussion of Party questions, free comradely criticism and assessments of events in Party life.” The interplay of vanguard with masses — he emphasized in the wake of the 1905 revolution — was a key to making possible the revolutionary upsurge, asserting: “The working class is instinctively, spontaneously Social-Democratic, and more than ten years of work put in by the Social-Democracy has done a great deal to transform this spontaneity into consciousness.”

Trotsky’s View

After he was won to Lenin’s view, Leon Trotsky wrote: “The proletariat can take power only through its vanguard. In itself



Leon Trotsky

the necessity for state power arises from an insufficient cultural level of the masses and their heterogeneity. In the revolutionary vanguard, organized in a party, is crystallized the aspiration of the masses to obtain their freedom.” He also emphasized the link between the party’s goal and its internal functioning, stressing that “revolutionary education requires a regime of internal democracy. Revolutionary discipline has nothing to do with blind obedience,” for “the will to struggle has on every

occasion to be independently renewed and tempered.” For Trotsky, this approach generates “a combination of the highest revolutionary audacity and political realism,” facilitating “the only relation between vanguard and class that can assure victory.”

The problem with many so-called “vanguardist” groups is that they believe they are the vanguard and that one must be part of their group to be part of the vanguard. This is absurd. The vanguard is a layer of the working class, a significant percentage of the class, and a revolutionary organization can be considered a genuine party in the fullest sense of the word only when it wins the allegiance of substantial elements from that vanguard layer.

The ingrown and stilted self-conception of the so-called “vanguardists” runs counter to the essence of revolutionary socialism, which was eloquently explained by the Afro-Caribbean revolutionary C.L.R. James when he was still a prominent figure in the American Trotskyist movement.

C.L.R. James and James P. Cannon on Working-Class Democracy

C.L.R. James put it this way, paraphrasing Lenin’s classic works of 1917, *Letters from Afar* and *State and Revolution*: “The struggle for socialism is the struggle for proletarian democracy. Proletarian democracy is not the crown of socialism. It is its basis. Proletarian democracy is not the result of

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A Hard Look at the AFL-CIO

Reprint from *UE News*

The following was printed in the Duluth Labor World, newspaper of the Duluth, Minnesota, central labor council, with this introductory note: "—from UE News (United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America, a union not affiliated with the AFL-CIO), Sept. 21, 1997, excerpts from their officers' report to their convention in Milwaukee." Subheads and ellipsis dots (indicating omissions) are as in the Duluth paper.

The Choice Before Labor

As organized labor faces the coming century, it is clear that those who begin to return to a more democratic, aggressive, participatory, and bottom-up style of unionism stand a chance of survival. But those who fail, and those who refuse to do so, will wither, die, or be consumed by some other union in another merger...

The labor movement cannot and will not be rebuilt by "professional" organizers, expensive public relations, or high-tech gadgetry. It will take tens of thousands of rank-and-file volunteers to do the job of organizing the unorganized millions.

The leadership of the AFL-CIO, and a growing number of unions, acknowledge that substantial changes are needed. For the first time in half a century the labor movement is beginning to stir, with key leadership elements recognizing the need to do a better job at the bargaining table, a better job of organizing the unorganized, and a better job of political action. But it's too soon to tell if the changes under way will be deep enough, real enough, or whether or not they will last...

One fact remains crystal clear. Labor will not win the millions of unorganized to our ranks until we demonstrate the ability to compel the bosses and the politicians to deliver the kinds of improvements that working people need and deserve. The kind of labor movement that brought us six-figure salaries for officers, endless concessions to greedy bosses, a failure to resist the bosses' collaboration schemes, and a complete lack of democracy for the rank and file will not accomplish the job. The struggle to reform and clean up the labor movement goes hand in hand with the work to reach out to the unorganized...

Revitalization

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney has vastly expanded the size and scope of the federation's organizing program, and has strongly urged affiliated unions to begin allocating substantial resources for the big job of organizing the unorganized...

Obedience to Democratic Party

There are a number of key areas, however, where the AFL-CIO has failed or refused to make progress. The political action program of the labor movement, while slightly reinvigorated during the 1996 elections, still functions as a subsidiary of the Democratic Party. The federation continues to promote obedience to the Democratic Party as labor's answer to our political crisis, refusing to recognize that whole sections of the Democratic Party have been captured by right-wing, anti-labor business elements.

The failure of the AFL-CIO to support the Workplace Democracy Act, legislation to reform the nation's broken-down labor laws, is a case in point. Introduced by Vermont Independent Representative Bernie Sanders, this far-reaching bill is the medicine needed to restore the right of working people to organize and join the union of their own choosing. Perhaps fearful of embarrassing pro-business Democrats who would refuse to support this much needed legislation, labor finds itself in the bizarre situation of trumpeting the right to organize in the media, while failing to support the Workplace Democracy Act in Congress. While big business has a comprehensive legislative plan to destroy organized labor and our hard-won labor standards protections, the AFL-CIO has so far failed to take the offensive by backing Sanders's bill.

While it must be noted that the AFL-CIO has allowed the new Labor Party to establish itself and begin to grow unmoled, the federation has yet to recog-

nize that the corrupt two-party trap is at the root of labor's political action problem. In spite of labor's all-out support for President Clinton and most Democrats last November, the movement has yet to realize any tangible gains from this massive investment.

The recent federal budget deal contains nothing for working people, and despite overwhelming public support for the UPS strikers, President Clinton found it impossible to utter a word on their behalf.

And just days after the UPS victory, Clinton invoked his presidential authority to prevent a strike by members of the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way union employed by Amtrak, who have labored for more than three years without a contract.

Corruption, Consolidation

From our vantage point in a union outside of the federation, it appears the AFL-CIO has yet to act to rein in the corruption plaguing numerous affiliates. Such corruption, possible only in circumstances where members do not run their unions, weakens and demoralizes the entire labor movement. The big business media regularly "expose" and feed on revelations of illegal and unethical conduct by union officials, adding to the ammo of the union busters in virtually every organizing drive.

The accelerating rash of union mergers, both at the local and national level, also drain the labor movement of vital energy. As unions increasingly create enormous amalgamated locals for their administrative and political convenience, the voice, vote, and activism of the rank and file are lost. This trend toward consolidation is one of the key elements discouraging the active participation of the rank and file in the critical work to organize the unorganized, or participate in any of the other activities of these unions. □

Labor Party Electoral Policy Committee Holds First Meeting

by Bill Onasch

The Labor Party Founding Convention decided that the party would not run or endorse candidates for elected office. At the same time, delegates voted to establish a committee to recommend future electoral policy to the second convention, which has been tentatively scheduled for October 1998.

This committee held its first meeting in New York on September 27-28. Committee members include: Dave Campbell, OCAW Local 1-675, Los Angeles; Bob Groghan, Organization of Staff Analysts, New York City; Ed Grystar, SEIU Local 585, Pittsburgh; Kay McVay, California Nurses Association, Concord, California; Carl Rosen, UE District Council 11, Chicago; Brenda Stokely, AFSCME Local 215, New York City; Frank Borges, SEIU Local 285, Boston; Jeff Dodd, Pennsylvania Federation of the BMW, Philadelphia; Kathy King, CWA, Elizabeth, New Jersey; Bill Shortell, IAM Local 1726A, Hartford, Connecticut; and myself. Dave Campbell was elected committee chair and Frank Borges the secretary.

The committee held a wide-ranging discussion over two days. Another meeting will be held around the first of the new year. That gathering will adopt a report to be published in the March issue of *Labor Party Press*. This will launch a discussion throughout the affiliated unions, and local chapters, leading up to the convention.

Since the committee's deliberations are still in progress, and no formal recommendations have yet been adopted, I cannot give a detailed report. I think I can fairly identify a number of general points where we seem to have a consensus. These include:

- The Labor Party will always remain *issue and action-driven* — not candidate-driven.
- However, at some point, the Labor Party will also want to run candidates for office.

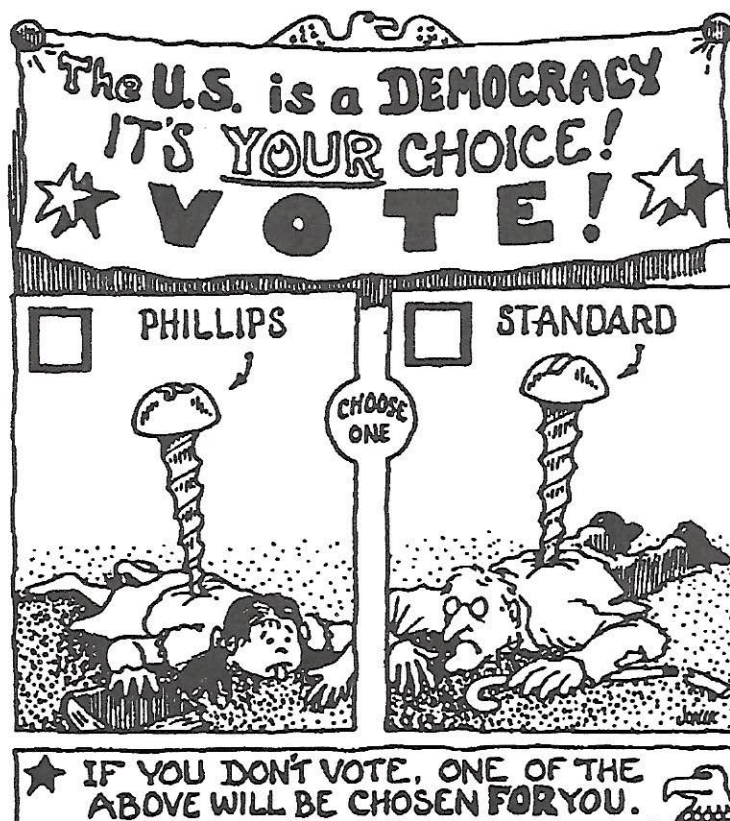
- We only want to run credible — not token — campaigns.
- These campaigns should reflect the success we have made in building our broader political movement.
- To assure credibility, we need to establish firm criteria to be met before the party enters an electoral campaign such as: a substantial number of Labor Party members in the electoral unit; substantial endorsement by area unions; and a substantial amount of campaign funds, separate from the party's treasury. (We're still discussing definitions of "credible" and "substantial.")
- At least during our formative period, state and local party units would have to obtain approval from the national party organization before running candidates.

Developing an electoral policy is a complex task. We not only have to think

through how this fits into our overall political strategy. There are also numerous legal restrictions on us that we have to keep in mind.

Right now the lion's share of the Labor Party's finances comes through affiliation fees, and contributions, from unions — mainly from general funds supported by their members' dues. As long as the Labor Party remains strictly issue-oriented this is not a legal problem. But once we start running candidates it's a whole new ball game. We are seeking advice from union lawyers about what kind of financial structures we would have to set up to keep ourselves, and our affiliated unions, out of hot water.

We're still a ways from having a rounded electoral policy to recommend to the convention but the committee has made a good start, in my opinion. □



Time to Act Like a Real Party?

by Jane Slaughter

This article was printed in the June 1997 issue of International Viewpoint, monthly publication of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. Some subheads have been added, and some long paragraphs broken into shorter ones.

The IV editors made this introductory comment: "Jane Slaughter reports on the challenges facing the Labor Party, one year after its founding convention in Cleveland, Ohio."

The editors described the author as follows: "Jane Slaughter is a member of the Detroit Labor Party chapter and a former staff-writer for Labor Notes. An earlier version of this article appeared in New Politics." (That is a "journal of socialist thought" published in New York).

The IV editors also described the then-current issue of Labor Party Press and gave its website address: <http://www.igc.apc.org/lpa>.

When 1,367 delegates gathered for the Labor Party's founding convention in June 1996, they took a step toward transforming the political agenda of the U.S. trade union movement. This is the first serious attempt to build a labor party in the U.S. since the late 1940s. It is the first time that most active unionists and socialists have been able to discuss an independent, working class-based party in a tangible way.

When Tony Mazzocchi, a former dissident, now leader within the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW), founded Labor Party Advocates in 1991, the notion of independent class politics moved out of the realm of Trotskyist canon and into the light of day. Five years later, the new party was born. Today, locals and national unions with hundreds of thousands of members officially support a labor party.

Deep disenchantment with the Democratic Party in some sectors of the union movement has helped to bring the idea of class political independence from the margins to the edges of the mainstream. And although this labor party is quite peculiar in some respects, it says most of the right things about why working people need class independence. The majority of its members want it to become a party that gives workers their own voice in politics. For that reason alone, it has the potential — no guarantee, but the potential — to foster class awareness and organization.

No Candidates Yet

But this is a decidedly odd kind of party. The second point in its new recruitment brochure asks: "Is the Labor Party running candidates?" And answers, "No."

This has led some on the left to wonder whether the Labor Party's leaders intend it to be anything more than a party on paper. The *Progressive* [a left-liberal monthly magazine published in Wisconsin] quoted a delegate from Pittsburgh: "I think some of [the national union leaderships] would be entirely satisfied if LPA just became a pressure group within the AFL-CIO and the Democratic Party." Alexander Cockburn and JoAnn Wypijewski speculated, in *The Nation* [a New York-based left-liberal weekly magazine], that "what was founded in Cleveland may wind up as a faction of the Democratic Party."

I would argue that the Labor Party's leaders do want an independent party — even though their strategy for becoming one is to conciliate those who do not yet want to be independent.

"Breaking with the Democrats": A Process

At the convention, some speakers on the floor called for the Labor Party to "break with the Democrats. Now!" Members of various small leftist groups repeat this phrase over and over, implying that anything less than a dramatic walk-out is a sell-out. But as Ellen David Friedman, a leader of the Progressive Alliance party in Vermont, has pointed out, "breaking with the Democrats is something you do over and over and over."

The Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMW) railroad union, for example, decided to support the labor party project because of their experience: successive strikes were broken by successive Democratic presidents and Congresses. Those who

"broke with the Democrats" before they were ever with the Democrats often fail to understand the ragged nature of this process. For socialists who were never interested in the Democrats in the first place, "breaking" with them is easy. For many others, including people in the Labor Party, it will be like the smoker who quits over and over again until finally the "break with cigarettes" takes and lasts.

Union Support

Let's look at the problems the new Labor Party faces. The party's "chapters" — local citywide [or statewide] bodies made up of members of various unions [or non-union individuals] — are somewhat segregated from the main endorsing unions. Local unions and internationals affiliate with the party directly, and, although the unions may encourage their activists to join the Labor Party, those activists are not required to join, much less be active in, the chapters.

The founding convention was called by four national unions — OCAW, United Electrical Workers (UE), BMW and the West Coast International Longshore Workers Union (ILWU). (Shortly before the convention, the United Mine Workers and the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) also endorsed, but brought few delegates.) Members of an endorsing union are not very likely to be members of one of the chapters, and not much is asked of them beyond their dues. Many or most of the delegates from the main endorsing unions had never attended an LPA meeting before the founding convention.

Integration of the two types of members, chapter and endorsing union, appears difficult: in large areas of the country the four relatively small core unions do not exist at all, or only barely.

At the convention, some votes showed a division between the “front of the hall” — the union delegates — and the “back of the hall” — chapters and at-largers (individual members not in a chapter). The original draft of the party constitution contained no provision for chapters, which were added by amendment. Chapters held their own separate convention in March 1997, with no decision-making power, and selected five representatives (with a total of one vote) to the party’s Interim National Council. The other votes are held by representatives of the main participating unions and by members added to promote ethnic and gender diversity.

Given that many chapters are not particularly habitable for non-leftists, the party has a problem. In many locations, chapters consist nearly exclusively of leftists, and sometimes sectarian leftists play a big role. As a result, many other progressives have decided that such a soapbox (or sandbox) is not worth their time. In other chapters, members who want to reach out have not succeeded in recruiting and retaining many non-leftist workers.

Given these problems, it is difficult to see how the chapters in many cities can be transformed, unless they develop projects that attract workers as members.

A Non-Electoral Strategy

The Cleveland convention voted not to run or even endorse candidates at this time. Instead, the group adopted “a new organizing approach to politics [to] promote a new agenda by recruiting and mobilizing hundreds of thousands of working people to engage in common non-electoral political activities throughout the year, not just on election day.”

In spring 1997, the party launched its non-electoral political project: gathering petition signatures to amend the U.S. constitution to guarantee the right to a job at a living wage (defined, in 1997 dollars, as \$10 an hour).

At first glance, such a campaign seems perfect for the Labor Party. In this era of downsizing, the notion of the right to a job directly challenges corporate

prerogatives. But the campaign also seems to be at odds with Mazzocchi’s maxims that you have to walk before you can run, and that defeats are bad for morale (see below). Everyone remembers the failure of the most recent progressive attempt to amend the constitution, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) for women, which was raised in a far less conservative time and was far less threatening to corporate interests.

The “living wage” amendment is of course a propaganda campaign that has no chance of passage. Although many members initially regarded this project as make-work, designed to keep members busy and their minds off the question of running candidates, many have now decided to get on board and give the campaign a try. It remains to be seen how long the project will last.

Although this is the party’s national campaign, heavily promoted by the Labor Party national office, chapters are also free to devise their own local projects, in line with the party platform, as long as they do not back candidates. But why should anyone join a new organization calling itself a “party” in order to work on non-electoral campaigns?

There are other organizations that do that. Jobs with Justice, a coalition of labor and community organizations, for instance, is an already existing national organization, with chapters in many cities, that works on local campaigns of various sorts. Why would anyone not already convinced that a labor party is an important idea join the Labor Party to do non-electoral work, rather than Jobs with Justice, which has a track record?

In Detroit, for example, the Labor Party chapter has given a great deal of support to the unions in the town’s newspaper strike. That work has won some recruits among strikers and a good name for some Labor Party members. But there are other organizations involved in strike support; the Labor Party was not needed to fill a hole.

Living Wage Campaigns

Local living wage campaigns have been mentioned as possible projects for local Labor Party chapters. Campaigns initiated by the New Party and/or local trade unions put measures on the ballot last year in many cities and states from Missouri to Oregon, pressuring the city council or state legislature to set a mini-

mum wage (usually \$6.50–\$8.00) for all workers in the jurisdiction, or at least for those whose employers have city contracts or who have received city subsidies.

But for the local activist who wants to achieve a living wage, the question again arises: Why use the Labor Party as the vehicle, rather than the local AFL-CIO, with its far greater resources, or the New Party, which has more experience?

In some places a local Labor Party may be able to play the role of a cross-union group that will undertake actions which the local Central Labor Council will not. In other places, though, activists will feel, “Why do I need another hat to wear to do the things I’m already doing?” In California, for example, the Labor Party supported the Patient Protection Act to rein in managed care corporations, but one didn’t need to be part of the Labor Party to work on that campaign.

Those who are totally committed to the Labor Party as a long-term goal will want to channel whatever work they can into the Labor Party. Other activists will be indifferent. The challenge is to find projects that are not simply meant to keep Labor Party members busy or visible, but to attract people who are not already Labor Party supporters. The obvious choice is running candidates, but the party leadership, at this point, is firmly opposed to this step.

Elections: Pitfalls and Opportunities

The approach adopted in Cleveland says the party will rely on “building a movement that... force[s] elected officials and candidates to speak to our issues as we define them.” In other words, rather than electing candidates of our own, we will build a movement so strong that existing politicians will be obliged to do our will. Mazzocchi often gives the example of the success of the anti-abortion movement, and of the right in general, in changing the context of American politics. In a pre-convention interview, he said, “I’m best informed by the success of the right in reshaping the whole national debate just by the use of language. They have reframed the entire national debate. You create a climate.” (Of course, the right has engaged aggressively in electoral politics, both locally and nationally, as well as “creating a climate.”) Mazzocchi argues that the only outcome of running candidates is either defeat and

demoralization, or victory followed by sell-out followed by demoralization.

At the convention, we witnessed the rather odd spectacle of members of the revolutionary left arguing passionately that the party should engage in bourgeois electoral politics in 1996, and higher-ups in the union bureaucracy arguing, at least ostensibly, for building a movement in the streets. But it was not only the hard left that wanted the Labor Party to run candidates in the foreseeable future. The UE and the ILWU both backed electoral action, although at the convention the UE decided to go along with a compromise formulation, backed by the OCAW, saying that political strategy would be rediscussed in 1998. And many local officers from the first four endorsing internationals also say that they want to run candidates.

Given the party's fledgling condition, the convention was right to decide not to run candidates at first. Nowhere was a chapter in good enough shape to do so. But in the long run, if the party is to grow, it will have to run in elections. Running candidates says something that no other type of political work does. It says, "Our class should take power." When the Labor Party runs candidates for Congress and President on its (mostly excellent and class conscious) platform, it will be saying, in effect, "We don't buy corporate competitiveness as the organizing principle of society. Working people should take the wealth from the fat cats." Merely pressuring existing politicians and candidates does not say that. It says, "We're just another pressure group on the professional politicians, who will always be in charge."

It is unlikely that simply by engaging in creative grass roots actions the Labor Party can replicate the civil rights movement (as some members have suggested) and develop a crusade that progresses in a straight line till it has "hundreds of thousands of members." In the best of all possible labor parties, action in the streets would interact with the more top-down activity of election campaigns.

Softly, Softly

So why isn't the Labor Party acting like a party? Because, for the time being, at least, the party leaders' growth strategy is to do nothing that would deter any national or local union president from

getting his or her union to endorse and commit funds. That means that the Labor Party should not compete with the Democrats, with whom most union leaders, at the national and the local level, are thoroughly entwined. For many Labor Party members who are local union officials, raising money for and asking favors of Democratic politicians is part of a well-established way of life, and they are not inclined to risk changing it. As Tony Mazzocchi has said, the idea of running candidates, for these officials, has "a chilling effect."

This is particularly true for public sector unions and in cities and states where a union is large enough to have some influence in internal party workings. The UAW in Michigan is a good example —and UAW local leaders have stayed away from the Labor Party in droves. AFGE's Political Director says he sees no contradiction in the AFGE president's being on the Democratic National Committee and also endorsing the Labor Party. "The point where I'll see a contradiction is if they decide to run candidates," he says.

Thus the Labor Party leaders' reason for refusing to run candidates is not that they fear annoying the Democratic Party bigwigs, as some critics have claimed. Labor Party leaders are pretty clear on the worthlessness of the Democrats. What they fear is alienating potential Labor Party recruits.

The Holding Tank

Under this approach, the Labor Party is to be a holding tank of progressive political sentiment. The leadership's strategy is to recruit unions into a larger and larger holding tank, based on the notion that you can be in the Labor Party and still do your regular Committee for Political Education (COPE) work, until there is a critical mass large enough to actually act like a party — that is, to run candidates. Party leaders may well be looking toward the ascension of Secretary-Treasurer Rich Trumka — seen as more progressive than current president John Sweeney — to the AFL-CIO presidency in a few years, and aiming to recruit as many locals, intermediate bodies, and internationals as they can to pressure Trumka to start an official, AFL-CIO-backed labor party once he takes office.

It is hard to argue with the notion that a party should not take bold action until it is strong enough. The question is: How does it get strong enough? Under the Labor Party leaders' strategy, the rank and file of those unions is likely to be passive. Their main activity is going door to door getting petition signatures. When, suddenly, someone opens the floodgates of the holding tank, are the ranks supposed to rush out and give their all for the Labor Party? Over the last 20 years union members have been markedly resistant to their leaders' recommendations about how to vote. Without significant groundwork — and action — they won't be automatic converts to the Labor Party either.

The holding tank strategy presents other problems: There are no additional national union endorsers on the immediate horizon. The endorsing unions (which include the Farm Labor Organizing Committee [FLOC], the California Nurses Association, and the California Carpenters) represent a small minority in the labor movement — more than a drop in the holding tank, but not big enough to drag the rest of labor in after them. Pointing out their smallness is not a criticism of those unions; nor is this movement insignificant because it starts on the margins of the labor movement rather than in the mainstream. That is to be expected.

During the next stage, Labor Party leaders are concentrating on recruiting local union endorsements, a positive step since it is work that is closer to the ground and which can involve rank-and-file union members, unlike top-level negotiations at union headquarters. But what is the Labor Party likely to do that would change the many non-endorsing union leaders' minds? The strategy has been "the less we do, the more likely they are to join" — and there is or was some truth in that, as the AFGE affiliation demonstrates. But what will persuade more unions to join now? The campaign for a constitutional amendment, itself, is unlikely to have much attractive power.

Pressure to Act

For many current members, moreover, the holding tank conception has little appeal. They are likely to want more. We have already seen this in action. In LPA's first years, restive members were

not satisfied with LPA as a mailing list/club. They transgressed leaders' wishes by forming local chapters whose de facto existence forced the leadership to accept and then encourage them. In late 1993, Mazzocchi noted, "It's difficult to recruit people, as many of our activists have pointed out, when there's really nothing for them to do." And that is what prodded leaders into holding a founding convention of a Labor Party when they had no intention that it should act like a party. But thereby expectations were raised. Now that it is a party, the pressure is on to act like one.

Leaders who share this view may be able to maintain the holding tank strategy (though such views are not unanimous among leaders of the four main unions). They may continue to win votes against running candidates at Labor Party conventions. But there will be greater pressure and fractiousness than ever within the party. Many, not just leftists but members of the endorsing unions, will want the party to run candidates at some intermediate stage, before the leaders decide that the holding tank is full enough.

LP Leaders Should Explore Running Candidates in '98

Instead of concentrating solely on filling the holding tank, Labor Party leaders ought to be doing some serious research and sounding out this year, investigating areas where the endorsing unions, both local and international, might have the combined capacity to run credible local campaigns — for school board, city council, county executive, perhaps even Congress. Local unions or chapters that think they could run a worthwhile campaign should be pressing the leadership to let them try. The 1998 Labor Party convention could adopt such campaigns and prepare to go all out to win them. Given the weaknesses of the chapters, this would be a sounder approach than passing a

resolution allowing any chapter anywhere to jump into the electoral arena.

It should be noted, that the holding tank strategy should not be equated with "restraining the workers." The union rank and file were not and are not straining at the bit for a militant new party, with the leadership of the Labor Party the only impediment to such a welcome development. On the contrary, Mazzocchi et al. were out in front: they deserve praise for their boldness in birthing the project and bringing it this far.

Social Issues

Many delegates predicted that the long-awaited labor party platform would remain silent on social issues, focusing instead on bread-and-butter economic planks. But the draft presented in Cleveland backed affirmative action, opposed "bigotry," and took stands on women's issues ranging from childcare to reproductive rights. When Clinton signed the welfare bill later in the summer, the party put out a detailed statement calling the bill an "attack on all working people."

Nonetheless, it is clear that the new party intends to distance itself from automatic acceptance of the left's full agenda. The platform takes positions and uses language meant to attract — or at least not put off — non-leftists. For example, the environment plank says the party will support steps to protect the environment "if and only if the livelihoods of working people endangered by environmental change are fully protected." There is no call for open borders, as the Farm Labor Organizing Committee had proposed in pre-convention discussions. The anti-bigotry plank opposes discrimination and injustice, but does not mention racism. The words "African American" found their way into the platform document only because the Black Caucus proposed an amendment opposing the torching of African American churches. The reproductive rights plank does not use the word "abortion."

This omission evoked one of the longer and more emotional debates at the convention. The California Nurses Association offered an amendment to support "safe, legal abortion." Speakers pointed out that the original language called for "a full range of family planning and reproductive services" under a single-payer health system — in effect the left's old call for "free abortion on demand." They proposed to include the substance but omit the trigger word, in hopes of mollifying anti-choice party members and potential members. Supporters of the amendment argued that, with abortion rights under attack, this was no time to appear to waver. They pointed out that feminists would not be attracted to a party that refused to openly support abortion rights. The amendment failed.

It is healthy that the new party had this debate. If the platform committee had called for abortion rights and everyone in the room had automatically raised their hands, it would have indicated that the new party was basically made up of the usual suspects. As it was, the platform committee made an attempt to recognize that the working class (like the middle class) is divided on abortion. The pro-choice majority, in effect, held out an olive branch to the less-enlightened, saying, "We want you in our organization since we agree on most things, so we'll make a major concession on language. At the same time, we won't modify our politics."

Convention delegate Marilyn Clement, who is executive director of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, said she voted for the original language for this reason: "Building a party is not about thinking up the most radical language. We've been there, done that." Although powerful arguments were made on both sides of this debate, perhaps the outcome signifies that the new party will reject the seductive but sterile "witnessing" model of activism in favor of one that says politics is about finding a way to work with people who do not already agree with you. □

Time to Act Like a Party? Not If You're Still an Organizing Committee

by David Jones

Jane Slaughter's discussion of the Labor Party's prospects (in the June 1997 issue of *International Viewpoint*) presents a fairly balanced assessment of the party's evolution since the founding convention in June 1996. A similar version of Slaughter's comments appeared in the Winter 1997 issue of the socialist magazine *New Politics*. (In my comments here, I have quoted mainly from the longer *New Politics* version.)

In these articles Slaughter emphasizes the importance of the creation of the party by serious and credible union forces: "...let us be clear," she writes in *New Politics*, "that the existence of a Labor Party — even if thus far mostly in name only — is indeed a momentous opportunity."

But the question now, she says, is "what the new party will do with its momentum." As a veteran labor and socialist activist who has worked closely with progressive union leaders for years, Slaughter, unlike many of the leftist critics of the party's trade-union leadership, does not underestimate the significance of the decision by nine U.S.-based "international," national, or regional unions to found the party.¹ Nor does she underestimate the very real limitations on the party's further development. Until the labor party idea gained "the support of major unions," she writes, "it was not actionable."

Nine Unions: Not Yet a Decisive Force

Although nine major unions (with varying degrees of commitment) and many local and regional bodies founded the Labor Party, they do not constitute a decisive force within the U.S. trade union movement. They represent an

estimated 1.2 million workers, equal to less than 10 percent of the AFL-CIO (whose membership is an estimated 16 million) Another contradiction is that many, if not most, of the nine endorsing unions supported Clinton and the Democrats in 1996.

The party, despite its name, essentially remains an *organizing committee* advocating the formation of a genuine mass labor party by a majority, or at least a powerful minority, of the U.S. unions. (Slaughter herself recognizes this when she says it is a party "thus far mostly in name only." At the convention of Labor Party chapters in March 1997, the party's national organizer, Tony Mazzocchi, stated repeatedly, "We are still in our infancy.")

The Party's Strength: Its Origins in the Unions

The Labor Party's strength is that the initiative comes from the union movement itself. The party founders, most of whom are veteran union leaders, conclude that the actual relationship of forces precludes utilizing electoral activity at the present time as an avenue for party building. Their position was adopted, although not without extended debate, at the founding convention. It should be noted that, despite the debate, the overwhelming majority of the trade-union delegates at the founding convention supported the policy of not running or endorsing candidates at this time.²

In their decision against trying to field candidates now, the party's leaders were guided in part by a desire to avoid the confrontation with the AFL-CIO leadership which would certainly have ensued if the party had sought to run

candidates for public office in opposition to the Democrats and Republicans endorsed by the labor federation. Such a confrontation, in their judgment, would have retarded the process of winning further support from the unions for a labor party and would not have educated any broad section of the rank and file.

Further, any realistic person knew that if the party had put forward its own candidates under these circumstances the campaigns would have been marginal and isolated from the unions. At best, such candidates would have been supported by a few radical-influenced union locals and a scattering of social and political activists, and would have received few votes. The experience would have been a miseducation as to what a labor party really is — that is, if one's conception of a "labor party" is a mass party supported, financed, and directed by the unions.

This difficulty did not bother the radicals who argued vigorously at the convention and afterwards for a pro-candidates position. (This is paradoxical, as Slaughter notes, for those who have often opposed any kind of participation in bourgeois elections on principle.) Their preoccupations were limited to an ambition to expose the party leaders as sellouts who had no intention of creating a real independent movement, and a hope of capturing a local Labor Party campaign here or there as a platform of their own.

Slaughter Weighs In for Candidates Now

Slaughter is a friendly critic of the party's trade-union leadership. Unlike the ultra-lefts and sectarians, she seeks to influence, not "expose." She does, nev-

1. Most prominent among the nine were OCAW, UE, BMW, ILWU, AFGE, UMWA, and CNA. Spelled out, the initials stand for: Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers; Brotherhood of Maintenance-of-Way Employees; International Longshore and Warehousemen Union; American Federation of Government Employees; United Mine Workers of America; and California Nurses Association. Two other, lesser-known "international" unions took part in the founding convention: the International Brotherhood of Dupont Workers, and the Textile Processors, Service Trades, Health Care, Professional & Technical Employees International Union. Hundreds of union locals and regional bodies, especially from the building trades, also took part; on some level almost every union in the country was represented.
2. We should note that in some areas the party has engaged in a certain form of "electoral activity." The Metro Los Angeles Chapter, for example, supported several pro-labor referendum questions that were on the ballot, particular one sponsored by the California Nurses Association. In Ohio, the newly founded statewide LP organization is supporting a "Vote No" campaign on a referendum issue.

ertheless, weigh in in favor of the party's participating in elections at its present stage of development, and is critical of the leadership's unwillingness to do so.

She somewhat dismissively calls their strategy the "holding tank" approach, and reduces it to a pragmatic unwillingness to confront the AFL-CIO leadership. That is, the party's "holding tank" can quietly accumulate union support and financing while holding back from any action — she says the leaders were "prodded into holding a founding convention of a Labor Party when they had no intention of allowing it to act like a party." (Emphasis in original.)

Slaughter says she does not share the suspicions of some that the party leaders simply are trying to construct a pressure group within the AFL-CIO hierarchy. "I would argue that the Labor Party's leaders do want an independent party — even though their strategy for becoming one is to conciliate those who do not want to be independent."

It is essentially pointless to speculate (or debate) on the motives of the party's present leadership. If they are insincere, it will be shown soon enough. But a labor party that can run "credible campaigns," one that incorporates (at least) a powerful minority of the unions, would be significantly different from the one that exists now. It would, in its majority, necessarily be composed of unions which do not at the present time belong to the Labor Party. Those unions might very well have a different leadership than they do now, perhaps arising as a part of the process of deciding to participate. It is by no means assured that the outlook of the founders would predominate. That might be better, and it might be worse.

A Class Party Based on the Unions

The conception of a labor party, at least one that is consistent with "the Trotskyist canon," to use Slaughter's terminology, is a political organization that is an expression of the unions. Whether there is a future labor party, and if so, what it is like, will be a function of what the future U.S. unions are like at that time. One of the weaknesses of Slaughter's analysis is that it largely separates consideration of the development of a labor party from the present dynamics of the U.S. unions, a subject on which Slaugh-

ter is exceptionally well-informed. Yet she discusses the labor party as if it were essentially a radical project.

Although radicals certainly participate in today's Labor Party, and the trade union leaders themselves are well acquainted with the radical movement, it is significant that the Labor Party from the very beginning has had strong support from traditionally conservative unions in the building trades and rail industries.

The power of the labor party idea, as has been explained many times before, is its organic connection to the trade unions, the only mass working-class organizations that exist in this country. This is the standard against which specific questions arising in this movement need to be measured.

Labor Party candidates who were not an expression of a decision by the affiliated unions to engage in independent electoral activity would be propagandistic — at best. Premature electoral action, without a solid union base, would retard the development of the labor party movement. Electoral activity will mean something when such action can credibly be seen as representing the official union movement.

Patience Required

This process cannot be hurried up. It is natural, inevitable, and, frankly, desirable that the dynamics of the Labor Party's development at this point fundamentally depend on the ability and judgment of its trade-union leadership, who have a long record of demonstrated capacity to maneuver and function effectively within the broader labor movement in pursuit of principled objectives. It is they, after all, and none other, as Slaughter reminds us, who for the first time since the end of World War II placed the labor party issue on the agenda of the U.S. trade union movement in a serious way.

They appear to understand what James P. Cannon said in 1948: "The minimum condition... is that the [labor] party must really be based on the unions and dependent on them, and at least ultimately subject to their control as to program and candidates... The danger," he concluded, "is that we may get impatient and [impatience] may impel us to seek shortcuts to a labor party, or some

wretched substitute for it, over the head of the official trade union movement."

The fate of the present labor party initiative has very little to do with whether radical activists attracted for one reason or another to the Labor Party are satisfied or dissatisfied with the pace of development. One problem with Slaughter's criticisms is that they seem to take the mood of this element as a significant factor. "For many current members... the holding tank conception has little appeal," Slaughter says. "They are likely to want more."

Slaughter's Proposal: A Step Away from Working Class Political Action

Instead of "concentrating solely on filling the holding tank," Slaughter advises, "Labor Party leaders ought to be doing some serious research and sounding out this year, investigating areas where endorsing unions, both local and international, might have the combined capacity to run credible campaigns — for school board, city council, county executive, perhaps even Congress." She says that "endorsing New Party or Green candidates in some places could have been a good practical step toward political independence, and a sign that the Labor Party is not simply a bluff."

On the contrary, this would be a bad idea, and a step away from working-class political action. The groups she mentions, and others like them, which do put forward candidates organizationally separate from the Democrats, are essentially political satellites of that party. They are careful not to run where they would harm the chances of so-called "progressive" Democrats, and basically try to use the electoral process to enhance their weight as pressure groups on the Democratic Party — in other words, a strategy similar to the one Slaughter warns the Labor Party leaders against.

For the Labor Party to start out by endorsing the candidates of various petty-bourgeois reform groups would, contrary to what Slaughter suggests, simply be a replication in miniature of the fundamental political error of the union movement's present political misdirection. It amounts to a recommendation that the unions merely find better candidates to support, and, coming at

the threshold of the party's existence, inevitably dissolves the class criteria — which is the fundamental strength and the liberating insight inherent in the perspective of independent labor political action which the Labor Party holds out — into a new version of the unions' present political horse-trading over endorsements.

If there is a way to guarantee a still-born Labor Party, that is it. Far better the "holding tank" strategy, even with the negative connotations of Slaughter's characterization. At least it remains a part of the unions.

The Electoral Illusion

The real problem an authentic Labor Party needs to come to grips with is not the possibility of disappointing its prospective membership with insufficient electoral action, but the deep-rooted illusion that electoral action in itself can provide fundamental change. The rank and file of the labor movement, like virtually everyone else in this country, has

been educated to believe that social problems can be solved if only the right people can be placed in office.

The formation of an authentic mass labor party, whose class character is announced by its support from the unions, makes it possible to begin to overturn this enervating political misconception. The Labor Party, by its very existence, inherently and inescapably introduces the consideration of class on a scale that radical propaganda can never achieve. And this begins to reopen the possibility of transformation of working-class consciousness, and a rejection of the reliance on others to solve workers' basic social problems.

Central Task: Win Over More of the Union Movement

From this perspective the question of running candidates cannot possibly be of central importance, most certainly not at the labor party movement's present stage. The centrally important task is to win over more of the organized union

movement to support the Labor Party, and the founders of the Labor Party, by their record and their credentials, seem to know how to do this.

As Slaughter notes, it was the founders of Labor Party Advocates in 1991 who "moved the notion of a labor party out of the realm of the Trotskyist canon and into the light of day. Today locals and national unions with hundreds of thousands of members officially support a labor party."

This is quite an achievement. The founders deserve not only the qualified praise Slaughter extends to them for their efforts, but some confidence that they have the ability to take this process further. Their strategy, their perspective, at this point, is the correct one and deserves the support of all who seek genuine independent political action by labor. □

Why Corporate America Hates Ron Carey

The *Wall Street Journal*, a big-time mouthpiece for Corporate America, has Teamsters President Ron Carey in its cross-hairs and is dying to pull the trigger. To read the *Journal*, you would think that Ron Carey and the UPS Teamsters are the biggest danger to Big Business and Corporate Greed since the 1930s revolt of mass production workers, and the revival of the unions during the Great Depression.

In a way, the paper is not far wrong. For the paper doesn't like the fact that 185,000 UPS strikers accomplished in just 15 days what the entire labor movement failed to do since President Reagan broke the 1981 air controllers' strike and busted their union (PATCO). That is, they gave American workers a good reason to hope that the American Dream of full-time jobs, job security, and livable pensions can be won. Well, what's wrong with that?

There's nothing wrong with that, if you work for a living. But Corporate America doesn't want to cut workers a bigger slice of the pie. That includes the freight bosses, who are worried that the Teamsters and Ron Carey are planning to hold the freight bosses' feet to the fire when the next contract comes up in April. *Traffic World* (a trucking industry magazine) is afraid that the industry will have to pay higher wage and pension contributions when the Teamsters "seek a larger share of the profits now that the LTL [less than full load] carriers are making money..."

The freight corporations weren't always treated so firmly by the Teamsters. Until President Carey was elected, the freight bosses were invited to attend the union's conventions and special conferences, where they mingled with the "boys" in the bars and on the golf courses. Showing up would be

top honchos from Consolidated Freightways, Anchor Motor Freight, Trucking Management, Inc., Motor Carriers Labor Advisory Council, Western Motor Carrier, Inc., Yellow Freight System, Inc., Southern Motor Carriers, Hadley Auto Transport, and on and on.

And that may be a big part of the reason why so many drivers have taken it on the chin since Deregulation, and the old-guard union tops sat on the freight drivers for 15 years.

By now Corporate America and the freight bosses have figured it out. Teamsters President Ron Carey is a different breed of cat from the old-guard fat cats who once misled our union down a road of retreat and defeat. The Teamsters have a guy with guts leading them now, and that's why Corporate America hates Ron Carey! □

*Bay Area Teamsters
to Reelect Ron Carey*

In Memory of Myra Tanner Weiss (1917–1997)

by Ed Kovacs

The following article was posted on the Internet on September 14. The author describes himself as a member of the L.A. Branch of Solidarity, a U.S. Socialist-Feminist Organization.

Myra Tanner Weiss (1917–1997) died on September 13, 1997. The last five years of this veteran Trotskyist woman leader were perhaps the most frustrating period of her life. After a devastating stroke, she all but lost the power of speech even though her mind remained alert and receptive, and she looked forward to death as a release from an impossible situation. This was in total contrast to the decades of her earlier political life when she was one of the most effective and brilliant spokespersons for the U.S. Trotskyist movement.

She joined the Workers Party in 1935 in Salt Lake City and became a founding member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in 1938. After moving to the West Coast, she was active in union organizing of agricultural workers and of cannery workers in Southern California. She became the organizer of the Los Angeles local of the SWP from 1942 to 1952, running for mayor of Los Angeles in 1945 and 1949. At that time, she wrote her first pamphlet, entitled *Vigilante Terror in Fontana*. It described the struggle for residential integration by African Americans with the support of

radicals and against the fierce opposition of white vigilantes.

When Gerald L.K. Smith began to organize right-wing meetings in L.A. in 1945, she and her long-time companion and SWP leader Murry Weiss through the influence wielded by the SWP local that then consisted of five branches heavily involved in all areas of union activity succeeded in influencing the labor movement in organizing a mass picket line in front of G.L.K. Smith's meeting hall that all but chased that racist demagogue out of town.

The L.A. local of the SWP also succeeded in recruiting a sizable number of young people from Roosevelt High School on the then predominantly Jewish Eastside of L.A. Later they were sent throughout the country to rejuvenate other branches of the SWP.

In 1952, she moved to New York to become a staff writer for *The Militant*, the weekly newspaper of the SWP. She ran as the SWP's vice presidential candidate, with Farrell Dobbs for president, in 1952, 1956, and 1960, unfolding in full her talents as an unrivaled agitator for socialism. Her insightful pamphlet

The Bustelo Incident — Marxism and Feminism, published by her in 1987, describes the entrenched male structures inside the SWP that she began to encounter in her national role. That eventually made her drop out of the SWP in the mid-1960s. In 1986, Jack Barnes in his "make-over" of the SWP as his own personal cult revived the "Bustelo Incident," in which women were ridiculed for wearing cosmetics. Myra Tanner Weiss took that occasion to write this brilliant essay of her views on Marxist feminism that should be recommended reading for all.

With Myra Tanner Weiss's death, the radical movement in the U.S. lost a courageous woman who preceded the growth of a feminist movement that eventually forced great changes not just in society as a whole but inside all the radical groupings, loosening up some of the male bastions of privilege that exist everywhere and that forced her out of the SWP. Myra Tanner Weiss was a "premature" feminist, so-to-speak, but also an inspiration to all those who struggle against privilege anywhere and for the emancipation of all. □

"The Real Scandal Is Corporate Power over Government"

Continued from page 3

than 70 percent of the cocaine brought into the U.S. comes across the Mexican border. As NAFTA increases the number of uninspected trucks coming from Mexico, drug traffic also increases.

NAFTA also threatens the safety of every American family on the highway. The trade deal has meant a huge increase in the number of trucks from Mexico that enter the U.S. to dump their loads. In Texas, where 65 percent of Mexican trucks enter the United States, fewer than one out of every 200 is inspected. Of those that are checked, nearly half must be taken off the road because they are unsafe. That means nearly one and a half million unsafe trucks cross into the U.S. through Texas

every year. Safety problems include drivers without licenses, brakes that don't work, unsafe tires, and toxic loads that are not properly labeled or secured.

Issues with the Freight Industry

Under NAFTA, corporations were supposed to gain the ability to use trucks from Mexico to haul freight anywhere in the four border states in 1995 — and in all 50 states and Canada in the year 2000. A coalition of Teamsters, environmentalists, and highway safety groups convinced the Clinton Administration to delay that part of NAFTA. But the American Trucking Association [S?] has been pushing Clinton and Congress to lift the delay.

Many American trucking companies like Yellow Freight, Consolidated Freightways, Roadway, and ABF have set up subsidiaries or partnerships with Mexican trucking firms to take advantage of NAFTA. Our freight companies say they want a new relationship with their Teamster work force. As we're heading into national contract negotiations with the freight industry, we encourage that. The companies say they want to be one big happy family. Yet they continue to support a scheme that would put thousands of unsafe trucks on our highways. They want the ability to use a \$7-a-day driver to move freight that is now being hauled by American drivers at a decent wage.

It's time for the freight companies to realize that in today's Teamsters union, we look at what management does — not what it says.

Put Public Interest Above Corporate Interests

We favor international trade — fair trade. We want trade deals that help working families in other countries win good wages so they can buy more American products and services. We want strong environmental and consumer protection standards in all countries, so we can be sure the goods we buy are safe. In short, we want our government to put the public interest ahead of corporate special interests.

Today, I challenge corporate America to put its political muscle behind real election reform. I challenge corporations to join us in supporting public

financing of campaigns, free radio and TV time for candidates, a ban on soft money, and other reforms. These reforms could be in place for the 1998 elections if the Chamber of Commerce and the American Trucking Associations and UPS would call a news conference and join us on this issue.

We don't have to wait for government to act. The Teamsters union will stop giving "soft money" to political parties — immediately — if corporations and their trade associations and front groups will do the same.

For a Future That Works for All

In the meantime, we will continue the new approach we've started in the past few years. We will continue to use more of our resources for voter registration and for rallies, petitions drives, and other grassroots actions that hold politi-

cians accountable on issues important to working families.

In Dallas, Springfield, Illinois, San Francisco, and many other cities and towns, Teamster members are out talking to their coworkers, handing out postcards to send to Congress, and meeting with public officials to talk about NAFTA "fast track" and other issues.

Like the UPS strikers this summer, these members are the future of the Teamsters union. Our union today is fighting for every working family — for every young person who needs an affordable education — for everyone who wants to know that their child or parent will be able to get quality health care. We're fighting for good full-time jobs, safe working conditions, and a decent retirement. We're fighting for the future of our families and our communities — and for an American that works for all of us. □

Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Supports Forced Overtime

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legislature will *not* do, unless a union or political movement gathers the strength necessary to force them to do it. Even then, a law can languish on the books, unenforced. That is why sweatshops are not some dim memory of turn-of-the-century America, but exist now, at the turn of the next century. The *New York Times* headline last July 20 which revealed that deaf Mexican immigrants were held in slave labor is simply a more extreme example of conditions that have long existed and which continue to this day, since efforts to eradicate them are half-hearted and underfunded.

Other legislators spoke as timidly as State Senator Murray. "If we did do this and got into micromanagement and telling every single employer how many hours their employees can work, we could do more harm than good," said State Senator David Lynch, co-chairman of the Joint Committee on Commerce and Labor. Lynch, a Democrat, worried that legislative action "could be seen as an intrusion into standard business practices."

What a remarkable sentiment for a legislator! "We wouldn't want to micromanage or get involved by passing laws..." However, the facts suggest otherwise. Legislators *are* involved and

they *do* make decisions. Whenever there is conflict there is no neutrality.

Neutrality in the Face of Injustice

Imagine that you walk down the street and see someone being robbed and beaten. You can do something and intervene on the victim's behalf, or you can do nothing and thereby help the thief. What you can't do is remain neutral. Deciding to do nothing, deciding not to act, is itself an action. Neutrality in the face of injustice hurts the weak and helps the powerful, hurts the victim and helps the criminal. If the government and courts do not limit the rights of the boss, they thereby limit the rights of the worker.

Legislators could adopt measures on behalf of the working class. No "micromanaging" by the legislature would be necessary. Congress can pass a law which simply states that no worker will be required to work beyond 40 hours a week. Then, the senators and representatives will not have to "micromanage" or "intrude." The workers can decide for themselves whether to work more hours, or not. But allowing workers to decide is exactly what the bosses and their hired lawmakers want to avoid. The boss will not voluntarily surrender decision-making power to the worker.

A law which allowed workers the right to determine the extent of the workweek — a law that should be passed on the national level — still would not create equality in the workplace. The boss would continue to hold the advantage. The boss could still, as now, apply pressure and intimidation. Power would remain in the hands of the employer instead of the employee.

Under Capitalism, Power Stays in Management's Hands

Whenever the time came to hand out bonuses, perks, and promotions, the boss would remember who had been compliant and obedient. The worker who had said "No" to overtime, for whatever reason, would not receive any favors from the boss. A law which allowed workers to limit the workweek to 40 hours would not fully protect a worker who made use of that law. Discrimination would continue, but it would be applied with more subtlety. The bosses know there is more than one way to skin a cat. As long as capitalism exists, power will ultimately remain in the hands of management.

Despite the denials of legislators, the state does indeed "micromanage," quite willingly — on behalf of the ruling class. In the case of Joanna Upton, this was done through the court's callous-

ness and the legislature's indifference. They decided that parents in Massachusetts without a union contract can raise their children only insofar as the boss is willing to allow it. These workers may care for their families, may see their kids

on Saturdays, only if the company says it's OK.

No Union to Protect Her

The bosses, the courts, the legislators — they will only move when they are shoved. They will act in the people's

interests only when forced. That's one lesson of the UPS strike. Joanna Upton is a brave woman who stood up for herself and her child against her boss. At her job there was no working-class solidarity to support her, no union to protect her. She fought alone, armed with courage and with right on her side.

It wasn't enough. □

Laid Ghosts Walking

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according to Sister Anna Maria, Catholics now worship in five different congregations, separated according to political affiliation. She believes that the indigenous ethos of community has suffered because of such divisions.

Militarization

The Zapatista revolt has provoked militarization. Large army units surround the Lacondón jungle, surrounding the EZLN. Army detachments are stationed in villages throughout the highlands and in the northern zone of Chiapas. The national military budget has increased 40 percent since the Zapatista uprising, and 60,000 troops — 30 percent of the Mexican army — are posted in Chiapas. With state, municipal, and highway policy, plus judicial officers, the total force opposing the EZLN adds up to 125,000, one person in uniform for every 28 inhabitants of the area (according to the July 22 issue of the newspaper *El Tiempo*, published in San Cristóbal.)

The U.S. government has assisted Mexico's military build-up. Carlos, traveling in the "conflict zone," has seen North American officers working with Mexican army personnel. According to Brian Willson's *Slippery Slope*, from 1988 to 1994 the U.S. government sent Mexico 7,000 armed troop-transfer vehicles, 78 helicopters, 78 airplanes, 1,615 machine guns, 360,000 grenades, and 266 electric prods. In 1994 President Clinton authorized the export of military equipment worth \$64 million, plus aircraft worth \$14 million. In April 1996, Mexico received more equipment, including 73 Huey helicopters, worth \$50 million. According to *El Tiempo*, narco-trafficking is used by both the U.S. and Mexican governments as a pretext for the stepped-up counter-insurgency offensive.

Human Rights Abuses

The Mexican government does little or nothing to stop rampant abuse of human rights in Chiapas. Among the many headlines of articles we saw, here are some examples:

- Three Cases of Torture by Judicial Police and Army Are Documented
- Man and Child Assassinated in Salto de Agua
- Those Who Were Displaced Survive in the Mountains

El Tiempo (July 29, 1997) tallied up the record for June of this year: 12 killed, 16 wounded, 3 kidnapped, 18 disappeared, 6 lynched, 11 illegally detained, 300 displaced. Brian Willson learned in an interview with CONPAZ that in 1995, 605 people were assassinated, 1,400 illegally detained, 300 evicted, and 1,200 homes were burned.

Four paramilitary groups carry out much of the terror. One of them, Peace and Justice, supported by ranchers and PRI leaders, operates in the northern zone of Chiapas with apparent impunity and the acquiescence of the army and police. Carlos and Josefina have friends who were among the 25,000 evangelical Protestants expelled several years ago from Chamula by the PRI, the army, and part of the Catholic Church.

Troubled Middle Class

Those who oppose the Mexican political system may not be confined to the dispossessed and the abused. Doctors who talked with us seemed unsettled and pessimistic, with a restlessness that perhaps extends to other members of the middle class. A recent administrator at the regional hospital pocketed hundreds of thousands of pesos intended for roof repairs, according to Dr. Rosquillas. The government's response was to transfer the administrator to a similar post in Ocosingo. For Dr. Rosquillas, such cor-

ruption has led to hospital shortages and the unavailability of basic laboratory tests.

Along the same line, the Medical Association of Chiapas placed a notice in *El Tiempo* accusing the government of corruption and shortages that had led to the unnecessary death of a prominent patient. We found an unhappy Dr. Armando Servin, the very picture of marginalization, making sketches for health education posters. He is a senior public health official, but is no longer asked to attend planning meetings for his agency, ever since he suggested that Zapatista representatives attend a public health conference.

Editorials use the word *ingobernabilidad*, claiming that government no longer works and citing corruption, terrorism, and rigged elections. Newspapers regularly print Zapatista communications and often give editorial support for Zapatista positions. Many members of the newspaper-reading middle class may themselves be hospitable to ideas of change. As in the Batista era in Cuba, people of affairs may be developing affection for a group of armed rebels in the countryside.

Zapatistas: The Yeast

What of the yeast that is stirring up ferment in this mix of suffering and repression? In the historical context of left organization and guerrilla insurgency, the Zapatista experience has become highly significant, in my opinion, on several counts.

The movement has been built from the bottom up. Displaced campesinos from throughout southern Mexico have migrated to the Lacondon jungle rather than the Zapatistas moving out to establish new foci in other areas. Zapatista decision making includes the whole community, as indicated by the phrase that ends many EZLN manifestos —

“from the men, the women, the children, the old people.” When the Zapatistas confer among themselves or with the government, Spanish is translated into four Mayan-based languages, and the people’s responses are translated back into Spanish.

One woman we met has worked with resistance groups elsewhere in Latin America. (A picture of Che hangs on her wall.) She regards the Zapatistas as having little resemblance to elitist groups who adopted the “vanguard” model. Zapatista deliberations recall to Carlos the coming together in the “long house” of his childhood community in North America. The Popular Revolutionary Army, a self-styled Marxist (probably Maoist) group based in the neighboring state of Guerrero, has recently become active in western Chiapas, but the Zapatistas are not cooperating with that organization.

The Zapatistas, like their namesake Zapata, have taken as their major concern justice for indigenous people, in Mexico and beyond. *Nunca mas un Mexico sin nosotros* (Never again a Mexico without us) appears prominently in Zapatista proclamations. In August 1997, *indios* from all over Mexico, plus Chicanos and Native Americans from the United States, came to a convocation in Oventic, Chiapas, that celebrated solidarity and cultural connections. Josefina told us that the words of Subcommandante Marcos bring her “to tears.” The image and reality of an indigenous resistance carrying on the long tradition of Mayan insurgency must indeed exert a compelling hold on its adherents.

Much Zapatista rhetoric focuses on the connections among economic power, poverty, and human need, and these factors are put into an international frame of reference. Josefina perceives a tie between agribusiness in Chiapas and foreign investment, and repeatedly the Zapatistas hold up the shibboleth of neoliberalism for condemnation. For them this term means disregard for the basic needs of poor people everywhere in favor of debt repayment,

profit making, privatization, and free rein in Mexico for NAFTA and the global market economy.

The rich have gained mightily in Mexico. Even before NAFTA there were 14 billionaires in Mexico — up from 2 in 1988 — who themselves had more wealth than the poorest 25 million Mexicans. The newspapers in August were full of reports on the trip of Comandantes Dahlia and Felipe to Spain for the Second International Conference on Neoliberalism, the first one having been held in Oventic the previous year under Zapatista auspices.

What of the Future?

Those working for change speak of enlarging “civil society.” That space, historically quite narrow, would be independent of both monolithic state power and Zapatista armed rebellion. The Zapatistas themselves claim they seek neither power nor electoral victory. Marcus Arana of CONPAZ told us that the movement for civil society is working toward protection for independent indigenous decision making and toward workable systems of health care, education, food distribution, and land tenure that will gain people’s trust.

In mid-September the EZLN organized the inaugural convocation in Mexico City of the Zapatista Front for National Liberation as a civilian arm of the Zapatista movement. The purpose, as indicated by EZLN statements, has to do with reaching out to the civil society of non-indigenous Mexicans “hurt by power” to build a more democratic process than the present mixture of (usually rigged) elections and armed suppression.

Sister Anna Maria saw little likelihood of basic change in Chiapas, although she noted incremental improvements. Girls, for example, from Zapatista-held areas are readily identifiable because they stand tall, take care of themselves, and attend school. Carlos views the present system of corruption and repression as so discredited that its fall is inevitable. When it falls, he

expects, power relationships will somehow change.

Why Workers in the U.S. Should Support the Zapatistas

1. Because they are our kind of people, standing up against the power of international money, the free rein of corporate profit-making in the global market; the Zapatistas are our brothers and sisters and need our solidarity. 2. The army surrounding the EZLN derives substantial support from the U.S. government, using our tax dollars. Washington and the Pentagon are acting in the interests of the same corporations that are pushing “fast track,” imposed NAFTA, and send U.S. workers’ jobs to low-wage areas while suppressing and denying the rights of Mexican workers and peasants. [See accompanying box on NAFTA and “fast track”; also see the articles on maquiladora workers, elsewhere in this issue.] 3. By supporting the indigenous people now struggling for justice in Chiapas, North American working people can make amends for some of the genocide and injustice committed in our name by our government in the past. 4. The Zapatistas are carrying out an experiment in new ways of running a revolution based on grassroots democracy, something workers everywhere can learn and benefit from.

There are heroes in Chiapas. Years ago Amado Avendaño founded *El Tiempo*, a newspaper that has been a consistent voice for justice, and he regularly writes columns for that paper and for *Expreso*. On July 25, 1994, he barely survived an apparent assassination attempt while running for governor against the PRI candidate. Three others, family and friends, were killed. His own fearlessness and the persistence of the rebels he writes about exemplify a long historical tradition of resistance, going back to the slave rebellion against the Roman empire led by the gladiator Spartacus. One of his recent columns (in *Expreso*, August 14, 1997) stated: *Los espartacos de todos los tiempos viven en las neuronas del pueblo* (Spartacus and those like him from throughout the ages still live in the nerve cells of the people.) □

Class-Struggle Policy in the Rise of the Labor Movement

Continued from page 33

ism and against craft unionism; they were for political action and against the Gompers policy of no politics in the unions; they invited the collaboration of all sorts of prosocialist and antisocialist tendencies, in the freest, most democratic organizational form that the union movement had known in this country.

This unique development was due to a number of exceptional factors. For one, a wave of utopian socialists had colonized the area and established a number of utopian colonies. The state of Washington is a wonderful place for utopian colonies — a fine climate and geographically on the furthestmost boundaries of the western frontier.

The first *daily* socialist newspaper was established in Seattle. The first *daily union paper* was established in Seattle and published by the Seattle Labor Council. And not only was it published by the council, but it competed successfully with the two capitalist papers and had a circulation equal to that of its two capitalist competitors.

And, of course, the first citywide general strike occurred in Seattle. It occurred in Seattle because the radical leadership of the labor movement arose out of the tremendous battles led by the IWW, because of the presence of socialists in the leadership of the unions, because of the widespread circulation of radical ideas through the widely read labor and socialist press, etc., etc. There were literally dozens and dozens of socialist newspapers published in the area, meetings, magazines, books, activities of all kinds.

The Seattle general strike was an expression of labor solidarity unexampled up to that time. The strike began over a dispute between the shipyard workers and the government. In this situation the labor movement faced the federal government as a direct antagonist. On the surface it appeared to be a strike of the shipyard workers against the employers for economic and trade-union demands. But the shipyards in Seattle were purely a wartime product; they were built as a wartime measure to meet the needs of American capitalism to expand its merchant marine in World War I. They were completely dependent

upon subsidies from the government. Their labor policy was established by Washington, where a government shipping board ruled over the whole maritime empire built by the government in the period of the war.

But in 1919 the war was over. There was no further necessity for the government to build more ships. In fact, their problem was how to get rid of the ships that had been built during the period of the war. So they seized upon the dispute of the shipyard workers in Seattle to teach the working class a lesson, and as a means of warning the workers throughout the entire country that the wartime “honeymoon” was over. Therefore, when the employers agreed to settle with the Central Labor Council, the government intervened and vetoed concessions designed to settle the strike. The Seattle general strike was called ostensibly for the purpose of rallying support for the demands of the shipyard workers.

With the exception of one other union, there were no economic demands made by the other unions. It was at this critical point that the union leadership exhibited its greatest confusion and committed a fatal blunder.

A general strike called as a protest demonstration directly involved in a dispute — this time with the federal government — under the given circumstances could only be an action of limited duration. However, carried away by the emotional surge of justifiable indignation and anger at the union-busting role of the government, the Central Labor Council called a general strike in the city of Seattle without defining its limits or setting a time of duration for the action.

Let me digress for just a moment. You know, some of our New Left windbags, together with any number of our hyped-up “leftist” sects, are addicted with “general strike-itis” and call for a “general strike” at the drop of a nosegay. Of course, no one pays any attention, but that just spurs them to shriller exhortations. Being constantly in orbit, intoxicated by the rarified atmosphere of outer space, their verbal radicalism is usually in inverse proportion to their size and influence in the labor move-

ment. The more impotent the grouplet, the harsher its ultimatic braying for the “general strike” as the solution to all problems. Which only confirms the astute observation of the sage who affirmed that the harshest sound is the braying of an ass!

Let me make this clear: I intend no invidious comparison between our current crop of long-eared “leftists” and the leaders of the 1919 Seattle general strike. The latter were genuine leaders of a surging mass movement, at that time far in advance of the labor movement of the rest of the country. Rejecting the Marxist theory of the state, the syndicalists in the leadership of the Seattle union movement viewed the general strike as the apex of the revolutionary struggle for workers power.

On the other hand, the socialists and the pure-and-simple trade unionists had in mind a general strike—protest demonstration to pressure the government into approving concessions made to the shipyard workers. But to avoid a semantic confrontation and dispute, the precise nature of the general strike was left vague and unresolved. The result was utter confusion in the conduct of the action.

Social Dynamite

A general strike is social dynamite with a burning fuse. Basic questions immediately arise. Where does the power of decision reside in matters concerning the life of the city? Who is to police the city? The cops are not viewed as “friends” of the strike; to the contrary, their role is that of chief strikebreakers for the boss class. The union strike committee must establish its own police force. How is the city to be fed? What institutions are to be permitted to remain open? And who is to supervise those permitted to operate? It is impossible to detail here all of the problems that are immediately posed.

Alongside the regularly established governmental power and its apparatus, there comes into existence the general strike committee with its apparatus, to establish a form of dual power. The dynamic of the dual power is that more and more the strike council is compelled to take over the functions of the state. A situation of dual power cannot, by its

very nature, exist for long. It must be resolved by the hegemony of one or the other of the great contending classes. One or the other must prevail.

From the beginning the strike leaders sought to defend themselves against the charge that they had any intention of seizing state power. They ridiculed the charge and with good reason. The very idea of seizing power in a single city was dismissed as an utopian adventure. Seattle was far in advance of the rest of the labor movement. The strike action elicited sympathy from other sections of the working class throughout the country, of course, but there was no extension of the general strike even to cities contiguous to Seattle. Tacoma had a partial "general strike," while other cities on the Pacific coast remained unaffected.

An indication of what contradictions the leaders of the strike were in was their action in suspending publication of the daily union newspaper. Their reason? Because, you see, in calling upon all the printing trade crafts to join the strike, it "would not be fair" to continue publication of the union paper while their "competitors" were shut down. The result? First, the printing trades national officialdom countermanded the strike call and ordered their members to remain on the job. Second, the two capitalist rags, published without hindrance, began bombarding the community with false charges, inflammatory rumors, falsification of the strike issues, etc., while the strike committee restricted itself to the publication of a small strike bulletin.

It was only on the third or fourth day of the strike that it was decided to resume publication of the daily union paper. By that time it was already too late. The initial momentum had been frittered away; the strike was weakened and gradually abandoned.

The general strike fizzled out, although the workers went back as an organized group. The strike was officially called off, and all the unions went back as a body. In fact, some of the unions that had returned to work earlier came back out when the leadership announced it was going to meet on the question of establishing a unified time to return to the job. They then went back to work, at the time decided by the strike committee.

The Seattle general strike of 1919 was probably the peak, so far as organization and consciousness was concerned, in the development of the American labor movement up to that time. I underscore the fact that in the development of this consciousness, the utopian socialists, the Marxists, the IWW, the native militants, were clearly the ideologues. They were the ideological source of the concepts that assumed organized expression in the strike and fashioned the character of the entire Seattle labor movement.

Legacy of Seattle

In the book *The General Strike in Seattle* by Robert L. Freidhiem, a typical professorial product, the thesis is advanced that the main weakness of the strike was that it alienated the middle class. If the unions had won the sympathy of the middle class, he claims, then things would have been different. He also blames the strike for the reaction which swept the country under the Palmer Red Raids, the witch-hunt in which the government spearheaded a drive to smash those unions that had succeeded in establishing themselves during the period of the war.

Here's what he says:

The first major general strike in the United States ended quietly at noon on February 11, 1919. Somewhat sheepishly, Seattle's workers returned to their jobs in shops, factories, mills, hotels, warehouses, and trolley barns. The strike had been a failure, and they all knew it. In the days ahead they were to learn that it was worse than a failure — it was a disaster. Now, they were glad simply to return to work, leaving their fellow workers in the shipyards still out on strike.

It was "a failure"; it was "a disaster," and to it he attributes the subsequent ills and ailments of the American labor movement.

It is true that after 1919 there was a tremendous wave of reaction. There was a witch-hunt, and the government spearheaded an attack upon the American labor movement in which strikes were broken and unions were smashed. In 1921 it was the government that smashed the maritime strike and broke the maritime unions, which later arose again in a more militant form out of the 1934 strike on the West Coast.

Was the Seattle strike such a failure? In the immediate sense, the strike failed to achieve its objective: to win the demands of the shipyard workers. But the Seattle shipyard workers were in an untenable position. The federal government didn't give a damn whether the shipyards were temporarily strikebound or stayed closed forever. In fact, they afterwards closed them down anyway. They had no need for more ships, and were determined to utilize the dispute to teach the organized labor movement a lesson. The immediate outcome of course was unfortunate. But the strikers went back as a body, and there was no victimization of any of the strike leaders.

The lessons of the Seattle experience, which Freidhiem and others like him fail to understand, entered as an important component into the subsequent development of the CIO through the 1934 Pacific Coast waterfront strikes. As a matter of fact, the next city-wide general strike in this country was the San Francisco general strike of 1934, in which the longshoremen and the maritime workers on the Pacific Coast fought it out with the employers, the state and city government, the cops, and the federal government, and succeeded in winning their essential demand, which was union recognition.

Who were these workers on the waterfront in 1934, whose tremendous victory was a precursor to the organization of the CIO? The IWW on the Pacific Coast was fairly strong in the maritime industry through their Marine Transport Workers Local 510. At that time, the Stalinists, who were still in their ultraleft Third Period binge, had organized the Marine Workers Industrial Union — their own union of revolutionary, "syndicalist" workers. But these workers were among the "militant nomads," many of whom had gone through the Seattle experience, which had its repercussions up and down the coast.

Link with 1934 Maritime Strike

In fact, many of the leaders of the 1934 maritime strike were from Seattle. Harry Lundeberg, who became the leader of the Sailors Union of the Pacific, first achieved prominence as a strike leader in Seattle. He was one of the leaders in the Seattle waterfront

strike of 1934. He came down to San Francisco, the headquarters of the SUP, and led the movement that booted the old AFL fakers out of office. These worthies were literally kicked down the stairs and out of the union, and the strike activists established a militant seamen's union in 1934. Harry Bridges, the long-shore strike leader, was an Australian syndicalist, under the influence of the Stalinists.

The coast-wide strike of the seamen and longshoremen on the Pacific coast, which reached its peak in the San Francisco general strike of 1934, was led primarily by workers who had previously gone through the earlier struggles in the Pacific Northwest. These were organized in, or under the influence of, one or another of the radical political parties or "revolutionary union" organizations.

So you can see how the stream was fed, how consciousness developed, how the lessons were assimilated, and how, although the radicals were relatively

few in number, their ideas found expression in tremendous class battles.

I shall stop here to conclude the first of our lecture-class series with a brief summary and extrapolation of the development, which will further underscore the validity of the thesis elaborated in Art Preis's book, *Labor's Giant Step*, that the impetus for historical development and social change is provided by the dynamic of the class struggle.

What happened in the 1934 maritime strikes on the West Coast was also true of the Toledo Auto-Lite strike and of the Minneapolis truck drivers' strikes. All of these events were precursors of the CIO. In Toledo the movement was sparked by radicals, members of the American Workers Party, who were moving in the direction of Trotskyism and later fused with the Trotskyist Communist League of America in 1935 to form the Workers Party.

These three great eruptions were an adumbration of the subsequent battles

that marked the development of the CIO in the period from 1935–1937. Through the lessons of these events Art Preis again confirms the validity of the Marxist premise that the concept, the methods, and the application of strategy and tactics of the class struggle, were primarily responsible for creating the leadership, the consciousness, the movement that established genuine trade unionism in this country for the first time since the inception of the early labor movement.

This development was interconnected and intertwined with the historical development of the entire American labor movement from the very beginning. Each successive plateau can be traced to its roots in previous struggles, each going through a certain cycle and each emerging on a higher level.

In our lecture-class next week we'll discuss the period from the beginning of the Great Depression of 1929 to the actual formation of the CIO and the role of the radical tendencies in affecting the development of that historic movement. □

France's Socialist Government

Continued from page 23

profile in the face of protest and strike movements that have jealously guarded their independence and voiced their criticisms of the PS record in office in the 1980s and early 1990s. As a result, it has been more permeable to critical thinking around such key questions as European construction, privatization, unemployment, taxation, ecology, immigration and women's involvement in political life.

One need only look at the PS election campaign and the initial pronouncements of the new government to see that we are dealing with a political dynamic that is at odds with the neo-liberal and authoritarian measures being applied almost everywhere else.

The PS campaigned for and has announced the suspension of the Superphenix fast breeder nuclear reactor and mammoth Rhine-Rhône canal project. It campaigned for and has announced an increase in the minimum wage. These are real gains.

Promises

To reduce unemployment, the PS campaigned for a reduction of the workweek

to 35 hours with no loss in pay and the state-funded creation of 700,000 jobs for youth. It also campaigned for: a review of and probable halt to all privatizations in process and under consideration; a halt to public sector layoffs; the re-establishment of the law requiring government approval for "economic" layoffs; the lowering of value-added taxes on consumer goods and increased corporate taxes; and the abrogation of new pension legislation that creates private pension funds at the expense of the relatively generous public system.

In his inaugural speech to the National Assembly on June 19, Jospin said he would respect all these pledges, causing great consternation on the Right and in business circles.

One can find fault easily enough. What immigration legislation will replace the abrogated laws? And what will become of the "illegal" immigrants not legalized in the current round? Similarly, Jospin announced that the 35-hour workweek would only be implemented by the end of the first mandate, in 2002 — whereas such a reduction has to be

implemented immediately and across-the-board to have the desired effect.

Credibility

But the main problems lie elsewhere. First, credibility. The French saw too many PS promises broken in the 1980s, and it remains to be seen if the renewed PS has abandoned the manipulative and treacherous legacy of the 1980s and of the deceased former president (and PS leader) Francois Mitterrand. Second, Europe. The Maastricht single currency convergence criteria and the post-convergence austerity-driven Stability Pact will play an overriding role in determining government policy.

Lest one forget, it was a PS government that signed the Maastricht Treaty in late 1991 and campaigned stridently for the "yes" side in the referendum on Maastricht in late 1992. Progressive economic measures run the risk of being sacrificed on the altar of the single currency, since it is difficult to see how these measures can be implemented without increasing the public deficit in the short term.

The new government's first policies have been less than encouraging. Take

Jospin's renewed acceptance of the convergence criteria and the single currency Stability Pact at the Amsterdam summit of European Union (EU) states in mid-June.

The PS has also betrayed what the electorate had understood was a promise to prevent the modern Renault auto plant at Vilvoord in Belgium from closing down. Since the French state holds 46 percent of Renault shares, the government could have vetoed the decision to close. But Jospin refused to do so. He argued that France no longer lived in an era of "state-administered" economies.

Public opinion is being prepared for the "discovery" of a worse inherited deficit than the outgoing government was willing to admit. The new government might use this as a cue to abandon much of its progressive economic agenda in its September budget address.

Germany and the European Dimension:

The French delegation to Amsterdam provoked a mini-crisis, by threatening not to endorse the Stability Pact. It only did sign when agreement was reached on the addition of a clause on job creation, on the holding of a jobs summit in the autumn, and on the establishment of a political counterweight to the European Central Bank.

Not much of a victory, to be sure. But the mini-crisis revealed differences within the PS itself. Not to mention the critical stance of its PCF and Green allies. It also focused attention on the difficulties faced by Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Germany, like France, is highly unlikely to meet the convergence criteria. And Kohl's tough stand on Maastricht is increasingly losing ground to the trade unions, the opposition Social Democrats, and public opinion in general.

Kohl has been left with little room for maneuver. On the one hand, there is growing opposition within the population to the single currency. This opposition comes in both progressive and chauvinist hues. On the other, there is the unrelenting monetarist orthodoxy of the German central bank and financial circles.

Germany and France have entered a period of ruling class crises and major showdowns, of the type Britain went through in the late 1970s and early

1980s. Strict respect for the criteria is virtually impossible in the two key European Union countries and is rapidly losing favor with public opinion. Coupled with the defeat of Chirac and the Right, this makes for a window of opportunity for the Left government in France.

Will it seize this opportunity? Only time and the unfolding political and social struggles will tell. The trade unions and social movements have already declared that there will be no honeymoon with the new PS government. A rally of more than 70,000 people was held in Paris on June 10 (at the same time as another large rally in Bonn) to demand action on unemployment. The French Communist Party has launched a "citizens forums" initiative — hundreds of grassroots committees throughout the country that could be another vehicle for mobilizing the population to force the government to keep its promises.

The European dimension will be crucial for creating a better relationship of forces for the Left in each country. Protests against the closing of the Renault car plant in Vilvoord, Belgium, marked a starting point for cross-border organizing. So did the pan-European march for jobs that converged on Amsterdam from all corners of Europe during the EU summit last June. The declaration of 331 progressive European economists against the EMU, published in newspapers across Europe on June 12, is another step in the right direction.

Prospects for the Radical Left and Danger from the Far Right

At the end of the day, the task of forging an inclusive radical political alternative for critical-minded sectors remains an urgent one. The goal is to force the PS government's hand and to prepare for eventual disappointment and the turbulence that follows. The PCF, the left of the PS, the Greens, and points left (the revolutionary socialists) — alongside the social movements, unions, and left-wing currents in academia — all have a pivotal role to play.

Let there be no mistake. If the progressive dynamic of the past two years is broken by some combination of PS betrayal and unfavorable political and economic circumstances, it will not be the critical Left that gains the upper

hand. If the new government cannot significantly reduce unemployment while preserving the population's social and democratic rights, the door will be left wide open for the worst elements in French political life — purveyors of a poisonous brew of mean-spirited neo-liberalism, xenophobic stupidity, and baton-wielding authoritarianism.

The political Right is in disarray and smarting from a well-deserved defeat at the polls. For the moment, the leadership of the RPR has been taken over by "left" conservatives (headed by Philippe Seguin) — much to President Chirac's dismay. But the initial signs of a rightward realignment can already be detected. The rank and file and some leaders of the main right-wing parties are already pleading openly for closer collaboration with the neo-fascist National Front (FN). The math is not very difficult: together, the Right and far-right won a slight majority of the popular vote in the elections. The lack of a stand-down agreement between the two camps probably cost them 40 seats. Forty seats with which they would now be back in office.

The FN has adopted a long-term, national perspective. It increasingly sets its sights on taking power, alone or in alliance with major splits it expects from the traditional Right. In the meanwhile, it takes one municipal government after another in the south of the country. It is only kept out of parliament (it has one seat) by an undemocratic voting system. The far right has learned the lesson of December 1995, and has turned its attention to setting up FN trade unions and soup kitchens in order to boost its "social" image.

Much of the FN vote can no longer be described as a mere "protest" vote, but rather as a vote "for" the party's brand of radical xenophobic and authoritarian populism. It now has real roots in the urban, working class areas where it does best.

Within the FN itself, a realignment is underway. Long-time leader Jean-Marie Le Pen is losing ground to a slicker and politically more astute wing around California-educated Bruno Megret. Megret wants to take full advantage of the crisis in the mainstream Right, without abandoning the most extreme elements of the FN program and ideology. He expects to test this strategy in key

Left-controlled areas in regional elections to be held in 1998.

The Left victory in France is a defeat for the Right and the neo-liberal project. It creates real opportunities for those

seeking a progressive response to the challenges of capitalist globalization and restructuring, in the European Union and beyond. Failure, however, could pave the way for a defeat of historic proportions. □

Negative and Positive Lessons from the Bolshevik Experience

Continued from page 38

Socialism. Socialism is the result of proletarian democracy. To the degree that the proletariat mobilizes itself and the great masses of the people, the socialist revolution is advanced. The proletariat mobilizes itself as a self-acting force through its own committees, unions, parties and other organizations.”

The role of revolutionary socialists in all of this was explained quite well in the early 1960s by James P. Cannon, a founder and early leader of the U.S. Communist Party and a founder of [and major spokesperson for] American Trotskyism:

“The conscious socialists should act as a ‘leaven’ in the instinctive and spontaneous movement of the working class... The leaven can help the dough to rise and eventually to become a loaf of bread, but can never be a loaf of bread itself... Every tendency, direct or indirect, of a small revolutionary party to construct a world of its own, outside and apart from the real movement of the workers in the class struggle, is sectarian.”

Leninist Politics in the U.S. Today

Leninist politics will look different in various countries, because of specific cultural, social, economic, and political realities unique to each — although there will also be much common ground.

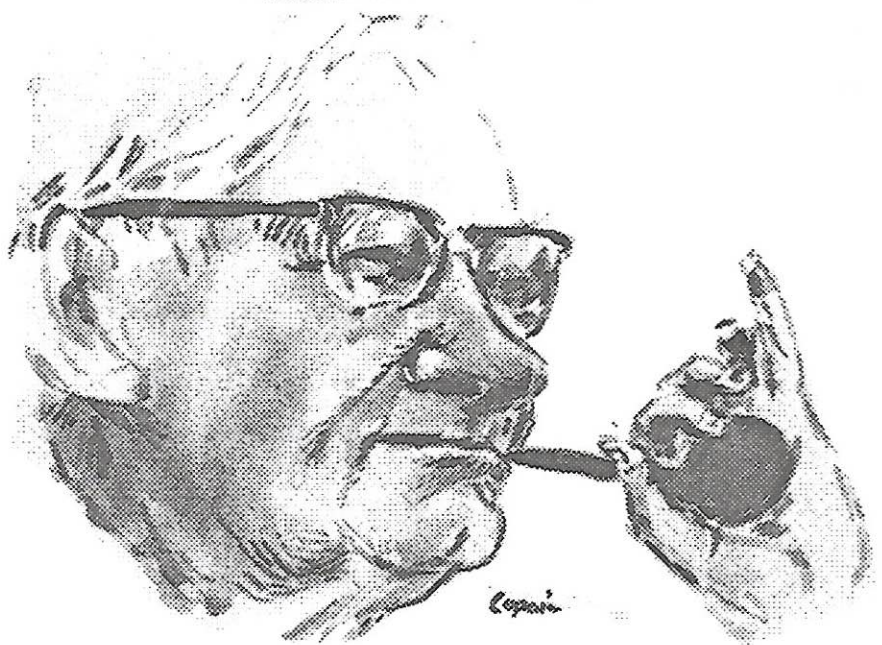
In the United States, it seems to me, a revolutionary socialist group should do several things. One is to combine serious socialist education — internal as well as public — with practical political work: involvement in struggles against racism, sexism, imperialism, and envi-

ronmental destruction, but combining and interweaving such efforts with involvement in struggles of workers against class oppression.

It is especially important to develop educational tools and vocabularies that can clearly and persuasively explain revolutionary socialist perspectives to working-class people who are not familiar with those perspectives.

Revolutionary socialists should find ways to help advance the coalescence of more conscious and activist workers into a mass Labor Party, the existence of which will open up new possibilities for advancing the cause of the working class, and which will give a more imme-

diately political relevance to our revolutionary Marxist ideas. Another thing a revolutionary socialist group should do is to seek out other groups whose activities and orientations are in harmony with this approach. Such groups should work together and, if the work is fruitful, seek to build an organizational current that can facilitate the development of a socialist-minded vanguard layer of the working-class. With hard work and luck, socialist revolution will be on the agenda in the early decades of the coming century and our own efforts will have contributed to making this a reality. □



James P. Cannon

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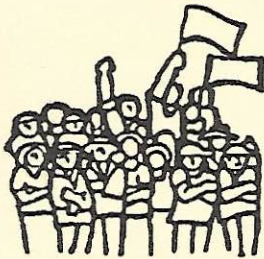
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Socialism or Barbarism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century

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

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

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

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

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

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Volume One:

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edited by Sarah Lovell, 328 pages
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This book consists of selected documents mostly produced by a political tendency that was organized in the Socialist Workers Party to defend and advance the revolutionary perspectives of Trotskyism. This tendency, which began to develop in the party in 1979, waged a struggle inside the Socialist Workers Party until the expulsion of its adherents in 1984, when they established a new group called the Fourth Internationalist Tendency. Also represented here are oppositionists who became prominent in other groups — Socialist Action and the Fourth International Caucus of Solidarity. Included are materials produced by two of the oldest and most prestigious veterans in the SWP, Tom Kerry and George Breitman. A substantial introductory essay by Frank Lovell, "The Meaning of the Struggle Inside the Socialist Workers Party," provides valuable background information and places the volume in a larger historical perspective.

Volume Two:

Revolutionary Principles and Working-Class Democracy

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

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

and the realities of world politics in the 20th century.

Volume Three:

Rebuilding the Revolutionary Party

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

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