

...Honor Laura Gray's Memory

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Unemployment in Steel

Over one-fourth of the 1.2 million members of the United Steelworkers of America are now unemployed or working part time.

Drastic changes within the labor movement will be necessary if an effective program to meet the present crisis is to be put into effect.

In the first place, the unions should be mobilizing the unemployed themselves into councils to fight for immediate local measures and to secure the maximum relief.

Collective bargaining demands must also meet the unemployment problem directly. The shorter work-week demand, 30 hours work for 40 hours pay, is made to order for this crisis.

Above all, it is necessary to solve the problem politically by independent labor political action and the formation of a labor party.

At the same time, the Steelworkers president declared support to the United Auto Workers in what was expected to be a fight for the shorter work week in 1958.

These statements by McDonald are in the right direction. To meet the present crisis, the labor movement must fight for direct and immediate measures to aid the unemployed.

The Senator from Outer Space

Recently a psychiatrist recounted an unsettling experience that he said he had gone through with a patient.

This story came to mind as we read in the Jan. 18 issue of Business Week that the Senate Democratic majority leader, Lyndon Johnson of Texas, now "sees himself as the 'space conscience' for Congress."

Business Week lets us in on the fact that the new influence in Johnson's life is Dr. Edward ("Father of the H-bomb") Teller, a man equally at home in outer space and the lower depths.

picture of a hydrogen bomb purer than Ivory soap).

Johnson became sold on Teller, says Business Week, when he heard Teller assert "that Russia could destroy our nation without firing a shot through control of weather."

The point became the axis of Johnson's "space" speech. He told his awe-struck Senate colleagues how "the masters of infinity would have the power to cause drought and flood—to change the tides and raise the levels of the sea—

Johnson shares the paranoic urge to win "total control over earth" with most other spokesmen of U. S. Big Business in both parties.

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knew Laura from the days in Chicago shortly after she joined the Socialist Workers Party.

His moving tribute to his comrade and fellow worker on the Militant staff over the 14 years of her participation, gave an appreciation of Laura Gray that all who knew her wanted to hear expressed at this memorial meeting.

FIRST CARTOON

Preis told the story of Laura's first effort as a cartoonist. He said, "Symbolically, her first venture in cartooning was in aid of a group of Chicago auto union militants in a struggle."

"We will never have another Laura," said Art Preis. "But somewhere in this land, right now, there are girls and boys, young women and men, who will come to hear of her and see the work she did."

PROJECTS BOOK OF HER CARTOONS

The final speaker was Farrell Dobbs, National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. Dobbs concluded his talk with the project of a memorial tribute to Laura Gray, the publication of a book of her cartoons.

The memorial meeting for Laura Gray ended with the singing of the anthem of the world socialist movement, the "International."

Socialism And Art

"... even a successful solution of the elementary problems of food, clothing, shelter and even of literacy, would in no way signify a complete victory of the new historic principle, that is of Socialism."

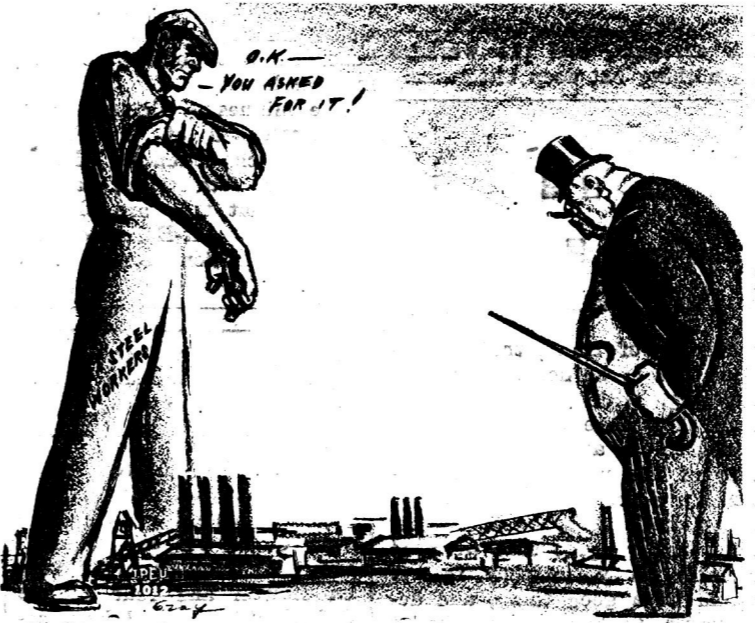
Leon Trotsky, Literature and Revolution, page 9.

Burnt Offering



Reprinted from the Militant, June 29, 1953

A Test of Strength



Reprinted from the Militant, December 24, 1951

We print the four Laura Gray cartoons above and the eight we reprinted last week not as her "best" but as among her best. For her best is a category that would include well over two hun-

Look Out Below



Reprinted from the Militant, May 9, 1955

Space Statesmen



Reprinted from the Militant, Oct. 28, 1957

dred by the gifted artist, who in our opinion was the greatest political cartoonist of her generation. The project to publish a volume of her cartoons is under way. We hope for its early completion.

'She Was a Fighter All the Way'

(Excerpts from speech of Farrell Dobbs at Laura Gray Memorial meeting in New York, Jan. 16.)

When I learned Saturday morning of the passing of Comrade Laura, my mind went back to the time in 1944 when Laura came to those of us who were in Sandstone prison.

We were struck immediately by the stark power in Laura's cartoons. After we had seen the first few of them, we were impressed by the skill with which she taught the political essence of the class-struggle issues of the day.

many, which is a matter of vital concern in all organs of struggle.

A worker as an isolated individual tends to feel himself handicapped. His strength, he more or less instinctively senses, derives from numbers and a feeling of organizational discipline.

For the intellectual the situation is somewhat different. An intellectual relies more on his personal knowledge and ability.

It is hard for him to subordinate his individuality within an organization. And he often feels himself above the discipline of the majority.

participated in distributors, went out on petition work in election campaigns. And in addition to her magnificent work as a cartoonist in the Militant she did a great deal of routine party work in which she did as in all things, her very best.

I felt and I believe this feeling was general, that very often she went a remarkably long way in capturing the universal in the particular presentation in a given cartoon. A basic class issue would be brought forth in sharp light in a cartoon dealing with a concrete event.

These were of the essence of the presentation of Laura's. It was this character, this depth in her work, that brought such appreciation from the movement.

Messages Tell of Sorrow

(The following are excerpts from several of the messages expressing sorrow over Laura Gray's death sent to the New York Memorial meeting by Socialist Workers Party branches throughout the country.)

We deeply mourn the death of Laura Gray and pledge ourselves to continue the struggle to which she dedicated herself. San Francisco, Calif.

Boston branch extends its deepest sympathy and expresses its great sorrow on the death of such a fine person and artist as Laura Gray. Boston, Mass.

We express our deep regret over the loss of Laura Gray—a loss not only to the Party but to all workers. In serving to advance the cause of the class struggle she has helped the liberating struggle of workers all over the world. Youngstown, Ohio

Each week, when we open the Militant, many of us look first for Laura Gray's cartoons as one of its outstanding features. It is hard and sad to realize that her hand will no more hold the crayon that gave such sparkling and incisive comment on the po-

litical events and personalities of our time. Los Angeles, Calif.

The Seattle branch mourns for that rarest of persons, the artist-revolutionist. She enriched our lives for so many years and her work became so much a part of us that even her tragic death will not deprive us of her indomitable spirit. Seattle, Wash.

We shall miss Laura Gray's keen and inspiring cartoons, her rare talent for laughing and making others laugh at the sacred cows of capitalism in a single picture. Quiet Laura could express our views better than a thousand words. We are proud that she was our comrade. Cleveland, Ohio

Some of us knew her personally and mourn the loss of a friend. All of us knew her revolutionary spirit, her matchless ability, her keen intelligence, which made her art the highest expression of the socialist fight against capitalism. Frail in body but indomitable in spirit, her life set an example for all revolutionary socialists to follow. Twin Cities, Minn.

Those of us who knew Laura Gray personally loved her. Her

sensitivity to human want, her understanding of trouble and frailty, her quiet courage, her simple contempt for all that is false, her creative art which she hammered into a weapon of the revolution—all combined to make her a splendid fighter and a beautiful person. Her art will live to be reprinted many times. It will be seen and understood by many millions as the socialist cause she fought for becomes the cause of the great mass of American workers. Philadelphia, Penn.

Laura Gray gave herself to the cause of socialism, without stint or reservation. She asked nothing in return, but she got much—a high purpose in life, the satisfaction of contributing to its achievement, the respect and love of all who knew and worked with her. There aren't many people today who live lives as good or rewarding.

Laura was an indomitable spirit in a frail body. The body wore out, as all bodies must. But her example survives as part of our collective consciousness, inspiring us to continue the struggle for a socialist society where people with her courage and sweetness can be the rule rather than the exception. Detroit, Mich.

'Her Humor Was a Source of Delight'

We publish below some of the stories about Laura Gray told by her close friend, Constance Weissman, at the N. Y. memorial meeting.

Although the mildest and quietest of beings, Laura could lash out in fury, especially when her own territory was attacked. I remember once when a misguided friend of hers started giving her a lecture on her sculpture. He knew Laura as a quiet person who listened intently to political discussions and who always treated him with shy respect.

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he had no idea of what it was all about. He got the surprise of his life. She lashed out at him with a fury and devastating attack on his philistinism which left him gasping. It was an indication of the capacity for indignation in defense of the truth that smoldered within her.

She had such a wealth of talent, such perfect taste—and always her abilities were at the beck and call, not only of the Party, but of her friends and comrades. When we were first building our camp, doing the best we could with amateur labor, among other things, Laura painted the walls of our recreation room in a most elegant style; did an abstract design on the hot water boiler; painted checkerboards on the home-made tables, upholstered chairs, in fact beautified everything she touched.

There is no doubt that in making her own living she was often taken advantage of. But at least once she won a battle against an exploiter. This was when her little ceramic cats were plagiarized by the owner of the shop where they had origi-

inally been sold. With the help of a friend she took the case to court and won.

All of us who were close to her knew how she labored over her cartoons. Sometimes, if she was not satisfied, she would do the same one twice, finishing both of them and bringing them into the editor to choose. It always dismayed us that she worked so close to the deadline that she was up all night.

Laura was so shy of officialdom that she even worried about buying a money order in the post office. Yet she steeled herself to go through the ordeal of job-hunting. First, she applied for work in a laundromat. But they didn't think she looked strong enough. So then she took a job painting the faces of store-window dummies at 75c a piece.

Laura's brand of humor was a never-ending source of delight to her friends. One time, she bought some odds and ends of fur at a rummage sale, made a pair of huge slippers in which she used to glide over the floor

of her apartment to polish it. . . . Laura loved to dance—her brand of dancing, a gentle, satirical series of steps, with her eyes demurely cast down, as though poking fun at herself. It was a great delight to us all—especially when she said to her partner, "Let me lead." . . .

Her imagination in decorating her apartment was sheer genius. She made a coffee table out of one of those big wooden spools that cable is wound on and which are left on the street by the Consolidated Edison Co. Once she got hold of a real big spool, dragged it upstairs and made that into a sort of chair on which you could roll gently back and forth. She made a beautiful screen out of the mesh bath that is used for building plaster walls.

Comrade Cannon used to say, referring to her cartoons, "When you think of the mighty power in that delicate little person." . . . But when you shook hands with Laura, you knew that those fragile-seeming fingers were mighty strong. . . . And I think this is what will stay with us about Laura forever—her great strength of character in the conduct of her life.

