

- Two-Party System in Crisis
- History of Affirmative Action



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:
A Trade Union
Issue

Labor Militant

FOR LABOR & YOUTH • WORKING CLASS UNITY & SOCIALISM

ISSUE 43

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1995
SOLIDARITY PRICE \$1

Across the country, the Republican-Democrat machine is seeking to dismantle the public sector and wipe out every public service which, however little, helped reduce the vast inequality in this society. Public education, transit, welfare and health care is under the axe.

By BEN URIBE

Member, HERE

In Los Angeles, the C. Clyde Hudson Comprehensive Health Center, one of the public clinics, is scheduled to close in October, as part of a plan to eliminate all six of its comprehensive health centers and close 29 of its 39 community clinics. For many of those who make the 1.8 million doctor visits at such clinics in L.A., it's their only chance to visit a doctor. And for most of the 6,000 who work there, it's probably their only chance to make a decent living.

Teresa Aguilar, a 57-year old diabetic who is now invalid due to the illness and on minimum income, will lose her only source of insulin and wonders what will happen when the center closes.

"We have never been scared as we are right now," says an administrator, a mother with three children, breaking down in tears: "We are just like the patients. We don't know what is going to happen to us. If I get laid off, who knows if I'll qualify for Med-Cal or food stamps?"

Three thousand miles away, in New York City, it's the same story. Republican mayor Giuliani announced his "enthusiasm" for an advisory board's recommendation to dismantle the 11 municipal hospitals of the City. His plan is to give away the public hospitals to the private sector for a song, along with every other city service that he wants to turn over to profit and greed.

New York is unique in the country in that public hospitals account for over 50% of outpatients. 40% of emergency patients and 30% of Medicaid recipients, for a total of over 7 million visits per year.

At Bellevue, the oldest public hospital in the country and the biggest in New York, the reaction of staff members and patients was anger and dismay: "That's crazy! If the mayor privatizes all the hospitals where will the poor people go for medical care?" asked a 43-year old woman with AIDS. "Without this public hospital, being that I am an asthmatic, I'd probably be dead much sooner," said another patient at Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx.

According to a study, 250,000 patients are

UNITE & FIGHT!

- AGAINST THE CUTS!
- DEFEND PUBLIC HOSPITALS!

"dumped" every year. Another 41 million people are officially without medical coverage. In the frantic race to increase profits, hospitals are cutting back on all fronts: from laying off full-time nurses and replacing them with part-timers and temporary workers, to scheduling 36-hour shifts, to reducing the time a patient needs to stay in the hospital.

The fate of millions of patients and workers who can not afford decent healthcare, mirrors the fate of millions of people around the country. As far as big business and its politicians is concerned, the message is: "If you can't walk, crawl. If you are hungry-starve."

The problems of public hospitals stem from the massive cuts implemented and proposed by Gingrich, Dole and Clinton in order to make workers and their families pay for the huge tax breaks for the rich. Their recipe is to reduce services, lay off workers, and cut in spending for welfare, healthcare and social security.

The more spending is cut, the more services such as transportation, healthcare and education are run down. Then, the politicians of big business argue that these services will be

more efficient if we hand them over to the various private vultures that want to squeeze them for as much profit as possible at the expense of service and quality.

The labor movement has the responsibility to provide an alternative to the destruction of the public hospitals and public services. The powerful unions and central labor councils in major cities should organize major campaigns of healthcare workers, community groups and patients to expose the lies, greed and hypocrisy of big business. Community and youth groups could also be mobilized along with union members for mass actions to defend public hospitals, jobs and services. Armed with a program to tax the rich, a minimum wage, a free national healthcare and childcare system, such a movement would be unstoppable in several cities, and the best preparation for the launching of a mass, union-based Labor Party to fight poverty, racism and exploitation.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

• This summer Labor Militant supporters went all out for our drive for cash.

During our 3rd quarter we have collected \$4,634 from paper sales, street and workplace collections, yard sales and BBQs—and we still have more to come in. On top of that we raised \$4,893 in our special summer collection making the total raised so far this summer \$9,527! Congratulations to all who helped make this drive a success.

In the coming months there will be big opportunities to spread the ideas of Labor Militant—the only paper that fights for a genuine socialist alternative to big business' nightmare. We need the resources to keep Labor Militant going strong and the only way to assure this is to turn to YOU, our readers and supporters. Rush your donations to Labor Militant at P.O. Box 39462, Chicago, IL 60639.

**FIGHT FOR LABOR CANDIDATES
AND A LABOR PARTY!**

SAN FRANCISCO HEALTH CARE MARCH DRAWS OVER 5,000

Over 5,000 people marched across the Golden Gate Bridge on Sunday, August 20, in protest against what is happening in the nation's health care industry. The protest was organized by SEIU Local 250. Some 70 other health care union locals from throughout the country participated.

In 1994, some \$42 billion was spent on mergers and acquisitions within the health care industry, and health care executives make some of the highest incomes of any industry. Big business in general is increasingly determined to lower the costs of health care. Their plan in process is to create an apartheid health care system—one for the very rich, the other for everybody else. All of this is having disastrous conse-

quences on health care workers—sharp cut backs, increased work loads, etc. Never has the time been better for the labor movement to turn to the rest of the working and middle classes to build a movement to totally transform health care in America.

While the protest was a positive first step, several points must be considered. The leadership of Local 250 all support Labor Party Advocates. In fact, Sal Rosselli, President of the Local, commented at an LPA meeting that the only difference between the Republicans and the Democrats is that the Republicans stab you in the chest. Unfortunately, note even a word about the need for a Labor Party to change health care system was raised by a single speaker at the rally. Instead, a series of Democratic "friends of labor" were

paraded on the platform. The public linking of this question with the question of a Labor Party would give the movement some teeth. A second step would be to reach deep down into the layers of the working class; seek to draw out not just the layer of union activists that can be mobilized fairly easily, but the masses around those activists. This could be done by organizing work place meetings, widespread leafleting at work places, shopping centers, street corners, etc.—especially if the question is linked with the other issues that concern workers, including the need for a Labor Party. On this basis, a movement could be built to transform the health care system and American politics.

RICHARD MELLOR
Steward, AFSCME Local 444
Oakland, CA



Fight the Con Game of Restructuring

On July 29, the largest union representing health care workers in New York City, Local 1199, called an emergency meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how "restructuring" the health care industry would threaten members' jobs and create a dangerous environment for health care workers and patients.

Over 600 delegates and activists had gathered to hear 1199's plan of action and to voice their concerns. As a delegate

in an HMO, I was glad to see the union was attempting to tackle the problem before any more jobs were lost. But the union leadership presented the issue of downsizing as "inevitable" and urged that the union must "take part in the restructuring process" to ensure that layoffs would be as "fair" as possible...

After the speakers on the platform had finished their presentations, delegates were given the opportunity to voice any questions or comments at an open mike. An atmosphere of confusion and demoralization was widespread in the auditorium. Many workers had hoped that the leadership of the union was going to confront the attacks of the employers and the government with a fighting plan to defend every one of our jobs and organize the unorganized.

When it was my turn at the mike, I said that restructuring was an assault on health care workers. That health care is an area of huge profits for the employers and the big conglomerates that dominate the industry. Healthcare expenses have risen from \$170 billion in 1971 to \$1.1 trillion in 1994. While profits are increasing, wages and jobs are decreasing. In the interest of profit, health care institutions are reducing the length of hospital stays, and patients are attended by fewer and less qualified staff. What restructuring boils down to is each worker must do the jobs of the workers who have been laid off, for the same or less pay. Instead of facilitating this, the union has the

"I've been a nurse's aid for 14 years. What happens if I fail one of these retraining courses, where am I then?"

"This restructuring sounds great, instead of doing one job, now I'll be doing three..."

Comments from workers at the 1199 meeting on restructuring

responsibility to fight for every single job, and fight against the privatization of the public hospitals in New York. I argued that we should be organizing the unorganized by showing that the union means better pay, shorter hours and safe working conditions, instead of layoffs and pay freezes. Finally, I argued that labor must build its own party, a Labor Party, in order to fight against unemployment, poverty and for a free national health care system.

The audience responded to these comments with thunderous applause. It was obvious that the activists and members at the meeting want the union to adopt a militant stand rather than the timid position of the current leadership.

MARGARET COLLINS
Member 1199, New York

Taking Care of the Poor

Michigan Governor John Engler has a plan to help the poor. Make them work for food stamps he says the measure is "part of our effort to make work pay." Of course, he doesn't propose it pay decently — like with a big boost in the minimum wage!

Taking Care of Battered Women

In Cincinnati, battered women are also at risk of being battered around by Judge Albert Mestemaker Scott Hancock. He pleaded no contest to domestic violence. His punishment from the good judge? He had to marry the victim in 9 months or go to jail. "I happen to believe in traditional American values: boy meets girl, boy asks girl out, boy and girl go steady, boy and girl get married, and then boy and girl start raising a family." Evidently, the judge believes that "boy punches girl" is also part of the traditional American values.

Debt Kills

Question: When is "equal under the law" not really equal? Answer: When you're not rich. For the family of Lambert Hillman, a simple speeding ticket for this teenager led to disaster. His stepfather had died of cancer, leaving large medical debts. He was "taking calls from the hospital and the creditors. He became aware of and involved in things that a kid just shouldn't have to deal with." His \$154.50 speeding ticket was the last straw — distraught, desperate, Lambert jumped off a bridge and drowned.

Boxers to Organize!

Making Jack Dempsey's 1937 dream come true, former middleweight Paul Jonson is trying to organize the first union for the 1200 pro boxers in the U.S. Labor Militant wishes the Boxing Organizing Committee the best of luck—the labor movement could really use them right now!

IT'S A WORKER'S LIFE

The Struggle for Shorts!

Life at Yellow Freight in Seattle is an every day battle for this union activist. I fight them over faulty equipment, which is a safety issue, and trucks that don't have airseats so they beat up on the drivers by the end of the day, seniority violations regarding start and finish times, which result in loss of overtime or missed doctor appointments, and bosses who ask for the world, but won't grant favors in return. This story is a little lighter than most, but what makes it different is that guys who don't seem interested in the major issues seem to follow this with more interest:

I'm referring to work rule #11, which in part says: "All employees shall dress in proper attire for the duties they perform and maintain a clean and presentable appearance."

Attire:

A. No shorts

B. A shirt with sleeves must be worn." (i.e. no tank tops.)

In August 1994, we finally became covered under the National Master Freight Agreement. We were one of a few terminals not covered by this

agreement before Teamster officer Jim Roberts told us at the time that we should be able to wear shorts, and that many grievances had been fought over this issue. Discussion between management and shop stewards, business agents etc. did not produce results.

Meantime, we got a copy of a shorts policy from Phoenix, Arizona, Yellow terminal where they wear shorts. We heard of a Yellow terminal in California, too. One brother who visited Orange County brought back photos of two men posing in shorts by their truck! Meanwhile, our grievance filed in late 1994 was heard at a state level, and deadlocks. Next step, goes to Southern California to the 13 Western states panel in May. Instead of them making a decision, they decide to refer it back to the original parties. "10 months and still no shorts." Our business agent tells me in June that he is working behind the scenes. He asks me not to do anything. HAH!

Late June, the weather was a record-breaking 90 degrees every day. This was too much. Monday, July 3rd, I came to work wearing "work shorts," black, hemmed, pockets, belt loops. At first manage-

ment don't see me. Then the terminal manager, Gregg, sees me and says "put on long pants." I said, "I'll get my shop steward, Thom." Thom and I go to see Gregg. I said, "I'm ready to work." He says: "Put on long pants." I said, "I don't have any." He says: "Punch out and go home!" I said, "I'm ready to work, and you're telling me to punch out and go home!" He looked around at the three or four of us who had gathered and replied: "Don't you understand English?" He said I had five minutes or he would consider this "abuse of company time."

End result, I go home. I get a grievance charging I failed to follow his instructions, and I violated workrule #11. I filed a grievance for failing to follow the "innocent until proven guilty" clause of the contract where you can't discipline a person (except cardinal sins i.e. drinking, drugs, stealing etc.) without due process. This will now go back to the state panel in September. One way or the other we will get shorts! I just hope we still have good weather in September!

Doug Frechin
Teamsters Local 174,
Seattle WA.

BRADLEY, PEROT, JACKSON, BROWN, POWELL PREPARE FOR '96

Two-Party System on the Rocks

As the '96 elections get closer, there is growing evidence of a crisis in politics as usual. Polls are showing record support for a third party and that voters are more angry than ever at the Republicans and the Democrats. Many well-known politicians are considering running as Independents in the '96 presidential election and third party organizations are springing up all around the US.

Big business is starting to panic as its own polls show voters are angry and ready for a change. The same wave that brought about the demise of Bush and the Democratic Congress in 1994, is preparing the possible defeat of Clinton in 1996.

USA Today reported on August 11th, that a poll it conducted jointly with CNN and Gallup showed 62% of voters "favor the creation of a new political party, up from 58% in 1992."

Through its control of the media and the educational system, corporate America likes to project the two-party system as a permanent fixture in US society. The reality is that third parties have always existed in this country. The Republican party started as a third party in the 1850s and it took power in 1860. Every upsurge of the labor movement has led to workers' parties being created at least on a regional basis. Economic downturns lead to instability in the two-party system. During the post-war economic upswing (1950-75) the two-party system, like the economy seemed more stable than at any other time.

After the '74-75 recession and Watergate, there was the opportunity for a resurgence of a third party but the leadership of the different movements and the leadership of the AFL-CIO, channelled these movements into the Democratic Party. During the Carter and Reagan years the increased attacks on working class living standards resulted in growing voter alienation from the two parties of big business.

Anger With Business as Usual"

The real shocker to the political system came at the end of the Bush regime. Perot ran as an independent and got 19 percent of the vote. Now as the '96 election approaches, much of the corporate media is focused on Perot again. But the potential fragmentation of the two-party system goes way beyond Perot. When an economic "recovery" includes a hemorrhaging of manufacturing jobs, a continued decline of living standards for the majority of workers, possible attacks on Medicare and social security, and bi-partisan slashing of the threadbare "safety net," then people begin to look for political alternatives.



Behind the rhetoric, both agree to cut living standards.

A poll conducted by the Americans Talk Issues Foundation found three of four Americans distrusting the government including both the Clinton administration and the Republican-dominated Congress.

"79 percent of the people asked said the government was pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves. The same poll showed 55 percent of those asked said the country needed a new party."

Poll conducted by the New York Times and CBS News (8/12/95)

This volatile situation has led sections of big business scrapping to keep a hand in the third party game: Ross Perot, Collin Powell, Lowell Weicker, Pat Buchanan, Jerry Brown and more recently Bill Bradley are all examples of possible "independent" presidential candidates in the '96 elections. All of them are also far from being truly independent—their money and organizational support would come mainly from

sections of big business. Add Jesse Jackson to the picture and what can be seen is the beginning of the fragmentation of the Republican and Democratic parties with Pat Buchanan and the religious right which could split from the Republicans and Jesse Jackson could split off the so-called "left-wing" of the Democrats. New political formations or coalitions like those of the United We Stand and the Rainbow Coalition could start around candidates like Powell, Brown and Bradley.

In the last few years, national alternative party movements have been created and/or started to grow more rapidly, including the Green Party, the New Party and Labor Party Advocates, to name a few. On a regional and state level there has also been an upsurge of independent parties like the Mountaineer Party (West Virginia), the Independence Party (Kansas) and the Statehood Party and Umoja Party in Washington DC among many others.

Out of all these initiatives, only the Labor Party Advocates—if it succeeds in getting off the ground and runs candidates—will have a financial and organizational base in the organized labor movement. If the LPA fails, then ultimately, a

future labor or workers' party based on the unions will break the political monopoly of big business in this country.

Jackson Ponders Candidacy

Jesse Jackson, recently said that he was considering a possible independent bid as a presidential candidate. Jackson goes further in criticizing big business than any of the prominent, "independent" candidates. In his bids for president, Jackson has talked about issues working class people care about even though in the end, he remained loyal to the big-business Democratic party, hoping that it could be "reformed." He has attended many workers rallies, picket lines and protests. If Jackson decides to run, working people across the country will take a serious look at his campaign, especially if he broke with the Democrats and ran as an independent.

If Jackson decides to help build a party around his candidacy, then his campaign will be attractive to union activists and other working people. Election committees could develop and in many areas union locals would support his campaign. Considering the present vacuum, and the refusal of the labor movement to run labor candidates to challenge the candidates of big business. Jackson could attract substantial labor support even in the face of opposition from the top union leadership in a campaign for president which would make Perot in 1992 look like a footnote in a new chapter of third-party politics.

Out of all the false starts and beyond all the demagogues, the trend toward independent working-class political action is unmistakable. The symptoms of the coming political storm that will change the face of politics in this country when the working-class moves to action industrially as well as politically are there. The real alternative to big business politics, whether in 1996 or in the year 2000, whether Jackson runs or not, will be a labor party with a democratic socialist program to challenge capitalism.

JEFF BOOTH
Member, AFSCME Local 3650

MOVEMENT FOR A LABOR PARTY:

It's Time to Start Doing!



Labor Militant received this article from MICHAEL QUIRK, long-standing labor activist and former independent labor mayoral candidate in Somerville, Massachusetts.

"No Endorsements, No Fusion, No Coalition! Yes to an independent Labor Party!" should be the slogan of Labor Party Advocates. If LPA allows chapters to endorse candidates from rival political parties it will commit suicide. Supporting Democrats or Republicans is not the way to create a Labor Party. Likewise for an emerging organization like LPA to fuse with other political parties either locally or nationally is to surrender its autonomy and identity.

Even a coalition will most likely result in its loss of independence and class roots. We should beware of becoming part of Rainbow Coalition or NOW, or any other group not based on a working class program. American labor history is littered with third parties that disappeared in fusions with the Democratic Party or became obscure and insignificant members of coalitions.

An independent Labor Party can only emerge from LPA if threats to its development and honest mistakes are anticipated and argued against before LPA formulates its own principles and platform.

Aside from the injunctions regarding the dangers of endorsements, fusions and coalitions, it would be best to encourage the maximum growth of local chapters. Membership and voting rights should not be confined to union members but extend to anyone who subscribes to the principles and platform that emerge from the national founding conference of LPA. As a radical laborite, I hope that the core planks in a Labor Party platform have a socialist dimension and go beyond welfare state demands, although I think it wise to keep in mind that immediate demands like national health insurance, free college education, guaranteed employment, minimum annual income etc. are more apt, at least initially, to have a greater degree of acceptability among workers.

I think local chapters should not be restricted organizationally or politically. I favor the participation in elections at the local or national level if the candidates represent the interests of labor or they are taking part in community demonstrations and struggles for housing, education, etc. It's time for the LPA to start doing!

LABOR PARTY ADVOCATES CONVENTION

Labor Party Advocates (LPA) has announced June 1996 as the time of its founding convention. The building of a labor party, which is the goal of LPA, would be a historic event for US workers and the international labor movement. During the next nine months it is essential that as broad a layer of workers as possible get involved in LPA to ensure that the needs of workers are presented at the convention.

Never have the two parties been held in such disrepute. In opinion polls, a majority of the public has continually supported the building of a new party. Also, an overwhelming majority cannot name a single politician they admire. Never has the opportunity been better for creating a massive political party for workers, i.e. a labor party.

We can not allow any time to go by. There are many forces, like Perot, who will seek to tap the discontent of workers, to channel it behind false promises and destructive policies. It is essential that a Labor Party is formed to present a real class alternative for workers in 1996 elections.

Over the last couple of years the leadership of LPA has been arguing that LPA must not support candidates and had no program. Now, the leadership argues that the program and other issues will be decided at the convention. Many LPA activists were expecting the convention to be held in the fall of 1995, not the June 1996 date that has been announced.

It was in this spirit that the Seattle chapter of LPA has twice contacted the national LPA leadership to urge the convention date be brought forward to the end of January at the latest. It argued that the June date "would almost eliminate the possibility of us being able to contest the 1996 elections at the local and national level, including for President of the United States" and that: "By calling a convention at this later date, they [the LPA Leadership] are in effect preempting the conference on this vital question." It is important that LPA members and chapters also contact the leadership on this important issue.

In the meantime, it is essential that LPA develops a campaigning approach to building support for a labor party. Local chapters are a good start. In Seattle, we are organizing for a rally on October 7. We are planning a dual campaign both inside the local labor movement, but also to have tables at public events and give out fliers to reach the general public. The Chapter has stressed the need to involve workers from all backgrounds, especially non-union workers who face the worst conditions and have the most to gain from a labor party.

During the next period the Democrats can be expected to reach out to labor to strangle it, so that it does not have a voice to organize the discontent and anger of workers and youth. We have to raise our voices and say that "We have seen enough of the Democrats!" Build a labor party! Get involved in LPA! For Labor candidates to fight the candidates of the bosses in 1996!

RICHARD CRAFT
Teamsters L. 174, Seattle



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: A Trade Union Issue

A recent study resulted in the government doubling its annual estimate

of rapes and attempted rapes in the U.S. to 310,000. An earlier study reported more than twice that amount. While violence against women probably far exceeds the levels recorded in these two studies, the different results are a reflection of attitudes about domestic violence. An investigator in the earlier study explained: "It's well known among researchers that if the questioner uses the word 'rape' instead of just physically describing forced sexual intercourse, the number of positive responses goes down by about 50%. That's because many women don't identify forced sex by their husband as rape although it meets the legal definition."

An Epidemic of Violence

"Almost all my friends are in relationships like that—either physical or psychological abuse. We had to take in one of my girlfriends. She just filed divorce papers and she's terrified."

—Karen, Oakland

Four million women are battered each year. If this violence was being committed by strangers it would be considered an epidemic of crime. But because domestic abuse, the most common violent offense in this country, is committed by family members, partners and ex-partners, it is often presented as a personal difficulty or a

private problem, not a crime. This idea is reinforced by the legal system, the media, politicians and religious groups. It is encouraged by the severe shortage of safe houses, lack of education on domestic violence and weak legal protection for victims.

The present social atmosphere condones abusers' actions and leaves many abused women isolated, trapped and blaming themselves. Treating violence in the home and in relationships as an individual issue lets big business and the government off the hook; they either ignore it or push individual responsibility instead of providing resources to end abuse.

Domestic violence is a social problem. It is a result of social conditioning. It is rooted in a society based on power and exploitation in which women and children are seen as and treated like personal property. It affects millions. Like other social problems such as poverty, joblessness, racial discrimination and inadequate health coverage, individual efforts are not enough to solve it—a social response is needed.

Not a "Women's Issue"

The labor movement needs to campaign to end abuse. Domestic violence is not just a "women's issue"—it weakens the whole labor movement. How can an abused person who lives in fear and has little self-confidence stand up to management and be an active, strong union member or shop steward? How can an abusive person be relied on to involve and represent all members and create a democratic, healthy atmosphere in the union?

Because the labor movement has the power to reach into every workplace and community and to organize for a redirection of resources and social attitudes, it has a responsibility to challenge domestic violence. A few unions, including the Steelworkers and AFSCME, have published some good material.

al on the issue. Much more needs to be done.

Considerations for abuse victims need to be negotiated in contracts, including the right to job transfer, relocation, paid emergency leaves and protection from discipline if the abuse affects their attendance or job performance. Unions should have established procedures for giving support and references to abuse victims and for dealing with union members who are batterers, including expulsion, if necessary. Labor needs to fight for living wages, health care, child care, and housing so women and children are not economically dependent on batterers.

Public resources must be directed for shelters in every neighborhood, counseling for batterers and victims and long term alternatives for the abused. Education and support programs should be organized in unions, workplaces, schools and communities. Legal rights and free, well-trained legal representation for the abused must be fought for. Social spending cuts and policies that require people to stay linked to partners, fathers of their children or parents in order to receive benefits must be defeated because they will force more people to stay in abusive relationships. The labor movement could accomplish this campaign by integrating it into a strategy to build a mass movement to defend the rights of all workers.

LORRAINE DARDIS
Member, UAW Local 2324

*"Help us fight this battle,
for the burden is too
heavy for us alone."*

—Andrea, abused teenager

How the Media Manufacture Reality

TV isn't just "entertainment." Television shows, movies, etc. always express ideas. But whose ideas are being expressed? The directors? The actors? The audiences? None of the above. It's the owners who decide which scripts become TV shows and which do not. They choose scripts with ideas similar to or at least not hostile to their class. The major networks are owned by a few giant profit-making corporations. The ideas expressed by Tele-dramas reflect the interests and the outlook of big business.

Take for instance the Television show "ER" which is supposed to be a realistic portrayal of a hospital. Anyone who has ever been in a hospital wouldn't recognize this place. In the show, everyone who needs medical care receives it regardless of whether they can pay or not. There are no doctors performing unnecessary operations to make an extra buck. No insurance companies refusing to pay for life-saving operations. No pharmaceutical companies gauging patients for prescription drugs. In other words, it's the mirror opposite of a real hospital.

If all of your information about the health care system came from this show you'd think it's the best in the world. Don't change it. That is exactly what big business wants people to think. The big pharmaceutical companies and the big insurance companies make a bundle off the existing health care system, and they want the system to stay just as it is, and damn the 41 million who have no health care at all.

The characters on prime time TV rarely, if ever, say anything that is remotely political. It's not what they say that matters but how they live. They reside in beautiful homes and have high-paying, fulfilling jobs. In reality, 75 million Americans live below

or just above the official poverty line. They aren't on TV. On TV no one's unemployed or struggling to make ends meet on a \$5 an hour job. In the make-believe world of TV, America is an affluent upper-middle class society.

The message is if you're poor it's your fault. Everyone else, on TV that is, is living the good life. You must have done something wrong. Big business wants us to think that poverty is a personal problem. It conceals the real cause of poverty—the bosses want to increase profits by cutting wages, jobs and raising rents.

Supposedly the news media defend the public against abuses by the rich and powerful. In fact the news media are themselves owned by the rich and powerful. CBS and ABC were just purchased for billions by

megacorporations Westinghouse and Disney. NBS is a subsidiary of General Electric. Eight giant profit-making corporations own these three major television networks, plus 40 subsidiary television stations, 60 radio stations, 41 book publishers, 59 magazines including Newsweek and Time, and chains of newspapers including the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post and the Los Angeles Times.

The news media also give us the corporate boardroom's view of the world. For instance if anyone calls for higher taxes on the rich the news media call it "class warfare." When Gingrich or some other politician calls for tax breaks for the rich and the big corporations they describe it as "promoting investment." Every newspaper has a business section and every network news

show devotes time to reports about the stock market. No newspaper has a labor section devoted to issues that concern working people like the availability of good jobs and affordable housing or why these basic necessities are in such short supply. When workers demand higher wages they are called greedy. When the corporations close factories in this country and relocate in some third-world country where they can pay workers a fraction of what they pay in this country, they aren't greedy, the news media say, they are just "making wise investment decisions." When workers go on strike the news media describe them as "selfish" for stopping production or disrupting services.

In the hands of the ruling class, the media is a powerful weapon for shaping social consciousness. They aren't, however, omnipotent. In the last analysis the consciousness of working class people isn't determined by what they see on TV but by their daily experiences. Today capitalism is in crisis and big business is cutting living standards. In the course of the struggle to defend jobs and wages, illusions in capitalism will be burned out, and the ideas of democratic socialism will get a wider echo.

The labor movement should break the monopoly big business has over the media. Along with calling for public ownership and democratic control of the major networks, major newspapers, publishing houses and studios, the labor movement should establish its own daily newspapers and cable TV stations. With our own media, we could put forward a working persons point of view on the issues of the day.

JEFF SIEGEL
Member, UFT, New York



THE SOCIALIST VIEW

THE HISTORY OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

It is clear why the politicians of big business are attacking affirmative action: They want to blame the most oppressed layers of society for the problems of the "middle class." BusinessWeek magazine explained the problem perfectly: "In the past few years... all but the most elite employees have landed in the same leaky boat. If they all come to stress their common fate more than their differences, it could spell trouble for corporations and politicians alike." In other words, divide and conquer. Following on the heels of Proposition 187 and "Three Strikes", the attacks on affirmative action are tending to stir up a new movement, especially among the youth. However, it is vital that this new movement take into account the history of affirmative action, that it recognize the successes and failures of affirmative action, and that some practical conclusions are drawn.

President Kennedy first used the term in Executive Order 10925 in 1961. It called on federal contractors to take "affirmative action to ensure that [job] applicants...and employees" be treated equally. This was done in response to the rising tide of the Civil Rights movement, which was causing a crisis for Kennedy and big business as a whole. For decades, the entire political establishment had depended on the old "Jim Crow" system of blatant racism in the South. Now this was under threat and millions of Americans (especially the youth), black and white, were being radicalized by the vicious attacks on the heroic civil rights marchers. In addition, many African countries had just won their independence, and U.S. big business was locked in a struggle with the Soviet Union for who would have the major influence over these new states. The bloodshed in the South was a major embarrassment for them in this struggle.

A major event shortly before Kennedy's executive order was the bombing of a black church in Birmingham, Alabama, in which three black school children were killed. Kennedy was forced to do something, anything, to give the appearance of action. On the day after his executive order, however, tens of millions of Americans woke up, went to school or work (or didn't go) and life went unchanged. And the



FBI, under Robert Kennedy's Justice Department, continued right on in the South ignoring the racist terrorism and cooperating with the southern sheriffs, who were working hand in glove with the Ku Klux Klan and the White Citizens Councils. In 1971, under President Johnson, guidelines were finalized for federal contractors which called for statistical comparisons of their hiring practices, as well as promotions.

Derailed Movement

Their main goal in these actions was to derail the mass movement that was developing, especially among the youth. In particular, they were terrified that it would spread to wider layers of the working class. An important part of their strategy was to increase the size and influence of the black middle class—business people, professionals, etc.—and through them to lead the mass movement off the streets and into the courtrooms, the Democratic and Republican Parties, where it would shrivel and die. For several decades, both parties cooperated wonderfully in this goal. The concrete results are told in the statistics (see box). More important, the idea of a collective struggle to change conditions for all was given

a major blow and was replaced by the typical idea of the middle class (the so-called "petit bourgeois"): Get ahead in your own career and leave the rest lying in poverty. Look out for number one."

As the movement was increasingly channeled in this direction, it allowed big business and their politicians to set the guidelines. At the time of his murder, Martin Luther King was planning a "Poor People's March" on Washington—to fight poverty in general. Later, under the big business influence, the idea became to "establish a level playing field"; in other words, it's okay to have poverty, it just should be equalized. This meant taking away from white workers to give to others, taking away from male workers to give to female—not taking away from the rich and big business to give to all, especially the most oppressed layers. Just as today, the goal was "divide and conquer." "Tricky Dick" Nixon carried this strategy through most clearly with his "Philadelphia Plan" which set flexible quotas (for the first time) in hiring of black and other minority workers. According to the Wall Street Journal (4/8/95), Nixon had two motives: One was "to create a larger black middle class," the other was to "create friction" between white construction workers and the civil rights movement.

Fight Racism & Inequality

Today it is clear that affirmative action must be defended. If the "California Civil Rights Initiative" is passed, repealing affirmative action, it will be seen as another green light for the forces of racism. It will increase the divisions that exist within the working class. It will tend to push conditions back to the days before the civil rights movement. However, those workers and youth who are struggling against this repeal must also be clear on the role of other layers within the movement.

In general, the layer of professionals—lawyers and business people, as well as the politicians—within the movement are seeking to control the growing movement of youth; they want to contain it and use it for their own purposes. On the one hand, they are seeking to focus the question

on that of who gets government contracts. Since most workers don't really care which boss they are exploited by, the voting majority will not feel affected by this and will tend to be influenced by other arguments. On the other hand, they are seeking to ensure that the movement doesn't break out of the safe confines of the Democratic Party. All that this means, is that they tend to pose the issue as one of "fairness" and "diversity".

Given the growing economic crisis that most workers (of all races) face in this country, they will not tend to be influenced by this argument. If on the one hand, they are told to vote for fairness, and on the other they are told to vote to keep their own job, they will tend to vote for the second one. In order to prevent the repeal of affirmative action, the question must be linked with the need for free higher education and decent jobs for all. It must be made clear that the attempt to repeal affirmative action is linked with the other attacks on workers and youth, including union busting. On this basis, this attack can be thrown back and a movement developed to eliminate racism and poverty in America and around the world.

JOHN REIMANN
Member, Carpenters Local 713
Oakland, CA

INTERVIEW

As conditions for the people of the world worsen, it is important to hear the voice of young people. ELJEE HAWKINS spoke to Raymond Christian, a 22-year-old worker from Harlem, New York

Labor Militant: The cutbacks by [New York mayor] Giuliani and Governor Pataki affect the lives of millions of working class students, the elderly, the poor and families in the city. What do you think we should do to fight these budget cuts?

Raymond: People have protested through demonstrations. But many of the cuts and the plans for more cuts passed. We must continue to put pressure on the politicians. We must re-educate black people, white people and the masses about America. Not beginning to hate America but to change it. Once the people begin to know the truth about how the system uses us and abuses us, then they will decide how to deal with it....

LM: What do you think are the main problems young people face today?

Raymond: I would say the main problems are drugs in the communities, a lack of proper education, decent jobs and recreational sites for youth, instead of hanging around their neighborhoods all day. All the things that Malcolm X spoke about thirty years ago are relevant today. I hear some young people say "This is who I am." But Malcolm proved you can change.

LM: What do you think about the Democrats and Republicans?

Raymond: People are beginning to see the politicians in a different light. Take Giuliani and Pataki doing things that are against the people. Now, even those who voted for them are speaking out against their policies.

Democrats say they're for the poor and working class people. But they haven't done anything for us.

LM: What do you think about the attacks on affirmative action?

Raymond: Many white people are being brainwashed. Many feel minorities and immigrants are taking all the jobs. But when you look at it, it's only a few people that have gotten jobs through affirmative action in corporations or the government. Most minority people and immigrants have jobs that would be considered low class level jobs. It is the government and the rich that produce the racist stereotypes in society in order to keep us divided.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SINCE THE MASS MOVEMENT WAS DERAILED

The Statistics Tell the Tale

Increase in number of black managers and officials	1972-83: 83%
Increase in number of blacks who are self-employed (outside farming)	1973-83: 51% (vs. 29% for whites).
Black income earners @ \$75,000/year or more	1970: 1.5% 1992: 4.2%
Black income earners @ less than \$15,000 per year:	1970: 41.3% 1992: 42.7%
Black median income as % of white:	1970: 60.8% 1992: 57.6%

Unemployed Council Leader Arrested in L.A.

Ever since the L.A. uprising in 1992, Deacon Alexander has been working to organize the unemployed in South Central L.A. to help them demand jobs in construction in the neighborhood. As founder and president of the L.A. Unemployed Council, he led groups of unemployed youth onto job sites demanding that they be hired. A construction worker, himself, many times Deacon would leave his own job to help his unemployed brothers and sisters fight for their rights.

Made up of both men and women and of workers of all races, the Unemployed Council won jobs for hundreds over the last few years. In addition, they took positions on many different issues, including helping to oppose Proposition 187. They even had a representative attend the historic conference of the Zapatistas in 1994, deep in the Chiapas jungle!

Of course, during this time, Deacon did

not exactly endear himself to many of the local contractors or the authorities. As a thorn in their flesh, they have been seeking a way to get rid of him. Now, they think they have manufactured such an opportunity: This June, Deacon and some of his comrades had been involved in a dispute with Curtom Construction, headed by Brenda Curry. On June 14, a meeting was set up for Deacon to meet with Curry. Among others, Curry's sister, Jacqueline Thomas, was also present. Ms. Thomas offered Deacon a job at that construction site.

The following day, while standing across the street from the site talking with some of his comrades, Deacon was arrested at the urging of the construction superintendent. He has been charged with "making terrorist threats" (apparently arising out of an argument he had with the superintendent previously) and extortion. The extortion charge arises from the job he was

offered. They claim that he threatened violence for personal gain. This charge is laughable, considering that Deacon has a history of leaving other jobs where he was already employed in order to help his comrades organize. The arrest of Deacon Alexander by the L.A. cops is part of their long, long history of brutality and repression, going all the way back to the 1930s. At that time, special "Red Squads" were formed to infiltrate the trade union movement and break it up. Following that, the SWAT teams were formed to kill off the Black Panthers. But the history of the L.A. working class also shows that they cannot be prevented from organizing to fight for their rights. Letters of protest against the frame-up of Deacon Alexander should be sent to:

District Attorney Gil Garcetti,
210 W. Temple
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Reference case number BA116809.

CANADA: ONTARIO PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS

Conservative Victory Unleashes Protests, Fightback

The Conservative Party in Canada has come back from the dead. After being reduced from a federal majority government to 2 parliamentary seats in the 1994 federal election, the Tories seemed to be relegated to the history books.

This summer, however, the Tories won 45% of the votes in the regional elections in Ontario, Canada's most populous and industrialized province. JOHN CLARKE is the leader of the militant unemployed group around which the anti-Tory fightback is converging. He is also a supporter of Labour Militant, Canada's Marxist paper. John writes:

The organization of Ontario's unemployed and poor, the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP), is in the front ranks of the struggle against the province's newly elected Tory government. One of the first measures announced by Premier Mike Harris after taking office was a savage 22% cut in income levels, set for October 1, for a million people living on welfare benefits. This move is unleashing a powerful and militant response and OCAP faces a major battle in the weeks ahead as it mobilizes to force a retreat by the government.

The welfare cut is only one element of the Common Sense Revolution that the Tories have vowed to impose. Harris took full advantage of the demoralization created by the betrayals of

While recognizing that only a broad united front of the workers' movement can actually defeat the Harris Government, OCAP is not waiting for the union leadership to act. Instead, it is working to spark a movement that will insure the rank and file and force the leaders off the fence.

the Province's first ever New Democratic Party (Canada's Labour party) government. He came to power on a populist wave, determined to roll back the gains that workers have won over a lifetime. Social programs and all forms of social regulation, from rent controls to labour legislation are to be slashed, abolished or reshaped in the image of the new Toryism. An agenda of cheap labour and massive cutbacks is being pursued as never before.

Union Leaders

The greatest weapon the Tories have is the incredible passivity of the trade union leaders. With the important exception of a one-day walk out by child care workers organized by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE), they have yet to organize any serious response to Harris. Yet their assertions that he is too popular to challenge are disproven by the initial mobilization against him. On July 29, operating with scant resources, OCAP was able to march hundreds of unemployed through the streets of

Toronto, the Provincial Capital, and hold a 2,000 strong rally at the Ontario Legislature.

While recognizing that only a broad united front of the workers' movement can actually defeat the Harris Government, OCAP is not waiting for the union leadership to act. Instead, it is working to spark a movement that will insure the rank and file and force the leaders off the fence. Already, significant support for the struggle is being generated among trade unionists at the local level.

Rich get Richer

On August 22, OCAP has announced that it will rally a huge crowd in one of Toronto's largest public housing complexes, Regent Park, and march on Rosedale, a neighbourhood containing many of the country's millionaires and billionaires. The March will target the plush home of Hall Jackman, a wealthy Tory who, as Ontario's Lieutenant-Governor (the Queen's ceremonial representative), will sign the order to cut welfare payments. It is estimated that the Harris welfare cut, coupled with his tax breaks for the rich, will mean that the residents of Regent Park and area will hand over \$1 million a month to the monied bags of Rosedale!

In the weeks ahead, the fight against the welfare cuts will continue to grow. If it goes through on October 1, there will be mass evictions of people from their homes, as their income drops below the point where they can afford to pay their rent. In that case, we will mobilize communities to block evictions or to rehouse displaced tenants in vacant houses. The period leading up to the cut has seen a new level of resistance. After October 2, we anticipate that we will be leading struggles that could ignite a movement capable of driving the Tories from office. There is nothing inevitable about the Harris Agenda. It can and it must be defeated!



STRUGGLES AROUND THE WORLD

SPAIN

Ten thousand dockers struck on July 20th against plans to lay off 5,200 workers, close down the shipyards at Seville and Cadiz and sell those of Vigo, Gijon and Cantabria. In the Basque country, workers marched on the town hall in Sestao to demand that the mayor and the council oppose the plans. On Gijon, angry workers used cranes and trucks to build barricades around the city center and fought pitched battles with the police.

SOUTH AFRICA

The South African police opened fire on longshoremen supporting COSATU's half-day strike in the port of Durban in June. The national action, successful throughout the country, was called by the federation to demand the right to strike on all issues affecting workers and national collective bargaining. This action follows a series of wildcat and official strikes by the workers in South Africa to press their demands on the employers and the government of President Nelson Mandela.

INDIA

Over 450,000 telephone workers staged a four-day strike in June after the government threatened to fire them. The strike was called to protest the privatization of the telephone system in India. The workers staged militant rallies in several cities against bidding by multinational corporations which will lead to massive layoffs and lower wages for workers and huge profits for the corporations.



Brazilian workers and youth fight for free education and against privatization.

FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

Bloodbath, "Ethnic Cleansing" Continue

The Croatian attack into Serb-held Krajina and the "ethnic cleansing" of up to 200,000 Serbs is the latest twist in the spiral of nationalist barbarism that has ravaged the Balkans since the break up of Yugoslavia five years ago.

All ethnic groups have suffered the most terrible treatment at the hands of reactionary nationalists on all sides. Four years ago Croats who had lived for centuries in the Krajina area of Croatia were driven out when it was seized by the Serb-led Yugoslav army and Croatian Serbs. Now the Serbs are suffering the same fate in the biggest exodus since the start of the war.

Although sickened by the barbaric consequences of counter-revolution seen in the Balkans and frustrated at the lack of an immediate solution, workers should not have illusions that NATO, European or U.S. imperialism can offer any short-term or long-term solutions. The United Nations, NATO, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, negotiations-all have failed to resolve the carnage.

Clinton Hypocrisy

Along with the Stalinist leadership of former Yugoslavia who fuelled the ethnic rivalry, the Western capitalist powers bear responsibility for the descent into ethnic and nationalist bloodshed. They watch the atrocities through crocodile tears while encouraging and advising the contending nationalist leaderships according to their own strategic and economic interests.

The United States and Germany gave Croatian President Franjo Tudjman the go-ahead for this latest military assault. Clinton, hypocritically indifferent to ethnic cleansing and other atrocities, claimed that the Croat advance could be helpful in resolving the Bosnian conflict. In fact, the Croat advance could mark a step towards complete partitioning of Bosnia.

Neither can workers support any of the reactionary nationalists

leaders who treat the peoples of the region as either disposable pawns or subhuman. Serbian President Milosevic, who refused assistance to the Krajinan Serbs, probably gave a behind-closed-doors indication to Tudjman that Serbia would not oppose Croatia's retaking of the area.

He also allowed Croatia to overrun Serb-held western Slavonia in May. In return Milosevic hopes that Tudjman will abandon any thought of regaining the oil-rich, Serb-held region of eastern Slavonia. He has also distanced Serbia from Bosnian Serb leader Karadzic and the Bosnian Serb offensives within Bosnia in hopes of being rewarded by imperialism with the lifting of the crippling economic embargo against Serbia.

Within Croatia, the victory in Krajina and the Western capitalist engenders is creating pressure to retake eastern Slovenia. This would draw Serbia into the battle, and the war could escalate, with the U.S. and other western powers like Germany backing Croatia and Russia supporting Serbia. This conflict could quickly spread to other parts of the Balkans and beyond. However, for

now it is more likely that Serbia and Croatia will try to divide what is left of Bosnia between them.

Workers' Unity Can End the Nightmare

The only force capable of preventing continuation of the carving up of Bosnia and the bloodshed is the Balkan working class. The workers of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia have suffered a huge defeat. Despite attempts earlier on to resist nationalism, four years of "ethnic cleansing" has done what all previous Balkan wars were unable to do-almost completely separate physically the different ethnic groups that have lived side by side for centuries.

The lack of a challenge to nationalism by an independent socialist leadership has left the working class fractured. However, building workers' unity remains the only possible way out of the Balkan nightmare. The horrendous conditions, the brutal consequences of war and the economic privations suffered by the masses while the warlords milk the situation for personal gain are creating the conditions for rebellion in the future.



No future under capitalism

In Croatia, 200,000 of the 4 million population are unemployed. There are half a million refugees. Yet Tudjman has spent \$1 billion on arms in the last four years. These class differences will forge anew the spirit of class struggle and class unity. The labor movement internationally must strive to build links with groups of workers in the region and prepare for the inevitable future opportunities when the independent interests of the working class can be asserted.

Labor Militant

SPECIAL AFL-CIO CONVENTION SUPPLEMENT

AFL-CIO CONVENTION: "FACELIFT" WILL NOT WORK

FIGHT FOR MILITANT POLICIES!

The public announcement by 11 affiliated union heads that they were not going to support the re-election of Lane Kirkland as president of the AFL-CIO in May, opened the way for a contest for the leadership of the AFL-CIO between Sweeney and Donahue at the Convention in October.

In June, Kirkland announced his retirement in order to allow Tom Donahue his hand-picked successor and former Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO, to run against SEIU president John Sweeney.

Despite the absence of fundamental differences between the two slates, the contest is a positive development from the point of view of thousands of activists who are trying to transform their unions and the labor movement into genuine instruments of struggle for the working class.

The Sweeney-Donahue contest and the division in the AFL-CIO as opposed to a "business as usual" re-election of Kirkland (until he died), is indicative of the tensions building up as big business intensifies its attack on workers and their organizations. The real reason for the challenge to Kirkland and Donahue was not Kirkland's "age," (who apparently was inspired by the Mexican octogenarian leader of the CTM, Velasquez) but the failure of the policies of the AFL-CIO in the past 15 years to either organize the unorganized or stop the avalanche of attacks on union wages, jobs and conditions.

The election of the Republican right-wing in Congress and the shift of the Democrats to the right has intensified this attack to take back the gains the labor movement made over the past 100 years. The policies of accommodation to the demands of capitalism by the conservative union leadership are now met with increased anger and resistance as the attacks on the living standards and democratic rights of the working class increase. The ideas of business unionism, that the "interests of the workers and employers are the same" and that "workers have to help the employer compete" which dominate the thinking and policies of the union leadership, lead more and more to failure to provide any defense of jobs, wages or living standards.

This can be seen by the disastrous policy of concessions given to the employers since the mid-1970s. The idea was for the union to help the employer to stand on his feet and then things will go back to "normal" (i.e. wages going up). In fact, the concessions given by the unions only emboldened big business to come back for more concessions if not open attempts to bust unions as we have seen in several cases.

As a result of these policies, the percent of the workforce that is organized in unions has declined from 35% of the workforce in 1953 to just over 12% at present.

This situation is only possible because of the conservatism and lack of action of the labor leadership. As Labor Militant has explained, this flows fundamentally from the acceptance of capitalism as the only way to run the economy by the tops of the AFL-CIO.

But the crisis of the system is undermining the most crusty, conservative tops of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and the policies of Kirkland in the last 16 years. This failure can be seen most clearly in the AFL-CIO's reliance on the big-business Democrats to try to stop NAFTA, GATT and the failure of anti-scab legislation. In every case, the result of this policy has led to defeats.

A Serious Danger-Team Concept

In the past few years, a section of the union leadership is increasingly attracted to the logical conclusion of business unionism with enthusiastic support for the so-called "worker-management programs," "quality circles," "teams" etc. which turn the union structures into enforcers of the employers' demands for higher productivity. These structures undermine the very foundation of the unions as independent workers' organizations, as shop stewards are replaced by appointed "cooperation facilitators" and the unions are ultimately faced with the danger of becoming company unions.

There has been an enormous proliferation of these schemes in the last ten years, with the employers using them to undermine the union contracts and structures or preparing the ground to bust the unions in the future.

In one of his statements, Ron Carey, the leader of the Teamsters union felt the need to defend "collective bargaining," one of the foundations of trade unionism, against the onslaught of the dominant thinking in the union leadership on "employee-management coopera-



tion."

The core of the opposition to Kirkland came from unions that most directly express the changes in the working class and they have to in some way respond to the situation. Among them were the main industrial unions (Autoworkers, Steelworkers, Machinists) which have been pounded by mass layoffs over the 1980s, the Teamsters, (a union whose leadership fought a vicious battle against the entrenched old guard and was involved in the important strike at UPS and Master Freight). The other main unions involved in the opposition are

AFSCME, whose leadership is increasingly under pressure with a massive attack on public workers and public services, the Miners who fought a series of vicious battles in the coal fields in the 1980s and SEIU - one of the few unions that has led successful organizing campaigns, especially among health care workers, the Justice for Janitors campaign, etc.

It is interesting to note that initially, SEIU president Sweeney and AFSCME president McEntee had indicated that they wanted Kirkland to retire and that they would support Donahue. They wanted someone more "telegenic" and lively than the wooden-looking Kirkland, and a facelift for the AFL-CIO's facade, rather than any sort of change or orientation. But the increasing crisis of ideas and program of the old guard in the AFL-CIO and the pressure from the Teamsters, Miners and the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW), to push in a new direction, in the end led to the Sweeney, Trumka and Linda Chavez-Thompson ticket to challenge Donahue and Barbara Easterling?

Perspectives

It is very difficult to predict which slate will win at the AFL-CIO convention in October. All kinds of developments could take place, including the possibility of a merger of the two tickets in the name of "unity." However, a setback for the Sweeney-Trumka-Chavez ticket would be seen as a step back by thousands of activists who are hoping that at least there will be some "change" at the top of the AFL-CIO.

Sweeney's program is extremely limited. While it is true that he makes much of the need to organize the unorganized, he says little about the program and the method he will use. In reality, a revival of the methods that built the unions in the '30s -- the sit-down strikes, mass picket lines, and open defiance of union-busting laws is necessary to reverse the decline of the union movement. A clear program for a \$500/week minimum wage, a 30-hour work week without loss of pay, a free national healthcare and childcare system, etc. is necessary to inspire millions of workers, organized and unorganized.

While explaining that the differences between the two tickets are minimal, and that the important question is in the struggle of workers to transform their organizations and the adoption of a militant program, Labor Militant supporters give critical support to the Sweeney-Trumka-Chavez slate and continue to fight for the labor movement to break with the ideas of the employers and to adopt socialist policies.

New Period

What is certain, is that at a certain point-an even sharper conflict will erupt over the policies and direction of the labor movement. This can already be seen in the development of union oppositions and the Labor Party Advocates, which is supported by OCAW, three other international unions and several locals and central labor bodies. We have entered a new period in which there is a burning need for the labor movement to find ideas that correspond to the real situation workers face as well as an effective program of action to deal with the crisis of capitalism. The ideas and program of the conservative leadership of the AFL-CIO leadership are showing themselves more and more incapable of dealing with the challenges of the day.

Despite the setbacks and defeats of the past 15 years, the labor movement represents a gigantic potential social power in society. While the fundamental ideas of genuine Marxism (the crisis of capitalism, the attacks on living standards, the worldwide reappearance of mass unemployment) are confirmed, the working class faces the worst ever crisis of leadership to lead an effective struggle against capitalism and big business.

As the working class moves into action, to defend its living standards, to organize the unorganized, and build a labor party based on the unions, the socialist ideas and class struggle program of Labor Militant, including the demand for the public ownership of the commanding heights of the economy under democratic workers control and management, will be seen as the only realistic alternative to capitalism.

Alan Jones
Member UAW, Local 1981

The labor movement needs to make some dramatic changes and they need to make them out in the open.... I hear that the Democratic Party has expressed concern about an open fight within labor in an election year but labor needs to tell the Party to butt out. They have already done enough harm to labor."

Stan Smith,
Executive Secretary of the San Francisco Building Trades Council, commenting on the AFL-CIO election.

AFL-CIO CANDIDATES DEBATE

Only once in the history of the AFL or the AFL-CIO has a president ever been voted out of office, and that was in 1894 when Sam Gompers was replaced by McBride of the Miners union. Since its inception, the AFL-CIO has never had a contested election for its president. This makes the present contest between John Sweeney (of the SEIU) and Tom Donahue (who replaced Lane Kirkland on August 1 as AFL-CIO President) all the more historic.

To the present, every effort was made to keep whatever differences might exist between top labor leaders behind closed doors, where the membership could not intervene. On August 24, the California State Labor Federation hosted a debate between Sweeney and Donahue and the results show how important such an opening up of the differences is for the trade union movement.

Sweeney opened up and condemned the record of the present AFL-CIO leadership, including Donahue: "Organized labor is the only voice of American workers and their families and... the silence is deafening," he commented. "The inertia of the American labor movement (cannot) be reversed without a change in the leadership of the AFL-CIO." He went on to cite his record in building the SEIU from 625,000 members in 1980 to its present 1.1 million. He also criticized Donahue for a lack of plan for organizing the unorganized and instead of sticking to vague generalities, as well as allowing the politicians a "free ride".

As for Sweeney's call for spending one third of the AFL-CIO budget for organizing, Donahue repeatedly asked where the money would come from for this. Would it be taken from current programs or would the AFL-CIO increase its per capita tax from the affiliated unions?

This contested election is an important step forward for all of organized labor. If Sweeney wins, it would serve to shake things up a bit and open up the movement a little more. For this reason, as well as for Sweeney's emphasis on organizing the unorganized, he should be supported.

However, he has some weaknesses in his campaign which should be clearly understood. Donahue makes a strong point of Sweeney's former support for him. This undercuts a bit the case for Sweeney as representing a real change at the top. More to the point, Sweeney's program is extremely limited and, in actuality, little different from that of Donahue. While it is true that Sweeney makes much of the question of the need for organizing the unorganized, he has said little about the program that they should be organized around or the methods used. In fact, a revival of the methods of the '30s is necessary.

By making organizing simply an issue of "dollars and cents", he opens himself up to Donahue's emphasis on the question where should the money come from? (In fact, the key question is how to develop a program that can mobilize the millions of members. As for finances, a good place to start is with the six-figure salaries of many union leaders.)

Another question raised was that of the AFL-CIO's carrying out the big business agenda internationally through the government-funded AFLD. Neither Sweeney nor Donahue would openly commit themselves to break with the past policies on this, although it is clear that a new approach is starting to be developed.

Even more to the point is the question of a labor party. A recent poll shows that 62% of the US population wants a new political party. This was pointed out by a delegate there, who asked where they stood on the question of a Labor Party in general as well as on the question of running a candidate next year. Donahue opposed it on the grounds that it would take labor "out of the mainstream", and Sweeney agreed, saying that we need to "strengthen the progressive wing of the Democrats." But that entire strategy is failing dismally, exactly because the basis for that approach (however limited it may have been in the past) has disappeared today.

In fact, Sweeney commented later that we must "strengthen our political message and find better ways of getting our message across to American families." (Donahue, too, made similar statements.) Yet by relying on the Democrats, this rules out accomplishing this. No mention was made of principled opposition to the various different labor-management cooperation programs, to contracting out and privatizing, to the idea that labor must help its employers compete with others, etc.

Despite these failings, as explained, this debate is extremely positive and will make it easier for all these ideas to be raised and discussed. A victory for Sweeney would be a further step in that direction. Lying behind this entire process is the hot breath of a discontented and angry membership, hungry for a more aggressive and independent leadership.

John Reimann

California AFL-CIO Conference Delegate

Carpenters Local 713

History of the AFL-CIO

The largest labor federation in the world was formed in December 1955 when the American Federation of Labor (founded in 1886) and the Congress of Industrial Unions (formed in 1936) merged to form the AFL-CIO. Millions of workers hoped that this unity of labor would lead to massive increase in the power and strength of organized labor, and increased living standards of workers. Forty years later, it is necessary to assess what has gone wrong.

The merger of the AFL and CIO brought together the two wings of the movement. The CIO was born out of the militant struggles of the 1930s representing industrial workers. It had been built because of the failure of the AFL to organize in the 1930s. The CIO had been the umbrella through which workers had surged to address their complaints. With mass pickets, solidarity strikes, and sit-down strikes, labor had shown that through militant and mass action it could defeat the employers.

Rejection of tactics of 1930s

Even during the 1930s, the CIO leadership had attempted to squash these militant actions of workers. In conditions of the red-scare and a purging of militants, radicals and communists from the unions, the CIO leadership rejoined the AFL not by adopting the successful tactics that had led to its rise, but by adopting the failed "business unionism" methods of the past. From 1936 to 1955 there were a staggering 78,798 strikes involving over 42 million strikers.

The principle method of the leadership of the AFL-CIO had been, a continual attempt to reach a compromise with the employers, and to hold back and repudiate any independent movement of workers, and any attempt to build solidarity actions that might "embarrass" the employers. But, it was only by mobilizing members, confronting the anti-union laws in the streets, and defending union gains against use of scabs, goons, the police, and even the national guard, that won the gains of the 1930s, and forced big business to accept unions and give improved wages and conditions.

Taft-Hartley Act



Labor has the power to end unemployment and homelessness. Everybody should have a decent life.

Is bigger always better?

The unusually large number of individual unions in the US, by international standards, represents a legacy of the old craft unions. The fact that there are still four or five major unions in construction, for instance, not only represents a lot of repetition and overlapping of union activity, but it's a serious obstacle to united working class action in defense of wages, conditions and jobs. Labor Militant enthusiastically fights for one union—one industry and in this respect these mergers are a welcome development.

The downside of these mergers are that the current leaders can become even more removed from the pressure of the shopfloor. Struggles to reform and democratize these unions can now seem beyond reach. Labor Militant believes the rank and file and local stewards must have input in the terms

of the mergers and must have the opportunity to debate the constitution of the new union.

Leaders on a Worker's Wage

With the IAM-UAW-USWA merger, George Kourpias, Machinist President argues that this will create the "most progressive, militant labor organization on the North American continent." This may be an exaggeration in light of the strong support for the Team Concept in all three unions' leaderships. Activists in these unions should use the merger as an opportunity to initiate a discussion to challenge the leadership's current policy of concessions. The wages of all union officials should be reduced back down to workplace levels and the hiring of hundreds of extra organizers should be initiated.

Between the three unions over two



Thousands of LA workers protest the cuts. The AFL-CIO must unite the struggles across the country.

By refusing to mobilize mass action against the adoption of the Taft-Hartley Act (which among other things seriously restricted the right of secondary picketing to win strikes), the AFL and CIO had effectively let Congress further outlaw mass actions of workers that won the gains of the 1930s. Instead, the main strategy of the union leaders was to attempt to influence their "friends" in both political parties, to do them favors. Never mind that a majority of both these parties voted for the Taft-Hartley Act.

The attempt to woo the Democrats, who were called "friends of labor," led directly to the failure to organize the South. During the mid-1950s and '60s there was an upsurge of struggle both to organize unions and in the civil rights movement. The AFL-CIO should have thrown its resources to link these struggle, and to lead a mass movement in the South. But the Democrats were the dominant party in the South, and they built and defended the racist Jim Crow laws. All attempts to organize the South would involve challenging these laws, and that would bring them into conflict with the Democrats. The mass movement that would have been necessary to organize the South would have severely undermined the labor leadership's conservative policies and approach in general. To avoid embarrassing the Southern Democrats, the union movement gave up its drive to organize the South. This weak-

ness has continued to this day. It has been the failure of the AFL-CIO leadership to build a strong campaigning union movement, addressing the concerns of all workers, that is the reason for its present weakness. This could have been done by building a mass political party to represent all workers. Instead, the leadership of the AFL-CIO put all its eggs in the basket of "influencing" the Democrats and Republicans to give some scraps.

Meany: "We believe in the American profit system."

By embracing the capitalist system, and the anti-communist propaganda, the AFL-CIO leaders adopted the position that anything that benefits US big business must be good for US workers. Huge resources of the AFL-CIO were used to back up the foreign policy of U.S. big business. This meant tainting genuine mass movements of workers overseas as "communistic" and intervening to subvert workers' struggles and genuine unions in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa. With these actions, the AFL-CIO participated in reducing living standards of workers overseas, divided the workers movement internationally and weakened itself at home.

The failure of this strategy of "business unionism," was masked by the post-war economic upswing. The dominant world position of US big business at the end of World War II and its ability to penetrate increased markets led US corporations to make huge profits in the 1950s and 1960s. These profits allowed big business to buy labor peace by giving some reforms to organized workers in exchange for political subordination to its own agenda. These included wage increases, health benefits

and pensions. By 1972, American workers had the highest living standards in the world.

End of Post-War Upswing

However, the economic upswing ended in 1975, with the oil crisis and a world recession. With world economic growth halved and facing more international competition, US big business tore up the "contract" they had effectively signed with the union leaders. No longer were economic gains on the table. Instead, the demand was for workers to give concessions. Starting with the New York fiscal crisis in 1974, then Chrysler and then across every industry, the gains workers had made began to be reversed. This was supported by both political parties, which legislated against effective strikes. Introduced deregulation, cut social programs, refused to raise the minimum wage, and pushed the NLRB into a more anti-union position.

In these conditions, the mistaken policies of the AFL-CIO union movement began to be exposed. Because the union

movement had not fought for the needs of all workers, labor was surrounded by a non-union workforce, who does not know of the traditions of struggle of unions, and only see well-paid leaders looking after the concerns of "their" members. This has been reinforced by the media who show unions as selfish and even unable to improve conditions even for their own members.

With employers going on the offensive, the use of scabs, and permanent replacement of strikers, the insular policies of the last 40 years meant labor was unable to build the necessary support and mobilize the potential power of labor to win struggles. Failed strikes at PATCO, Greyhound, Caterpillar, TWA, and others showed the leadership incapable of dealing with the new situation. In each of these cases, the workers had shown their determination to fight, and fight again. However, they were left isolated without the force of the working class behind them.

In the last year, the crisis led to the demand for a change in the top echelons of the AFL-CIO and to a challenge to leader Lane Kirkland. The heroic struggle of Staley Kirkland was too much of a contrast to Lane Kirkland's "invisible man" act. Kirkland was not doing anything that previous AFL-CIO leaders had not done. It was conditions that had changed. The old policies were exposed as inadequate to deal with the problems of labor.

TOM WILLIAMS
Member, SEIU, Seattle

UNION MERGERS

WHAT'S IN IT FOR THE RANK AND FILE?

Merger mania seems to be hitting the labor movement. In July the United Rubber Workers merged with the Steelworkers. In the same month the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers merged with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union to form UNITE (the Union of Needletrades Industrial and Textile Employees). This follows a dozen mergers in the last four years. This is also a part of the same process of the United Mineworkers and Teamsters unions' return to the fold of the AFL-CIO after decades of isolation.

But, undoubtedly, the biggest of all mergers is the 2 million workers currently in the Autoworkers, Steelworkers and Machinists. This new union announced at the end of July, will become the biggest private-sector union and in effect will be one of the biggest manufacturing unions on the planet.

of the mergers and must have the opportunity to debate the constitution of the new union.

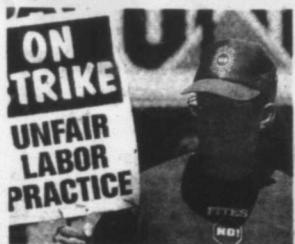
Leaders on a Worker's Wage

With the IAM-UAW-USWA merger, George Kourpias, Machinist President argues that this will create the "most progressive, militant labor organization on the North American continent." This may be an exaggeration in light of the strong support for the Team Concept in all three unions' leaderships. Activists in these unions should use the merger as an opportunity to initiate a discussion to challenge the leadership's current policy of concessions. The wages of all union officials should be reduced back down to workplace levels and the hiring of hundreds of extra organizers should be initiated.

Between the three unions over two

million members have lost their jobs over the past twenty years. This has been primarily as a result of plant closures, but also the absence, for many years, of a bold organizing strategy.

Mergers are generally a good thing, but linked to a militant program and an organizing strategy they can really increase union power!



War Zone Labor Conference Calls for Labor Party, Militant Action

Workers involved in the three labor disputes in Decatur, Illinois, against multinational corporations Tate & Lyle, Caterpillar and Bridgestone-Firestone, refuse to be intimidated by these powerful enemies. Instead, they continue to make their mark as fighters in some of the more important struggles going on the USA today.

Saturday June 24th, saw the convening of the "War Zone Labor Conference" attended by 175 activists, mainly from the Great Lakes states and the West Coast. The following day over 5,000 union members, their families and supporters marched to the city center in a rally which was addressed by Jesse Jackson and labor leaders including the International presidents of AFSCME and SEIU.

The conference resolved to draw conclusions from the Decatur struggles which go far beyond the boundaries of the "Pride of the Prairie" city.

Resolutions for the Convention

These conclusions are expressed in the form of resolutions to be brought to the leadership of the labor movement from the floor of the AFL-CIO's Constitution Convention in New York City, October 23-26th. Those passed unanimously at the War Zone Conference call for an end to all

"labor-management cooperation" schemes and for the AFL-CIO to put its huge financial resources to use by expanding its educational and training programs, by "supporting ALL of its affiliates during labor disputes" by stopping all production, transportation and use of struck goods nationally and internationally, and by building a Labor Party through support for Labor Party Advocates. Two other resolutions called for support for more democratic representation on the AFL-CIO Executive Council by voting for an opposition candidate, Dr. Harry Kelber, and for letters and resolutions to the Governor of Pennsylvania to save the life of Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Fourteen other resolutions, which due to pressures of time and the need for amendments, were reprinted and circulated by



"If we don't see some real reform then we're not going to wait around for a second term-we may as well start out and create a new umbrella [organization]...after all, the CIO was created after the AFL..."

Dave Yettaw, UAW 599, Flint Michigan

mail for a postal vote, received general support. Some called for opening up the Union movement through democratizing and publicizing its activities, particularly those of the AFL-CIO itself, for the AFL-CIO to develop its own weekly press, radio and TV news programs and for the Union movement's pension and other investments to be withdrawn from anti-union companies. Others called for the suspension of the AFL-CIO's international operations pending a review "by the entire labor movement" to end the cooperation of the top union leaders with U.S. government suppression of unionism in other countries, for an end to government welfare

to corporations, and for the labor movement to run its own-labor candidates in 1996.

Union Democracy

The session on Union democracy was the liveliest, with emcee Mike Griffin, a locked-out Staley worker, setting the tone from the platform. "Blind faith will not work. The leadership has to tell us much as possible to the membership—and that doesn't leave very much unsaid. I firmly believe that anyone should be able to go to a microphone in any union and state their

opinion—because that's what makes the Union work. There are some of us that have stuff to share with the leadership that the leadership doesn't know. There's no such thing as a stupid question: we have to be open to everyone and anything they have to say."

A speaker from UAW 599 in Flint, Michigan made the link between Union strength and democracy:

"What I've seen in our plant with jointness is that it destroyed democracy—we had an array of 1,200 Union "jointness police" instead of stewards, in a workplace of 12,000, making discussion of our problems an impossibility. Another UAW speaker, from Local 2244 in Fremont, California, put the issue like this:

"Democracy is to do with how you involve the membership. People don't go to the union meetings because they don't see the unions as relevant, as winning anything in my local the Union's life revolves around perks...the Union leadership thinks the membership won't do anything unless it's expenses-paid. The company is actually better at this point in time, in involving people in voluntary activities..."

"We put our lives on the line in the plant the only thing they (the bosses) put on the line is money."

Art Dhermy, UPIU Local 7837, locked-out Staley worker)

Transform the Labor Movement

But it was left to Dace Yettaw, leader of UAW 599 which successfully struck to force General Motors to rehire 1,000 laid-off workers, to state the issue most starkly: "You see your union needs to be reformed or you wouldn't be here—in fact we need to reform the entire labor movement."

Tom Balanoff, a Regional Director of SEIU who was representing SEIU International President John Sweeney at the conference boldly stated: "This is a class struggle, and we need to stand up on that basis. We need to shake up our own movement—we can't exclude any group... We have to have a leadership that reflects the diversity within—our movement must be about reordering the priorities in this country. The Sweeny/Trumka (United Mineworkers President/Chavez (AFSCME Vice President) slate have pledged one-third of the AFL-CIO budget to organizing. We have to organize a grass roots political movement. We need independent political action..."

More clearly, Phil Yokey, an UMWA Vice President for Indiana, stated he would "go on record with strong support for a third party for Labor."

"Reformers" on notice

Later in the session, UAW opposition leader Yettaw declared support for the Sweeney reform slate, but put it on notice: "If we don't see some real reform then we're not going to wait around for a second term—we may as well start out and create a new umbrella organization...after all, the CIO was created after the AFL. As several people said, we are the Union and we are going to mobilize."

The conference was an outstanding event. It marks a further step in the developing crisis of US capitalism. The calls for Union

democracy, for a break with the policies of collaboration with the bosses, politically and in the workplace, represent the inability of existing structures to continue to contain workers' anger against this crisis. The determination of the members of the three locals has driven this anger to a new level, and the connections made by the conference show how it stands on the shoulders of the many bitter struggles that were abandoned by the leaders of the international Unions in the 1980s. The conference was a first step in the right direction, toward the militant policies that built the labor movement in the 1930s. Labor Militant campaigns for the labor movement to adopt a program that includes the struggle for \$500 a week minimum income, a 30-hour work week without loss of pay, and public ownership of the Fortune 500 corporations and any company that threatens to shut down or move, under democratic workers control and management.

Labor Militant urges support for the War Zone workers. For copies of resolutions, further information or to send donations to the Staley workers, contact:

Staley Workers: Food and Emergency Assistance Fund, c/o UPIU/AIW Local 7837, 3080-B Kandy Lane, Decatur, IL 62526 or call (217) 872-2207 or -2209.

STEVE EDWARDS
AFSCME Local 2000, Chicago

Unite Workers Across the Globe

Despite national competition, capitalists are united in their effort to increase profits at the expense of the world's workers. Every day 750 million people go hungry because of extreme poverty. 820 million are unemployed or underemployed—33% of the world's workforce—the highest percentage since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

U.S. corporations are loyal to their profit margins, not American workers. As economic growth has slowed since the 1970s, big business has coordinated a sustained effort to reverse wages, benefits, employment levels, working conditions, the 40-hour work week and union rights.

Global Capitalism

Capitalism operates on a global scale. Borders become invisible when there's a profit to be made. In the past 20 years, 300,000 U.S. textile workers lost their jobs as plants moved to Central America. This trend of U.S. jobs disappearing is similar in many other major industries—auto, electronics, steel, etc. Greedy corporations set up shop in Mexico, Asia and elsewhere because they can pay starvation wages (hourly wages of Mexican auto workers are 10% of their counterparts in the U.S.) and often operate with-

out union or government regulation of working conditions and environmental safety.

Trade agreements like NAFTA and GATT, backed by sections of big business, the Democrats (including Clinton) and the Republicans are put in place to let multinationals, big banks and financial industries better exploit workers and markets in foreign countries. Institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are used as a protection racket by the major capitalist countries against poor countries. U.S. workers gain nothing from trade policies which are put in place to maximize profits for U.S. companies. These policies only strengthen big business' drive to make the U.S. workforce compete with foreign workers i.e. accept lower wages, fewer jobs, longer hours, weaker contracts.

Protectionist Policies: Dead End

While going along with these concessions, AFL-CIO leaders respond to company flight with "Buy American" campaigns, appeals to the Democrats for "fair" trade agreements and in some cases, attacks on immigrant and foreign workers.

ACCORDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS:

IN 1994:

* 98 countries violated workers' rights, the highest number yet recorded

* As a result of trade union activity:

—528 workers were murdered in 17 countries (300 in Algeria and 178 in Colombia)

—1,983 were injured

—4,353 were arrested or detained

—66,029 were fired

IN THE LAST THREE YEARS:

* Repressive government action against organized labor increased 65%

ing class at a time when we need to unite, but it is used by the union leadership to avoid organizing a fight for jobs.

The best defense for saving U.S. jobs is building a mass militant movement internationally, with unions in all workplaces and working class political parties in every country. Many AFL-CIO unions which are "International" in name do not put this into practice despite their enormous resources. A few unions, like the United Electrical Workers (UE), have begun to make direct links with unionizing Mexican workers.

Workers—union, nonunion, U.S.-born, immigrant, and foreign—need to stand together. By joining with workers in Mexico, Canada and elsewhere, the labor movement can replace competition between workers with solidarity. A global campaign for guaranteed jobs with living wages and union rights should be initiated. This should be combined with a drive to end the rule of profit over the world economy. Public ownership, workers' control and planning and democratic socialism should be fought for internationally to eliminate the poverty, hunger and violence that capitalism causes.

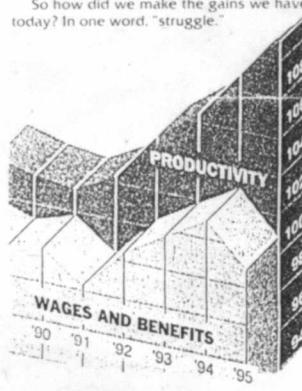
LORRAINE DARDIS
Member, UAW Local 2324

WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO DEFEAT THE EMPLOYERS' OFFENSIVE

McDonalds is currently running a radio ad campaign to attract mothers to come and work at their restaurants. They boast that if you need flexible hours they're the employer for you. They fail to mention the pitifully low wages. What most workers need is a \$500 minimum weekly wage and a thirty hour work week. But what the TV and newspapers regularly chant is that progress on wages and hours is nothing of the past, along with strong unions.

This is not the first time in history that the unions were declared dead and progress suspended until the country turns around. The greatest mobilization of the working class in the US was during the 1930s. This was despite the chronic economic crisis. In the first phase of the depression (1929-33) employers cut pay by 30% on average. Every boss claimed poverty, while they continued to rake in the profits. More than one in four workers were unemployed and all of today's arguments against wage hikes were being argued by the bosses' press.

So how did we make the gains we have today? In one word, "struggle."



Jack Spiegel is an activist in Chicago Jobs with Justice. In 1930 he was an organizer for the Unemployed Council. Every worker today that cashes his/her unemployment check should thank workers like Jack. The unemployed got very little until they built a movement that hurt the employers and the government. Jack organized sit-ins, mass demonstrations, and other civil disobedience actions until the mass of the workers supported the unemployed and the bosses were forced to introduce unemployment benefits.

Militancy Pays

The same goes for legislation on the minimum wage, workers compensation and social security, all introduced during the huge labor upsurge of the 1930s. These reforms were often won in spite of conservative union leaders who argued now is not the time. In reality, these leaders are only echoing big business' arguments. These leaders were often swept aside or side-stepped as over ten million workers flooded into the unions over this period.

"A lot of my friends who were in the unemployment councils went on to being union organizers," Jack Spiegel explained, as the unions rose after the city-wide labor victories in Minneapolis, San Francisco and Toledo in 1934. Labor's big turning point was the defeat of the world's biggest corporation, General Motors in the winter of 1936/7. The workers defied the law and took over their plants, rendering the private police useless and forcing the company to its knees.

Several hundred "sit-downs" swept across the US as the most effective strike form became the key weapon in the workers' arsenal. These workplace occupations were also known as "quicknesses" because they were so effective that the employers generally capitulated to workers demands within hours or days. However, many union leaders saw the sit downs as concentrating too much power in the hands of the rank and file and feared that an empowered membership would start knocking at



Newspaper workers fight the police in Detroit.

their door asking questions like why do you earn twice our wages?

Post War Period

The beating the employers suffered during the 1930s and 1940s, their fear that obstinacy would encourage socialist sentiment and an economic upswing, led to the bosses to be more generous to the labor movement after World War Two. By the mid 1950s workers would often only have to go out on strike for a few days, allowing most workers to go home to mow the lawn and the employers would settle up. Mass picketing, sit-downs and strikes organized with military precision were increasingly abandoned by the union leaders as means of struggle. It was during this period that being a steward was a relatively easy job and the single picketer became the norm. However, historically, this was not the norm for labor, but an aberration and one which created an approach to the employers which cost workers dearly in the 1970s and 1980s when the economic downturn developed.

The defeat of the Air Traffic Controllers' strike in 1981 was a turning point for labor-capital relations. The recently retired Lane Kirkland put himself at the forefront of the battle against the rank and file demand for a nationwide solidarity strike. While the air traffic controllers' leaders went to jail they were left isolated. Workers were stunned by the rotten role of their leaders, who in turn argued that a general strike was illegal, union resources and treasures would be put at risk etc. This defeat marked the tone for all the battles to date.

Civil Disobedience

The choice confronting the new



Occupations & mass pickets built the unions in the 1930s

leadership will be whether to reject the methods of the last forty years or oversee a continued decline for labor. Some labor leaders have finally grasped that we're in a new period of confrontation between labor and big business and that the last forty years were not in fact the norm but an exceptional period in history. The subsequent conclusion must be drawn that new methods of struggle are necessary for the current period.

Currently, almost any action that increases a union's membership or contract gains is illegal. We cannot win if we go along with the flow and play by the rules initiated by the Republicans and Democrats. Any attempt to cooperate with the bosses, such as the adoption of Team

Concept methods, will only weaken our power and undermine the unions' identity. The natural result of the error of worker-management cooperation is the present attempt to legalize company unions.

What is clear is that loose-knit coalitions and ad hoc groups of unions and community groups with limited resources are not going to be a sufficient force to turn back the Gingrich-Clinton-Big business front against the working class and the unions. The sterile exercise of getting the members out to vote for one or other employers' parties will not change a thing.

So called "peaceful" picketing, that is legal picketing, where one striker stands outside the gate and everyone else takes off fishing only disarms the workers. This approach is like standing on a freeway with a motorcycle helmet. It almost consciously implies that it's safe for workers to try and win a strike without any effort to mobilize. This is why the number of strikes has dramatically fallen and the length of strikes has increased.

Winning over Workers

The Congress of Industrial Organizations, the CIO, in the thirties, won a great moral authority among the working class for the willingness of its members to break unfair laws. The heroes of the civil rights movement adopted many of the methods of the CIO, including sit-downs, mass demonstrations and civil disobedience.

This does not mean the photo-op symbolic arrests of union leaders during certain strikes, where everyone knows they were going to be home for dinner. "Union Privilege" credit cards and "Union Yes" ad campaigns will not turn the unions around. To think that organized labor will be more

attractive by lowering the definition of being a union member, with cheap gimmicks, is insanity. The unions' attraction is essentially higher pay and a willingness to stand up to injustice.

The conservatives in the union ranks will argue that they could challenge the law in the past because labor had no offices, investments etc., but today it's different. That's partly true. Today organized labor has undreamed-of financial, legal and above all, membership resources which would actually make mass organizing far easier. If the employers' courts take away the \$2,000 oak desks of a few union leaders maybe that wouldn't be so bad.

The new leaders of the AFL-CIO must seize the time. People are angry, they're

overworked and increasingly underpaid, especially the youth. Young people want a better life and only the union can offer them that. As one worker remarked, it's like the union leaders have abandoned their children.

Labor needs a fighting program, its own Labor Party and an organizing strategy which doesn't reluctantly include mass civil disobedience but embraces it enthusiastically. As union members are seen occupying workplaces and mass picketing, and as union leaders defiantly go to jail to support the low paid, then the unions win the high moral ground which they have ceded through overpaying themselves and cozying up to the establishment.

In the 1930s it was the socialists and communists who were the impetus to the successful struggles, because they had the perspective and optimism of not only knowing what they're against but also what they are for. Regardless of the outcome of the struggle at the top of the AFL-CIO, for the ultimate success of the battle against big business tyranny in this country only a democratic socialist society can take life forward for workers.

ROB ROOKE
UAW 1981, Chicago

Fight for a Labor Party!

The Republican-controlled House and Senate have proposed a massive program of cuts for Medicare, Medicaid, welfare, environmental protection, safety, education, etc., to make sure that the \$200 billion annual transfer of wealth to the rich (payments of debt) continues to take place undisturbed. Clinton was quick to match these cuts with a 10-year program of his own. Both parties of big business agree on the necessity to cut everyone's living standards in order to give new massive tax breaks and subsidies to the rich (to the tune of \$189 billion).

It is interesting to note that in 1994, Democrats in the House and the Senate received the highest number of awards from the National Federation of Independent Business, apparently for their services to their masters, and the quick passage of NAFTA, GATT, the crime bill against youth, and the toothless promised striker replacement bill that never went anywhere.

The Republican-led state legislatures are also now taking bolder initiatives to attack workers and their families and undermine wages, conditions and public services. Having said this, the recent AFL-CIO News (July 31, 1995) quoting Minnesota AFL-CIO president Bernard Brommer gives an example of a Democratic-led legislature and how differently they are handling things:

"[The Democrats are] attacking anything that regulates or is burdensome to business, including OSHA, prevailing wage, minimum wage, workers' compensation and collective bargaining."

The only way that our voices can be heard and we can turn the tide against anti-labor legislation and the attacks on our living standards is to form our own political party and challenge the bosses' parties with candidates on the local, state and national levels.

The idea that workers need their own party to defend their interests is becoming clearer among workers, and a number of international and local unions and central labor bodies are supporting the initiative of Labor Party Advocates to form a U.S. Labor Party.

MARTHA ROOT
Executive Board Member
SEIU Local 285

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD WAR II

Did Dropping the Bomb on Hiroshima Save Lives?

Last September I had the great fortune visit Japan. The people were friendly and extraordinarily helpful. I had the opportunity to visit Hiroshima.

It was Hiroshima that 50 years ago, on August 6th 1945, a 6,900-pound atomic bomb was dropped from an American B-29 airplane. Three days later, another A-bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. History was changed forever.

It was estimated that 170,000 people were killed on impact with tens of thousands more dying in the months that followed. Survivors tell of having flesh seared, clothes burned off and being thrown 30 feet. While the casualties of World War II in both Europe and Asia were horrific, the legacy of the only time the atomic bomb has been used on a large population continues to haunt us.

American big business, through their politicians and dominance over the media and school systems, continues to argue that the bomb ultimately saved the lives of tens of thousands of American soldiers and more Japanese civilians.

Manhattan Project

In the 1940s, scientists were brought together under the guidance of J. Robert Oppenheimer in Los Alamos, New Mexico, in a top secret mission to develop the "ultimate weapon" under the code name the Manhattan Project. This bomb would be so devastating as to force the Nazi regime in Germany to surrender. The scientists were told that the Nazis were also trying to develop such a bomb. Many of those working on the bomb were liberal scientists who thought the bomb would be a deterrent but didn't dream that it would be used on a major civilian population. Once it was developed, the discovery was made and there was no turning back. Big business, through the government, controlled its use.

After the war, Oppenheimer, recognizing the effects of what had been created at Los Alamos, became a leading adviser to the government on nuclear policy. He was an outspoken opponent of the Hydrogen Bomb which was in development. This bomb was capable of a blast 1000 times greater than the one used on Hiroshima. Accused of being a communist sympathizer, he was

eventually stripped of his security clearance, and publicly humiliated.

Dropping the Bomb

Before the use of the atomic bomb, all of Japan's major cities had been firebombed and flattened. Today very few pre-World War Two buildings exist, even in cities like Tokyo or Osaka, which weren't hit by atomic bombing. Hundreds of thousands fled to the countryside to avoid being burnt alive. Japan was effectively reduced to its knees, but the dropping of the A-bomb was to have another significance.

By the summer of 1945 the war in Europe was over. British and American imperialism had hoped the war would lead to both Germany and Russia being exhausted and then they could move in and loot the entire region. They particularly hoped to see the USSR return to capitalist rule. This strategy failed when in 1944 the Russians began to advance and the Germans began retreating at top speed. The western front was finally opened to prevent the USSR sweeping into western Europe. At the end of the day, capitalism and landlordism were being dismantled in the eastern half of Europe. American big business' singular enemy became the Stalinist regime in Russia.

With much of east Asian opposition to Japanese imperialism coming from communist and socialist partisans, the US did not want to risk losing half of Asia to Stalinist influence. The bomb was dropped effectively to warn Russia against attempting to challenge its influence in east Asia.

Gar Alperovitz wrote the 1965 book *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam*, questioning the school text book version of the bomb which argued it saved tens of thousands of GI lives. He argued that the Japanese had in fact made overtures towards a surrender before the two A-bombs. He was also slandered as a communist sympathizer. In his new book, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, published to coincide with the bomb's 50th anniversary, he argues that withholding the bomb could have strengthened America's democratic image in East Asia and from a capitalist point of view might have prevented the ousting of capitalism in China in 1949. Alperovitz argues that the Democrat President Truman could have abandoned Roosevelt's policy of demanding unconditional surrender, allowing Japanese Emperor Hirohito to retain his throne, establishing a constitutional monarchy.

Workers Perspective

While assessing any question in modern history it is critical to see the ruling class' strategy, but also to figure out the workers' interests. Millions of workers, both soldier and civilian, in the East and West, died for a war which was based on a new carve-up of the world's markets between German, Japanese, US and British Imperialism. The potential to prevent World War II was great. However, the mistaken policies of the workers' leaders and in particular, the Communist parties betrayed the working class, encouraging workers to fight in a capitalist army against the fascist regimes. While the threat of fascism in Europe was real and needed to be stopped, it was capitalism which gave rise to and nurtured the Nazis. American big



business throughout this century, before and after World War II, has supported and even initiated dictatorships, especially in Latin America. The fact that German imperialism was run by a fascist regime was convenient for big business' war propaganda, little else. The powerful working classes of the US and Europe, united under a genuine socialist International could have launched an international general strike bringing big business to its knees. This was the only reasonable alternative to the mass carnage which ensued.

Atomic Future

A walk around the streets of Hiroshima today belies the experience of 50 years ago. Only a small plaque at Ground Zero at the Peace Park, with the skeletal remains of the Hall of Industry serve as physical reminders. But in the consciousness of Japanese workers and youth the effects of the bomb will always remain fresh. Strong anti-war sentiment has forced Japan's ruling class not to develop its small military budget and nuclear

program.

Today Japanese students are at the forefront of protests against renewed nuclear testing. Worldwide, mass demonstrations have accompanied the resumptions of nuclear testing in the Pacific by the right-wing government in France. Clearly, imperialism is not going to abandon nuclear weapons, as the capitalists will never agree to get along on this planet, so wars are inevitable under this system.

The Manhattan Project opened a Pandora's box of mass destruction. The hands of time cannot be turned back and Pandora's box of nuclear bombs cannot be closed. It is up to the working class to fight to end the world's domination by big business and its profit-addicted economic system. While the anarchy of the market prevails we will always live in the shadow of nuclear annihilation and the memory of the mass destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

LISA HANE,
Hospital Worker, Chicago



TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Deregulation: A Disaster for Consumers, Workers

The 1983 court-ordered breakup of AT&T was heralded as a great victory for the consumer, smashing a monopoly and ushering in lower long distance rates through increased competition. Now we're on the verge of the deregulation of local telephone service. Again this is put forward as a victory for the consumer, opening local telephone markets to competition, bringing the information superhighway to your door. But what does this mean to working people, who are the majority of the 'consumers' that will be affected by deregulation?

Before 1983 AT&T was one of the world's largest corporations, employing over 1% of the US workforce. Its subsidiaries operated in an environment where telephone service was highly regulated. They were monopolies that were granted exclusive rights to deliver dialtone in the areas they served. The price AT&T paid for this was a high degree of state regulation of its profits and a promise to provide "universal service": they were required to deliver dialtone to everyone in their serving area at standard rates, regardless of the actual cost of providing that service. AT&T used the more lucrative long distance service to subsidize local service.

In 1974, AT&T plowed 70% of its long distance profits back into local service through wages, equipment purchases, etc. This shows why there was pressure to deregulate long distance service. Big business accounts for a huge percentage of long distance calling. 1% of AT&T customers paid for 25% of toll calls. Big business' long distance payments offset the cost of providing local service to small markets and rural areas. With the deregulation of long distance service this cross subsidy was cut. This has resulted in higher local rates for residential and small businesses.

End of Universal Service?

Now, the deregulation of local service could mean the end of universal service. If you live in a densely populated area with a good income base, where a little wire goes a long way and people will order lots of new products like online computer services and video on demand, you're in luck, pick up your phone and you'll hear dial tone. But if you live in a rural or lower income area, well, maybe, maybe not.

Deregulation will eliminate the cross subsidy from higher to lower profit margin areas by allowing companies to cream customers off the top and isolate high cost low revenue residence service to a smaller and smaller core of customers, who will be forced to pick up a higher and higher percentage of the costs. Deregulation is an attempt by big business to make working people pay a larger and larger share of the costs. It should be seen as another tax bill shifting huge amounts of wealth from working people to big business.

Bell Contract

The current contract negotiations between CWA/IBEW and the Baby Bells, covering the wages and conditions of 250,000 workers, are taking place against this background of continued deregulation and emerging 'competition' for local phone service. These contracts follow the general pattern of collective bargaining in the telecommunications industry since 1983: contract labor and temporary workers, cost shifting of health care, and job security are the major issues. As we go to press CWA and IBEW have settled contracts with 6 out of 7 of the Baby Bells. While these agreements are "relatively" good contracts (when compared to what the rest of the labor movement is getting these days): wage increases of 10 - 11%; the beating back of attempts to cost-shift health care; the winning of limited transfer rights to new subsidiaries, and limited job security language - they fail to address the continued hemorrhage of jobs in the industry and the convergence of new technologies and deregulation.

Bell Atlantic, which provides local phone service in the mid-Atlantic region is the sole holdout and the possibility of a strike still exists. It's employees have been working without a contract since August 5th. It's demands at the bargaining table reflect the ugly future deregulation will bring. It wants to 'realign' its operations in line with the 'new competitive' environment.

"New Competitive Environment"

After winning a vicious concessionary contract from IBEW, represented technicians in New Jersey, Bell Atlantic is now gunning for the CWA. They have expressed their desire to 'get out' of all operations that are not 'core' to the business. This includes supply and logistics workers, clerical, building and vehicle maintenance, and janitorial services. They want to end any restrictions on the use of temporary and contract labor. They have tried to split the union at the bargaining table by offering technical workers wage increases while freezing the wages of 'non essential' workers. In one stroke they want to eliminate and contract out thousands of jobs. While there has been much talk of the effects these proposals would have on the construction of the 'Information Super Highway' and the skilled technical workers who build and maintain the network, it is clear that the immediate result would be the end of meaningful full time employment for thousands of clerical, semi-skilled, and unskilled workers. The local telephone business offices now staffed with union represented service reps making \$10-15/hr with benefits would be overrun with temporary staff hired through outside agencies.

The company makes these demands on the pretext that they need these concessions to compete in the new deregulated environment. They state their desire to work together with

the union to beat the competition and preserve our jobs, but first we have to understand that retiree health care is just costing them too much money.

Where's the Competition?

But who really is the competition? Bell Atlantic likes to point to the lightly regulated CATV companies who employ large bodies of temp and subcontractors at 50 - 60% of the pay of a union telco technician. The more complicated answer is that the Baby Bells will be competing with themselves, literally. In Rochester NY local service has been opened to competition. New start up "Phone Co's" are leasing excess dialtone from Rochester Tel. and reselling it on the open market. Nothing has changed. The same switches and wires carry voice and data traffic but they "compete" with the established phone co. It is only a matter of time before Rochester Tel. comes to its employees and asks for concessions so it can better compete with these upstart companies. The Baby Bells are also eyeing each others serving areas. Bell South is positioning itself to move into Bell Atlantic's territory when the new laws permit. All this shows the venal character of modern big business. At least the Robber Barons understood that you had to actually build a factory in order to produce goods to sell. Today, these geniuses of the market just want to loot the existing infrastructure that was built with 100 years of our phone bills. If they really want to 'compete' let them build their own Central Offices and lay their own cable.

Unless the CWA and IBEW develop a clearcut program to oppose deregulation and propose an alternative, we will end up being whipsawed against ourselves. Union brothers and sisters will be competing to see who can work the hardest, fastest, and longest for the least money, to save "their" company.

*** A 30-hour workweek with no cut in pay would drastically cut unemployment** and would use the increased efficiencies of new technologies to make our lives better instead of taking our livelihood. *** No contracting out of work. No use of temporaries. Hire from our communities the workers necessary to do the job. Build the Info Super Highway at union wages and benefits.**

*** No give backs on healthcare. The CWA should renew its campaign for a nation-**



al health service.

- For the public ownership of telecommunications industry under democratic workers' control and management, a national telecommunications policy and the planned deployment of new technologies so that all (workers and consumers) can benefit from its potential.

Mobilize the membership!

To win these demands the CWA must mobilize its rank and file and take its case to the community. If a strike becomes necessary we must make our position clear that we want to preserve residence and emergency services, that we are fighting not just for our jobs but for the future of our society. Every job we let slip away in an employee buyout or layoff is one less job for our children. What will be left for them? McDonalds? Instead of spending months sitting on the picket line, under the force of an injunction watching scabs and managers work, we should occupy the central offices and work centers. The new technology makes it possible to selectively strike at big business. Through occupation and strikers control of plant and equipment we could maintain residence and emergency service and deny service to big business. This would place an enormous amount of pressure on the company, much more than we can bring to bear through lobbying and corporate campaigns.

JUSTIN HARRISON
CWA Local 13000
Philadelphia

HARVARD WORKERS: REJECT JOINTNESS, CONCESSIONS !

I am a member of AFSCME Local 3650, a union of clerical and technical workers at Harvard University. Harvard is a fabulously wealthy employer with assets totalling \$8.6 billion which does not include the university's huge real estate holdings.

People may think that unionized workers at the richest university on earth would

make good salaries. But this is not true.

Our most recent contract proposal, calls for a miserly 11.2% raise over three years, for a clerical workforce which is already underpaid. Worse yet, Harvard will be able to slash our medical benefits during the next three years.

Our union leadership want us to approve the contract proposal without even knowing what cuts will be made to our medical benefits. Our pensions, already pitifully small, will also get the axe.

Jointness

Why would our union leadership agree to such a weak deal? The answer lies in a policy called "jointness" which our union officials endorse. Jointness means that the union leadership bends over backwards to please management and undermines the union. This is why we do not have a real union grievance procedure at Harvard, but a vague process called "problem-solving" which always seems

to wind up leaving union members frustrated.

As a result of this policy, the union leadership has indicated to management that we will never go on strike, so the employer has no reason to be afraid of our power on the job. We had just three subdued union rallies to prepare the members for this contract. No employer would be impressed by such weak tactics, and Harvard has a long history of exploiting its workforce.

We Need a Fight-Back

What we need to turn things around at Harvard and other workplaces is a new militancy in the best traditions of the union movement. We should have regular monthly membership meetings, so that members can vote on contract proposals and strategies to be used during contract negotiations. We need to build stronger links with the other unions on campus and negotiate all union contracts together. We should organize the

"casual" workers who receive tiny salaries and no benefits whatsoever. Union members have formed an opposition caucus *HUCTW Members for a Stronger and More Democratic Union*. We support higher wages, 100% employer-paid healthcare and no layoffs. The caucus is urging members to vote "No" to the concessionary contract.

Fight Jointness

I believe that the struggle at Harvard is linked to what is happening generally in the labor movement. The bosses are on the offensive, trying to rip away all the gains organized labor has made for working people. The labor movement should reject jointness and concessions and launch a massive organizing drive, build genuine working class political action and renew the fight for a socialist future.

GEOFF CARENS
Member, AFSCME 3650
Boston

"Jointness has led to a very serious erosion of our union's power"

Tom Potter, worker at Harvard

"To accept a concessionary contract is bad enough, but accept it without a fight is shameful."

Ed Dupree, worker at Harvard

INTERVIEW WITH UNION LEADER

Reform Teamsters Point the Way

Teamster Local 142 in Gary, Indiana, has 6,000 members working in both public and private sectors. Two years back it was under an old guard leadership, led first by one man and then his son. The old leaders paid themselves enormous salaries and generally ignored the problems of the rank and file. Today Local 142 has become one of the most progressive locals in the Chicago area and an example of what a union can be.

Recording Secretary, Jim Skinner, spoke to Labor Militant's ROB ROOKE about how they won the local, what they've done in power and what their plans are.

Building an Opposition

"I worked in a factory of about 300 workers, for nine years and I became a shop steward. In 1991 we had a contract coming up at our shop. The previous contract was shoved down our throat. So we decided it wasn't gonna happen again. We worked midnights so we'd meet round the kitchen table and put the contract under a microscope. We'd meet two or three times a week. We set up other organizational structures on the day shift and afternoon shift."

"When the business agents came down for the contract, we handed them a thirty page contract proposal to put to management. That was the beginning of my union activism."

"Then we started planning for the Local election in 1992. We met with some other activists and finally got a full slate."

The Old Guard

"What angered me first of all was the lack of democracy. They were appointing their buddies for stewards. Dissidents were crushed real bad. When you'd come to meetings you'd be told to sit down and shut up. Their ultimate objective was to get a contract, but that's all, not a good contract, just a contract. They would wanna force a contract down our throats. To me, a union is for the members. The leaders should be subordinate to the members only. This isn't an elite country club for the select few."

The New Local 142

"Our local has over 300 individual contracts and in the year and half we've been in office

we've covered over half of those. Not one of them had concessions in them. We had to take on one of the biggest and most powerful corporations in America, Pepsi, when we first took office. Talk about baptism by fire, we took them on and struck them for five weeks and didn't accept any concessions. We've also tried to reform the grievance procedure to the members' favor."

Leaders on a Workers' Wage

"When we took office the old administration had seven full time business agents. They had zero organizers. We now have thirteen full time business agents/organizers, including three full time organizers, for the same amount of money they were paying seven business agents. The business agents took between 30 and 35% pay cuts from what the previous administration were paying. I personally took a \$1500 pay cut to be working here at the hall. We didn't come here for the money but for the core belief that the union belongs to the members. Literally hundreds of members earn more than me."

"The old guard forgot who the union belongs to. They had all these special perks and privileges that we have disassociated with."

"It's time that we get some activism in the AFL-CIO, some of that intestinal fortitude that it takes to put the hammer down and say, hey jack, I don't care how many contracts we have out there that says they can't strike, if you guys do this then we're gonna shut this country down."

JIM SKINNER, Business Agent and Recording Secretary, Teamsters Local #142, Gary, Indiana

Mobilizing the Members

"We need more than three organizers, we need volunteers. It's very important to get the rank and file involved in organizing and social activism. To me unionism isn't just about contracts, it's about social activism and political action too. Things that our forefathers fought for, who shed their blood in the streets for. Chicago Haymarket and Minneapolis 1934 They shed their blood for the rights we now enjoy."

"We're trying to do some innovative things to involve the members. We've set up a

Stewards Council. They're gonna control a lot of their own things. We have a hundred and fifty stewards and seven on the council. The council will help mobilize the stewards. We've set up a phone tree of all our members so that when something comes up for a rally or something, we can get the word out to all our members."

"We have four divisions of work in our local: trucking and construction, municipal, factory and commercial and delivery. We set up a chain of command with division heads. Business agents report to their division heads. We're no longer micromanaged by one man. We've put a lot of organization structure in place to help communications and get our message out."

The Way Forward

"I think the turning point will be the 1996 International Teamster convention. On whether or not the reform movement will go forward working for the members or reverse course. We're getting our house in order before we can worry about the other ones. There's a lot of good information out there from union activists like Teamsters for a Democratic Union and some of the work Labor Militant does, so the word is getting out there that the members can run their own union."

"I think we need a true voice of the working people, to me that's what the role of the AFL-CIO should be. We need more co-ordination between unions. This business union stuff is an oxymoron, business and unionism just doesn't mix. We're not here to run a business. We're here to be the spokespeople for the workers."

Labor Party

"The Democrats have turned out Republicans and I, personally, believe its time that this country had a Labor Party that represents just the workers. One of the best things to happen in this country to get people out of poverty is to set a minimum wage of \$10-an-hour. You wanna get people off of welfare, set a liveable minimum wage, so people can have some hope. The American dream used to be to own your own house, two-car garage and a little cottage, now it's having a roof over your head and some food in your mouth. That's a sad, sad, statement on where our society's heading."

"Hopefully we're an example to other members considering running for their Local union that, hey, you can run your own local. Sure you need experts, but you don't have to be a rocket surgeon. A year and half ago we were just workers working out there like anyone else."

A FIGHTING PROGRAM FOR LABOR

All the gains of the working class have been made through the independent movement of the workers themselves. The labor movement needs a fighting program to defeat big business and its system, capitalism.

FIGHTBACK

- Mass pickets and workplace occupations to stop union busting, plant closures and layoffs; organize the unorganized
- A \$5 per hour wage increase and a full uncapped cost of living increase
- A 30-hour work week with no loss in pay
- Guaranteed real, full-time jobs for all; a \$12.50 per hour minimum wage and a \$500 per week minimum income

DEFEND SOCIAL SERVICES

- Cancel the national debt with no repayment to the rich investors. Use the money to rebuild the inner cities and the infrastructure, under union conditions and wages
- No cuts in public services; full funding for all community needs
- Free higher education for all high school graduates
- End pollution and environmental destruction by big business
- Free socialized medicine

WORKING CLASS UNITY

- End all forms of racism, sexism, discrimination and division within the working class. Equal pay for equal work
- End attacks on immigrants
- End police brutality and harassment through labor-community committees to control all aspects of public safety

LABOR PARTY

- The union leaders to break with the big business Democratic Party and build a mass Labor Party
- All union officials to be paid the same as the average worker they represent

SOCIALISM

- Public ownership of the "Fortune 500" and a socialist plan of production under the democratic management and control of the workers themselves. For a society based on the needs of the majority, not the profits of a tiny, unelected minority
- For a democratic socialist world to end hunger, war and environmental destruction

NO MORE GIVEBACKS!

DEFEND PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS AND SERVICES

The federal, state and city governments have been continuing the onslaught of budget-cutting and attacking public employees and public services. At the same time, taxes for the wealthy continue to fall. New York City mayor Giuliani is now openly talking about selling the 11 public hospitals and even privatization of education and the prison system. How does he think he can get away with this?

The president of AFSCME District Council 37, Stanley Hill and other leaders of the Municipal Labor Committee have been giving one concession after another. The Mayor asked for another \$600 million in concessions, and that's just what he got. On top of that, the mayor was given \$2,000 for his re-election campaign from DC 37 and \$6,000 from AFSCME Local 372!

The policies of givebacks will not solve the budget crisis. For the past five years the city has been cutting its budget and yet there is always another gap come the next fiscal year. Every time they destroy jobs, even if it is attrition, (15,000 union jobs were lost this way in New York in the last two years) or cut public assistance programs. This means less money in circulation, less tax revenue and more people on welfare as there are less jobs.

The latest \$600 million deal between the mayor and the union leadership was sold as a "no layoffs" agreement. This deal includes another \$140 million in productivity givebacks,

- Stanley Hill, AFSCME DC 37 Director, makes \$245,000 a year!
- Al Diop, AFSCME Local 372 President, has an annual salary of \$160,465.

Labor Militant campaigns for labor leaders to be on the same wage as the workers they represent

which could mean a full week's wages will be "deferred" or some of our holidays will be given up or even furloughs!

For his part, the mayor promised that there will be no "large scale" layoffs till June 30, 1996, and as we all know, politicians never lie!

Stanley Hill, and other leaders of DC 37 are getting very nice salaries. Maybe they don't realize what it is like to live in America's most expensive city on what we make. We need a union where the leaders are paid what their members are paid! We need a political action strategy where workers are candidates for public office independent of the two corrupt political parties. We need to link union members, their families and friends, along with the working people of New York to fight for more money for better public services paid for by the wealthy elite who are destroying this city and this country.

TOM TROTTIER
Steward, AFSCME Local 154, New York

WE ARE THE UNION—LET'S GET INVOLVED!

A union is not an office building. It's not a staff. It's not a prescription card. It's not a place for some officials to make careers and fat salaries. A union should be a fighting organization to defend the interests of its members and all workers.

When rank and file members are not active, the leadership can claim this as approval of their policies i.e. giving concessions to the mayor and supporting politicians who later kick us in the teeth. It's up to us to put a stop to this. We must do two things: Get involved with the union, and join and get involved with AFSCME Activist.

Contact AFSCME Activist at:
P.O. Box 10614
Oakland, CA 94610

Lo que necesitamos hacer para derrotar la ofensiva patronal

McDonalds tiene actualmente una campaña promocional por radio para atraer a madres de familia para trabajar en sus restaurantes. Dicen que si lo que usted necesita es un horario flexible, ellos son quien usted busca. No mencionan, por supuesto, los salarios miserables que pagan. Lo que la mayoría de los trabajadores necesitan es un salario mínimo de \$500 a la semana y una semana laboral de 30 horas. Pero lo que la televisión y los periódicos gritan frecuentemente es que las mejoras salariales y de horas de trabajo, junto con las uniones poderosas, son cosas del pasado.

Esta, sin embargo, no es la primera vez que se declaran muertos a los sindicatos y al progreso laboral hasta que el país se recupere. La mayor mobilización laboral en la historia de este país ocurrió en los años 30. Esto a pesar de la crisis económica crónica. Durante la primera fase de la depresión (1929-33), los patronos redujeron los salarios en un 30% en promedio. Todos los empleadores se declaraban arruinados, mientras continuaban amasando fortunas. Más de uno de cada cuatro trabajadores estaban desempleados y todos los argumentos que se usan hoy en día en contra de mejoras salariales, eran también usados entonces por la prensa burguesa. Entonces, ¿cómo conseguimos los logros que hoy tenemos? Dicho en una palabra, "luchando".

Jack Spiegel es un activista de la campaña Chicago Jobs with Justice (Empleos con Justicia). En 1930, era organizador de The Unemployed Council (Consejo de Desempleados). Todo trabajador que recibe un cheque de desempleo hoy en día, debería agradecerle a trabajadores como Jack. Los desempleados conseguían muy poco hasta que formaron un movimiento capaz de herir a los patronos y al gobierno. Jack organizó huelgas de brazos caídos, demostraciones masivas, y otras acciones de desobediencia civil hasta que la mayoría de los trabajadores estuvieron del lado de los desempleados y los patronos se vieron forzados a implementar el beneficio de desempleo.

La militancia resulta

Lo mismo ocurrió con la ley de salario mínimo, la compensación laboral y el seguro social, medidas todas iniciadas durante los grandes movimientos obreros de los años 30. Estas reformas se consiguieron aún a pensar de líderes sindicales conservadores que argumentaban que no era el tiempo propicio. En realidad estos líderes le hacían el juego a los patronos. Estos líderes fueron barridos de mapa mientras cerca de diez millones de trabajadores inundaron las uniones en este periodo.

"Muchos de mis amigos de los consejos de desempleados se convirtieron en organizadores sindicales," explica Jack Spiegel, refiriéndose al crecimiento sindical luego de las victorias a nivel municipal en Minneapolis, San Francisco y Toledo en 1934. El momento crucial del movimiento laboral fue la derrota de la corporación más grande del mundo, la General Motors, en el invierno de 1936-7. Los obreros, desafiando la ley, se tomaron las plantas y instilaron a los matones privados de la compañía, haciéndola finalmente rendirse.

Cientos de huelgas de brazos caídos tuvieron lugar a lo ancho de los Estados Unidos, convirtiéndose ésta forma de protesta en el arma más efectiva del arsenal de los trabajadores. Estas ocupaciones de plantas pasaron a ser llamadas "quickies" (rápidas) porque eran tan efectivas que los patronos accedían a las demandas de los obreros en cuestión de horas o días. Sin embargo, muchos líderes sindicales veían una amenaza en este tipo de huelga que concentraba tanto poder en la membresía.



Una membresía evanesciente podría empezar a hacer preguntas tales como ¿por qué ganan ustedes el doble que nosotros?

El periodo de post-guerra

La derrota sufrida por los patronos durante los años 30 y 40, su temor a que su propia obstinación propiciara sentimientos socialistas, y el repunte económico, llevó a los empleadores a ser más generosos con el movimiento laboral después de la segunda guerra mundial. A mediados de los años 50, los trabajadores generalmente sólo necesitaban irse a la huelga por pocos días, permitiendo que la mayoría de ellos fueran a casa a cortar el césped, para que los patronos acordaran negociar. Las manifestaciones masivas, las tomas de plantas, y las huelgas organizadas con precisión militar fueron abandonándose poco a poco como medios de lucha por los líderes sindicales. Fue durante este periodo que se representante sindical se convirtió en trabajo fácil y que el huelguista único se convirtió en norma. Sin embargo, éste no había sido el caso siempre, sino más bien una aberración, aberración que le costó caro al movimiento laboral cuando la caída económica de los 70 y 80 tuvo lugar. La derrota de los controladores aéreos en 1981 fue un momento crucial para las relaciones obrero-patronales. El recientemente jubilado Lane Kirkland estuvo al frente de la lucha contra la membresía que abogaba por una campaña nacional de solidaridad con los huelguistas. Mientras los líderes del sindicato fueron encarcelados, el resto de las uniones los ignoraron. Los controladores aéreos no podían concebir la actitud tomada por los líderes sindicales a nivel nacional, que argumentaron que una huelga general sería ilegal, que los recursos sindicales se agotarían, etc. Esta derrota marca la pauta de todas las batallas aún hoy en día.

Desobediencia civil

Las alternativas que la nueva dirección sindical tiene son: o rechazar los métodos de los últimos cuarenta años, o presidir la total destrucción del movimiento sindical. Algunos líderes sindicales han finalmente caído en la cuenta de que estamos en un nuevo periodo de lucha entre los trabajadores y los capitalistas, y de que los últimos cuarenta años no fueron en realidad la regla sino una excepción como periodo histórico. Lo que lleva a la conclusión de que nuevos métodos de lucha son necesarios para el presente periodo.

Al momento, casi cualquier acción que incremente la membresía o que produzca mejoras en los contratos es ilegal. NO podremos ganar si vamos con la corriente y jugamos con las reglas de los Republicanos

tas. Los héroes del movimiento por los derechos civiles adoptaron muchos de los métodos de CIO, incluyendo las huelgas de ocupación, as demonstraciones masivas y la desobediencia civil.

Esto no significa los arrestos simbólicos para la fotografía de ciertos líderes sindicales actuales durante las huelgas, donde todo el mundo sabe que van a ir a cenar a casa. Las tajetas de crédito de la unión y las campañas publicitarias no van a cambiar los sindicatos. Pensar que el sindicalismo va a ser más atractivo si es seguida la definición de lo que es ser miembro, con trucos baratos, es cosa de locos. Lo que la unión tiene de atractivo es, esencialmente, los salarios altos y la voluntad de luchar por lo que es justo. Los retrógrados en las uniones argumentarán que en el pasado, se podía desafiar la ley porque el movimiento no tenía oficinas ni inversiones, pero que hoy eso ha cambiado. Esto es cierto hasta un punto. El movimiento laboral tiene hoy recursos financieros, legales, y sobre todo de membresía, inimaginables; lo que haría la organización masiva mucho más fácil. Y, al cabo, si las cortes de los empresarios se quitan los escritorios de \$2000 a unos cuantos líderes sindicales, no sería tan malo. Los nuevos líderes de AFL-CIO deberían aprovechar la oportunidad. El pueblo está molesto; está siendo explotado y poco renombrado, especialmente los jóvenes. La gente joven quiere una mejor vida, y sólo el sindicato les puede ofrecer eso. Como dijo un trabajador, es como si los líderes hubieran abandonado a sus hijos.

El movimiento laboral necesita un programa de lucha, su propio partido político, y una estrategia de organización que no incluya la desobediencia civil masiva a medias, sino que la haga el centro de la misma. Cuando los miembros del sindicato sean vistos ocupando plantas y manifestándose masivamente, y los líderes yendo a la cárcel en defensa de los mal pagados, entonces las uniones van a reclamar la altura moral que perdieron por hacerle el juego a los capitalistas.

En los años 30, fueron los socialistas y comunistas los que daban el impulso a la lucha, porque tenían la perspectiva y el optimismo de no solo saber contra lo que luchaban, pero también porque luchaban. Sin importar el resultado de la lucha en la cúpula de la AFL-CIO, sólo una sociedad democrática socialista puede llevar adelante los cambios que los trabajadores necesitan.

ROB ROOKE
UAW L. 1981, Chicago

Como ganarse a los trabajadores

El Congreso de Organizaciones Industriales (CIO), en los años 30, se ganó una gran autoridad moral sobre la clase obrera por su voluntad de romper las leyes injus-



New York Water: Polluted by "Fecal Matter"

Long considered to have the highest quality drinking water of all U.S. cities, New York City was just found to have violated federal drinking water status over 13 times. Of the other 300 systems in the U.S. which provide drinking water for populations of at least 100,000 people, only eight other systems violated these standards more than once. Today in New York City many people drink tap water containing viruses, bacteria or microbes. The water's purity has been affected by increased fecal matter from birds, excessive amounts of chlorine used to prevent lead poisoning, cryptosporidium (a parasite which is fatal for people with AIDS and others with weak immune systems), and wastes which have been dumped in upstate water reservoirs by corporations like GE.

This is not the only environmental problem which affects New York City. The Fresh Kills landfill on Staten Island has created enormous problems for area residents. Nearly half of all children on Staten Island have respiratory problems. Children raised in Williamsburg, Brooklyn have leukemia rates 60 times greater than the rest of the country. Throughout the city, all children are exposed to dangerously high levels of lead, which can impair their intelligence.

In Williamsburg waste disposal problems are increasing. The Giuliani administration claims that

the city budget deficit no longer allow the local government to subsidize recycling centers. Without these subsidies big business refuses to invest in recycling centers because it is not profitable. Since the government is cutting back on spending many working-class communities also do not have adequate sanitation services. Although they claim to have no money for recycling and garbage pickup, the Giuliani administration is moving ahead with plans to build an incinerator which would create further health risks. You can bet that whoever receives the contract for this job will get enormous tax breaks and subsidies.

Residents have not been intimidated by either Giuliani or the local Democratic party thugs. We have prevented them from building the incinerator for the last nine years. This did not stop Giuliani from trying to extend a permit to expand a local waste transfer station. But when neighborhood residents demonstrated on several occasions protesting the smells that came from the nearby dustbowl, the rats that invaded their apartments and the noise from the trucks that lined up in the middle of the night, Giuliani was forced to back down.

New York has these environmental problems because the government is more concerned about protecting the profits of big business than

it is in providing us with clean drinking water and sanitation services. Filtration plants exist in other cities in order to make drinking water cleaner and safer. Giuliani claims the city does not have \$4 billion to build such a plant. This seems peculiar considering the local government has used taxpayer dollars from workers to balance the budget by cutting Wall Street's taxes and recently gave another \$150 million gift to the Mercantile Exchange.

It is apparent that neither Giuliani and the Republicans or the Democratic-controlled City Council are interested in providing us with clean drinking water. Their pockets are lined by high salaries and big business. They can afford to buy either expensive home filter systems or bottled water. Many of us cannot.

The labor movement is the only force in society that can address this issue. Unions need to defend our right to have a clean environment and jobs. Clearly now is the time to have a Labor Party. Instead of giving tax breaks and tax dollars to private companies and the rich, funding should go to building a filtration plant and a publicly-owned and controlled water and sanitation system to provide clean water and a clean city for everyone.

STEVE PERKINS
Brooklyn, NY

Heatwave Kills Poor

The three-day July heatwave, which topped 106 degrees, was the hottest in Chicago history and for 500 people it was their last days. What we've just witnessed was not a natural disaster but a preventable social disaster.

A crowd of James Sisson's family and friends comforted each other as they mulled the 44-year old's death in a cruelly-hot apartment in Robert Taylor Homes. James had a seizure during the night with the heat and lack of fresh air. At the same time Mayor Daley took off to his breezy, lakeside cottage. In reality, James Sisson died of poverty: a disease which the politicians and the employers perpetuate.

In the windows of Chicago's gold coast high-rises are air conditioning units. But for the 200,000 Chicagoans living on the public housing high rises air conditioning is an option most can't afford. The rich have a swimming pool in every backyard, while city kids were forced to open 3,000 hydrants to try to survive the heat. Water

pressure wasn't our only problem as ComEd, that very profitable electric company, shorted electricity for thousands.

In the richest country in the world and one of the richest states (Illinois ranks 13th largest economy in the world) these tragedies should not happen. People have a right to a living wage, decent affordable housing and a happy retirement. Too many "senior citizens", (who are retired workers) subsist on incomes that don't allow them to afford decent housing and air conditioning.

While the Republicans and Democrats fall over each other to cut medicare and welfare, the bosses and their politicians have fought a war against subsidized housing. This has allowed slumlords to further rob low-income people, through high rents for bare walls. And the bosses want to make the city unlivable through more cuts to public transit.

Labor Militant fights all cuts and believes that it's time to turn things around in Chicago. We

need a union and community fightback and our own party, a Labor Party, to fight for workers' and youth rights and to take society forward out of this profit-addicted system:

- Restore the cuts and expand social services for communities and the elderly
- \$500 allowance for airconditioning for every household
- Dramatic expansion of park district facilities especially swimming pools for the kids
- Massive infusion of public funds to refurbish all public housing
- Tax the multi-billion dollar Chicago Board of Trade and make the rich pay for their crisis

The blame for this mass murder falls on the bosses and their politicians

PETE ANDERSON
AFSCME Steward, Public Aid Worker
Cabrini Green, Chicago

PRISON ABUSE PROTEST

Not one protest sign criticized capital punishment as we gathered in defense of death row prisoners' rights. My sign read "Rehabilitate—don't Humiliate" and "Personal Hygiene is Necessary." Another sign aimed at the guards read, "Stop the abuse!" One read, "Germany had Hitler, Hell has Satan and Indiana State Prison has M.D. Williams." Mr. Williams is the administrator responsible for the guards' conduct.

Most of the twenty protesters were family members and friends of Chuck Roche, a death row prisoner. His mother and sister wore t-shirts emblazoned with "We Love You Chuck." Our objective was to let the public know about the ill-treatment of prisoners by guards abusing their positions.

Since Chuck arrived at the prison, he and his cellmates have been unmercifully antagonized by the guards. Prisoners have been denied showers and then forced into showers fully clothed and returned to cold cells during winter months. They've been handcuffed to bars and left hanging for hours. During shakedowns, personal letters and family photos are confiscated and destroyed. Prisoners have been denied personal hygiene items (soap, shampoo etc.) forcing them to shave their avoid head hair.

The key problem facing the politically conscious prisoners is that they are being singled out for abuse to the point where they are forced to react. The Roche family described one visit where Chuck showed them his bruises from

mistreatment.

Chuck's family and friends accept that he has committed a crime and therefore must do some time as punishment. However, this should not be at the personal whim of the prison guards.

There is currently over one and half million people in prison in the USA. Probably a large percentage are innocent through misidentification or poor legal assistance. The government is warehousing instead rehabilitating. This does not make for a safer society, but actually just hardens criminals and we'll all pay for that in the long run.

EUGENIA BRISCOE
Member, AFSCME Local 2000
Chicago

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

OJ Simpson Trial Exposes Police Brutality, Racism

O.J. Simpson's trial is undergoing as many twists and turns as a snake having a fit. The latest may have repercussions way beyond the trial itself. It has now been revealed that Mark Fuhrman, the LA cop who says he found the famous bloody glove recorded a series of tapes in which he used the "n-word" about blacks repeatedly.

"We've got females...and dumb n____ and all your Mexicans that can't even write the name of the car they drive...and all of 'em should be lined up against a wall

and shot," he is reported to have said. He also talks about beating and choking a man after he was unconscious as well as numerous other stories of brutality, one of which resulted in the death of a suspect.

Of course the real facts about the way the police works lie behind millions of other trials, but it took O.J. Simpson's million-dollar legal team to unearth them in this case....

FRANK TURNER
California

Send your comments to:
Labor Militant
P.O. Box 5447, LIC, NY 11105

Wrong person, buddy!

My father, an 80-year old, retired construction worker on social security, became a victim of capitalist harassment. Upon finishing his morning coffee and muffin, he threw the plastic coffee cup onto a designated garbage heap. Within seconds, an agent of the Environmental Control Board appeared and pursued my father for several blocks demanding I.D. The police were called, and my father was issued a \$500 fine!

Can a retiree on a meager, fixed income be categorized as an environmental criminal like Exxon corporation?

DOROTHY IMPERIALE
Queens, New York

ORDER NOW!

Why We Need A LABOR PARTY

\$3.00

LETTERS FROM X-ROW

\$1.00

For orders, write to: LABOR MILITANT
P.O. Box 39462, Chicago, IL 60639

CONTACT LABOR MILITANT

BOSTON:
P.O. Box 3598, JW McCormack Station
Boston, MA 02101

CHICAGO:
P.O. Box 39462, Chicago, IL 60639

COLUMBUS:
P.O. Box 02192, Clintonville Stn, Columbus OH 43202-9998

MANCHESTER:
P.O. Box 5831, Manchester, NH 03108-5831

MICHIGAN:
P.O. Box 1741, East Lansing, Michigan 48826-1741

NEW YORK:
P.O. Box 5447, LIC, NY 11105

OAKLAND:
P.O. Box 10614, Oakland, CA 94610

PHILADELPHIA:
P.O. Box 24600, Philadelphia, PA 19111

SEATTLE:
P.O. Box 45365, Seattle, WA 98145

TORONTO:
P.O. Box 148, Station F, Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 2L5

VANCOUVER:
P.O. Box 79006, Kingsway, Vancouver V5R5H0

Call us:
1-800-655-9277

E-MAIL

Cserve: 71412,313
InterNet: militant@cpccn.com

Condolences

to
Dino, Michele, Theresa
and their family
on the passing of
their mother
in May 1995

NEW!

Socialism Today

the international magazine
of Marxist analysis and news of
workers' struggles

Tyr (10 issues) £25
For orders write to:
SOCIALISM TODAY

3/13 Hepscott Rd., London E9 5HB

Congratulations

to
Steve & Virginia
on their wedding

Labor Militant

For Labor/Community Inquiry Into Philly's Justice System

Supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal celebrated the stay of execution granted by Judge Sabo on August 7th knowing that their hard work organizing demonstrations, leafletting, letter-writing campaigns, petitions and civil disobedience here and around the world tipped the balance in Mumia's favor.

Police Campaign to Kill Mumia

Mumia's opponents were determined to kill him and organized their own campaign to see that the execution went ahead as soon as possible. Governor Ridge signed the death warrant knowing that Mumia had not exhausted his appeals. Judge Sabo, the justice who presided over Mumia's first trial and who has presided over more death penalty convictions than any other judge in the US, refused to recuse himself from the retrial hearings. Two or three hundred Fraternal Order of Police members picketed the location of a fund raiser planned by Mumia's supporters, even though the event had already been canceled. Supporters had a very difficult time finding a venue for later fundraisers, so much so that a Rage Against the Machine concert had to be staged in Washington DC. The Philadelphia event was finally held at 1199 union hall despite public statements by FOP president Rich Costello accusing 1199 of "openly advocating the murder of police officers."

Questions surround Mumia Abu-Jamal's 1982 trial convicting him of killing police officer Daniel Faulkner and sentencing him to death. Mumia's current legal team has presented a seven page petition for a retrial explaining the grounds on which they believe a new trial should be granted. They cite evidence withheld from the jury, illegal rejection of jurors on the basis of race by the prosecution, inadequate resources made available to the defense and botched ballistics studies, among many other points.

Labor/Community Commission Needed

Mumia Abu-Jamal needs more than a new trial, he needs a fair trial. Is justice possible in the court system in Philadelphia, notorious for police repression and intimidation under Police Commissioner, later Mayor, Frank Rizzo in the 1970's? Where police bombed MOVE, burning 63 homes to the ground, killing 6 adults and 5 children in the 1980's? And where now, in the 1990's, 5 police officers have been indicted for stealing money from suspects, falsifying search warrants and police records, planting guns and drugs on people then lying about it on the witness stand to send people to jail? In this ever-expanding scandal, at least 12 more officers are expected to be indicted and 1.100 convictions could be overtaken.

This "justice" system can't deliver justice! Only by establishing a Labor/Community Commission to review the facts of the case could a fair trial be guaranteed. The commission would need full access to police and court files, the power to subpoena any witness it judged significant to the case, the resources to carry out a thorough re-investigation and the authority to punish anyone it found guilty of wrongdoing. Its hearings and deliberations would be open to the public.

Class Action Suit

Supporters of Mumia Abu-Jamal have plans to file a class action suit against the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania which would deny Governor Ridge the right to sign any more death warrants until there has been a thorough investigation into corruption at all levels of the "justice" system—from the Philly cops to the District Attorney (who recently pleaded guilty to a mail fraud charge as part of plea bargain agreement) to the state supreme court (which impeached one of its own judges last year for getting employees to obtain prescription drugs for him). This is a great idea and will focus public attention on the wider issue of justice surrounding Mumia Abu-Jamal's case. But who will preside over this case, perform the necessary investigations, etc.? Likewise, only the Labor/Community Commission could truly get to the bottom of this very rotten barrel of apples.

Activities in support of Mumia Abu-Jamal will continue in Philadelphia and elsewhere until justice is served. Contact: National People's Campaign, 813 S. 48th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19143, (215) 724-1618 or 39 West 14th Street, Room 206, NY, NY 10011, (212) 633-6646. Emergency Mobilization to Save Mumia, c/o 1199C, 1319 Locust Street, Philadelphia, PA 19107.



DEFEND PUBLIC EDUCATION!

Tens of thousands of high school and public college students fought a heroic battle against the attack on their education in the spring of this year in New York. As the new school year starts, students across the country are faced with a continued attack on public education with bigger classes, higher tuition, less teachers. MARY MURTHA, a public school teacher, examines why education is under attack:

The struggles within the public education system in America mirror the struggles, conflicts and crisis of the capitalist system we live under.

Throughout the 19th century, the American frontier had served the purpose of providing an opportunity for a better life. During this century, in the folklore of capitalism, education became the new frontier. The saying "go west young man" became "go to college." But by the 1970s, the folklore was no longer matching reality as the economy headed for a downturn.

Beginning in the late 1970s, the shift in federal funds from social and educational programs to defense and the loss of revenue due to the tax breaks to the rich, began to eat away at spending for elementary, secondary and higher education.

What we face today is the effects of Reaganomics trickling down into the classroom. As we feel the noose around the neck of public education tighten, we have to see that the struggle to defend public education is also a struggle against a system that no longer cares to educate the youth, a system that no longer provides a decent future for the majority.

Assault on Education

During the past year, the assault on public education has gathered momentum and attracted a wide variety of followers. These are usually individuals with no background in education or child development, but very willing to write articles, hold press conferences and rant about cutting funds for education and slashing the "bloated bureaucracy."

They roar about the education budget deficits, which are in fact the deficits brought about by the waves of tax breaks for the wealthy, big business and real estate moguls. Then they demand that working people and the poor pay by slashing funds for



education, welfare and social services. They insist that education cuts can be made without "hurting the quality of education."

Nevertheless, these attacks have resulted in increased class size, decreased support services, the cutting of nutrition programs, increased tuition, elimination of academic programs and layoffs of instructors and other school personnel.

Blaming the Victim

While these cuts are taking place, the politicians, with the help of the media point a big finger at the failures of the public education system. In the attempt to place blame, they point first at the students, next at the parents, then at the "bureaucracy" and finally the teachers and their unions. This assignment of blame serves an important purpose. If parents blame the teachers and teachers blame the students and students blame the parents and teachers, and everyone including the union leaders blame the "education bureaucracy," there is little chance that the necessary movement to save public education can be built.

Today, parents, teachers, students, staff members and union leaders are drawn into an ideological struggle regarding the purpose and mission of education. The demand from the politicians and their backers is that public education be dismantled and given over to the private sector to "fix it." They want to abandon the responsibility of educating all the kids, unless their parents are able and willing to pay for it through the nose.

But as they attempt to squeeze the last living breath out of the public education system, we must build a

movement to fight back.

The starting point for students and the labor movement must be to expose the lie that there is "no money for public education." We must say clearly that the money is there, in the hands and bank accounts of the rich who are dictating the agenda. Clinton and the politicians found \$50 billion to provide welfare for the multinationals when they needed to protect their investments in Mexico, and to give massive tax breaks and subsidies to their masters, big business.

The struggle for education is reaching a turning point. Either this world was made for all of us, or it will continue to be run by the few for the rich. The struggle of the students at the City University of New York are an indication of the movements that will develop in the future as the attacks continue.

The labor movement has the resources to organize and assist a serious fightback, link with the students and parents and educate the working class about the lies and hypocrisy of the system we live under. Such a movement may start to defend public education, but it will ultimately have to stand for a new society that is not based on exploitation, poverty, and racism.

Part of our demands should be:

- Fight the cuts, privatization and tuition increases
- Double the spending for education at all levels
- Free education – Education is a right
- Democratic student-parent-teacher management of educational institutions

MURDERED BY THE BOSS

Low wages, harassment from the boss, no time to see friends or to study. These are problems of young workers trying to survive or save up money for college. But working that minimum wage job can be more than a burden—it can be a big danger. Thousands of young people are injured or killed on the job every year.

According to a recent Alert released by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a reported 670 16- and 17-year olds died at work in the 1980s. Also, 64,100 teenagers (ages 14-17) were treated in emergency departments for workplace injuries in 1992. This is a conservative estimate, as only about one-third of work-related injuries are treated in emergency departments.

Young people are being murdered, maimed and hurt on the job. Why? Because unsafe conditions, long work hours, improper training and understaffing save management money. Suing the company after an accident happens doesn't reverse death or injury. We need to organize unions to protect us and fight for better wages.

How the Media Manufacture Reality

p. 7

History of Affirmative Action

p. 5

LABOR MILITANT

6 ISSUES \$10

12 ISSUES \$17

Postage included

Checks payable to:
LABOR MILITANT
P.O. Box 39462
Chicago, IL 60639

