



The ORGANIZER

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Philadelphia Workers'
Organizing Committee



MARCH 1978

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Miners study contract proposal

"WE CAN FIGHT AS LONG AS IT TAKES"

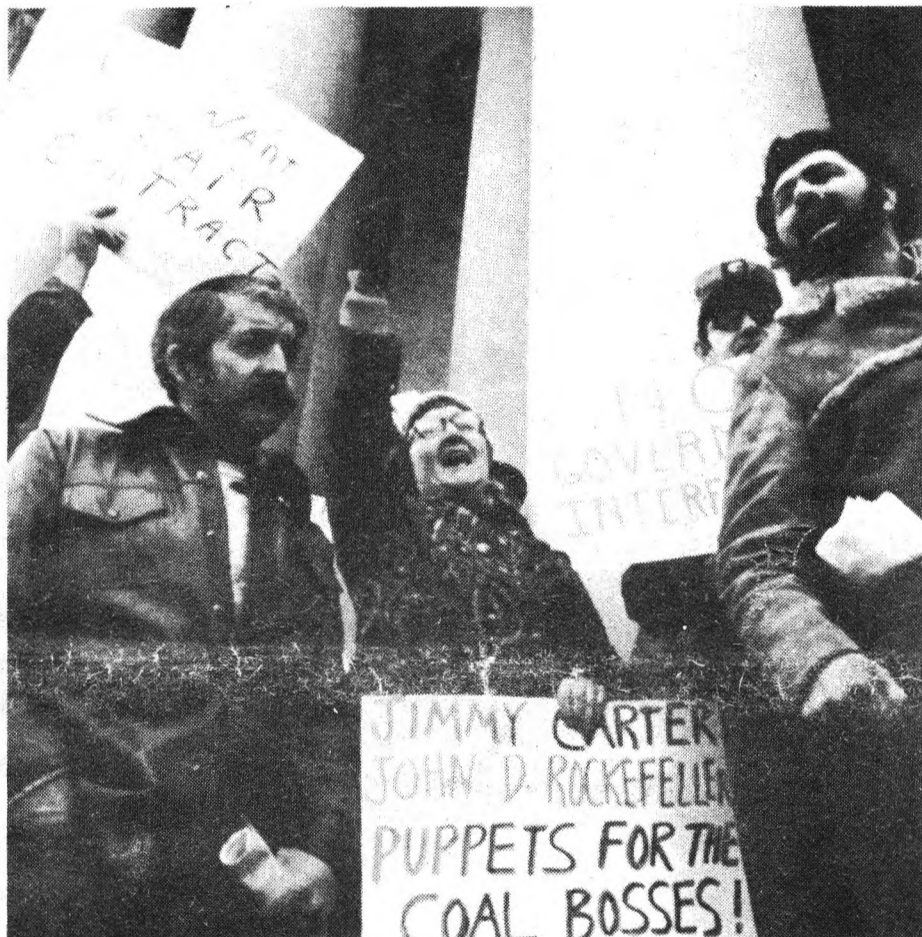
by DUANE CALHOUN

"We're going to take our time and study this here contract, we're in no hurry to ratify it. If it's just about like the one they tried to put over on us a few days back, well, there's no way we can work under that." That statement from a West Virginia coal miner is pretty typical of the feeling among miners about the tentative contract agreed to by union and company negotiators on February 24th.

During the first week in March, 160,000 striking coal miners will vote on the new contract. Two earlier settlements were dumped due to protests by rank and file miners, including rallies of over 2000 miners each in Beckley and Morgantown, West Virginia. The latest contract is almost a copy of the one reached by union negotiators with the independent P&M Coal Co. That contract faced stiff opposition from the P&M rank and file because it allowed the company to fire anyone who had "fomented or otherwise been involved in the cause of an unauthorized work stoppage", made strikes over grievances illegal, gave health benefits less than those under the old contract, and took away the power of union safety committees to shut down jobs that are threats to life.

If the UMW rank and file does vote to accept, it will only be because of the hardships of a three month winter strike with a union president who's in the company pocket. But miner's spirits are high; they realized that the severe coal shortages are in their favor, and they seem ready to hold out. One District 17 official told the *Organizer*, "When they start having to negotiate with a candle, why then they'll start to come around. We can fight 'em just as long as it takes."

The UMW rank and file clearly spelled out what it wanted in this contract at the UMW's 1976 convention in Cincinnati. Delegates there voted nearly 100% for



a resolution binding President Arnold Miller to hold out for the local right to strike over grievances. Coal industry arbitrators are even more pro-company than most, ruling against the union in about three-fourths of all grievances.

Former UMW Secretary-Treasurer Harry Patrick described the need for the right to strike this way, "The 1974 agreement was a good contract. I was proud of that contract, but it's reduced to about three pages right now. I can show you things in it in black and white that we

don't have any more. I found out that a contract is not worth the paper it's written on unless you can enforce it."

At the convention the miners also made it clear that they would not accept any retreat on safety rules, yet the latest contract offer takes away the right of union safety committees to shut down a job they believe might kill or cripple a miner. This rule is critical in the coal mines, where a worker is five times as likely to be killed on the job than in any other industry. Miners rightly

regard any step back on safety as a threat to their lives.

HEALTH BENEFITS A MUST

When the coal companies cut the miners' health benefits last summer, claiming the benefit fund was going broke, nearly half the miners in the eastern fields went out on a two-month wildcat. They only went back when President Miller promised to get the benefits fully restored in this contract. Instead, the proposed contract requires each union member to pay the first several hundred dollars of their year's health costs as a deductible, before the benefit fund will pay anything.

If the miners reject the contract, President Carter will most likely use the Taft-Hartley law to order them back to work, with the threat of jail and heavy fines if they don't obey. Taft-Hartley has been used against the miners before, and each time they ignored it and refused to work without a contract. Carter will also ask Congress for a special law, authorizing temporary government control of the mines, giving the President the legal right to dictate contract terms to the miners and to use the army to enforce them.

Nearly half of the eastern coal mines are non-union, but half of these mines have been shut down by UMW pickets. Those pickets mean business, and troops trying to re-open the scab mines or move scab coal trucks will be met with rocks, clubs, and gunfire. After Carter threatened the miners with Taft-Hartley, rank and file miner John Beckett of Shadyside, Ohio, said "there'll be some guerilla warfare if they go too far."

The National Guard has already been called out to protect scabs in Indiana, and District 5 union officials in western

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story of a Puerto Rican
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Letters To The Editor...



the struggle against racism ...

The following two letters deal with various aspects of the struggle against racism and its treatment in the pages of the Organizer. We appreciate this kind of constructive criticism and feedback and urge our readers to keep it coming. We're listening.
The Organizer Staff

Dear Editor,

I read with interest your article in the December issue on "Gould-ITE". As usual, your story was insightful. I have one addition, however.

You stated that racism was the main reason unions were not successful in the South. I agree. But your solution was to call on the UAW and other unions to organize southern workers.

While this is part of the solution, we must not forget that the unions themselves are racist and often represent big business rather than labor. This, of course, has been pointed out by the Organizer many times.

But what was missing in the article was the importance of rank and file organization in the South. The challenge to the Southern working class is to organize themselves into strong rank and file units. In this way we can best fight for our interests before, during, and after union drives.

Yes, racism exists. But we can already see the solution to achieving class unity. For a variety of reasons (civil rights struggles, increased demand for labor, black migration into cities) mills and factories in the South have been forced to hire large numbers of black workers.

For the first time Southern labor has become integrated at the point of production. This is good. We now have a stronger basis for class unity. Already we have begun to see that we have more in common with each other than with the bosses.

Now we must strengthen this unity, for it is still very weak. And as our rank and file organizations grow we must build ties with northern workers, for it is the same struggle.

B.R.
Kannapolis, N.C.

Friends,

The article, "What about Human Rights for Undocumented Workers?" (Organizer, Oct. 1977, p. 14) taught me a lot about their contributions to the US economy, and the conditions for them here and in Mexico since the Mexican-American War. Two weaknesses of the article were that 1) it did not emphasize the use of racism as a general tactic to divide the working class, which is a feature of capitalism world wide; and 2) it did not tie the numerous racist campaigns which are being waged in the recession of the 1970s to earlier economic crises.

The above two points can help increase a systematic political understanding of the roots and branches of racism in order to better know how to cut it out! I wanted to bring this up because you are strong fighters against racism and have asked for criticism to help become more consistent.

It is not new to the 1970s that "foreign" workers are being attacked as aliens. Historically, in times of economic recession and crises the government and chief owners of business and finance get together to try to shift the blame for society's problems away from themselves (see Bakke leaflet history). One main tactic of the capitalists is to arouse racism against minorities and foreigners. The campaign against undocumented workers, the backlash against affirmative action, the exaggeration of welfare fraud, the campaign against imports — all have this aspect in common, they are geared to making white workers distrust the working class, and this is one way, by making it seem that people of different races are taking more than they give, or taking jobs away from other workers. This is an attempt to hide that the lack of jobs to go around is itself a feature of capitalism.

The "Overturn the Bakke Decision" article in the same issue also gave useful facts and addressed the backlash against

Civil Rights in the context of racism as a tactic of capitalism. As both of these articles show, the fight for equal rights to basic needs of job, housing, income, health care and education are in most cases little better than they were twenty years ago. We will not be successful in our fight to organize a new society until working people of all races and nationalities consistently stand up beside each

other and build multi-national unity.
a friend in Seattle

P.S. Why does the caption to the Bakke article picture say "a blatantly racist attack on Black civil rights..."? I think that is taking a statement out of context from the Black Caucus which is a special interest group, and narrowing to one race the attack on Civil Rights.

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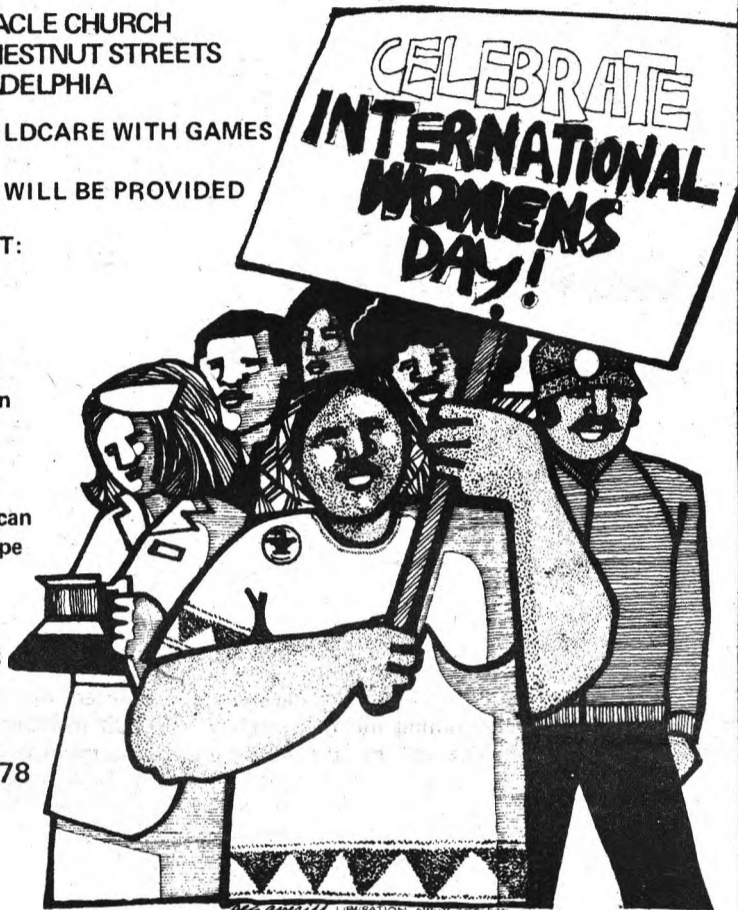
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Philadelphia Workers' Organizing Committee

Who We Are



The PWOC is a Communist organization, basing itself on Marxism-Leninism, the principles of scientific socialism. We are an activist organization of Black and white, men and women workers who see the root causes of the day-to-day problems of working people as the capitalist system itself. We are committed to building a revolutionary working class movement that will overthrow the profit system and replace it with socialism.

We seek to replace the anarchy of capitalist production with a planned economy based on the needs of working people. We want to end the oppression of national minorities and women, and make equality a reality instead of the hypocritical slogan it has become in the mouths of the capitalist politicians. We work toward the replacement of the rule of the few — the

handful of monopolists — by the rule of the many — the working people.

The masses of people in the US have always fought back against their exploitation and today the movement in opposition to the monopolists are rapidly growing both in numbers and intensity. What is lacking is the kind of political leadership that can bring these movements together, deepen the consciousness of the masses, and build today's struggles into a decisive and victorious revolutionary assault against Capital.

To answer this need we must have a vanguard party of the working class, based on its most conscious and committed partisans, rooted in the mass movements of all sectors of American people and equipped with the political understanding capable of solving the strategic and tactical problems that present themselves on the difficult road to revolution.

The PWOC seeks, in conjunction with like-minded organizations and individuals throughout the US, to build such a party — a genuine Communist Party. The formation of such a party will be an important step forward in the struggle of the working class and all oppressed people to build a new world on the ashes of the old.

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Labor Round-up



Workers announce the Union Bowl. Left to right: Pat Burn and John Brosnan from Mesta Machine; Bill Ehman, Latrobe Steel; Bernie Casey, Wiegand; and Mel Packer, Consolidated Freightways and Teamsters for a Democratic Union.

UNION BOWL BUILDS SUPPORT FOR MINERS

The following article was contributed by a steelworker in the Pittsburgh area.

On a snow and ice packed gridiron in Pittsburgh, Saturday, February 4, some 400 union brothers and sisters from over two dozen union shops played an all day marathon football game raising almost \$1,000 for the mineworker's cause. It was a game with a purpose much larger than football and it wasn't anywhere near as boring as the Super Bowl. During the game, in a gym adjoining the field, supporters were entertained by the music of labor singers Jeanne Mackey and Penny Rosenwasser and by film presentations of "Union Maids", "J.P. Stevens Boycott", and the very popular "Harlan County." A bake sale, refreshments and rank and file literature tables were also bustling with activity. The Union Bowl was the first project of the new Committee of Concerned Unionists, a loose co-

lition of rank and filers from area shops, mines, and barns who intend to keep on drumming up strike support through future creative events.

After the game, CCU held a rally featuring speakers from Latrobe Steel local 1537 and Mesta Machine local 7174 (both on strike) and the Teamsters for a Democratic Union and the UMW Dilworth mine. In a special appearance, sponsored by TDU, the president of a 10,000 member local from Puerto Rico gave a message of solidarity and received both a standing ovation and the game ball autographed by many of the stalwart union players present.

Following the rally, Teamsters local 249 hosted a victory party with beer and blue grass music (Devilish Merry) at their hall - until the long hard played day of union solidarity came to a close.

Racist Firing at Victory Metals

On February 2 a Black forklift driver was fired by Victory Metals, Inc. Butch McFitzhugh was fired after a six-month dispute with Victory Metals over their refusal to upgrade him into the position of "receiver".

Butch Fitzhugh had originally applied for the receiver job in the summer, 1977, but was hired as an "assistant receiver" and forklift driver because there was no opening for a receiver at that time. However, a few weeks later, the receiver moved to a different job and on his way out he recommended that Butch, based on his proven performance and three years prior experience as a receiver, be given the job of receiver.

The company ignored his recommendation and hired a white worker off the street with no experience. The company's justification for passing over Butch Fitzhugh was that he was "too valuable" as a forklift driver to upgrade. The unofficial word going around Victory was the company didn't want a "black face" coming in and out of the front office where potential buyers would be.

Most warehouse workers, all of whom are white, recognized the company's action as being racist discrimination, but the warehouse workers were left out of the bargaining unit (Local 837 of the Teamsters) and have no job security or organized form in which to fight back. The two attempts at fighting this discrimination resulted in the firing of two white workers.

Butch Fitzhugh filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and was fired for "excessive absenteeism" several weeks later though he had less absences than other white workers who had not been disciplined.

Butch Fitzhugh has a good case before the EEOC for winning his job back with back pay, but it isn't a sure thing. The only sure thing for defeating racist discrimination and winning decent, equal wages and working conditions is the power of a united, organized rank and file. This is the road to a workers' victory at Victory.

Got a legal problem?

Call Rank & File Labor Law Project

LO-3-1388

More from Alan Wood Steel

Well, Alan Wood Steel is giving its workers the shaft once again. If you have been following our story, after the company made all sorts of threats and pay-cuts, it closed down last summer. Then the receivers of the company went to Bankruptcy Court to cut off all benefits. Blue Cross, Blue Shield, dental plan, and life insurance were cut off for everybody, including those employees on pension.

But this wasn't enough for the receivers, so on January 26th they again went to Bankruptcy Court to ask that the Pension Plan be eliminated. For those who have heard of the Federal Pension Law (ERISA) which supposedly guarantees federal money for pensions if a plan folds, you might not think that this was such a bad thing for the receivers to do. The problem with ERISA is that it only guarantees pension for people who are already on them or they have to wait until they reach age 62. Under one of our plans, employees could retire, under certain conditions, at 55. We have a number of people that need only a few months to get their pensions, but if the judge agrees with the receivers they will have to wait seven years. And for those

people already on pension, their pensions will be reduced, in some cases substantially. So pensioners who are now paying for Blue Cross, Blue Shield, and life insurance out of their own pockets, out of their pensions, will now have their pensions reduced if the receivers have their way.

But not everybody connected with the company is hurting. In a previous hearing the receivers asked for and got the "nominal" sum of \$25,000 for Harleston Wood, former owner of Alan Wood Steel. The money is for the advice Wood gave the receivers. The day before the receivers asked for the pensions to be cut, they got the judge to agree to pay someone \$1,500 a day, up to \$75,000 to help prepare the auction of the company.

No, not everyone is hurting. Just those who kept the plant running and made money for the Wood family. But if we're getting nothing else, we employees are getting a good education on what to expect from the corporations, the courts, and the government, and why we have to rely on our own organization to defend our rights and standard of living.



Retail Clerks Settle

At midnight on January 21st the contract expired for the employees of the major supermarket chains all along the east coast. Members of Local 1357 of the Retail Clerks number somewhere around 7,000 in the Philadelphia area alone. The threat of a strike appeared more and more real as the companies, with Pantry Pride at their head, continued to push for cutbacks in already established wages, particularly around the payment of double time for Sundays and shift premiums for night workers.

There was no real communication between the rank and file and the negotiating team, so the crowd at the first union meeting, Pantry Pride employees, were understandably confused and angry when they were kept waiting for two hours until negotiations were finished. When Local president Wendell Young finally arrived the rank and file was impatient to hear the terms of the contract which the president was urging them to accept.

That was the setting when Young began rattling off page after page of benefits interspersed with comments about the failing profits of the A & P chain and the hardened attitude of the Pantry Pride management. Some of the positive highlights were the continuation of double time pay, substantial increases in the pension plan, strengthened company wide seniority for purposes of upgrading and 15 hour minimum for part time workers.

However, there were some questionable aspects too, the night shift premiums which used to begin at 10 PM were now put off until midnight, and employees hired after this agreement was adopted would not be eligible for the same night shift premiums. Also, new employees would start at the same wage for the next three years, consequently taking them longer to achieve top rate. None of this was discussed, in fact, not a single question was entertained. Instead there was an immediate motion to adopt - which is exactly what happened.

The general sense was one of having received a "good deal," but the confusion about shift premiums and new employees

is only now beginning to be cleared up - its now quite clear to the night workers who are losing money a couple of hours a night. And it will be increasingly clear to the new employees - especially in the third year of the agreement - when they will start at fully \$3.00 below top rate!

Another "benefit" which has already fallen on its face is the provision for two rest periods for employees working six hour shifts - its not surprising that all part-time workers have been scheduled for 5 and 3/4 hours since the ratification meeting. The union must take a stand in this regard.

Time will tell about the other benefits of this contract, but without rank and file involvement in the bargaining process and the union as a whole - and that means much more than the right to ratify an agreement you've never laid eyes on - and without strict enforcement of the contract on a daily basis, the retail contract stands more like a lame duck than an agreement in force.

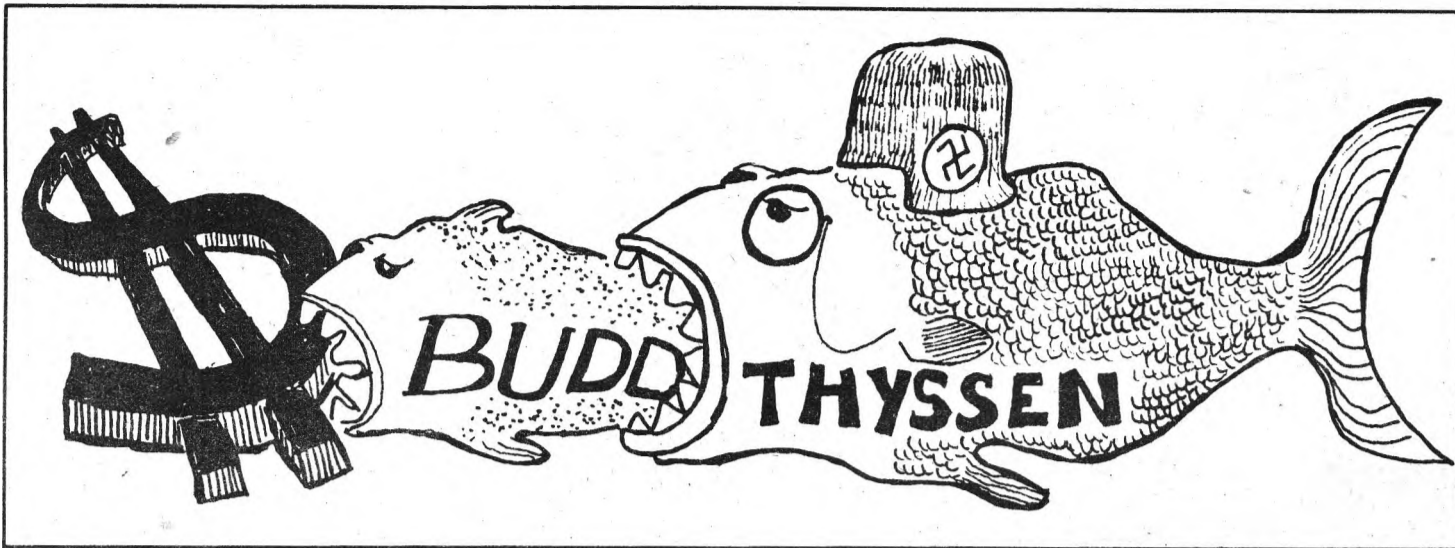
This contract is setting management's pattern for the next period, and that pattern is creating sharp divisions between new hires and senior members, divisions which spell added profits for the owners and less unity in the union - it's up to the rank and file to turn this around before contract time rolls in again in '81!



Budd merges with German Steel corporation

Budd Workers Get New Boss

by DUANE CALHOUN



big fish eat the little

Thyssen AG, a German steel corporation, is buying the Budd Co. for \$275 million, cash. Budd, the 215th largest company in the US, makes auto bodies, chassis, wheels, brakes, truck trailers, dies, foundry castings, plastics, and railroad cars. Budd has twenty major plants in the US, and more in Canada, Germany, France, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil. Last year it sold \$1.25 billion worth of products, about half of that to the Ford Motor Co.

Businessmen on both sides of the Atlantic are making a killing on this sale. Two of the largest Budd stockholders — the First National Bank of Chicago and the Girard Trust Company of Philadelphia — are selling their shares to Thyssen for \$12 to \$24 per share more than they paid for them. As a result, they'll rake in at least \$30 million profit on the transaction.

Most of that money will end up in the Rockefellers' pockets, since they control First National of Chicago. David Ginsberg, former owner of Gindy Trailer before Budd took it over, will collect about \$34 million in cash for his one million shares of Budd.

That's a lot of cash changing hands. Why is Thyssen willing to pay \$100 million over the market price of Budd stock, in cash, to acquire the company? According to investment analysts on Wall St., there are two reasons. Not surprisingly, the first reason is that Budd is a big money-maker. In 1977 Budd cleared a profit of \$46 million. That means each Budd hourly worker created over \$3500 in clear profit for the owners in 1977.

Wall Street insiders predict that Budd's earnings will keep on climbing in the years ahead, with the railcar division leading the way. Because Budd is so profit-

able, Thyssen expects to get its \$275 million back in about five years.

The second reason Thyssen is so anxious to buy Budd is that its major product — steel — has been selling poorly the last few years, and they want a bigger opening into the US market. Foreign companies which own plants in the US are exempt from President Carter's recent import restrictions on foreign steel. Since Budd is the fourth largest buyer of steel in America (only GM, Ford, and Chrysler buy more) Thyssen now has a very big guaranteed market for its steel.

The take-over of the Budd organization, with its experience and contacts in the American auto industry, is also expected to give Thyssen an opening for selling more of its other products (from machine tools to plastics) in the US.

This kind of corporate merger, where the big fish eat the little fish is part of a trend that has gone on since the capitalist economic system began. The drive for more profits forces the employers to invest constantly in new labor saving machinery and mass production methods, to get more production out of fewer workers. The need for more and more expensive machinery, and for larger and larger scale production, necessarily favors the larger companies and chokes the small ones.

Budd has swallowed up more than a dozen smaller companies since its beginning in 1912. The largest of these was in 1968, when Budd bought Gindy Trailer from its founder, David Ginsberg, for 1¼ million shares of Budd stock.

THYSSEN — INTERNATIONAL GIANT

Thyssen itself is a huge corporation,

about eight times the size of Budd. It owns 54 companies in Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Canada, the US, Brazil, Argentina and Liberia. It also holds controlling blocks of stock in many more, including ore mines near Durban, South Africa.

Besides all types of iron and steel, Thyssen makes foundry castings, railroad cars, ships, electric generators, plastics, and machine tools. It's also the landlord of 35,000 workers and their families in Germany. 72,000 of its 140,000 employees work in steel mills. Thyssen made \$125 million profit inside Germany in 1976, its profits on foreign operations aren't published.

Thyssen began as a steel blast furnace, founded by Mr. August Thyssen of Duisberg Germany in the 1880's. The company grew rich during the Nazi Third Reich, getting large military contracts and freed of troublesome labor unions by Mr. Hitler.

Messerschmitt GmbH, builder of aircraft for the Nazi Reichswehr, was (and still is) owned by Thyssen. Hitler's downfall was only a temporary setback for Thyssen and the other corporations which had backed him. Although Thyssen was broken up into smaller pieces under Allied occupation, it received US money under the Marshall Plan in the late '40's, and reassembled into a giant conglomerate in 1953.

Some of the biggest capitalists in Germany sit on Thyssen's Board of Directors. Toni Schmucker, Chairman of the Board of Volkswagen, plus top executives of the Deutsche Bank, IG Metall, and Siemens (the German version of GE) sit on Thyssen's Board. In line with the trend among European capitalists to give

their ramshackle system a pretty paint job, Thyssen's Board also includes four workers. They are pipefitter Werner Rave, roll turner Karl-Heinz Weihs, and two officials of the German Federation of Trade Unions, Heinz Vetter and Adolf Mutter. Of course, the workers are outnumbered five to one and have no real power on the Board.

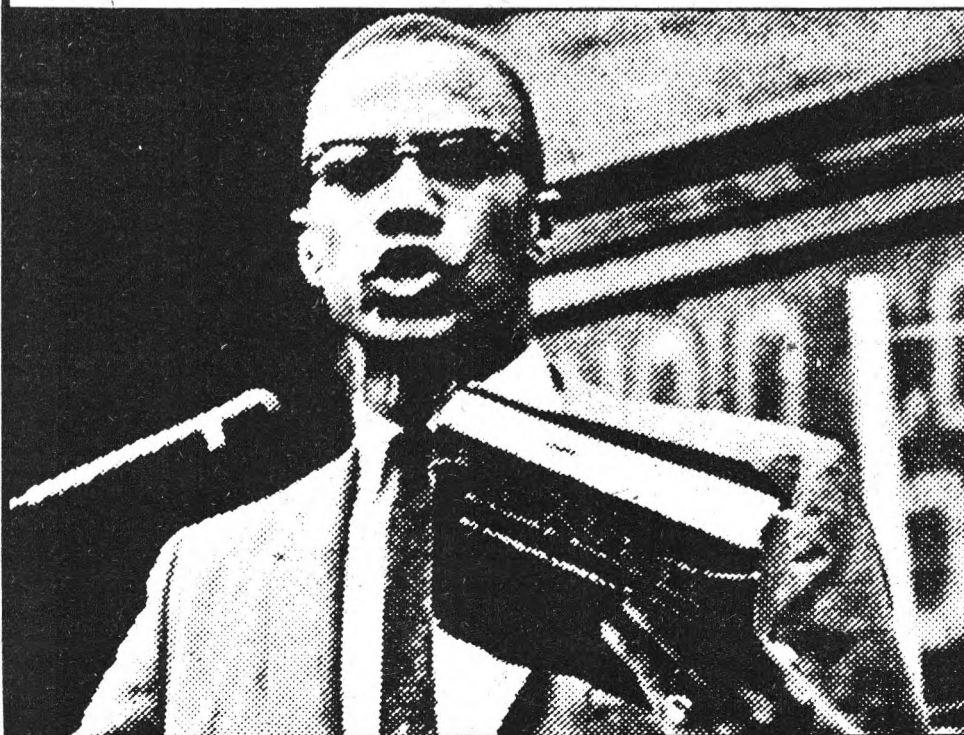
The *Organizer* predicts that this is the end of Budd's "Be American, Buy American" campaign, too. Last year Chairman Gilbert Richards reported in a letter to all Budd employees that the Company was voluntarily holding its purchases of foreign steel to 10% of its total purchases, and called on patriotic Budd workers to write their Congressmen in favor of restrictions against imported steel and cars. Now that his \$350,000 yearly paycheck is being signed in Germany, you can bet you won't be hearing any more of that from old Gil. As long as Budd's owners were American businessmen, naturally they wanted us to "Buy American" and help them eliminate their competition; their motive was profits, not patriotism.

Budd is now one-eighth of a giant multinational firm. Close cooperation with the labor movement in other countries has become even more urgent for Budd workers than before. In order for the union's strike threat to be really effective against Thyssen, it would have to come from representatives of all the major unions of Thyssen/Budd workers acting together.

The UAW-Budd Council needs to hook up with the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), the federation that includes most of Thyssen's European workers, and with the unions in South America and Africa whose members work for Thyssen. The UAW International already has loose ties with the IMF, but this needs to be built up into a working bargaining council, with contracts ending on the same day and joint negotiating teams of some kind. The International Rubber Workers Federation already has such a council for the Michelin Tire Company's plants on three continents.

Budd workers face a bigger and more powerful enemy now, to be sure. But while Budd workers have an opponent eight times as large, they also have eight times as many allies: over 140,000 other Thyssen workers around the world. If all of those workers organized to face Thyssen united, then Budd workers will gain a lot more than they lose from their new employer. It's going to take a large fire under the chairs of our union "leaders" to get the job done, and now is the time to start building it.

Malcolm X, In Memoriam



On February 21, 1965 Malcolm X was assassinated in New York city. He was 39 years old. In his brief life Malcolm inspired and instructed millions of Black people in the struggle for Black Liberation. A high school drop-out at 15, imprisoned for burglary at 21, Malcolm went on to become the most brilliant and effective organizer and leader of the Black Muslims. Breaking with the Muslims over their narrow politics and anti-white stand, Malcolm travelled widely in Africa and the middle east, absorbing the lessons of the liberation struggles there. At the time of his death Malcolm was in the process of organizing a new organization and his politics were still rapidly developing. He was without a doubt the most influential Black nationalist of our time, leaving his mark on the movements of the 60s and 70s.

Malcolm was pictured by the press as a hate-monger and a racist. This was because Malcolm pulled no punches and constantly exposed racist hypocrisy. Malcolm's message was simple and powerful. Let him speak for himself.

On being an American: "I'm not going to sit at your table and watch you eat with nothing on my plate, and call myself a diner. Sitting at the table doesn't make you a diner...Being here in America doesn't make you an American."

On Getting Freedom: "You get your freedom by letting your enemy know that you'll do anything to get your freedom; then you'll get it. It's the only way you'll get it."

On Capitalism: "Capitalism used to be like an eagle, but now it's more like a vulture. It used to be strong enough to go and suck anybody's blood whether they were strong or not. But now it has become more cowardly, like the vulture, and it can only suck the blood of the helpless. As the nations of the world free themselves, then capitalism has less victims, less to suck, and it becomes weaker and weaker. It's only a matter of time before it will collapse completely."



Milton Street (right) and the homesteaders have a heart-to-heart chat with HUD official.

Philadelphia Inquirer / ROBERT L. MOONEY

Milton Street and the Walk-in Homesteaders . . . 'House-Snatchers' or 'House-Savers'

by JOE LEWANDOWSKI

When Milton Street began moving walk-in homesteaders into abandoned houses last year the local newspapers reacted as if the earth had opened up and the Devil himself had appeared in North Philadelphia.

Two years before when Street led the Black Vendors Association in a fight against anti-vending ordinances, the press made dark mutterings about "skull-capped, incense-burning Black vendors," which made it sound as if Center City streets were being turned into sinister alleys of opium smokers and black market traffickers.

The media didn't love Milton then either. After all, it's the advertising revenue from Wanamakers, Gimbels, and Strawbridge and Clothier that pays most of the reporters' salaries and it was these big department stores which were calling the shots in the battle against the vendors.

But the vendors struggle was small potatoes compared to the walk-in homesteading program which Street initiated to save North Philadelphia neighborhoods. In recent months as the homesteading has progressed, moving as many as 300 families into abandoned housing owned by the federal government, so has the newspaper hysteria.

A January cover story in the Inquirer's Today Magazine called Street the "unrepentant house-snatcher" and headlined his words, "Blacks are 45% of the city's population, . . . and we don't control 45% of nothing. . . ." Obviously the powers that be regard this as very dangerous kind of thinking, because they've whipped up a dandy little campaign of character assassination chock full of racist innuendo.

The main tactic in the battle against the homesteaders has been to discredit Street. At first, the attacks centered around Street "stealing" houses, inferring that Street was a threat to small landlords and somehow to all homeowners. A secondary theme has been to picture Street as a hustler, a media grandstander, a manipulator and an opportunist who is interested only in his own political future.

In response to the first charge, Street answers, "If I am doing something that is illegal, why ain't I in jail?" Then he turns to what he thinks is the real question, who is ripping off North Philadelphia? He points out that city policy has turned parts of North Philadelphia into a no-man's land of abandoned houses and acres of empty lots. This "recycling"

of North Philadelphia, he explains, is for a purpose: it is to prepare North Philly for development as Society Hill North, a white middle-class haven surrounding Temple University.

The statistics back him up. An estimated 40,000 abandoned and boarded up houses scar Philadelphia, most of them in the Black and Latin neighborhoods of the city. The people who once lived in them have become refugees in their own city. Over 40,000 families are on the waiting list for vacancies in the 25,000 public housing units which are operated by the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA). Officials estimate that some 150,000 families are in need of decent low-cost housing.

Street and the homesteaders are hardly the threat to private property that the newspapers make them out to be. Homesteaders which have moved into tax-delinquent privately owned homes have usually been able to work out a lease-purchase arrangement with the owner. The main target of the homesteading program has been so-called publicly-owned housing — the houses which have reverted to ownership of the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by way of foreclosure on FHA mortgages. These houses, which are supposed to be rehabilitated and returned to the market by HUD have been standing empty for years, speeding the decline of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

Years of hearings, petitions, and protests has produced few results from HUD and the PHA. Some of the plans for rehabilitation which have been proposed are riddled with kick-backs and inflated construction costs which put them out of the price range of low-income people when they are put up for sale.

The homesteaders, therefore, are doing what the government is supposed to be doing, but with their own money and labor. Before a house is considered for the homesteading program it is checked out by Street's organization, the North Philadelphia Block Development Corp., to see what repairs will be necessary to make it liveable again. Prospective homesteaders are carefully advised as to their obligations to the program, the repairs which will be necessary, and the risks which are involved. One homesteader who was recently evicted from a home in West Philadelphia had already invested several thousand dollars in materials and labor rehabilitating a previously abandoned house.

Leaders of the walk-in homesteading program have made it clear that they are interested in cooperating with federal and city agencies to develop a reasonable plan to return decent housing to low-income people. But they are wary of taking any of the government's promises at their face value, and for good reason.

HUD SHUCKS AND JIVES

Early on in the homesteading program HUD offered to guarantee the homes of the original 27 homesteaders if Street would stop moving people into HUD owned properties. But, sensing a trap, Street refused. "They (government officials) would have painted me as a big hero if I took their offer, but I would have had to stop moving people into houses. And once that stopped, everything else would have stopped, too. Our leverage would be gone."

Street's assessment of HUD's intentions were verified later on when he moved homesteaders into houses which had previously been approved by HUD for occupation by homesteaders. Many of the houses on the list were in a state of decay beyond repair. Others, it was discovered after homesteaders had moved in, were already promised to prospective buyers who were mostly working-class Blacks.

The newspapers ignored the fact that Street had been obviously set-up by HUD and attacked Street for "stealing" the houses from other Black families. Street removed the homesteaders from these houses, called off negotiations with HUD, and resettled the homesteaders elsewhere.

Since then HUD has declared war by evicting some of the homesteaders Street has placed in HUD homes. But this is not a battle that HUD is likely to win. In December and January, for example, HUD succeeded in evicting eight homesteaders, but in the same period of time 48 families, including the eight previously evicted, moved into HUD houses.

The homesteading program enjoys widespread support in North and West Philadelphia where Denise Lawus is carrying out a similar program. Militant demonstrations have hindered evictions and mass demonstrations in City Council has kept the pressure on local government officials.

Some minor victories have been won already as a result. In September, city and federal officials offered to sell fifty-nine of the homesteaded houses to the people who occupied them for \$13.50

each. Street has also forced city officials to move on a program called "Head Start" in which the basic systems of a house are restored — the heating, plumbing and the electrical systems — at a cost of about \$3,500 per house. They are then turned over to low-income families to complete the rehabilitation.

Street thinks that the victories won so far are just crumbs off the table. Larger victories will come, he predicts, when Black people seize their share of political power. Street sees running for political office himself, probably for the Congressional seat now held by Robert N. Nix, as a step in this direction.

WHERE IS STREET GOING?

The newspapers have pounced on Street's announced candidacy as proof positive that the man is a stone opportunist. They have done this precisely because they fear that Street may just be serious about standing up for the interests of Black people. The motives and ambitions of hundreds of other politicians raise no suspicions. But when someone like Street, a fighter, chooses to run, they say, "See, you can't trust this guy."

The people will decide which leaders they can trust. Leaders have to be judged by what they do and so far Milton Street has done a lot. He fingered the Rizzo administration's racist anti-working class housing policy. He has skillfully directed a campaign of militant mass action to get homes for the homeless and expose the empty promises coming from HUD. Finally, his leadership of the homesteading movement has helped spark activity elsewhere, notably among public housing tenants.

Street's political overview remains unclear, but he seems to be moving in the right direction, targeting big business and their political allies as the source of the city's housing crisis and relying on mass struggle as the weapon for change.

The mere fact Street is running for office does not mean he is abandoning this perspective. It all depends on the aims of Street's campaign. Will it serve to further educate and organize the masses and expose the dead end politics of the Democratic and Republican parties? Or will it represent the taming of another militant leader who gives in to the temptations of power, wealth and privilege that political office offer? The Inquirer and the Bulletin can't answer these questions. Only Milton Street can. And the people he has up to now so ably served will be his judge.

Resistance Grows in Zimbabwe & South Africa

by S. BUNTING

To the people of Zimbabwe, Ian Smith's negotiations for an "internal settlement", that is, one without the mediation of the US or Britain, must seem about as serious as a dummy's argument with the ventriloquist.

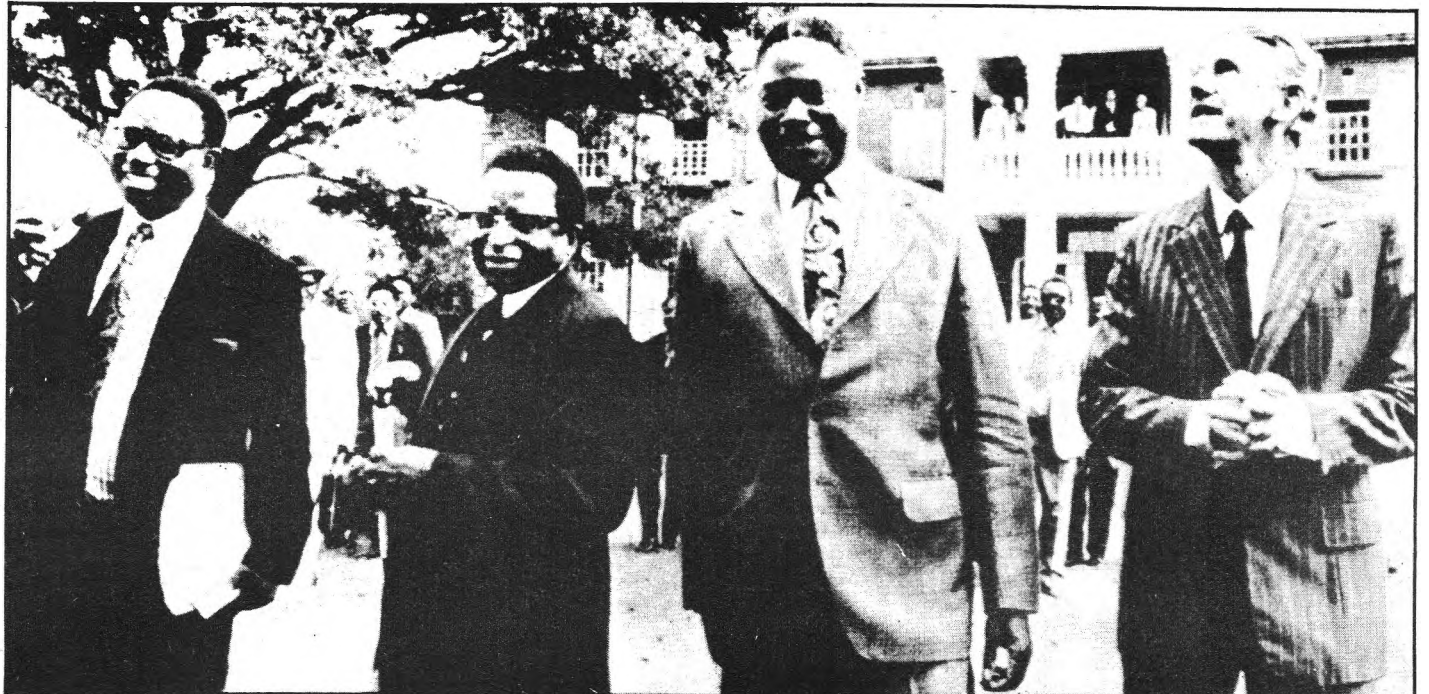
After all, he is negotiating with African "leaders" who enjoy the protection and support of his racist settler regime. Jeremiah Chirau, Ndabaningi Sithole, and Abel Muzorewa, Smith's negotiating partners, have already agreed to reserve one-fourth of the seats in the parliament of a "liberated" Zimbabwe for whites — who are less than 5% of the population.

Meanwhile, the entire country has now become a battle zone as guerillas of the Patriotic Front steadily intensify their struggle, hitting targets in the suburbs of Salisbury, the capital.

While reality will never interfere with Mr. Smith's plans, Britain and the US have come to recognize that it is the Patriotic Front, a coalition of Zimbabwe's two armed liberation movements, which is the most important factor in the future of the country. This recognition prompted the recent conference held on the Mediterranean island of Malta between British Foreign Secretary David Owen and leaders of the Front, Joshua Nkomo and Robert Mugabe.

The goals of Owen and his sometime companion Andrew Young remain the same — to prevent the establishment of a socialist government in Zimbabwe, and to protect the investments of American and British corporations and the availability of cheap labor.

The acknowledgement of the Patriotic Front on this new level, however, is both an unintended tribute to the consistent and successful struggle of the Zimbabwe-



African "leaders" who enjoy the protection and support of the racist settler regime of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) negotiate with Ian Smith. Left to right — Gabellah, Muzorewa, Chirau and Smith.

an people, and a sign of weakness on the part of the imperialist powers.

RESISTANCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, meanwhile, the resistance movement has rebounded with amazing speed from the crackdown of last October 19. Mass organizations representing students, the people of Soweto, and other groups of Black South Africans have grown up overnight. The Soweto Students League, which has replaced the Students Representative Council, has maintained a near 100% boycott of the schools, and the Soweto Action Committee, successor to the Committee of Ten who were arrested, has organized in support of the students.

The Action Committee also organized the

boycott of elections for new "Community Councils". The Councils are the government's attempt to create a figure-head representative government of Blacks to hide the racist brutality of apartheid. These councils, like the Urban Bantu Councils before them, will have no money, and will be subject to strict control by the Bantu Administrator, a top official of the white racist government.

Soweto residents forced the Bantu Councils out of existence, and the Community Councils may never be formed. Conservative African leader Gatsha Buthelezi was forced to insist that members of his political party — a party approved by the apartheid government — not run for Council seats, as this would thoroughly discredit Buthelezi with the people of Soweto.

The speed with which Black South Africans are organizing themselves clearly gives the lie to the claim that resistance is sparked by a few malcontents or outsiders. And each new generation of political organizations has learned from past experience how to prevent disruption by the South African Police. Despite the repression, guerilla activity in the country has been increasing steadily, aimed mainly at sabotaging the apparatus of apartheid. Heavily censored newspapers report on the one hand that no underground activity exists, and then on the other hand that guerillas have been captured and executed!

The success of the resistance has had its effect on the settlers. In 1977, whites left South Africa as fast as they entered — for the first time since World War II.

Public Housing Crisis



housing units. The high rises account for 1500 units while 800 are scattered site units (single family dwellings or apartments) spread around many different neighborhoods.

The major complaint of tenants has been the agency's poor maintenance and repair record. Although PHA is budgeted and staffed to provide services, what many tenants get is no heat and hot water, flooded basements, and leaky and falling roofs. Many properties are in such disrepair that they are health and fire hazards. Another problem is the agency's admission policy. Some 42,000 families are awaiting PHA homes. Yet, even with this incredible demand, vacant PHA properties sit deteriorating in the neighborhoods of Philadelphia.

Until now, City Council chambers has been the battleground where PHA tenants have chosen to launch their campaign for decent housing. Tenants from North Philadelphia, West Philadelphia, Ludlow, Spring Garden and West Kensington have been calling for an investigation of PHA. The agency's budget is not even public information. How a person gets a PHA home remains a mystery to the thousands on the agency's unpublished waiting list.

On February 2nd, City Council met in its regularly scheduled Thursday session. In a unique show of unity and strength, over 200 public housing tenants jammed the Council's chambers to support Councilman Cecil Moore's resolution to investigate the Housing Authority. The voting on the resolution came down along racial lines. In a 12-5 vote against the resolution, 11 of the votes against

were from white council people while 4 of the 5 in favor were from Black council people. It seemed the idea of an investigation struck a raw nerve in the Rizzo controlled City Council.

The Rizzo administration already has one of its agency heads (Augustine Salvitti of the Redevelopment Authority) on trial for corruption. With Rizzo contemplating a third term, an investigation of the patronage ridden Housing Authority could be disastrous to his hopes. The frustrated tenants staged a sit-in for the duration of the day demanding to see the Mayor. In typical fashion, the Mayor refused to hear the concerns of the tenants.

Although the resolution was defeated and tenants did not see the Mayor, the day was a big one for the public housing movement. For the first time, public housing tenants from different parts of the city came together with a common

purpose. The leaders of the action applauded the unity and agreed it was the completion of a crucial first step for public housing tenants. They pledged to work for the development of a city-wide public housing coalition.

The actors are many in the public housing play here in Philadelphia and the curtain has yet to rise on Act II in the struggle. Day by day, tenants are organizing themselves, learning about their rights and moving to action. The city government is trying desperately to defuse the movement by proposing petty and at times contradictory reforms. On the same day, Rizzo called for the closing of the high rises while City Council was asking HUD for funds to repair them. Leaders and tenants know neither of these proposals offer an answer. Only when the inner-workings of PHA are exposed and the agency made more responsible through tenant control will the public housing crisis be on the road to a solution.

by HENRY MENUFARGIS

The struggle for decent and safe public housing is growing here in Philadelphia. Small skirmishes at City Council in early December spearheaded by residents from the Raymond Rosen project have grown to major confrontations between city officials and Black, Puerto Rican and white public housing tenants from all parts of the city.

The focus of the tenant's ire is the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA). PHA is mandated by federal law to provide decent and safe housing for low income people. Besides the rent payments from tenants, PHA is subsidized by the office of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The agency operates 2300

Commemorate Sharpeville Massacre

A commemoration of the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 in South Africa will be held on March 18 at the Zion Baptist Church, Broad and Venango Sts.

The full-day and evening program will start at 10:30 AM and will feature workshops, films, seminars and cultural presentations. Childcare will be provided all day and dinner will be served in the evening.

The South African play by Black artists, "SIZWE BANZI IS DEAD" will be presented at the Annenberg Center on Friday evening, March 3 at 8 PM. The play is a benefit for the Peoples Fund and is being co-sponsored by two member groups, the United Peoples' Campaign Against Apartheid and Racism (UPCAAR) and the Namibia Action Group.

Tickets for the play are being sold for \$8.00 and \$12.00. A discussion and reception will follow the performance. For more information, contact the Peoples' Fund at 1427 Walnut Street, LO 3 0636.

Puerto Rican Workers Fight to Defend Unionism

Government Attacks UTIER Strike

by JENNY QUINN

6200 members of UTIER, the Electrical and Irrigation Workers Union of Puerto Rico, have been out on strike for a little over two months. They are employees of the Water Resources Administration, Puerto Rico's government owned electrical utilities commission. UTIER went out December 27th because the wage and benefit clauses of their contract were unsettled after almost a year of negotiations. Other clauses were settled months ago.

But this isn't just any old strike — both the importance of UTIER to the whole Puerto Rican workers movement and the tactics the government is using against the union make this strike one that can make or break a number of other union contracts that are up this year — including the telephone workers, and the public transport workers whose union, TUAMA, has also gone out. The strike also follows on the heels of a police "death squad" murder of Teamster organizer Juan Rafael Caballero in October, and fits into an overall strategy of the government to stop further unionization of government workers.

The government looks at it like this — since UTIER is the strongest and best organized independent union on the island, if their strike can be broken then any other union that takes a militant and independent stand can also be done in.

UTIER has won, in previous contracts, wages well above the Puerto Rican average (even though their wages are below the US average and the cost of living in Puerto Rico is higher) and their benefits and non-economic terms are among the best.

Despite the fact that the government has arranged the workforce of the Water Resources (WRA) so that fully one-third of the workers are classified as management, and can therefore continue to run the power stations, the UTIER is holding on strong after two months, and has increasing and broad-based support from the public.

The government has sunk millions into its campaign to break the union. At least two bulletins come out daily attacking the strikers, and radio and television programs slander UTIER regularly. Before negotiations were even broken off, the



WRA management met with Civil Defense minister Angel Mendoza to discuss methods for quelling a strike. The government has at its disposal new "urban control" units of the police force, a vast media network and unlimited resources from US banking interests. Although the government is using more violence every day against UTIER, the union has a militant membership and popular support — and that has been enough to take them this far. If they can build that support into the kind of movement they want to, even the bloodiest methods of strike-breaking will not stop them.

GOVERNMENT ISOLATED

The government's credibility with the public is weak, despite their extensive media blitzes. Roberto Sanchez Villela, a member of the governor's own party and former governor himself came out publicly and denounced the results of an independent commission investigation into the strike. He was a member of the commission. The commission report stated that there was no money for significant wage increases. Villela disclosed that there was \$18 million waiting in the

WRA coffers for wage increases, and that the claim that profits had gone down was a distortion. The only reason that profit figures look low is that much of the revenue is drained off by the large US banks to which WRA is in debt, not because it isn't a money-making operation.

The present governor, Barcello Romero, has gone on television to denounce the strike as political rather than economic, and in a sense he is right. It is political because what's on the line is the right to hold a union card that means something. That card will only have meaning if the right to strike is attached to it, and the governor is doing his damndest to take that away. He would like to see public employees limited by no-strike clauses the way they are here. In Puerto Rico, public employees make up about one-fourth of the workforce, and more are joining unions every year.

It is also political because the strike leaders are Independentistas, people who belong to various parties which support independence from the US for Puerto Rico. Anti-communism has also been a central focus in the government campaign, but the workers, whatever their

politics, are united behind their leadership in their demands for decent wages and benefits in their contract.

Anti-union forces have plenty of support coming from both private enterprises in the US and from government agencies and the National Guard. But the strikers do not have the kind of support from workers in the US that could insure the solvent strike fund and the muscle that might be needed to outlast the government.

TUCAR, the Trade Union Committee Against Repression, and PRSC, the Puerto Rican Solidarity Committee, are attempting to build that kind of support. They are calling for letters of solidarity and donations to the strike fund from caucuses, union locals, and individuals throughout the US trade union movement. Strikers and their sympathizers are facing physical attacks every day, and they need our support.

If you want to show your solidarity with the members of UTIER, write to PRSC, Box 4212, Phila. Pa. 19144 for more information.

"You Can Tell They're Not Capitalist"

In July and August of 1977, nine US children and two adults enjoyed a one month stay in Cuba. Their group, the Venceremitos, represented the 5th contingent of US children to Cuba and they stayed in the 26th of July International Camp in Varadero, Cuba, with some 1500 children of 30 nations. In this article some of the children share their experience with the readers of the Organizer.

"EVERYTHING IS EVEN"

In Cuba the people think about each other. They care about their community and the people get together and build a hospital if they need it. They volunteer to do jobs. And the children learn about their country and what's going on. They are raised as revolutionaries.

I liked the delegation meetings. The

meetings I liked best were with Palestine and Chile. The meeting with Palestine was good because the children were so strong mentally. We learned about their struggle that they are going through.

The meeting with Chile was good because they asked us questions we could relate to like about racism and sexism. They were interested in our community.

Everything is even in Cuba. Here we have our ghettos and we have our middle class areas with their cadillacs. There everybody's the same. They have one of everything. They don't have a million different kinds of aspirin. They don't waste their time making a million different products. You can tell they're not capitalist.

If I had the chance to go back to Cuba I would go. I'd like to see more of Cuba and the community.

To help change our society I would do radio shows and articles for papers and stuff. But I can't do it myself. We have to do it as a group. I will tell my friends about my trip.

Kathy Fleming
age 13
Philadelphia

"PEOPLE IN CUBA ARE SMART"

The thing I liked best was the people. The people were friendly and happy most of the time. They never argued with me. Yes the people in Cuba are smart. They do things on their own and they help others of their kind.

I think that Cuba was very smart to fight for their freedom and to keep on

fighting until they won. Not to back off like cowards. I can write a letter to the President telling him that I know how the Cubans feel and if he refuses to back I can protest. But instead I can tell my friends that they should try to find out what I mean and that I'm not telling a lie.

The Palestinians especially are in grave danger. Maybe some of the Palestinian children that we met are dead or hurt badly. Lebanon is in the middle of the situation.

Cuba is very small but yet it beat the US.

Aissis Richardson
age 11
Philadelphia

For anyone who would like more information about the Venceremitos trip last summer, or if you would like to rent a slide show and see an exhibit, please write:

Mitos Slide Show
c/o G. Samuels
PO Box 7764
Philadelphia, Pa. 19101

Bruce Bodner is a worker and activist at the Budd Co. Red Lion Plant. He is a member of the Blue Ribbon Group, a rank and file caucus within Local 92.

UAW rank & file rallies behind Essex workers

by BRUCE BODNER

On February 4, UAW members from across the country assembled in Anderson, Indiana, to address the task of building rank and file organization. The conference was inspired by the militant nine month strike of 220 Essex workers, 85% of whom are women, of UAW Local 1663 in nearby Elwood. The Essex workers took on United Technologies, Inc., one of the richest conglomerates in America. The cause of the strike was starvation wages — \$2.76 per hour.

The strike was defeated. The new contract will bring Essex workers' wages to \$3.37 per hour by 1980. In addition, 110 scabs will remain on the job with top seniority. But as is so often the case, the Essex workers have drawn valuable lessons from their struggle and are determined that next time around they will win. These lessons have value for all auto workers and thus were major focal points of the conference.

Georgia Ellis, a rank and file strike leader and Paul Couch, Local President, brought these lessons home.

Ellis, hardly involved in the local before the strike, in a moving speech told of the effort to drive the scabs from the plant in the face of armed attacks by company goons and the state police. She told of repeated but futile efforts by the local to gain support from the UAW regional and international offices. Ellis explained the stake all auto workers had in the Essex strike.

The wages and working conditions of Essex workers are not uncommon in the UAW. While workers in the Big Three generally earn wages of over \$7 per hour, and enjoy many contract benefits, hundreds of thousands of UAW workers employed in the parts sector and small shops fare far worse. The parts sector is characterized by small shops, with heavy concentrations of minority and women workers, and with sub-standard wages and working conditions.

These low wage auto plants have always provided the auto companies with a weapon to resist the demands of Big Three workers for higher wages and better benefits. Work can be farmed out to these smaller shops, they are available when other locals are on strike, and they operate as a bargaining lever for company negotiators.

The Essex strike was significant, among other reasons, because the trend is growing in the industry to use the small, low-wage operation to increase faltering profits. Plant movements to rural, unorganized regions, decentralization of the process of production and more frequent farming out of work are becoming genuine threats to the UAW and its more highly paid workers. The strike at Essex was therefore a strike against the entire industry, an initial effort to curb the abuse of the small parts worker, a first battle against a growing union-busting movement in auto.

This helps to explain the tenacity of the Essex Corp. which, with the assistance of the state of Indiana and the "neutrality" of the UAW's friends in Congress, unleashed a violent campaign against the workers. Pickets were fired upon by Company guards, state police escorted scabs into the plant, the National Guard was put on alert, dozens of pickets were arrested, 11 workers were fired, supervisors ran down pickets with their cars, and at no time did Essex seriously negotiate with the local. In fact, the wage settlement was a penny less than what was offered in April!

POSITION OF INTERNATIONAL

Under such circumstances it was difficult to comprehend why the UAW International responded as it did to the strike. As President Couch explained, the attitude of the International from beginning to end was that "there's little we can do", that "the strike is a lost cause".

Organizer, March 1978, page 8



Georgia Ellis, a leader of the Essex strikers, was one of the featured speakers at a conference called by UAW rank and file activists in Anderson, Indiana. She suffered a beating at the hands of company goons, but she is still fighting.

Time and again the International urged, pressured and cajoled President Couch to bring his people into line and return to work.

Yet the strikers were determined to win a decent wage and some dignity from Essex. They requested that the International organize sympathy strikes in other Essex plants, they pleaded for a legal boycott of Essex parts being shipped to assembly plants, they asked that the union provide financial help to the local, strained to the breaking point by legal fees and fines.

But the UAW International could not be moved. Fearing that an aroused and mobilized rank and file might get out of their control and viewing the strike as one involving merely "women workers", the International made only token gestures in behalf of the Essex strikers.

The only consistent supporters of the strike were UAW activists around the country and some forces in the women's movement. Caucuses and progressive local officials raised funds, helped when they could with picketing, and tried to bring pressure on the International. Women's groups like Union Wage and NOW contributed funds and some volunteers to aid in the strike.

One of the many important lessons of this strike, stated Georgia Ellis and Paul Couch, is the vital importance of the rank and file movement in the UAW. Had the rank and file movement been more developed and better organized the outcome of the strike might have been very different.

It was to this task that the conference devoted itself. Three speakers, Pete Kelly, a leader of the Independent Skilled Trades Council, Keith Mickens of Local 140 and the Justice Caucus, and Bruce Bodner of Local 92 and the Blue Ribbon Group here in Philadelphia, rounded out the program.

The tasks of the conference have to be seen against the backdrop of the recent history of the rank and file movement.

HISTORY OF RANK AND FILE

Toward the close of the '60's two parallel movements emerged within the UAW. In 1967 a movement developed among skill-

ed tradesmen focusing on wage demands and job security. At about the same time a powerful and well-organized movement among Black production and service workers exploded in Detroit's inner city plants.

Black workers had become the majority in many UAW locals, yet most of these locals were led by white officials having little sensitivity to the problems of discrimination and racism. As a result of the policies of the International many of these same locals neglected the burning shop floor issues like speed-up and health and safety as well. The soil was fertile for the growth of worker militancy and the movement of Black workers gave it an organized expression.

In plant after plant caucuses of Black workers sprang up. Leaflets and newsletters were published. Mass actions against harassment, speed-up and racism were organized. The do-nothing policies of the International were exposed.

Walter Reuther and the rest of the union's International Executive Board grew more and more alarmed. The movement of Black workers was uncovering both the hypocrisy of Reuther's public stand on civil rights and his failure to defend the day-to-day interests of auto workers.

In the short space of a few years the rank and file movement among Black workers swept from local office much that was old and obsolete in the UAW. Where before Black local leadership was the exception, now it became the rule. The most obvious expressions of racism were wiped away. But for the most part the new Black leadership did not represent a real change in union policy.

Those that did, those Black workers fighting for a class struggle policy in the UAW came under heavy attack both from the companies and the International. The election of Black representation, the repression of the more militant elements and the relative isolation of the movement in Detroit eventually dissipated the strength of this upsurge. Today there is little organized remnant of this movement although there is still a mass of discontented Black workers anxious and ready for an alternative to the UAW's present course.

Meanwhile, the skilled trades movement grew both in influence and in numbers, but with its base restricted to the skilled trades primarily in the Detroit area. In 1970 the pressure of the skilled trades movement forced Walter Reuther to conduct a ten week strike against GM to restore the cost of living allowance, which he had allowed to be capped in 1967. In 1973 skilled tradesmen at Ford voted down the national agreement only to have the International sign it over their heads. In 1976 the skilled tradesmen organized mass meetings and mounted large, militant demonstrations in front of Solidarity House in their fight for a decent contract.

The one thing that the auto companies and the International feared most during this entire period was the prospect of a united movement of Black and white UAW members. It was the division of these two movements, the division between Black and white workers, that enabled the corporations to deflect and resist the demands of each, and enabled the International to come out relatively untouched and unaffected by the explosion of dissatisfaction with its policies.

On a number of occasions between 1967 and 1973 there were efforts made to merge these struggles. However the failure of the skilled tradesmen to deal forcefully with the issue of racism in their program and secondarily the effects of nationalist sentiments among the Black workers, (itself largely a reaction to the failure of the whites) proved too powerful an obstacle to bring such a merger about.

Thus the chief weaknesses of the auto-workers movement have been its inability to unite Black and white workers, its inability to extend beyond Detroit into a genuine national movement, and its tendency to be organized on the spur of the moment, and to be vague in its politics. Its representatives, often proved little different from those they replaced.

CONFERENCE A BEGINNING

Did the conference deal with these historic weaknesses? First the conference was a genuine national meeting with thirty locals represented, more than half of which were outside Detroit. With the exception of the West Coast there were representatives from every region.

The conference itself was an indication of the low level of Black-white unity among the rank and file forces in that only about 15% of the delegates were Black. But what was encouraging was that the discussion in both the workshops and on the conference floor showed a widespread understanding that the key to building unity and toward strengthening Black participation and leadership, is an aggressive commitment to the struggle against racism on the part of white rank and filers.

Finally there was lively discussion of the need for the movement to base itself on a concrete program. During one presentation a four point program was put forward calling for: 1) Defending the living standards and working conditions of autoworkers, 2) fighting for equality for minority and women workers, 3) union democracy, and 4) labor solidarity and independent political action. While the conference did not adopt a formal program this class struggle platform was well received.

When all is said and done it must be concluded that the Essex Conference was both a success and a question mark. A success, in that it proved an important expression of solidarity with the Essex workers by resolving to push for the formation of an Essex Council within the UAW. A question mark in that, while filled with potential, it remains for the conference participants to convert sound ideas into effective action. Only time will tell whether the Essex Conference indeed represented an historic turning point for the rank and file movement in the UAW.



International Women's Year: Women Struggle Against Reaction

by ANNA GOLD

1977 may well have been declared International Women's Year, and Carter may well have endorsed a major National Women's Conference in Houston, but for most women this past year was marked by setbacks. Women's control over their bodies has continued to erode, their right to life itself is threatened by welfare cuts, and programs aimed at correcting past discrimination are being attacked by those who monitor our system of "justice".

One of the clearest indications of the reactionary turn of affairs with respect to the democratic rights of women is the recent Congressional decision to significantly restrict the funding of abortions by Medicaid. Abortions will now be funded for poor women only when it can be shown that severe and long-lasting health damage will result from the pregnancy. The language makes it very difficult for women to receive welfare funds for an abortion even if the pregnancy is due to rape or incest! This action is clearly intended to limit the effects of the 1973 Supreme Court ruling legalizing abortions and is a threat to all women.

The specific racism of the measures cannot be underestimated, however. National minority women are forced on the mercies of welfare in disproportionate numbers due to the racism prevalent in employment and education. It is they who are most directly affected by the Medicaid restrictions.

The state governments have followed closely the pattern set by the federal government. Only eleven states still subsidize abortions on demand, and the number is dropping fast. Anti-abortion and anti-Equal Rights Amendment forces have been well organized and have passed a call for a "right to life" amendment in nine states. Nineteen more states are scheduled to consider such an amendment.

Ironically, while abortion funding is practically non-existent, the government continues to pay 80% to 90% of the cost of sterilizations. Reports of countless abuses and persistent public pressure have resulted in federal guidelines restricting sterilizations. However, recent surveys show an alarming disregard for even these basic safeguards in major hospitals, again most

seriously affecting national minority women.

Finally, the Equal Rights Amendment is still no closer to becoming part of our Constitution than it was last year. Two major efforts, one in Florida and the other in Illinois were defeated, leaving the amendment still three states shy of ratification. ERA supporters have organized massive convention boycotts in those states which have failed to ratify the amendment. While this campaign has clearly had a positive effect, it is still too soon to determine its full impact.

Meanwhile, the toll of sexist policies on working women continues to mount. Affirmative action programs are threatened everywhere. The rights of women to disability pay and seniority guarantees during their child-bearing years are being eroded. Although half of all women with children under 18 years old work, child-care facilities are being drastically cut.

The earning gap between men and women continues to widen.

(Continued on p. 16)

Women's Liberation in action, the Essex strike

by ANNA GOLD

Although Jane is a fictitious person, the story is very real and her situation and ideas are representative of the real life experiences and thinking of hundreds of thousands of real women.

Most of the women who live in the small town of Elwood, Indiana, and work for the Essex Corporation probably hadn't given women's liberation so much as a second thought before April of last year. Women like Jane had enough to worry about caring for their families and getting themselves to and from their job. At work they did the best they could to protect themselves from company harassment and hang on to their desperately needed \$3.00 an hour for producing small electrical auto parts.

Jane never paid much attention to the union, either. It always seemed as though that was the men's concern. After all, even though only 15% of the workforce is men, the local UAW leadership was all male and they never seemed too interested in Jane's problems. So she mostly kept to herself, and tried not to think too much about what the chemicals she was working with were doing to her body. She couldn't have made it to too many of the union meetings anyway, because who would make dinner and watch the kids?

But a lot of that changed when the strike vote was taken last April. Jane decided that she'd had it. It wasn't tied to any fancy manifesto and she didn't stop curling her hair or wearing make-up. She just decided that she deserved much more than Essex was giving her, and she was going to get it. She wasn't going to let everyone else run her life for her anymore.

The main issue of the strike was wages, but it didn't take long before the very survival of the union was in question. United Technologies, owner of Essex Corp., knew this strike must be broken. This was only one small plant, but there are hundreds of others just like it across the country.

These small parts producers hire mostly women, and their unusually high profits

depend on their ability to cash in on the substandard conditions that prevail in mostly women's shops: low wages, no pensions, few fringe benefits and constant speed-up. United Technologies knew that if these women were allowed to win, there would be no stopping the wave of strikes in sister companies.

Now, after a nine month strike, Jane is back at work. The strike was lost, but in a lot of ways Jane feels like she's won one of the biggest battles of her life. "At first everyone wanted us to just stay in the back seat like we used to. My husband didn't like me walking the picket lines with all the violence happening. The men who were used to running the union didn't expect us to be able to help lead the strike or play such a strong role. I guess they thought we'd run for cover when things got rough.

"But after a while they saw that we really weren't any different from them, and that we were all a lot stronger when me and my friends got involved. I guess my family still wishes I were home more sometimes, but they think what I'm doing is right and they're backing me all the way. They know that if places like Essex can keep getting away with treating us like dirt, well, then nobody's safe."

Jane and her friends have just begun. Now they are convinced that the only way they'll win next time is if there is a broad national movement of rank and file workers all of whom are ready to say they've had enough.

THE LESSONS LEARNED

Although most of the Essex women are white, the recent experience has taught them something about racism too. "They're using Black and Spanish workers just like they're using us," Jane explains. "They bank on keeping us all divided. Just like the men thought they didn't need to worry about our problems, white workers turn a deaf ear to the problems of minority workers. And that's how we all end up getting screwed."

The Essex workers also understood that



Essex workers, the majority of them women, continue to fight the company and the UAW International's sell-out contract. During the strike one worker was shot and another was beaten severely, yet their spirits have not been dampened.

the UAW International didn't go all out to support them because they were afraid of the movement which might grow out of that kind of support. They were afraid of the awesome power of women and national minority workers who have had enough and are ready to fight back.

The men at Essex learned some pretty powerful lessons too. It didn't take them long to figure out that by dismissing the women they had reduced their fighting capacity to 15% of the workforce, and that a minority of workers didn't stand a chance of winning anything. Now these same men talk seriously to their brothers in other locals of the necessity of fighting sexism within the union.

When the newspapers print articles about women's liberation they usually don't talk about people like Jane. They talk about the one woman who just opened a bank or the women who were picked to be astronauts. We don't hear about the thousands of women in factories and offices who are fighting for equality on the job. We don't hear about those women who have been forced on welfare and are fighting for their children's survival. We don't hear about the women in the ghettos, barrios, and white working

class neighborhoods who are leading the struggle for better education, housing, and daycare. These women, women like Jane, must be the backbone of the struggle for the liberation of women.

Already the women of Essex have provided a tremendous inspiration to workers across the country, men and women — just as the Farah workers did before, and the women at J. P. Stevens continue to do. And a number of women's organizations have recognized the importance of such struggles. NOW chapters have sent money and groups like Union Wage have been active in their support.

Jane and her friends now know that they are a part of the women's movement — in fact, they are a central part of it. And they also know that when the alliance between the women's movement and the workers' movement is complete, when the workers' movement really takes up special problems faced by women across the country, then two things will happen: the democratic demands of women will no longer be a dream but a realizable goal, and the workers' movement itself will have gained a powerful and steadfast ally.

INTERNATIONAL A DAY TO HO STRUGGLES O



During the late 1860's textile workers in Lawrence, Mass. went on strike for better wages and working conditions, for "Bread and Roses."

From the cotton fields of the old South to the mills of New England, working women have played a role in building this country and in fighting for the rights of all working people. March 8 is the day we set aside to commemorate the struggles of women throughout our history and all over the world for freedom, dignity, and equality.

The day was chosen because it is the anniversary of the uprising of garment workers in New York City in 1908 — demanding equal pay for equal work, the eight hour day, and legislation guaranteeing women the right to vote and prohibiting child labor. On International Womens Day 1978 many of our concerns are the same: we demand equality on the job, a shorter work week, childcare and better schools for our children, equal rights before the law and an end to racism and the double oppression it forces on national minority women.

While here in the US the celebration of International Women's Day has only been renewed in recent years, it is an official holiday throughout many parts of the world. In the socialist countries like Cuba, China and Vietnam, and the newly independent countries like Angola and Mozambique, the role women are playing in the struggle for a new and better way of life is celebrated by all. Meanwhile, in places like South Africa, the Phillipines, Puerto Rico and Chile, women are risking their lives in the fight against racism and imperialism. On this day of international solidarity, we must take up their fight as our own, for we are all fighting the same enemy.



National minority women suffer centuries-old "triple oppression". Here the tobacco industry exploits the cheap labor of Black women and children around the turn of the century.



1908-9 — Thousands of NYC garment workers demanded the 8-hour day, equality on the job, and the right to vote. International Women's day marks the anniversary of this March 8 demonstration.

a program to guide us

Fight Against Sexism



Communists must fight sexism wherever and whenever it appears, both as a practice and as an ideology. We understand that it must be attacked primarily at its roots -- discrimination by the capitalist class. Capitalism has a direct interest in maintaining this discrimination for three reasons: 1) the "free" maintenance and reproduction of labor power (housework); 2) superprofits from super-exploitation of women workers; and 3) a class divided because of sexist ideology -- a division which helps prevent the class from developing the kind of unity necessary to win its emancipation.

While the capitalist class directly benefits from sexism, it is the working class which pays for this discrimination. The reserve army of female labor means lower wages for everyone and the constant threat of unemployment. Furthermore, the divisions within the class leads to fewer women being unionized, undercutting the strength of all unions.

Because sexism, like racism, is one of the mainstays of the capitalist system, we focus our struggle for the emancipation of women on the capitalist class. The struggle against sexism is a classwide concern and must be approached on the basis of the class struggle.

Finally, we understand that the basis of the liberation of women lies in the degree to which they are brought into the process of social production. The isolation of women in the home can only have a retrogressive effect on their consciousness. We therefore focus our energy on facilitating the trend of women to enter the labor market and we focus our organizing on these women. We also recognize the need to end the particular discrimination suffered by women on the basis of age, and marital status.

We must be very clear that the struggle for democratic rights for women cannot be separated from the struggle to end racial oppression suffered by national minority women and men. In particular, Black women face the triple oppression of class, sex and race. While they represent the largest and most active sector of the female labor force, they hold the lowest paying and least desirable jobs. Only by consciously attacking racial discrimination will the struggle for the emancipation of women be moved forward.

Further, while we must constantly maintain our focus on the primary contradiction between the struggle for the emancipation of women and the needs of the capitalist class to maintain their oppression, we cannot ignore the secondary contradiction -- sexist ideology within the working class.

We are confident that truly progressive reforms can be won by a class determined to fight for the democratic rights of women. The cost of these reforms must be borne by the corporate ruling class, not by more taxation on working people.

We are clear, however, that fully socialized production and full equality can only be won with socialism. Ultimately, the liberation of women is integrally bound with the struggle for socialism. It is imperative that the leading elements in the fight for the democratic rights of women consciously link their movement with the overall revolutionary struggle of the working class for socialism.

1. END JOB DISCRIMINATION. Women, especially oppressed national minority women, are channeled into the most menial, unskilled, marginal and low-paying jobs. In all spheres of industry and service, sex discrimination must be ended. We need:
 - a) An end to all forms of direct and indirect job-related discrimination.
 - b) Affirmative action programs to promote equal employment for women and national minorities in both the public and private sectors, with a special focus on national minority women.
 - c) Union-run, federally funded vocational training and job placement centers focusing on the needs of women and national minority workers, especially in providing training for areas previously closed to them.
 - d) Extension of workers' benefits to all workers -- including household workers, migrant workers, part-time workers.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

A DAY TO HONOR THE STRUGGLES OF WOMEN

From the cotton fields of the old South to the mills of New England, working women have played a role in building this country and in fighting for the rights of all working people. March 8 is the day we set aside to commemorate the struggles of women throughout our history and all over the world for freedom, dignity, and equality.

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Today we celebrate not only our own history, but our tasks for the future: the building of a mighty united front where women from all walks of life would march with the workers' movement and the movements of the oppressed nationalities for the liberation of us all.

The goals of our struggle today are reflected in the labor song *Bread and Roses* written over 100 years ago by striking women textile workers in Massachusetts:

BREAD AND ROSES

As we come marching, marching, in the beauty of the day,
A million darkened kitchens, a thousand mill lofts gray,
are touched with all the radiance that a sudden sun discloses,
For the people hear us singing, "Bread and Roses, Bread and Roses!"

As we come marching, marching, we are standing proud and tall,
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Women fought for the right to organize in the CIO during the 1930's. As this photo from the struggle for the steelworkers shows, their strike support was not that of a "ladies auxiliary"!!

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- Extension of workers' benefits to all workers — including household workers, migrant workers, part-time workers.

2. GUARANTEE OF JOBS OR INCOME. Because of systematic sex discrimination, women are paid so poorly, or have so little access to better jobs, that they cannot support themselves and their families. We need:

- Jobs for all who are willing and able to work, coupled with a massive training program at full pay, union scale. Unemployment compensation available to women and youth entering the job market.
- Guaranteed minimum annual income with protection for the individual rights and dignity for the recipients. Oppose all forms of "workfare" which force poor women to slave and scab for an income.

3. FULL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN AS MOTHERS. Because women are childbearers they are denied the right to maintain seniority, return to work and develop stable working situations because of the discrimination they face. We need:

- Pregnancy/maternity leave guaranteed for as long as medically recommended at full pay with no loss of seniority. In addition, fathers receive one month leave paid following birth. After that, one parent should receive paid leave with no loss of seniority for six months to care for an infant.
- Federally funded quality childcare available from the age of six weeks on a 24-hour basis for all guardians regardless of ability to pay. Development of workplace based nurseries to facilitate contact between infants and parents, especially nursing mothers.

4. QUALITY HEALTH CARE. Soaring health costs and sexism in the medical system have a special oppressive effect on women. We need:

- Federally funded health insurance and services, available to all regardless of ability to pay.
- Legal right of all women to control their own reproductive systems:
 - *Free, safe and widely available contraception.
 - *Free, safe abortion on demand.

WOMEN'S DAY HONOR THE EFFORTS OF WOMEN

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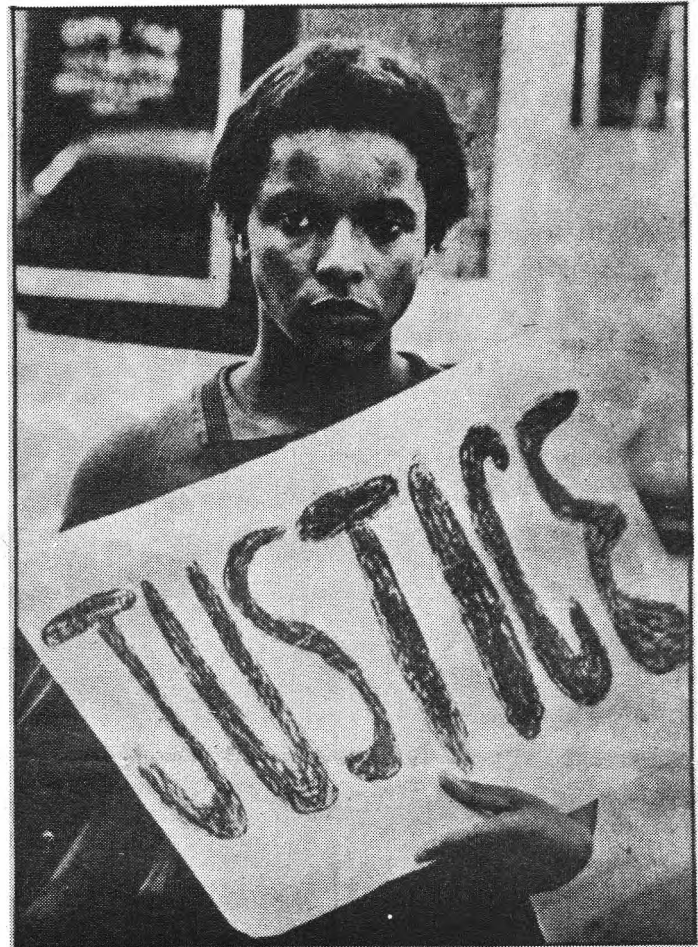
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Today JP Stevens workers, men and women, Black and white, march for better conditions and the right to organize.



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1950's—Black women played a leading role in the struggles of the Civil Rights Movement.

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*Free, safe and widely available contraception.

*Free, safe abortion on demand.

*Protection from forced sterilization; an end to the systematic attack on national minority people.

c) Federally funded research into drug and medical procedures which have particular significance for women. Special focus on occupational health and safety hazards which endanger the reproductive capacity of all workers. Elimination of health hazards on the job.

5. FAMILY LAW. Marriage law maintains the oppression of women within the family. We need:

a) Low cost, no-fault divorce available to either party, guaranteeing the rights of women and children to support as necessary.

b) Equitable consideration of both parents' rights and responsibilities in care and custody of children.

6. END PHYSICAL ABUSE. Because of the history of women as chattel and as sex objects, they are victims of abuse both in their families and in the broader society. We need absolute protection for women against physical and sexual abuse.

7. EQUAL RIGHTS FOR WOMEN IN ALL ASPECTS OF SOCIETY.

Women must gain equality in every sphere of this society. The problems are particularly acute for national minority women and there is an historic link between the struggle for the democratic rights of women and the struggle for the democratic rights of national minorities. The struggle against sexism must proceed hand in hand with the struggle against racism. We need:

a) End to discrimination before the law; End sex bias in all state and federal legislation; pass the ERA; extend protective legislation.

b) End discrimination in housing, insurance, credit requirements.

c) End discrimination in the criminal justice system.

d) Equal access to all educational, vocational, athletic programs and facilities. An end to sexist curriculum in all such programs and facilities.

Class, Race, Sex.... Triple Oppression of Black Women



Women suffer discrimination on the job, and national minority women suffer the most from this discrimination. Racist hiring and upgrading practices relegate minority women to the most menial and low-paying jobs. For example, 37% of minority women work in service jobs, as compared to 19% of white women. Minority women earned an average of \$5,772 in 1973, compared to \$6,544 for white women and over \$12,000 for white men.

Unemployment is higher among Blacks than whites, and Black women are hit especially hard by the job crisis. Unemployment figures, including hidden unemployment, in 1973 showed that white women suffered an unemployment rate of 15%. For Black women this figure soars to close to 30%. Over half the Black women not working with responsibilities for childcare said they would work if they could.

The housing shortage in urban areas has reached crisis proportion in the Black community. Black women are the hardest hit victims of this crisis. In Philadelphia, for example, % of public housing residents are Black, and % of these households are headed by women.

of the oppression they suffer because of racism and sexism.

We have to view these factors in their interaction and not in a mechanical way. Double oppression of racism and sexism does not mean "Black women earn half as much" or "Minority women have housing that's twice as bad." It means that the interaction of these two factors, race and sex, combine to place the national minority woman in an intolerable situation.

RACISM: BASIS OF OPPRESSION

To understand the roots of "double oppression" we only have to look at US history, that is, at the system of slavery. Black women, like Black men, were brought here in chains for the purpose of lining the pockets and bank accounts of the Southern plantation owners, not to mention those of Northern merchants of the slave trade.

The Black slave woman was seen as a work animal and as a breeder. She was subject to brutal working and living conditions, sexual harassment and abuse by overseers and owners, and could be sold

to work more and longer than her white sister if the family income is going to make ends meet.

It is important to see racism, growing out of the system of slavery, as the basis of the double oppression we are talking about. This has been a weakness of the women's movement in this country historically — to see all women in the "same boat" with varying degrees of recognition that minority women carry an added burden. This leads to a distortion of the centrality of racism, and in practice leads to a minimizing of the struggle against racism.

In a debate in the 1880's over the 14th amendment which guaranteed Black men the right to vote, Frederick Douglass got into an exchange with a white woman. He pointed to Klan terror, lynchings, murder of children in the night, and said that this reality led to an urgency for the 14th amendment which took precedence over the need for women in general to be voters. "But Black women too suffer from this terror," the woman said. "Yes, yes, yes," said Douglass, "but not because she is a woman — but because she is Black!"

SEXISM: OPPRESSOR OF WOMEN

Still, the situation of the Black woman must be seen in the interaction of racism with sexism in this society. In all class society, women are viewed and treated as primarily "wives and mothers" and their role in a job is seen as secondary. This means women suffer extremely from a lack of job opportunities, no job training, either in school or in special programs; wages which aren't even enough to buy pins these days. Women still have trouble getting credit in their own names; they can't buy homes, and hardly anybody but the worst slumlords will rent to women alone with children. Daycare programs for infants are almost nonexistent, pre-school and after school programs are being cut into oblivion.

These realities of sexism in our society affect all women, particularly women of the working class. But when we see the interaction of these factors with the position which racism has placed Black women in, we begin to see what is meant by "double oppression", why its no simple matter of one plus one, and how all these factors interact to trap minority women at the "bottom of the barrel" where the fight for survival must be waged on a daily basis.

The history of Black women fighting back, fighting for survival for themselves and their families, is a long and proud one. Just as slave women suffered brutal

living and working conditions side by side with slave men, so they stood and fought side by side with them. Slave women played no "auxiliary role," in the struggle against slavery — history is full of women exemplified by Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth.

This militant and fighting tradition is the counterpart of the legacy of racism and oppression that Black women inherit today. It was no accident that a woman was the first to be arrested for sitting at a "whites only" lunch counter in the early days of the civil rights movement. In the community, national minority women have taken up the fight for rights and dignity under the welfare system, the fight for better and safer schools for their children, for quality childcare, for employment and training, both for themselves and their children, for decent health care and housing.

On the job, minority women have been in the forefront of many labor struggles. They have waged the fight for an end to discrimination on the job, for safer working conditions, for decent wages. Particularly important in recent years has been their role in the fight for unionization — from hospital workers in the northern cities, to clothing and textile workers in the "right-to-work" South, exemplified by the Chicana Farrah workers and the Black J.P. Stevens workers.

MINORITY WOMEN'S ROLE

But are these women fighters part of the growing women's movement? Or part of the new militancy in the workers' movement? Or are they part of the Black Liberation Movement and the movements of the other oppressed nationalities?

As a result of their "triple oppression" these women have a vital and leading role to play in all these movements, in the struggles against racism, sexism and capital. But the fact is, most see themselves as struggling against racism, and less often as part of the movement for women's rights or the broader workers' movement. This is due to weaknesses in both these movements.

Both the women's movement and the rank and file workers' movement must take up the struggle against racism, and particularly the fight of the national minority women, as central to these great movements. Only in this way will we build a united front against this miserable system, which oppresses and exploits all working people, all women, all members of oppressed nationalities — and wipe away the triple oppression of national minority women.



Whether its on the job or in the community, the "double oppression" of national minority women, particularly of Black women, can be demonstrated by facts and figures. In fact, the term "double oppression" or "triple oppression" has become a familiar one to many of us. But what is really meant by these terms? The facts and figures only begin to scratch the surface in revealing the whole picture.

"Double oppression" refers to the fact that Black and other national minority women are "at the bottom of the barrel" in this society: the worst jobs, the worst pay, the worst housing, the worst schooling, the worst health care.... This situation did not develop from "natural causes" but it developed directly out of our system.

The term "double oppression" points out that the situation of the minority woman is a product of racism and sexism operating in this society. The term sometimes used "triple oppression" points out that class exploitation is the basis of operation of both racism and sexism. From the time they were brought here in chains, Black women have been workers. Their labor was exploited for the purpose of making the rich grow richer — first as slaves, then as tenant farmers and sharecroppers. Today the Black people are overwhelmingly members of the working class (90%), and similarly with the other oppressed nationalities. Their super-exploitation as workers lies at the heart

away from her husband or have her children sold away from her at any time.

Throughout history, the Black woman has often been left alone to support herself and raise her family the best she could. Under slavery, families were torn apart by the simple acts of buying and selling. Today, the legacy of the slave system remains, while the Black family is torn apart by the more complex realities of modern capitalism.

The Black family is torn apart when the man leaves home in search of work or a better job, by the racist welfare system that cuts off child support when an "able-bodied man" is present in the home; by the racism of the criminal justice and penal systems which fill the prisons with Black men and youth; by the military system, which used poor and national minority men as the rich man's cannon fodder during the war in Indochina, and which today — with its "volunteer army", remains the last resort for many minority men seeking work; by the miserable health care system where the poor pay with their very lives; by the pressures of day to day life in poverty, where building a stable family life is next to impossible.

The result? As in times of slavery, the Black woman is often the sole support of her family. While one out of eight families is supported by a woman in the society at large, on out of three Black families is supported by a woman. And in two-parent families, the Black woman has



Story of a Puerto Rican Woman

by Jenny Quinn

International Women's Day is a time to build solidarity between all working people in the struggle for equality for women. As North Americans it is particularly important that we build solidarity with the struggle of Puerto Rican women. Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States. It is in our name that the Puerto Rican people are oppressed. What does colonialism mean for Puerto Rican women? Why do growing numbers of Puerto Rican women raise the demand for independence for their country? The case of Antonia Marin, a housekeeper in a large San Juan hotel, goes a long way towards providing answers to these questions.

Antonia was born in 1938, the fourth child of a sugar refinery worker and a needle-trades piece worker. Antonia's mother and sisters worked at home sewing pockets for men's pants -- something which Antonia helped with from the time she could remember. When she was fifteen, her father died, and she left school to work full-time with her mother and sisters.

They made about 14 cents an hour for their work. Since the cost of living in Puerto Rico is much higher than in the US, it isn't hard to imagine why the family applied for food stamps when Operation Bootstrap got going in the '50's. Operation Bootstrap was a program promoted by the US government to attract corporations to invest in Puerto Rico. The unemployed and underemployed could get food stamps, the giant corporations which invested got ten to 25 year "tax holidays" -- this meant the companies got both cheap labor and extra profits from taxes they didn't have to pay.

But Antonia's life was affected much more by Bootstrap than she realized at the time. A new garment factory opened up near her home -- a factory that was owned by a big US company based in New Jersey which moved operations to Puerto Rico in the late '50's to avoid the union and the state taxes it faced at its home base. She got a job there making 25 cents an hour. It seemed like a lot at first, after 14 cents, but she soon realized that she still couldn't really help her family onto its feet.

At 25 she married Jorge Ortiz, a young man who was working on a construction crew building luxury apartments financed by the Chase Manhattan Bank. When most

Puerto Ricans were living in substandard housing, with thousands live in shanty towns, it seemed odd that economic help from the US should build housing for the "new commercial and manufacturing elite". As usual, average Puerto Ricans just had to wait and be satisfied that there were a few more jobs. But Antonia was glad Jorge had a job, and they decided to start a family while their luck held out.

Antonia's health had been giving her trouble -- the cotton lint and poor ventilation, the bad light and the discomfort of sitting at a sewing machine all day seemed to make her pregnancy and birth more difficult. When she gave birth to her daughter, she was glad to have a few months at home. But she was never rehired. Her foreman told her right out that there were plenty of single young women who wouldn't have the absenteeism that mothers do, and she could look for a job elsewhere. So she and Jorge decided to have another child -- first a family, and then she would look for work.

STERILIZATION NO ACCIDENT

It was only after trying for a long time that that Antonia finally went to a doctor and found out that she, like many other Puerto Rican women, had been sterilized without her knowledge after giving birth. He even showed her the consent form which she had signed while coming out from under anaesthesia. To this day, she doesn't remember signing, but she does remember that the signature looked nothing like her own.

Jorge lost his job when the apartments were done, and picked up another one on road construction for the government. He was away from home most of the time, Antonia couldn't find work, and she worried about money all the time. Even though Jorge didn't blame her, something went out of their marriage when they learned that there could be no more children. They separated, and Antonia moved back in with her mother. She got rehired at the garment factory for a year, but then it closed down and moved to the Dominican Republic where wages are even lower than in Puerto Rico.

Puerto Rico in the '60's was experiencing a "construction and tourism boom" -- over 2,000 companies decided to take advantage of the tax breaks and cheap labor. That is where Jorge's jobs had come from, and Antonia soon found another



which had been brought in. She became a maid in a new hotel. As she was told when she got the job, she was one of the lucky ones. Because despite the "boom" unemployment among women was higher than ever, with only 24% of Puerto Rican women in the workforce. The new jobs in luxury hotels and related tourist industry added only 1% to the number employed.

Not long after Antonia got her job at the hotel, she began to have health problems related to her sterilization operation. She walked to the bus every day looking at posters urging women to have themselves sterilized, knowing now that what had happened to her was not something isolated or accidental. By 1968, over 33% of the women of Puerto Rico had been sterilized.

Many others were victims of cancer due to birth control pill experimentation in Puerto Rico. Before the pill was used in the US, Puerto Rican women were used as guinea pigs to test its safety on human beings. The dosages were extremely high and, in many cases, the pills proved unsafe. Antonia's older sister had been one of those experimented on, and she had developed serious blood clots in her legs.

After the experiment was over, the pill was no longer available from family planning clinics for free. The only free form of birth control then was sterilization, and many women, like Antonia, were operated on without their knowledge. Others accepted the operation, with the knowledge that in many cases having a child would make it impossible to get a job. No jobs for more than 40% of the eligible population, fear of having children, forced sterilization -- what else would it take to make a people sick of living under colonial rule? Seeing your sons killed in a war you have nothing to do with -- and this is just what happened.

Like Blacks and Chicanos, Puerto Ricans were part of the cannon fodder of the Vietnam war. Antonia's nephew came back with only one leg -- a guarantee that he would be almost unable to find work. But he had also learned something from this experience. He saw Vietnam, like Puerto Rico a country with a history of colonial rule, fighting for its independence against enormous odds. He came to see that he, as a victim of colonialism, was fighting on the wrong side. Now he became an activist for the independence of Puerto Rico. He had lost his leg fighting in a war that made no sense to him, and he came back ready to fight for what did.

WHY INDEPENDENCE?

As he learned more about Puerto Rico's relationship to the US, pieces began to fall into place for many members of his family. Antonia learned that every job she or her husband had held was tied up with loan speculation by the Rockefellers and that many other big banks and investment firms played with the Puerto Rican economy like it was a game of cards.

She learned that the profit taken out of Puerto Rico in the last ten years had been higher than all the profits from US investment in western Europe. She learned that the Puerto Rican government agencies which built the roads and the electrical system were so in debt to US banks, like the Rockefeller's Chase Manhattan, that the present Puerto Rican governor cannot afford to do anything without talking to the bankers. All the development of Puerto Rico was so that it could have a "healthy investment climate" -- and the people could still go hungry.

This year in Puerto Rico, Antonia, who has never in her life thought of herself as 'political' will celebrate International Women's Day with other men and women who believe in independence for Puerto Rico. At the age of forty, she says she thinks "I am just waking up".

"Looking at my daughter, who is old enough to work now, old enough soon to think about a family, I think, what will it take to give her something more than I had? And now all I can tell you is that to me, independence is what it will take to make Puerto Rico work for Puerto Ricans, and not some US businessman".

Antonia has suffered from the fruits of colonialism -- her body, her marriage, her self-respect, and her family have all been attacked for the single purpose of extracting more profits. Colonialism is a more severe form of capitalist exploitation, but what Antonia experiences is not that far removed from either her Puerto Rican sisters in the US, or many of the Black, Chicana, and other poor and minority women.

Sterilization of poor Black women is on the rise here, unemployment for women still so high they don't even measure the people who are permanently unemployed. And just as in Puerto Rico, union representation for women workers is dismally low. The colonial status of Puerto Rico means that independence from the US is the first step, but it is the system of capitalism itself, and its rule over Puerto Rico which must be broken. This can pave the way for real construction of a Puerto Rico for Puerto Ricans.



An exchange on party-building and the Guardian Clubs

Silber: Is this "hegemonism"?

Irwin Silber of the Guardian.

by IRWIN SILBER

In the last two issues of the *Organizer* (October & November), Clay Newlin has put forward certain criticisms of the *Guardian*. The essence of his criticisms was to charge the *Guardian* on two counts: an attempt at hegemonism in the party-building movement in the US and an "even-handed" view of Eurocommunism.

It is unfortunate that Newlin has put himself in the position of clouding over genuine points of political difference between the *Guardian* and the PWOC with these unfounded charges.

Concerning hegemonism, Newlin charges that the *Guardian's* plan to establish a network of *Guardian* Clubs "amounts to an attempt by the *Guardian* to set itself up as a center for the Marxist-Leninist trend." Now I do not mean to quibble over words, but it strikes me immediately that there is a significant difference between "a" center and "the" center and Newlin should explain what he means. He says "a center" but he seems to mean "the center."

The difference between these two should be readily apparent. Party-building, after all, does not proceed from a set formula. Given the particular circumstances of our own movement, it would seem virtually inevitable that several "centers" would emerge. The PWOC obviously sees itself at the center of one such "center".

Most readers are undoubtedly familiar with a number of the questions on which there have been differences between the *Guardian* and the various "trend" organizations associated with the PWOC. We have put forward our views in the pages of the *Guardian* and have provided space for these groups to respond. In addition, the *Guardian* has from the beginning maintained an active interest in the efforts initiated by the PWOC to develop a national ideological center and to establish an ideological journal.

Newlin says that "they (*Guardian*) have been requested to attend meetings, participate in discussions, and make concrete proposals as to what course of action should be followed." The inference is that the *Guardian* has not responded to these invitations. The fact is that we have attended every such meeting to which we have been invited and we have on several occasions very forcefully put forward our views on party-building, questions of international line, and others.

But it did not take us long to realize that on a number of questions we stood alone against all the other groups in the "trend". Indeed, it also became clear to us that some groups were dubious that the *Guardian's* representatives really belonged in this process since it was "only a newspaper" and "did not have direct connections with the working-class movement".

To be completely frank about it, we felt that this attitude toward the *Guardian* was itself a sign of the "trend's" political immaturity. We found among some a marked glorification of localism, an idealization of "workerism", a strong tendency toward economism and a tendency to conciliate with revisionism. It seemed to us that the PWOC's theory of "fusion" tended to reinforce some of these negative tendencies and provide an excuse for perpetuating localism.

As a result, it became difficult for us to judge the merits of the general plan for creating a national ideological center because of the relatively primitive level of development of many of the leading forces who were undertaking it.

CRITICIZE FEDERATIONISM

Our own view, which we expressed many times over, was that the plan as it was unfolding seemed to lead inevitably toward a form of federationism in party-building. We also argued that there were some positive aspects to the experiences of the October League and the Revolutionary Union in their creation of national organizational forms from the outset. For this we were accused of not having made a thorough break with dogmatism.

Meanwhile, the *Guardian* had its own very pressing problems to solve. Everyone knows the price we paid for our stand on Angola and for the public discussions on China's foreign policy which we initiated in the pages of our paper. Our sponsorship of tours to China — an important source of supplemental income to us — was cancelled. Bookstores managed by dogmatists and flunkies stopped carrying the *Guardian*. Our public meetings were harassed. Subscribers and Sustainers were urged to cancel their support.

And yet we knew that we were expressing the views of large numbers of Marxist-Leninists in the US — while providing indispensable information and guidance to a large body of progressives and anti-imperialists. A few of the "trend" groups rallied to our support but for a variety of reasons — both objective and subjective — this was really only a drop in the bucket.

It was obvious that the "solution" to our immediate problems was to be found primarily through our own efforts and from the support we would receive from those who particularly valued our political line. In response to an appeal to expand our Sustainer program, hundreds of *Guardian* readers — many at great personal sacrifice — signed up. The loss in both Sustainers and readers was quickly made up by others.

But to sustain this effort, a more permanent support structure was required. We had already accumulated some experience in this regard with the *Guardian* bureaus



which performed many of the functions the Clubs now handle from news-gathering to circulation and fund-raising. At several "trend" meetings we raised this question and urged the various groups to see the value of having a national weekly newspaper under Marxist-Leninist leadership and to assume some responsibilities for news-gathering, circulation building, and financial support. Two of the groups became Sustainers — as groups — which was greatly appreciated, but of course in financial terms this did not make any measurable dent in our difficulties. There were some good contributions — from these same groups — with occasional news articles on developments in their cities.

But by and large, this work in relation to the *Guardian* was a very low priority among the "trend" groups. Undoubtedly, they had other matters to take up which were of greater immediacy to them, but we also felt that there was an underestimation of the importance of having this national voice of our movement survive and expand. In any event, the need for self-reliance was underscored.

This is the "practical" framework for our plan for developing a *Guardian* Clubs network. We have never disguised this. We have said that "supporting and building the *Guardian*... will be the chief form of practical activity for the Clubs." The three activities we have stressed are circulation, newsgathering, and fund-raising.

The other work of the *Guardian* Clubs is collective study and local political activity.

CLUBS AND PARTY-BUILDING

It is our belief that this effort by the *Guardian* will objectively strengthen the party-building movement in several key respects:

1. It will introduce a concrete national organizational form into a political tendency which has not yet developed any other national form. This can help overcome the sluggishness of the localist and small-circle mentality which everyone concedes still operates in the movement.
2. It will help train a body of party-building cadre in both common theoretical work and in common practice.
3. It will enable the *Guardian* to initiate certain political undertakings.
4. It will help ensure the survival and expansion of the one national political voice of the anti-revisionist, anti-dogmatist tendency.

Is this hegemonism?

The number of *Guardian* Clubs will not exceed ten in the first year (five are already organized) and the size of each Club will be limited. In other words, we

are not trying to set up the only organization in town, we are not "raiding" other groups or suggesting that other organizational forms have no right to exist. We plan to continue consulting with various local Marxist-Leninist organizations and develop coalition work with them as well as debates, forums, and discussions.

Does any of this sound like hegemonism?

Newlin says that "the most highly developed of our forces are organized into local organizations and collectives" and suggests that the membership of the *Guardian* Clubs will be made up of less developed individuals. But this is a very provincial perspective. Already, *Guardian* Clubs have attracted a good number of developed Marxist-Leninists who up until now have been primarily active in mass organizations or mass work and for a variety of reasons have not joined a local Marxist-Leninist collective. After all, there are certainly many independent Marxist-Leninists who have some significant political differences with their local "trend" organization and whose own views correspond more closely to the *Guardian's*. This is readily apparent in those cities where we have already established *Guardian* Clubs.

In addition, the Clubs start out with a core of people experienced in the work of the several *Guardian* Bureaus. They are hardly a group of political "left-overs" and "misfits".

Newlin's charge of hegemonism is politically reckless. It tends to cast doubt on the political integrity of the *Guardian* and could, therefore, weaken our efforts to develop a sound material base. It should be withdrawn. Let the ideological debates continue — but this is an organizational attack that could have serious consequences. It is neither merited by the facts nor is it to the credit of the PWOC.

ON EUROCOMMUNISM

Concerning Eurocommunism, I fear that on this matter Newlin has succumbed to the temptation to score a cheap shot at the *Guardian* rather than to reflect accurately our position. Taking into account the series of four articles which I wrote for the *Guardian* on this subject last spring as well as a lengthy two-part editorial, there is certainly no basis for saying that the *Guardian* has an "even-handed" approach to Eurocommunism.

On the other hand, Newlin seems to feel that even the expression of "independence" by the Eurocommunist parties is, on the balance, negative. The problem, I'm afraid, is that Newlin doesn't appreciate the reactionary nature of Soviet hegemonism. The independence of the Eurocommunist parties hasn't made them any more "revolutionary". But they were thoroughly revisionist long before they asserted their independence. No one can seriously suggest that the French and Italian parties based themselves on basic Leninist strategic conceptions — the nature of the state, the dictatorship of the proletariat, armed struggle, etc. — during the sixties. So the *new* element in the process — besides the formality of dropping certain phrases — is precisely the independence from the Soviet Union.

To make this point is hardly being soft on Eurocommunism or "evenhanded" about it. Newlin knows better. The comment was not worthy of him nor the organization for which he speaks.

One last note. We have no desire for yet one more "split" in a Marxist-Leninist movement already incredibly fractionalized. It is a mark of seriousness in politics that ideological differences be fully and honestly aired while maintaining respect for the organizational integrity of the various forces. These two articles by Newlin, however, begin to go over that delicate borderline.

PWOC response: Build a unitary spirit

by CLAY NEWLIN

As a result of two articles in recent *Organizers*, Irwin Silber has threatened the PWOC with a split. According to Silber we have been guilty of "clouding over genuine points of political difference between the *Guardian* and the PWOC", and have even begun to go over "the delicate borderline" where ideological differences (can) be fully and honestly aired while maintaining respect for the organizational integrity of the *Guardian*.

Silber objects to two "charges" reputedly made by us. First, we have criticized the *Guardian* for "an attempt at hegemonism in the party-building movement", and second, we have argued that they advocate "an even-handed view of Eurocommunism."

In our opinion, the question of Eurocommunism is only tangential. The real source of Silber's irritation (and his threat of a split) is our article criticizing the *Guardian's* call for a network of Clubs. As Silber interprets our criticism, we object to the *Guardian's* attempt to develop "a more permanent support structure", to build a series of *Guardian* Clubs whose major activities will be "supporting and building the *Guardian*" by helping to expand circulation, gather news, and develop a stable financial base. And further, that we oppose the *Guardian's* efforts to use the Clubs to strengthen the party-building movement and our emerging anti-dogmatist and anti-revisionist trend.

Nothing could be further from the truth. If the Clubs had been initially presented in the same modest tone in which they are now being discussed, and if the *Guardian* really views them in the way that it is presently putting them forward, then we support them without reservation.

The problem is that the *Guardian* has backed away from its original conception of the Clubs as introduced in the "party-building supplement". In that supplement, under the heading "Organizing for the New Party," the *Guardian* advanced its call for Clubs immediately after emphasizing that in the rest of our trend "localism and small circle mentality dominate", that our forces are characterized by the "absence of an organizational center", and that "a serious (emphasis CN) party-building effort... must in fairly rapid order take on a national character, linking up Marxist-Leninists on the basis of ideological unity and common organizational form." The discussion of the Clubs laid great stress on the fact that they would be "linked together in a network with a national political newspaper as their focus." (*On Building the New Communist Party*, June, 1977)

At the same time the *Guardian* had not a word to say about the role of the existing anti-dogmatist and anti-revisionist organizations in the party-building process. From the treatment these forces received, one would have to assume that they had no role to play whatsoever — unless, of course, they joined the Clubs.

We viewed this whole development against the backdrop of our endeavor to engage the *Guardian* in a united effort to create a single ideological center for our emerging trend. Repeated attempts were made to encourage the *Guardian* to participate

in the development of a common plan, only to have them refuse without offering a satisfactory explanation.

To justify their first refusal, the *Guardian* raised their feeling "that some of the organizations participating underestimated the importance of the *Guardian*" and pointed to two trivial incidents as examples. We said at that time that while a few organizations may not fully appreciate the *Guardian's* contribution to the development of our trend, all representatives were in agreement that their participation should be encouraged in every possible way. We also pointed out that the PWOC representative had argued vi-

ously for the *Guardian's* involvement. Nevertheless, it was not our position then — nor is it now — that the litmus test of an organization's political maturity is its attitude toward the *Guardian*.

The *Guardian* still refused to participate. We requested that they put their reasons in writing, specifically demonstrating how their differences prevented a common effort to develop our trend. They did not do so.

The second time the *Guardian* refused to participate, their differences with the Potomac Socialist Organization on party-building and with the PWOC on the international question were given as reasons. Since neither position was a basis of unity for involvement and there were other organizations participating that had similar disagreements, we again told the *Guardian* that we did not feel they had a principled basis for not joining us. Again we requested that they put their position in writing — and with the same results.

ADVANCE THE TREND

In the meantime we pursued our attempt to develop a common plan for advancing the anti-dogmatist trend, making certain to keep the *Guardian* informed. The *Guardian* never made a single statement on how they viewed this plan. It may have been their perspective, as Silber says, that the "plan as it was unfolding seemed to lead inevitable toward a form of federationism in party-building," but it is not true that this fear was "expressed many times over". In fact, to our knowledge, and our representative was the *Guardian* contact — it was never raised even once!

Given the refusal of the *Guardian* to join in a collective effort to develop a single center for our trend on the one hand, and its manner of presenting the plan for Clubs on the other, it seems to us that it was a fair characterization to say that the *Guardian's* plan amounted to "an attempt... to set itself up as a center for the Marxist-Leninist trend."

Furthermore, it is clear, given the context, that we did mean "a" center and not "the" center. We interpreted the *Guardian's* plan as an attempt to set itself up as a competing national center to the ideological center that we and others were pursuing.

Silber interprets our criticism as a "charge of hegemonism". We do not. To our mind hegemonism would involve an attempt to dominate the development of the party-building movement.

On the other hand, quite frankly, we did not feel that the way the *Guardian* approached our efforts to develop a genuine center exemplified an attitude of striving for the best interests of our embryonic trend. On the contrary, it tended to show an excessive concern with the place and influence of the *Guardian*.

Unfortunately, similar narrowness is apparent in Silber's article in several places. Consider, for example, his discussion of the likelihood of the development of a single national center. "Given the particular circumstances of our own movement," he writes, "it would seem inevitable that several 'centers' would emerge."

Then Silber states, without offering a shred of evidence, that the PWOC is "obviously at the center of one such 'center'." This, in itself, is a jaundiced view. As we have stated repeatedly, only the coming together of a broad range of forces in our trend on a principled basis can create a genuine center. While the PWOC did initiate an effort to develop such a center, we are no more at its 'center' than any other organization; it has been a collective process from the very beginning.

Nevertheless, after implying that the PWOC is setting itself up as a center, Sil-



"The *Guardian* should adopt a more unitary spirit. It should prove its dedication to the interests of our emerging trend by asserting its commitment in principle to the development of a single ideological center and its willingness to join in a common effort to develop one."

ber proceeds to point out the *Guardian's* "differences" with the PWOC and the organizations "associated" with it. But he makes no assessment of the depth of these disagreements and why they prevent a common effort to create a single center.

The clear implications of Silber's comments are: many centers are inevitable; the PWOC is setting itself up as a center, why should the *Guardian* be criticized for taking steps to set itself up as a center?

Perhaps it is inevitable that several centers will develop in our trend given its disparate ideological character. However, those who place the unification of our movement at the forefront of their efforts will, in principle, strive for the development of a single center. They will only support the creation of distinct and competing centers in cases where clear differences in principle make it inevitable.

DANGERS OF CIRCLE SPIRIT

Those guided by the circle spirit, however, will attempt to constitute themselves into a "center" just to advance the position of their own circle. Most likely, they will use the argument about the "inevitability of several centers" to cover their opportunism. One would assume that given the history of the party-building movement, Silber would be more in touch with the dangers of the circle spirit!

A second indication of narrowness is Silber's treatment of our remark that "the most developed of our forces are organized into local organizations and collectives." Silber removes this phrase from its original context and interprets it to mean that, in our opinion, "the membership of *Guardian* Clubs will be made up of less developed individuals." And, as if to ice the cake, he adds, "They (Club members) are hardly a group of political left-overs and misfits."

Anyone who looks up our statement about "the most developed of our forces" will see that it has nothing to do with individuals. On the contrary, we are pointing out that local organizations have done the most to address our pressing theoretical tasks and have pushed farthest toward fusing Marxism-Leninism with the movements of the working class and the oppressed nationalities. From a Marxist-Leninist point of view it would hardly seem controversial to hold that an organi-

zation is a higher manifestation of a movement than an individual!

The impact of Silber's defensive distortion of our statement can only be to create the impression that the PWOC sneers at members of the Clubs. It can only serve to discourage Club members from striving for a common effort to develop a single center for our trend.

Silber's exaggerated emphasis on our differences around the question of Eurocommunism provides an additional example of a narrow mentality. It would seem to us that our disagreements on the question are at best peripheral to our discord over the much more vital question of the development of a genuine center. And yet while Silber accuses us of succumbing "to the temptation to score a cheap shot" on the issue he devotes substantial space to discussing it himself.

Since Silber distorts our disagreements, we will take up the question briefly. Anyone who reads our article will see that the substance of our differences is whether or not the Eurocommunist "independence" from the Soviet Union is "positive" and has "a progressive political content." (*Guardian Viewpoint*, Oct. 12, 1977)

Silber chooses not to address this question. First he accuses the PWOC of failing to "appreciate the reactionary nature of Soviet hegemonism." Then he argues that to make the point that the "new element in the process (of the development of Eurocommunism)... is independence from the Soviet Union" is "hardly being soft on Eurocommunism."

Since we ourselves maintain that the "distinctive feature" of Eurocommunism is its independence from the Soviets, we could hardly be arguing that to make this point is to be "soft on Eurocommunism". Given his handling of our disagreements on this question, we find it ironic that Silber should contend that we are the ones guilty of "clouding over genuine points of difference between the *Guardian* and the PWOC."

A narrow approach is also apparent in Silber's perspective on ideological struggle. He writes, "It (the alleged charge of hegemonism) tends to cast doubt on the political integrity of the *Guardian* and could, therefore, weaken our efforts to

(Continued on p. 16)

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from
the
other
side
of the
wall



"We Need Help from the People of the World

Many remember the case of Joann Little, the Black woman who killed a prison guard in self defense. The treatment meted out to Joann Little is by no means unique as the following letter from a white woman prisoner testifies: (The letter has been edited for reasons of space.)

To whom it may concern:

We need help from the people of the world. Since I have been in Arkansas me

and two juvenile girls were raped in the county jail by the Sheriff and his deputies. Then I was sent to prison at Pine Bluff.

The warden told me and the two other women they would kill us because we supposedly helped kill an Arkansas police officer. I didn't believe it at the time. I thought they were trying to scare us. But I believe it now. Because I have been cussed out, beaten, drugged up, tortured and threatened to be killed.

You wouldn't believe what is going on here. Once a male guard beat me up just because I asked him not to put his hands on me. They took me to have x-rays because my face was all swelled up. Again I was beaten by Major Campbell and several male guards. One of them kicked me in the head with his cowboy boots. Then he took the spurs off his boots and raked them on my back. He said: "I have rode a horse and bull but never have I rode a bitch before." Then they gave me pills and I passed out. Again I was beaten and my finger got broken and my eyes blackened. I have been beaten so bad at times I prayed and wished I was dead.

A while ago the feds gave them money to build a new prison but its just a bigger torture chamber. We still get beaten and drugged up. I tried to kill myself because I couldn't take it any more. Now they say they have me where they want me. They say they can kill me and make it look like a suicide and people will believe I killed myself because of my record.

Its not just me. One woman was beaten unconscious. Another woman got a fractured rib. Major Lindalyn Campbell is the leader of the beatings and torture. If the other guards refuse to go along with her they get fired.

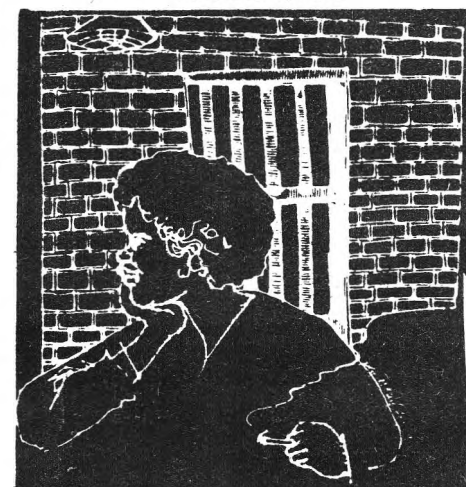
So I'm pleading for help from the people

of the world. If we don't get help soon alot more inmates will be beaten or tortured. So please help us prisoners before someone gets killed or badly hurt. The officers and Major Campbell are not going to change unless they are forced to. Write:

Mr. Robert Faulkner
U.S. Magistrate Office
Box 969
Little Rock, Arkansas 72203

Also write to the governor, David Pryor in Little Rock and Judge Smith Henley, U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Arkansas, Pine Bluff Division, Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

A Sister in a Struggle
Pine Bluff, Ark.



INS/cpf

Women Struggle Against Reaction

(Continued from p. 9)

Of course women are not accepting these setbacks without fighting back, and there are numerous examples of individual victories. Major sex discrimination cases have been won, such as the suit against the *Reader's Digest*. Local 1971 of the United Mine Workers elected that union's first woman president. Major demonstrations have been organized in defense of the right to abortion.

A serious drive is being organized to extend the time allotted for the ratification of the ERA beyond the present March '79 deadline. Hospital workers, teachers, and clerical workers continue their determined push to organize themselves into unions. In Wisconsin, a judge was recalled and a woman elected in his place when the judge practically condoned rape because of the "provocative" nature of women's clothing styles.

Perhaps the Houston conference best illustrates both the strengths and weaknesses of the current fightback. There is no doubt that the determination and spirit necessary to win were present among the many women there. In fact, the delegates were sufficiently representative of the nation's women to push through a fairly progressive platform. The weak-kneed anti-discrimination phrases proposed were replaced by a firm resolution condemning the double oppression of national minority women, and calling for affirmative action to correct it. The right to abortion on demand was affirmed, despite organized efforts on the part of the Catholic and Mormon churches and other reactionary forces to block such a step.

But the significant weakness of the conference was that it was not tied to any ongoing and strong grass roots organization. It had only the very weakest links to organized labor, and although a number

of unions have given lip service to the demands of women, few have taken steps to translate their words into action.

The movement for the democratic rights of women continues to be divided and disorganized. Its leadership is still overwhelmingly dominated by petty bourgeois and bourgeois forces, and it is politically bound to the existing two parties, parties which have shown over the years their disregard for the needs of women.

The future of the movement for the democratic rights of women depends on our ability to turn this situation around. Increasing numbers of rank and file workers are beginning to understand the central character of the struggle against sexism, and growing sections of the women's movement are dedicating themselves to solving the problems of the masses of working class women.

As these two movements become linked, it will become possible to transform our struggle from a defensive one to one in which the joined forces of the workers' movement, the women's movement, and the movements for the rights of national minorities join together in a mighty attack.

PWOC Responds

(Continued from p. 15)

develop a sound material base. . .let the ideological debate continue — but this is an organizational attack that could have serious consequences."

It would seem that Silber has no problem with general ideological struggle but demands that we keep silent on the *Guardian's* organizational efforts. Now the PWOC certainly has no desire to weaken the material base of the *Guardian*. Given our own modest resources and financial burden, we have done what we could to provide the *Guardian* with needed support — including sustaining, writing articles, and limited fundraising. We have repeatedly, in public and in private, urged other organizations to do the same. And it is our intention to continue doing so.

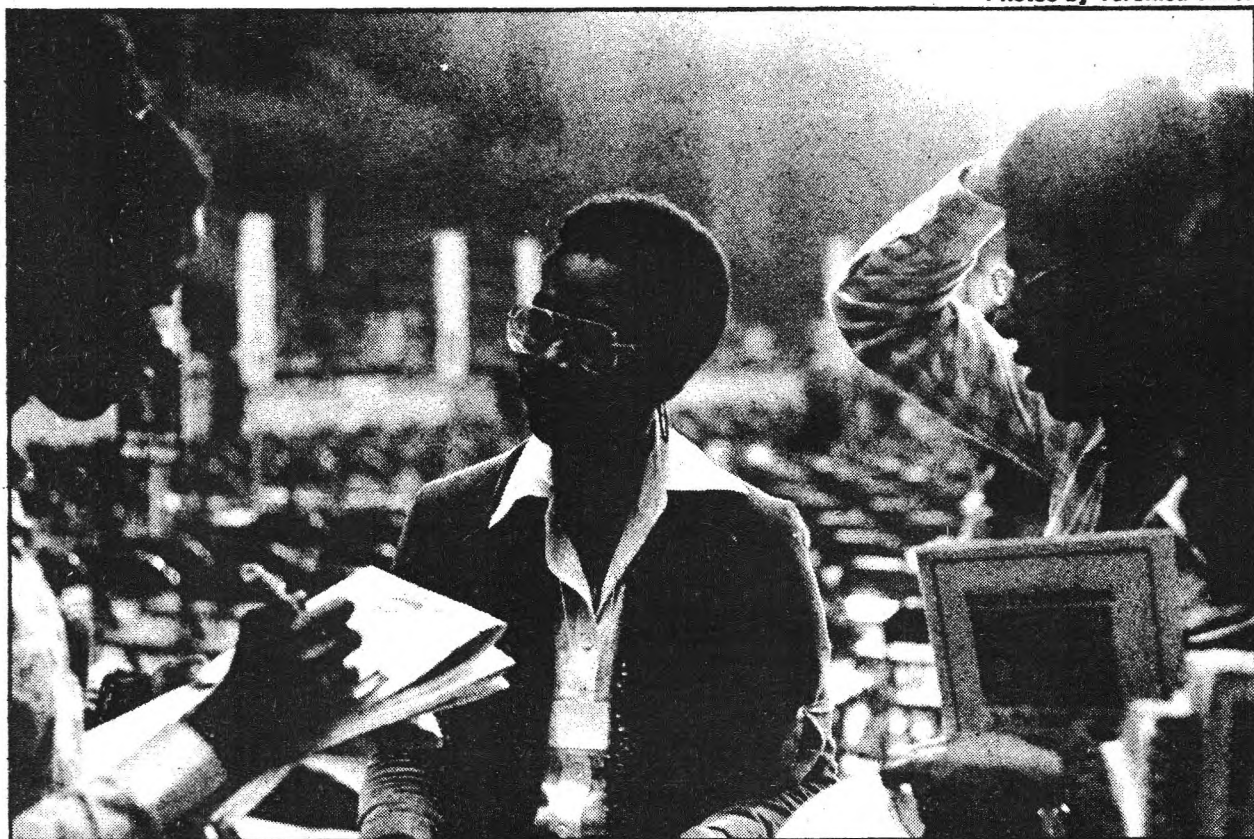
However, if we believe that the *Guardian* is not behaving in a manner which best advances the future of our Party, we will also continue to feel compelled to blow the whistle. As much as we desire to support the *Guardian*, we cannot submerge necessary criticism just because it might undermine respect for the *Guardian's* political integrity.

One final example. Silber says, "we have no desire for yet one more 'split' in a Marxist-Leninist movement already incredibly fractionalized." And then he talks about how we have begun to go over the borderline.

In our view it is a sign of maturity in politics that one does not go around threatening other organizations with a "split" every time they raise a criticism you do not like — even if you feel that it is an unprincipled one. Those dipped in the circle spirit may take one more split lightly, but Marxist-Leninists will only support a split that is based on serious and unavoidable differences in principle.

The *Guardian* should adopt a more unitary spirit. It should prove its dedication to the interests of our emerging trend by forthrightly asserting its commitment in principle to the development of a single ideological center and, in addition, its willingness to join in a common effort to develop one. If the *Guardian* chooses to take this course, it can silence our criticism of its original plan for the Clubs without having to threaten "yet one more 'split' "!!

Photos by Veronica Silver



The International Women's Year Conference held recently in Houston reflected both strengths and weaknesses of the womens' movement. A strong delegation of national minority women struggled for — and won — a firm resolution against racism.

The Paris Commune of 1871: the first workers' state

by JIM GRIFFIN

"Well and good, gentlemen. . . you want to know what this dictatorship looks like? Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat."
—Frederick Engels

What is the dictatorship of the proletariat? Is it a dictator or a small privileged group lording it over the masses of people like J. Edgar Hoover and his kind claim? Or does it correspond to a higher form of democracy as Marxist theory argues?

Marx and Engels never wrote up a blueprint for the dictatorship of the proletariat. Idle speculation and gazing into crystal balls were alien to their method. In the *Communist Manifesto* they described the rule of the working class and the transition to a classless, Communist society only in the most general terms. They believed that only the working class itself in the course of its struggle with capital could provide the answer to the questions associated with such a transition.

In 1871 the French workers by their revolutionary action gave the world its first glimpse of proletarian democracy in the flesh. This was the Paris Commune, the first workers' state.

In 1870 France and Prussia went to war. The French Emperor, Napoleon III, aimed at dominating Europe and this in turn required a weak and divided Germany. Prussia, guided by Bismarck, sought to unite Germany, which brought it into conflict with France. When France attacked Prussia the International Workingmen's Association, led by Marx, supported Germany as long as it remained a defensive war to stifle Napoleon's imperial ambitions.

But France reverses on the field of battle rapidly changed the character of the war. The Prussian forces overwhelmed the invading French Army and then invaded France. Napoleon and the bulk of his army surrendered at Sedan. Bismarck was not satisfied with repulsing the French attack. He now sought to impose a peace that would fatten the emerging German empire at the expense of France.

The surrender of Napoleon resulted in the collapse of the French empire and the formation of the Third Republic, a government of the propertied interests dominated by big capital. Headed by Adolphe Thiers, the new government paid lip service to continuing the war, but sorely lacked the resolution for this task. Its generals surrendered outright or fought half-heartedly. The Prussian armies laid siege to Paris and the Thiers government signed an armistice. Treaty negotiations rapidly followed. The Republican regime prepared to cede the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine to Prussia, pay an indemnity of five million francs and suffer the occupation of Prussian troops until all the terms of the treaty were fulfilled.

But one thing stood between Thiers and his objectives — the armed workers of Paris. The national guard, a popular militia made up of all citizens able to bear arms, and thus overwhelmingly composed of workers, artisans and shopkeepers, had refused to disarm following the armistice with Prussia. As long as the workers remained armed the shameful peace with Prussia was not safe and the rule of the propertied classes was not secure. Thiers thus sent regular French troops to disarm the national guard.

The working people of Paris, suffering from unemployment and hunger and disgusted with the cowardice and treason of

the bourgeois government, refused to give up their arms. Instead they took matters into their own hands. The National Guard disarmed the regular troops and the Thiers government fled to the Paris suburb of Versailles. Power was transferred by the National Guard to an elected municipal council, the Commune, which rapidly organized a radical democracy, and committed itself to driving out the Prussians.

The bourgeois republican government reacted swiftly. They begged Bismarck to return French prisoners of war to aid in crushing the Communards and allow the French army to enter Paris through Prussian lines in violation of the armistice.

The same French politicians and generals who lacked the will to fight the Prussian invaders, now attacked the French workers with great energy. As for Bismarck, he was only too happy to cooperate in smashing the resistance of the workers. The common interest of the bourgeoisie of both France and Germany in repressing the revolutionary workers overrode their divergent national interests.

For two months the troops of the Thiers regime fought the militia of the Commune on the barricades, finally recapturing the city. On the heels of the defeat of the Commune the bourgeois government unleashed a violent repression. Thousands of workers, and often their families as well, were simply lined up against the wall and shot. Thousands more were hauled before military courts and then executed. Those fortunate enough to survive were imprisoned or exiled. The most militant and revolutionary elements of the French working class were wiped out in one fell swoop.

COMMUNE DEMOCRACY

The Communards had no unified program. Their ranks consisted of radical democrats, anarchists, and Marxists. Moreover, they had little time to carry out their social aims. The Commune sur-

The commune put a moratorium on payment of rents, closed the pawn shops, and eliminated night work in bakeries. It's most far-reaching measure was a plan to take over all idle factories and turn them over to cooperatives made up of the workers previously employed by them.

vived for less than three months and its energies were consumed by the military struggle against overwhelming opposition. Nevertheless, in this brief time under the most trying of circumstances, the Communards gave the world a heady taste of working class democracy.

The Commune moved rapidly to dismantle the old bourgeois state and fashion a new political instrument responsive to its aims. The three pillars of the old state were the standing, professional army, the state supported church, and the civil bureaucracy. This state apparatus, which seemed so durable, so resistant to any attempt to change or reform it, was swept away in a matter of days.

The standing army, led by an officer corps drawn from the propertied classes and based on conscripting or drafting full-time professional soldiers, was disarmed and then abolished. The military power

of the Commune rested on the National Guard, a militia of all citizens capable of bearing arms.

The Commune proclaimed the right of citizens to practice the religion of their choosing and separated church and state. All state subsidies and taxes for religious purposes were abolished and religious indoctrination in state-supported schools was eliminated. Religion was transformed from an instrument of the propertied classes to a private matter for each citizen to pursue according to conscience.

Under the bourgeois form of democracy elected bodies or parliaments make the laws and an unelected bureaucracy of state officials implement them. Legislative and executive functions are separated with the result that parliaments are largely talk shops and the real action goes on behind the scenes. The Commune did away with this division.

The Commune consisted of representatives elected in each neighborhood according to universal suffrage. Each district could recall and replace its represen-

tative at any time. The representatives not only debated and adopted laws but had the responsibility for carrying them out. Finally, Commune representatives and all state officials were paid a salary based on the average worker's wage and could make no more.

The democracy of the Commune was in contrast to the democracy of the bourgeoisie. It was direct, open, and maximized the initiative and participation of every citizen in the process of government. Only a state that bases itself on the working people can afford and indeed require such democracy.

The defeat of the Commune was an enormous setback for the French workers and it took them over a generation to recover. But their heroism was not in vain. The international working class absorbed the lessons of the Paris Commune. In October of 1917 when the Russian workers made a revolution, they stood on the shoulders of the Paris Communards.

THE COMMUNE AND PRIVATE PROPERTY

While the Commune's short life and lack of unifying vision made sweep-

ing changes in economic life impossible, the measures it did take pointed in a definite direction. The Commune put a moratorium on the payment of rents, closed the pawnshops, and eliminated night work in bakeries. It's most far-reaching measure was a plan to take over all idle factories and turn them over to cooperatives made up of the workers previously employed by them.

The whole logic of the Commune as a workers' state naturally led it to curtail the rights of private property and move toward the socialization of the means of production.

The revolutionary democracy of the Communards showed itself in many small and symbolic ways. The guillotine, symbol of repression by the old order, was dragged out in the streets and burned. The Victory Column on the Place Vendôme, built by Napoleon to symbolize his military triumphs was torn down as an affront to other peoples and an incitement to national hatred. The internationalism of the Communards was evident too in their welcoming foreigners to serve as representatives of the Commune. The claim of the Commune that "the flag of the Commune is the flag of the world republic" was not an idle boast.

Was there a "bloodbath" under the Commune? Yes, there certainly was, but it was not the work of the Communards, but of their enemies. The Commune executed two generals and one counter-revolutionary archbishop. In response to the wholesale slaughter of the Communards by the Versailles army, a decree was issued for the imprisonment of hostages drawn from the city's most prominent counter-revolutionaries, but it was never carried into effect. This impulse of generosity and restraint toward the propertied classes was in stark contrast to the bloodthirsty terror launched by the bourgeoisie against the workers. By their own accounts, the Thiers government executed over 15,000 workers. In the final analysis a sterner policy would have better served the Commune in its struggle for survival.

The defeat of the Commune was an enormous setback for the French workers and it took them over a generation to recover. But their heroism was not in vain. The international working class absorbed the lessons of the Paris Commune. In October of 1917 when the Russian workers made a revolution, they stood on the shoulders of the Paris Communards.

(to be continued in the next issue)



CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

OF THE SAME OLD KIND

by RON WHITEHORNE

Two years ago *Jaws* broke the bank for Hollywood. In the wake of this toothy shark came a tidal wave of disaster movies featuring larger than life animals. Orca, the killer whale, Big Foot, and a six million dollar monkey, the new, improved King Kong, dominated the silver screen. But the public rapidly tired of these creatures. The Monster disaster format had certain limitations. There is only so much you can do with a big fish or a super ape.

The answer to this dilemma was science fiction movies on a grand scale. In the uncharted realms of outer space anything goes. The special effects people got together and created some strange looking folks that live in the remote reaches of time and space. A script was thrown in as an afterthought, and presto, we had *Star Wars* which quickly knocked off *Jaws* as the all time money maker.

Now we have *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* which is on its way to toppling *Star Wars* at the box office. *Close*

Encounters is about UFO's. Like other sci-fi thrillers before it, it capitalizes on our fascination with the unknown. It does so with considerable technical skill and a certain amount of humor, a quality that sets it apart from most movies of this type. But *Close Encounters* is different in a deeper way.

Traditionally science fiction movies have pictured the aliens from outer space as hostile, as objects of fear and loathing. These beings invade Earth with the aim of destroying or capturing the human population. The earthlings for their part fight back with all their meagre resources and somehow miraculously win out in the end.

These movies are simple morality plays designed to re-affirm the superiority of our "way of life." Our dedicated scientists, generals, and law enforcement officials (the good guys) fight slimy, immoral aliens (bad guys) who symbolize everything we despise.

Sometimes these films have some fairly obvious ideological content. For example, *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, made during the McCarthy era, drew a parallel between the body snatchers, who took over people's minds, and alleged "communist subversion".

Close Encounters introduces a new version of the aliens. At first they seem true to type, sweeping through the countryside rattling buildings and kidnapping little children. But in the end the aliens prove to be downright friendly. Their kidnappings appear to have been inspired by a desire for greater knowledge of earth people. Eventually all the earthlings are released unharmed.

Although it is clear that the aliens possess the technology and intelligence to easily lay waste to the Earth, instead they choose to simply try to communicate, using a series of musical notes and visual images. Finally these aliens don't look like the Creature from the Black Lagoon. While certainly a bit strange by our standards, they nevertheless possess delicate and expressive features and display human-like emotion.

Close Encounters also revises the traditional role of human beings in the S-F equation. Usually the suspicious townsfolk take their shotguns to the first Martian they see. The state, be it the local Sheriff or the Pentagon, quickly concludes the worst about the aliens and hits them with everything they've got.

But in *Close Encounters*, the ordinary people after an initial period of fear, become positively enchanted with the aliens. And in what is probably the most incredible part of the film, the military brass who gave us Vietnam and the neutron bomb, manage to keep their guns in their holsters.

In *Close Encounters* the true heroes are the aliens. We identify not with the all so obviously weak and mortal earthlings, but with the space people. We are fascinated with their great and mysterious power. We admire their brilliant use of light and sound. Rather than portending evil, everything we learn about the aliens seems to promise better things for us all.

Why this new twist? Could it be that the makers of this film instinctively understood that much of today's movie audience could no longer take the traditional formula seriously? Confidence in the dominant institutions, in those who run them and in the values they represent is at an all time low. Movies that ask us to identify with the authority figures and values of capitalist society in a life and death struggle against alien-life forms lack credibility. Those who we are asked to accept as heroes are almost as alien to us as the aliens.

Along with this the oppressiveness of life under the thumb of monopoly capital is at the root of the widespread fascination with UFOs and the possibility of life in outer space. We want to believe there is something out there and we want to believe that it is something better than what we have here. It is this mass emotion that *Close Encounters* has so skillfully captured and exploited at the box office.

And in the end it is a terrible fraud. The same social forces that have generated revived interest in astrology, Black magic and the instant salvation religious cults are behind the UFO phenomena. The interests of monopoly capital demand that people seek salvation in a flying saucer rather than investigating and acting on the real causes of their oppression.

The close encounter of a third kind — actual contact with extra terrestrial life — may become a modern variety of the traditional religious experience. The evidence for mystical communication with God is about as strong as the evidence documenting exchanges with intelligent life from outer space. But the absence of hard evidence has never silenced the faithful and it is unlikely to do so in the future as long as we must endure a social life based on exploitation.

For these reasons *Close Encounters* might be better compared with *The Ten Commandments* or *Our Lady of Fatima* rather than with *War of the Worlds*. And when seen in this light there is really nothing very new about it after all.

miners strike

(Continued from p. 1)

Pennsylvania told the *Organizer* last week that Pennsylvania state police have been busting pickets "right and left" in the last two weeks. So far, two miners have been killed by agents of the coal operators. Retiree Mack Lewis was shot dead on January 6 by a company guard in Kentucky, while walking the picket line. John Hull was killed by a burst of gunfire from scabs at a non-union mine which he and 35 other union miners were trying to shut down.

"This is our last chance, because if we get stuck with (the contract) we're looking at now, this union is finished. We'll never organize another mine," said Ohio miner Jim Hepe.

Non-union mines now produce half the nation's coal, up from about 25% just five years ago. Most of these are strip mines opened since the energy crisis jacked up the price of coal. If the percentage of non-union mines keeps going up at that rate, the power of the UMW will be broken in a few years. The union needs a good contract, especially in the area of benefits and working conditions, to attract non-union miners to the union.

Scab coal companies are paying union wages or better in order to keep out the union, yet still rake in the profits because they don't have to follow union contract rules on safety or job classifications. Only the promise of job security, good benefits, safer working conditions, and a working grievance procedure backed up by the right to strike can convince these miners to go with the union.

DEFEND RIGHT TO STRIKE

The miners fight for the right to strike is a fight to defend the foundation of real unionism. If they win the spark could catch in the steelworkers or autoworkers next. If they lose, it will be a setback for every worker in America.

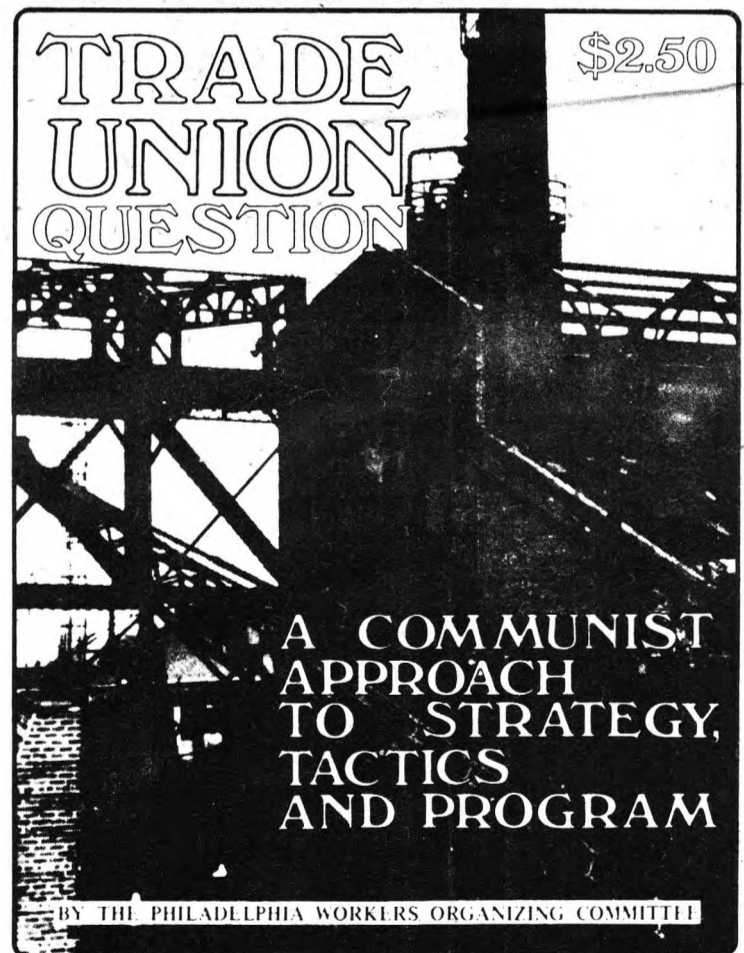
Organizer, March 1978, page 18

After three cold months, and with the threat of federal troops being sent in to move scab coal and break the strike, the miners need the support of other workers. True to form, George Meany has sided with the companies by criticizing Carter for "indecisiveness" and calling on him to use Taft-Hartley against the miners.

So its up to the rank and file and honest local leadership to build support for the miners. Already, locals of the Steelworkers, UAW, IUE, IBEW, Teamsters UE, and others, have sent food and money to the strikers. Support rallies and fund-raisers have been organized in Columbus, Ohio, Pittsburgh and Philadelphia, Detroit, New York City, and elsewhere.

The most important thing we can do now is stop Carter and Congress from intervening on the side of the companies. Senator Byrd of West Virginia, the powerful leader of the Senate Democratic caucus, has already asked Carter not to invoke Taft-Hartley. Byrd is clearly worried about his political future if the government does openly side with the coal operators, and other politicians have the same fear. Letters, petitions, local union resolutions, and delegations to the White House and to congressional representatives should be sent, protesting against government intervention. Send copies of these letters and resolutions to the UMW at the addresses below, so that they'll know we're behind them. The UMW also desperately needs funds to defend pickets arrested while shutting down scab mines and stopping scab coal trucks.

Free clinics set up to provide medical care during the strike also need funds. Send checks to — Miner's Free Clinic, Box 3182, East Beckley Station, Beckley, West Virginia 25801; District 5 Legal Defense Fund, Box 62, Montcalm, W. Va. 24737; and Miners Relief Committee District 17, Box 1313, Charlestown, W. Va. 25325.



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