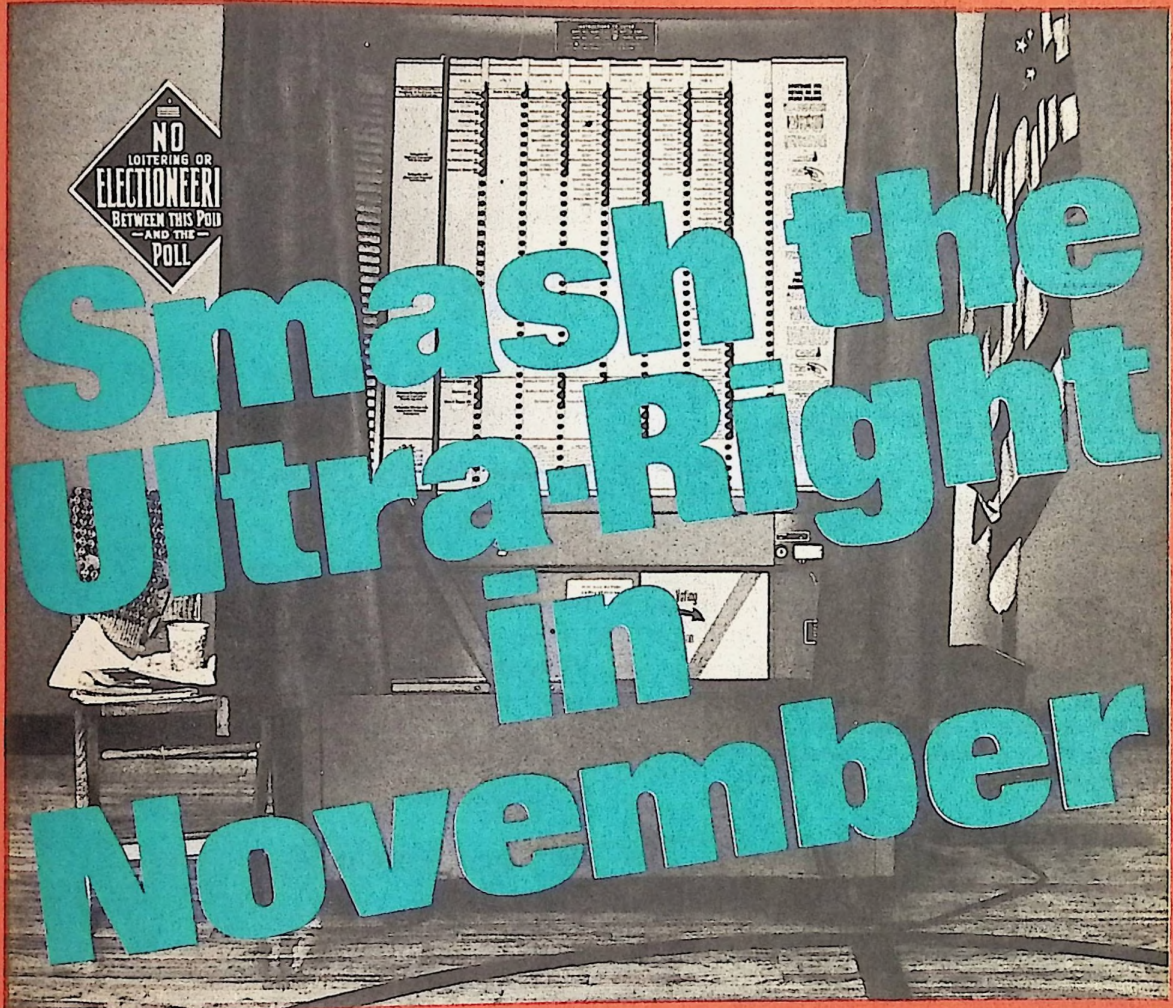


# Political Affairs

Theoretical Journal, Communist Party USA, April, 1996

\$1.75



- **Retooling for Mass Party - Fishman**
- **Communist Party & Elections - Webb**
- **Women Fight Contract - Wood**
- **Imperialism and Ponzo - Saffer**
- **Vietnam Today - Azad**

- **Canada - CC CP of Canada**
- **Working-Class Culture - Brodine**
- **Remembering Rebozo - Bonosky**
- **International Notes**
- **Reader's Viewpoint**



0 74470 84926 1

# Political Affairs

## Editorial Board

Joe Sims, Editor  
Mike Bayer, Phillip Bonosky,  
Norman Goldberg,  
Judith Le Blanc, Carole Marks,  
Victor Perlo, James West

**Cover Art:** Norman Goldberg  
**Business and Circulation:**  
John Urquhart, Rose Goldberg

**Special Assistant:** Dorothy Kahan

**Political Affairs** (ISSN 0032 3128) is published monthly, except for combined September/October, by Political Affairs Publishers, Inc., 235 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011. [This address is for all correspondence.] ☎ 212 989-4994

**Manuscripts** are invited. If a manuscript return is requested, please enclose a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope.

**Subscription rates:** \$18 for one year (Individuals); \$27 for one year (Institutions); foreign subscriptions: Canada and Mexico, \$20 a year; all others, on request; single issues, \$1.75. Second class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices.  
**Postmaster:** Send changes of address to: Political Affairs, 235 West 23 St., New York, NY 10011.



April 1996 Vol. 75 No. 4

- 1 **Editorial**
- 2 **Retooling for a Mass Party**  
Joelle Fishman
- 6 **We Can Make a Difference in '96**  
Sam Webb
- 8 **Women Fight the Contract**  
Roberta Wood
- 10 **Imperialism and the Fight for Peace**  
Pamella Saffer
- 13 **Vietnam Today**  
Interview
- 17 **The Future of Canada**  
Central Committee, Communist Party, Canada
- 24 **Working-Class Culture**  
Virginia Brodine
- 30 **Remembering Paul Robeson**  
Phillip Bonosky
- 33 **International Notes**
- 35 **Letters to the Editor**
- 36 **Reader's Viewpoint**



**A**T&T, the world's largest telephone company, announced its intention to split into three parts, laying off 40,000 workers in the process. A wave of similar "restructurings" and "downsizing" swept through American industry. The price of AT&T stock and the stock market generally, zoomed.

On April 4, the first split-off became public with the sale of \$3 billion of stock in the Lucent Corporation, containing most of Bell Labs, the telecommunication systems, software and products which gave AT&T its technological leadership. In its prospectus, Lucent announced the firing of 22,000 employees, half managerial, half operational workers. A syndicate of top brokers sold the stock to eager buyers at a price of \$27 per share, higher than expected, and the price immediately jumped to \$32 per share.

Don't the very rich men dominating the stock market realize that the wave of layoffs is undermining the economy, and in the case of Lucent, risking their technological edge? Their overriding perception, driven by greed, sees only the prospect of higher profits from "lower costs" as workers are dropped from payrolls.

On April 5, the Bureau of Labor Statistics released its monthly report on the employment situation, indicating higher employment and lower unemployment than the media and Wall Street "experts" had predicted. This news set off a four day rout that cost the Dow Jones industrials 203 points. Don't the financial magnates see in this report prospects of a stronger economy, better business? Their overriding perception, driven by fear and greed, sees the labor movement threatening to cut into their super-exploitation of American labor, a more militant labor movement under improved leadership that is organizing new contingents of workers, and is already beginning to win a higher minimum wage, so long resisted by capitalists. The super-rich want higher unemployment to split the working class, to weaken the resolve of those still employed.

Short-term profit prospects and the course of the class struggle, determine the gyrations of the stock market in both of these seemingly contradictory situations.

The course of the stock market isn't determined

by the petty investments of Joe Smith who owns the corner deli, but by tycoons controlling gigantic blocks of money, who can throw in billions at a time to buy stocks, or take out billions by selling stocks. Recently their scope has been magnified by the now \$4 trillion in "mutual funds" of stocks and bonds, money that formerly would have been put into savings accounts. Edward (Ned) Fitzgerald III, who owns Fidelity and controls its \$550 billion of investments, holds large blocks in many large corporations, joining the older families of the Rockefellers, Mellons and Du Ponts.

These tycoons, the Fitzgeralds and their ilk, the bosses of General Motors now preparing to shut down 13 plants and out-source the parts at half the wages, do not worry about economic dangers. They are reassured by such representatives as Alan Greenspan that all is in balance and will be kept under control.

What's really happening in the economy is different from their perception. The growing extremism in distribution of income, starting with the incredible salaries, bonuses and percs of the top executives, is part of a total picture. On the other side there are the millions who cannot keep up with their credit card debts or their housing mortgages and cannot make ends meet.

Yes, a major crisis of overproduction is ripening. But the owners and politicians heading U.S. imperialism aim to forestall domestic problems through the rapid expansion of their holdings and superprofits in all parts of the world, backed by ground, air, and naval forces, conspicuous intervention in many areas, an intensified campaign against Communism, and if needed, rising military spending to counter slashes in welfare Medicaid, Medicare and education.

Must we wait while these events unfold? Labor action, the struggle for higher wages and shorter hours, real affirmative action, anti-fascist victory in the 1996 elections are the immediate objectives. The longer goal must be the replacement of the decayed, parasitic system of capitalism with one by and for the people, a rationally managed socialist system without the stock exchange or other gambling extravaganzas. □

# Retooling for a Mass Party

---

Joelle Fishman

Ask most any member of the Communist Party, or yourself, "Why did you join?" and the answer, in a kaleidoscope of different ways, is usually "for a better life." America, supposed to be the "land of milk and honey," where the "streets are paved with gold" is more like a capitalist nightmare for millions and millions more of its people every day.

A mother and community leader who joined a few months ago after working with the Communist Party for years wrote on the flyer/announcement of a newly forming club in a public housing development, "Nothing will change if you stay at home. Together we can make a difference." Another new member joined that night.

The impact of corporate greed on the everyday lives of most families is devastating as plant closings, mega-mergers, downsizing and massive job elimination, privatization, etc. further redistributes the nation's wealth – created by the working class – into the hands of a top few super rich.

Divide-and-conquer tactics have enabled the most dangerous henchmen for corporate America to gain control of Congress and many state legislatures. Everything won in the last 50 years is threatened, from food stamps to Social Security to welfare to affirmative action to union rights. Food is being taken from the mouths of children to fund an obscene military budget and tax breaks for the rich.

In such drastic conditions, without a doubt, the Communist Party is called upon to respond in an extraordinary way.

We have learned a lot and we have changed a lot in the last few years, as we put our full energies into the fight for jobs and equality and opened our doors wider and wider to those who are hungry and angry and ready to struggle. We better understand the necessity, and better see the possibility, for the Communist Party to achieve a massive size and strength in our country at this time.

Practically every day there is a new experience in our Party to build on the assessment that we are

in a time when a broad cross-section of working-class people understand our message, and respond immediately. Our class-struggle framework is a breath of fresh air, the way out.

It's not hard for someone being hurt and destroyed to see that the whole system of capitalism is cancerous. It's natural for someone who is angry to want to fightback for their immediate survival needs and at the same time see the need to join with others and organize for a total change, a new system based on equality and "people before profits."

The thousands of phone calls and letters in response to Gus Hall's speech on C-SPAN this January, many from the deep South, make the point dramatically. One of the Connecticut callers helped confirm the significance of our broad outreach and growth and correspondingly more flexible organization. This was a victim of the structural crisis, a basic industrial worker who lost touch with the Party after moving to a rural area of the state when his job was eliminated in the '80s. "I'm calling to renew my commitment," he said, eagerly agreeing to come to the state convention, surprised but happy to be included after such a long time. "We're more like a real movement," he said with confidence.

The elements of a mass Party have developed throughout our 76-year history. Our challenge is to apply these lessons to the class-struggle conditions of today. Perhaps some of the most powerful descriptions of the mass Party approach from the 1930s are found in the autobiographies of leading Communists from that time, like *Black Worker in the Deep South*, by Hosea Hudson. Thousands of people signed up to join the Communist Party at meetings held in Madison Square Garden, in New York City. Communists organized the unemployed, organized the first unions in basic industry, fought segregation and racism at home and fascism abroad.

The repression against the Communist Party, the labor movement, civil rights movement and all people's movements in the 1950s made conditions very difficult as thousands were harassed, fired from their jobs, and jailed for their ideas.

During the student protests of the Vietnam War era, the civil rights movement, and the movement to

---

Joelle Fishman is a member of the National Board CPUSA.

Free Angela Davis, young people began to flock to the Communist Party once again. In this period, many joined the Party after having already participated in other left organizations. They joined because they supported socialism intellectually, more so then because they themselves were directly part of working-class struggles.

**MILWAUKEE CONFERENCE** ■ For us in Connecticut, the moment that began a new grass-roots approach to building the Party among the working class was the special Party conference held in Milwaukee in 1982. This conference focused on the club as the center of life in the Party. There, we spoke of the permanent decay and decline of monopoly capitalism, and therefore the urgent need for a greatly strengthened Party and for a mass Party of struggle. We spoke of shop and neighborhood concentration, public presence, Party work among the masses, industrial concentration, and the unity of the multi-racial working class. We laid the basis for bringing many more working-class people into our organization.

In Connecticut, our efforts were focused on the poorest neighborhood in Hartford. A *Daily World* route was started. The same comrades knocked on the same doors every week for years. They became a part of the extended family. Several times one or two would join the Party, but then move back to Puerto Rico or down south. It took eight years before a solid club of residents from the Sheldon-Charter Oak neighborhood was born. It took a lot of time and personal attention to the needs of the readers of the paper, including helping out when a crisis hit the family.

The new members named themselves the Mariana Braceti club. They did not know at the time that they would become famous for their consistent work over the years: leading the fight for a Civilian Review Board in Hartford, which was finally won in 1992; and with all the clubs in Hartford opposing privatization of the schools by EAI, a victory won just this month.

The Mariana Braceti club has by now given birth to two new clubs. As members have moved away from the old neighborhood, they have recruited new members where they now live, and the concentration-style mass recruitment has multiplied.

In the years since the Milwaukee Conference, our national leadership has continued the struggle to root the clubs in neighborhoods and workplaces and to achieve grass roots recruitment on a large

scale.

In 1985, then National Chair Henry Winston argued that the "main ideological problem in the Party is understanding the Party itself and how to fight for it politically, ideologically and organizationally." Although the times and the specifics are different today, the question which Comrade Winston raised was central to our 26th convention preparations.

In all of his National Committee and Convention reports since 1982, Gus Hall has outlined and developed the idea of a "Mass Party of Action," and "clubs of a new type," grounded in class struggle, fun and meaningful to be a part of, placing all questions in the class-struggle framework.

The reaffirmations of our Party's foundations of industrial and working-class concentration at our last convention in 1991, also reaffirmed the concept of a mass Party - bringing large numbers from the working class into its ranks to develop as Communists even as they are members of the organization.

Comrade Hall opened up an in-depth review of our history and experiences leading up to and since the Milwaukee conference at the November 1995 National Committee meeting. In his report, "A New Mass Revolutionary Party on the Move," he says the "single-minded aim in these remarks is to stir up your creative juices, your best Marxist-Leninist thinking on what it will take to make a mass working-class revolutionary Communist Party a reality in every club and district of the CPUSA."

He discusses a combination of "tightening up on our ideological, philosophical and political concepts of the Party" and at the same time developing "a looser, more flexible approach to the club ... new, experimental, novel and bold approaches to building a truly mass party."

When the Mariana Braceti club was first formed, comments from other clubs in Connecticut and around the country were very skeptical. It was generally considered to be an "exceptional" experience that could not be repeated. Many Party members could not imagine themselves making an eight-year commitment to distributing our paper door-to-door before seeing the concrete results.

Today, there are very few if any who would argue that the Mariana Braceti club is "exceptional." There are too many new examples and experiences of many varieties that prove the point that when given the opportunity, working-class people, especially those members of the working class who are

the poorest and most oppressed and exploited, will respond directly to the Communist Party, join and become leaders to struggle "for a better life."

That first group of members of the Mariana Bracetti club had to be very strong. As a Party, we had not yet begun to learn how to do away with our jargon, how to carry out our meetings and discussions in a popular way. Over the years, we have all learned, and continue to learn, many things, including how we speak, our style of education, collectively arranging child care, translating into Spanish, handling finances and coming up with action agendas. Now that the early members of Mariana Bracetti are developed Communists in Party leadership, they in turn find that they have to consciously remember to break ideas down for the new members joining today.

The concept of working class concentration, of a club being responsible for the balance of forces in a given working-class neighborhood or workplace, has forced the issue of grass roots-style recruitment.

It is always exciting when a breakthrough in one area helps lead to a breakthrough somewhere else, and on and on. There have been a lot of breakthroughs in our Party nationally, in state after state, including Connecticut, since the last convention.

Today, when thousands are ready to join our Party as soon as they are asked, the lessons learned from grass roots organizing and neighborhood and workplace concentration over the past 15 years, can help guide us to be as effective as possible.

One such lesson is that involvement in the economic fightback struggles and recruitment are completely interrelated, and each helps strengthen the other. In New Haven, organizing with the homeless community in opposition to welfare cuts in 1992-3 and bringing forward the Party's Connecticut Economic Bill of Rights in public testimony, as well as analysis and coverage in the *People's Weekly World*, resulted in quite a few new members and a new club.

When the city moved to eliminate beds in the homeless shelters, the homeless movement decided to set up a tent city on the New Haven Green. It was the Communist Party that helped broaden the struggle, involving the labor unions, peace and progressive organizations in support on the basis that an injury to one member of the working class is an injury to all. Every club in New Haven became involved. The fight to save the shelter beds was won. While many of those who joined the Party at that time have moved on to other places, a core

group remains. The club which was born around the homeless struggle has not yet succeeded in involving most who joined at that time in regular club meetings. However, all the members enthusiastically participate in specific campaigns in which the club is involved, including the Tax the Rich election campaign and November's city-wide referendum for public works jobs.

**MASS RECRUITING** ■ We also learned a lot in this experience about how to hold popular meetings and rallies, how to target a particular elected official or issue and tie each event to an overall action plan. In November, 1993, when we held a state-wide Jobs Not Jails rally on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of the Communist Party, 19 people passed up their cards to join, during the speeches. A worker with 24 years seniority whose job had been downsized and eliminated by Pratt & Whitney moved the entire audience. George Meyers put it all in context, told of his own experiences being unemployed and the need for socialism. Everyone was electrified. Several of the cards were from workers. Workers making minimum wage, forced to work more than one job, looking for answers. Today one of those workers is the newly elected chair of a club in the housing development where she lives.

Back in New York, Gus Hall immediately recognized that the response at this rally was an early indication of the changing times. He urged us to study what had happened.

The breakthroughs with tabling came not too long after. First the YCL, then New York, and across the country. People were signing cards much faster than they could be followed up on, given our present size and involvement.

The next tactic tried was knocking on doors in a specific neighborhood and inviting people to join. Mostly, people just took the pen and signed up. Same results, everywhere it was done.

Of the 100 who have signed up to join in the past months in Connecticut, almost half are now a part of a club, a major achievement in a limited amount of time. Some of those not yet in clubs signed up at tables and live where we do not yet have a club in their area. Others have said they signed up to show support but are not ready get actively involved. Practically all the new members are working class, the majority are African American and Puerto Rican. Our Party is on a higher level, we are closer to the people, we are able to produce

more and to win more struggles.

We know that our next breakthrough in Connecticut has to be figuring out how to bring numbers of workers into clubs at the factory or workplace. In two contract struggles now underway, and following up on a recent strike, we are experimenting with ways of getting to know the workers better and inviting them to be a part of the Communist Party.

There is a lot to build on. The popularity of the *People's Weekly World*, the respect given to our members who are union leaders, and the recognition of struggles we have helped to win. When the Steelworkers union finally honored Gus Hall as a founder of their organization, the pride reached all the way into a steelworkers shop in Connecticut. "We're all one, now! Look who our union's founder is!" a Communist steelworker told her workmates. They wanted to find out a lot more.

In New Haven, our Party's contribution to the successful union struggle last year that kept the Winchester factory jobs in the heart of the African American community is recognized. It is the Communist trade unionists who will make the difference in placing labor at the front of the class struggle today, by initiating organizing drives, shop floor struggles and alliances of labor and community. We can draw on our experiences of grass roots mass recruiting in the neighborhoods and by tabling to discover the tactics for the shop floor.

We understand that some of those who sign up at a table or call in after seeing a program on C-SPAN are just making a "protest vote." We'll take all the protest votes we can get.

We know that many who sign up are looking for how they can join with others who are also angry, and we welcome each and every one.

We know we have a big responsibility to meet the needs of these new members for education, club life and activity. We have a long way to go, but we're doing better all the time. There's nothing like a couple of enthusiastic new members to get a club onto a regular meeting schedule and into the thick of things in its neighborhood.

As a new member of the Communist Party, most people are looking forward to learning and doing new things. To respond to those needs for education, action and comradeship takes a lot of time, and leadership, of which there is not yet nearly enough to go around given the pace of recruitment.

Without an understanding of the class struggle

framework of the Communist Party, a new member cannot develop as a Communist, and the Communist Party cannot become stronger. To help the clubs, the state Party organization in Connecticut developed a "New Members' Day," led by a team of longer-time Party members. It's an exciting introduction to the Party, dealing with the meaning of surplus value and class struggle, racism and the fight for equality, socialism USA and the Communist Party.

At our last session in December, 11 attended who had joined in the past year, most at tables at public events, others from neighborhood *People's Weekly World* routes, and others from working relations with club members in workplace or neighborhood activity. Two more joined at the conclusion.

As we continue to sign up new members, we must find ways to regularize these sessions. At the same time, we should not stop with the basics. We will have to experiment in club meetings and in other ways to continue the ideological development of all Party members in an organized way, as a compliment to our growing involvement and leadership in mass struggle.

For recruitment and for new members both, we have experimented with weekly discussions. In 1990, we held sessions on the picket line at Circuit-Wise, and later at the home of a Circuit-Wise worker. Each session covered a single basic concept of Marxism – what is the working class, how we are all exploited by the capitalists, how racism divides the working class and how it can be overcome, how capitalists use the government to stay on top, what is socialism and how we can win it, and why we need a Communist Party. In 1993-4, we had a similar series for new YCL and Party members from the homeless movement. In each case, we invited people who were interested but had not yet joined. The discussions were lively, centering on how the concepts related to the participants' actual experiences.

The newer members who are taking responsibilities in their clubs today, came to the sessions, came to national conferences in New York or to state conferences, and liked what they learned and saw. The process of discussing our policies and our ideology helps new members develop as Communists, brings forward new leadership, and at the same time tests and refines our concepts against the daily experience of life and struggle.

Do we have anything to be afraid of? Only that

Continued on page 12

# We Can Make a Difference in '96

---

Sam Webb

*Editor's note: The article below is based on the author's remarks to the Northern California district convention of the Communist Party in April.*

The electoral arena is the main arena of struggle in the coming period. Or to put it differently, the outcome of the struggle to defeat Gingrich and his gang will in large measure determine the political dynamics and political prospects for victory in every other arena of struggle. That's the dialectic of struggle at this moment.

For this reason the struggle to bring to life and implement our electoral policy is the key task facing the entire Party, from California to Maine and from Michigan to Louisiana. It is the task of every Communist and every collective. We have to find the ways in the coming months to influence and move millions. I think that's our charge, challenge and responsibility.

What should we put a premium on at this moment in terms of our work in the electoral arena? First of all, initiative and action. We can't wait until next month, we can't wait until Labor Day, and we can't wait until election day. We need to take initiative and action now.

Secondly, we have to think big in our approach to this election – bigger than we normally do. Our aim should be to move not tens, not hundreds, not thousands but tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, millions. I think that has to be our approach. We have the ties, connections and the political skills to do that.

Thirdly, our approach has to be one that embraces flexible tactics – we shouldn't be rigid. We have to have tactics that will move people into action, tactics that takes into account different political levels and different understandings of people.

Fourthly, I think we have to fight for broad unity. Here we can play a special role, because of our history, traditions, experience, and understanding.

Finally, we should not be taken aback nor deterred by the presence of groups, organizations

and people who have views which are different from ours in these elections. After all, that is the nature of coalition work. It's especially the nature of the broad and loose electoral coalitions that are forming around the objective of defeating the ultra-right and the fascist fringe in these elections. We're going to come across, meet, talk to, and mix with people who do not fully share our views on many questions but agree with us on the necessity of defeating the ultra right – that's the nature of this moment.

Although we will contribute in a variety of ways in these elections we will have the opportunity to make a special contribution in at least two areas. As others have said, one is in the political-ideological arena of struggle. The ideological struggle will be sharp and we must bring our thinking and analysis on all the questions which surface.

One particular ideological problem that we have no choice but to address is the tendency among some to underestimate the ultra-right danger. If that's not seen, it becomes a problem in terms of mobilizing people, and getting them to the polls. Such an underestimation can only benefit Wall Street and the ultra-right.

Take the Nader campaign for example. That's the problem – an underestimation of the ultra-right danger. There is not an appreciation among the forces supporting Nader of what control of the Congress, the White House and the courts by the ultra right would mean for our country.

Now what can we do to ensure that our views on policies are part of this big ideological debate that is now taking shape in this country?

To begin with, we have to make the main report a living document, both within the Party but beyond the Party as well. We ought to think about who we can send the report by Comrade Hall to. What organizations, community leaders, opinion-makers, elected officials, and trade union leaders? Every club should do this.

Also I think we should organize the broadest possible circulation of the *PWW*. This year, we're going to combine our fund drive with a circulation drive. And there's not a better moment to do this,

---

Sam Webb is a member of the National Board CPUSA.



because of the political stakes of the 1996 elections.

We should use nationally and locally-prepared leaflets and materials that speak to the questions and the stakes in the 1996 elections as well.

Finally, we have to continue to fight to break through in the mass media. This is a critical for us.

**IMPACT ON LABOR** ■ The other area in which we can make a special contribution, in my opinion, is in the labor movement. And here, the doors are wide open all over the country. The new leadership of the AFL-CIO, as has been mentioned, aims to make the elections their main political priority in the coming months. They are committing people and they are committing \$35 million to bring about the defeat of the ultra-right and its fascist fringe. We should be, and I know we already are, a part of this struggle that the labor movement is initiating.

We should deepen and broaden our involvement in every phase of labor's struggle in this election campaign, beginning with the selection of candidates. It's hard to beat an ultra-right Republican unless you have a good candidate to do that.

I am convinced that we can because of our new relationship to the labor movement. Communists are elected to office in local unions and are members of central labor councils. We have very good relations at the grassroots and with labor's leaders. And we are sought out for our thinking and our positions on questions.

Our aim is not only to help mobilize labor, to be a part of that whole process, but to bring labor forward as the leader of this all-people's anti-ultra-right electoral front that is emerging. That is the special role we have got to play.

The other matter that I want to address briefly relates to the building of our Party and YCL. The 26th Convention, by and large, won most of the Party to the idea that we have to build a bigger Party and that we have to do it in a new way.

I think all of us who went to the convention left with a new sense of confidence that we can build a much bigger Party, a much bigger YCL, and we can do it in new ways.

Therefore, we should take advantage of this new mood in the Party. We have to begin to think about what concrete initiatives will bring new people into our ranks. Does that mean that we give up trying to recruit people one-on-one, the old method of recruiting? By no means. In fact, we should do

more of that in the movements in which we participate.

However, if we are going to recruit masses then we have to organize new methods of recruiting, mass methods of recruiting. We have to think about new approaches, mass approaches, public approaches to building the Party and the YCL. One-on-one is necessary but we have to complement that with greater attention to mass ways of recruiting.

The atmosphere is right. People are joining. For example in New York, the district set up a table at a number of demonstrations of health care workers, fighting for welfare, Medicare and Medicaid. As a result they recruited close to 100 health care workers at these actions! Shortly after, they established a new club of health care workers, and some of those new members came to the 26th Convention.

The new members were thrilled by the convention. In fact, one of the members went back to her local union meeting where she stood up and said, "Brother president, we have to work more closely with the Communist Party USA!" And someone started to raise a question, but before he finished someone else shouted out, "It was the Communists who established and built this union!" And the president of the local said, "Let's have a cup of coffee later, we'll talk more about it."

That's quite bold. Maybe that is not an appropriate tactic in every situation. But we have to look for new mass, bold methods of recruiting to complement the one-on-one recruiting that we do in the workplaces.

The building of a mass legal Party is not a narrow concern on our part. The fact is that the building of our Party as a mass Party will have huge repercussions on the future of our nation. Our multi-racial, multi-national, male-female working class will benefit greatly.

I think this is a whole new area that we have to discuss at every level of the Party – the clubs, the leading bodies of the districts, in our National Board and National Committee. It's both a great responsibility and a great opportunity for us in this coming period. □

# Women Fight the Contract

Roberta Wood

America needs a raise! is the AFL-CIO's new rallying cry. New Executive Vice-President Linda Chavez-Thompson, addressing the Chicago Federation of Labor was more blunt: "It's the wages, stupid!"

Women are emerging on all fronts in the fight against the Contract on America – in strike battles like that of Detroit newspaper workers and in organizing campaigns in chicken processing plants across the South. In modern-day sweatshops, hospitals and nursing homes, women are spearheading the fight for children and seniors and leading the way in voter registration drives.

It's clear that in 1996, economic questions are at the heart of the struggle for women's equality and the survival of working-class families.

Women workers, alongside their male co-workers, have experienced massive loss of union wage jobs and an overall decline of wages. Even on the same pay, it's become harder and harder to make a go of it because more and more of an individual's resources are called on to fill in the gaps for the social resources being snatched from our families.

Take education for example. With three kids, here are some of the charges our family faces in Chicago's "free" public schools: each year, each child, an overall fee of \$25-\$50 plus \$10-\$25 for each of six classes; \$50-\$100 for equipment for any sport team they join plus an expected \$50 or so per family to help pay the part-time teacher/coach who is expected to volunteer his/her time; \$2/day for bus transportation plus endless candy-raffle-book-flower-balloon-donut-frozen food sales to finance not only extra-curricular but also regular classroom activities.

Child care, public school fees, school lunches and breakfasts, transportation, sports and recreation, supplementary tutoring, college tuition – even access fees to libraries and museums that used to be free – are some of the things hard-pressed working-class parents are scrambling to make up for.

The shrinking paycheck is one way billions of dollars have been transferred from workers' purses to corporate bank accounts. On top of that, the corporations' Contract on America and its attack on human entitlements would transfer even more, especially from working-class women and children, for the benefit of America's ultra-rich. Some statistics compiled by the National Organization for Women Legal Defense and Education Fund prove the point:

## Proposed Program Cuts

Program	Women & children (millions)	Percent cut	\$ cuts (billions)
Medicare	36	58%	\$270
Medicaid	85		\$163
AFDC	15	97%	\$82
Income Tax Credit	75		\$33
Food Stamp	26	85%	\$33
SSI	68		\$20
WIC		100%	\$5
Public Housing	84		\$3

The cut to Head Start would in addition deny 180,000 kids \$137 million.

Not coincidentally, along with the economic attack on working-class families, a vicious and sophisticated ideological campaign against working-class women has been launched with two goals: 1) to justify the cuts in entitlements to the working class so that the same funds can be transferred to entitlements for the super-rich and corporations; 2) to foment disrespect and mistrust in order to divide and disable any united fightback against the corporate attack on working-class America.

Across the country, working-class families are pushing themselves to the limit to protect their children. Many burn the candle on both ends, working two or more jobs to make ends meet, then using whatever hours are left in the day to provide the social and cultural activities their children need.

Roberta Wood is a contributor to PA.

**RACISM** ■ In particular, millions of African American mothers and fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles are true heroes in endlessly sacrificing and struggling to raise their children and fight for their futures under the most difficult of conditions – poverty, abysmal schools, a flood of drugs and guns brought into their neighborhoods and a lack of decent-paying jobs for either youth or adults. Just putting food on the table, assuring a decent place to live, clothes to wear, a school to attend and a way to get there, decent medical care, to keep the children out of harm's way – millions of African American parents sacrifice their own needs every day to care for their families under the most adverse conditions.

Nevertheless, African American women and their families are especially singled out to be lied about and slanderously stereotyped by big business media and politicians. Newspaper features and talk shows highlight every sordid case of child abuse, drugs and alcohol, dirty homes and parental irresponsibility they can dig up as if this were the norm. Meanwhile, the lives of the huge majority of African Americans, as well as other working-class mothers and fathers, grandparents, aunts, and uncles who heroically raise families against all odds are deliberately unreported.

The right wing's vicious family values campaign was cooked up in the putrid think tanks of corporate America. These billionaire "Welfare Kings" who have stolen the kid's lunch money, school money, rent and doctor money, use their control over the mass media to shift the blame for illiteracy, disease, poverty and all the human suffering that comes with them – crime, drugs, misery. They shift their blame onto the backs of the same parents whose paycheck they've cut or stolen.

Working-class families have always pooled their resources to care for the kids as best they could. From the same working-class viewpoint it makes sense for society to pool its resources and make the best that's possible available to the young. This seems like a logical use of our tax dollars.

The "family values" campaign seeks to break down this fundamental tenet of working-class morality – collective responsibility for society's children. The morality that the "family value-ists" want to teach the working class holds that each

individual set of parents is responsible for everything related to the upbringing of their children.

Seeking any help outside of the family is a sign of failure by the parents. Isn't this a convenient philosophy for those who want to pocket for themselves all of the tax dollars working-class families have paid into the social fund. The family values campaign glorifies the elimination of any program or entitlement that benefits working-class children and families.

**JOBS BILL** ■ It is no accident that the same programs and entitlements under attack by Big Business's Contract on America were fought for and won in parallel to the building of the labor movement in the '30s and '40s. They were a key to the success of that movement because the struggle for them built class unity.

The industrial unions were built parallel to the struggle not only for Social Security and unemployment compensation, but also for public works jobs. Public works jobs programs improved working-class communities and quality of life with arts, culture recreation and education as well as infrastructure improvements like sidewalks and sewers. They also provided paychecks to millions of working-class families.

A focal point for working-class women is the Martinez jobs bill, HR 1591, which calls for allotting a massive amount of public resources to create jobs at union wages. These projects would build facilities and services that would improve the quality of life in working-class communities across the country.

Imagine the vast array of public works that working-class families would fight for to improve the quality of life for our children – well-staffed sports, art, cultural centers, child care and after-school programs and neighborhood family health clinics.

The Martinez Bill lays the groundwork for great unity based on peoples immediate needs – jobs, an improved quality of life, protection and strengthening of the labor movement and equality through affirmative action. In terms of job opportunities for women, massive public works jobs programs offer the best chance for real, not token gains for all women – African American, Latino, Asian and Native American, and white, in obtaining union wage jobs. □

# U.S. Imperialism and the Fight for Peace

---

Pamella Saffer

Today's occurrences are a reaction to the demise of the socialist world and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This collapse has fed the appetite of U.S. imperialism which is now operating with greater confidence because it is the super military power in the world. Although U.S. imperialism faces economic rivalries it is able to force, blackmail, cajole and maneuver into place policies which promote and sustain its own ends. The foreign policy of the U.S. administration is the logic under which imperialism operates.

With the collapse of the socialist world countries like Angola and Mozambique have been setback and the leadership of liberation struggles have had to readjust.

Attention to foreign policy should not be left in the hands of the few who work in peace and solidarity. We fight for jobs for U.S. workers in Pittsburgh, Oakland, or New Haven because these struggles are part and parcel of the same package that determine U.S. foreign policy. The same forces that go along with the policies to cut welfare and Medicaid go along with a foreign policy that balks at international law, sustains an inhuman embargo against Cuba, and refuses to allow Cuban women and children medical supplies and food. The same forces that supported Duarte, Somoza, Savimbi, Mobutu Sese Seko, Marcos and tyrants everywhere support the greed of the multinational corporations at home and abroad. Racism is basic to all facets of imperialism's actions domestically and internationally. This is clearly seen in U.S. intervention in Third World countries.

The Clinton administration is subtle and sophisticated in its approach but is using its influence to continue the policies of the old administration in a less obvious way. Essentially, there has been no deviance from Bush's New World Order policies internationally. Threats to North Korea continue, and hypocrisy in Haiti abounds as the CIA digs in ever deeper after the U.S. armed intervention. Attacks on China for "human rights" violations are

heightening as are attempts to prevent the reestablishment of the Communist movement in former socialist countries. The administration has taken full advantage of the collapse of the socialist world and is moving ahead full strength. The embargo of Cuba is a criminal example of this kind of action by U.S. imperialism and the danger facing Cuba is greater today than ever before.

The same can be seen in moves to guarantee the marketplace regionally and internationally. NAFTA sets the stage for other regional agreements which diminish the rights of working people and open possibilities for economic and environmental devastation and increased exploitation.

We live in an extremely destabilized world, particularly in Third World countries where poverty is the legacy of colonization and people and resources continue to be exploited. This sets the stage for violent confrontations which in turn cause devastation of the environment and economic development and untold suffering, resulting in millions of deaths and displacement. The World Bank and IMF, with economic control over Third World countries carrying massive debts, have more control than the colonialists ever dreamt of.

**WAR IN TODAY'S WORLD** ■ In the war of the '90s, nine out of every ten people killed are civilians. They are women children, peasants, workers, the elderly. Among the body count there are no politicians, no arms manufactures, no heads of corporations, no generals. And about 20 times more people die from lack of food and medical services, combined with the stress of flight from war zones, than from weapons.

In Somalia in 1994, half or more of all the children under the age of five on January 1 were dead by the end of the year. The number of refugees and displaced persons because of wars, ethnic conflicts, economic or environmental devastation is more than 22 million and 80 percent of this number are women and children. Traditional lands and ways of life of indigenous peoples are threatened by encroaching oil and gas companies and other multinational corporations.

---

Pamella Saffer is a contributor to *PA*.



Even in the U.S. where the combined wealth of the top one percent of U.S. families is about the same as the entire bottom 95 percent the effects of the deadly combination of capitalism and militarism are evident. In the United States, from 1964 to 1975 the years of the Vietnam War, 123,600 workers died on the job in the U.S. - 58,000 died in Vietnam. Today, one of four children is born into poverty in the U.S. Marian Wright Edelman, president of the Children's Defense Fund has called for a mass demonstration in Washington on June 1 to challenge Congress cutbacks in programs that benefit children, to oppose a bill that makes more children poor, sick and hungry.

The arms race is wrecking havoc on the lives of people in the U.S. and other developed capitalist countries. According to the *United Nations Human Development Report 1994 (HDR)* five countries are responsible for 86 percent of the arms trade to the Third World. They are the U.S. the United Kingdom, France, Russia and China.

The UN Development Report rates countries according to a Human Development Index (HDI) based on longevity, education, and standard of living. In 1993, the U.S. ranked sixth, preceded by Japan followed by Canada, Norway, Switzerland and Sweden.

The U.S. rating changes drastically if a different measure is employed. For example the authors of the HDR separated out the Black and Latino populations within the U.S. as if they were separate countries. The ranking changed. White Americans ranked first, ahead of Japan; African Americans, with lower life expectancy, income and education levels, ranked 31st the same as Trinidad and Tobago. Hispanics ranked 35th, below the Bahamas, Republic of Korea and Estonia. In 1995 the U.S. ranked second on the HDI, preceded by Canada and followed by Japan. With the decline in the standard of living we know that has taken place for working people over the past two years, it would be interesting and telling to know the statistics for separate population of the U.S. now. These statistics should not obscure the fact that working-class whites are experiencing great impoverishment also.

Still, the majority of the impoverished throughout the world are women and children. UNICEF, the UN Children's Fund, publishes an annual report, *The State of the World's Children*. This year's report is a special 50th anniversary edition, an urgent and passionate call for global action to sup-

port an anti-war agenda. Fifty years after its inception, children's lives are still being shattered by conflict. Carol Bellamy Executive Director of UNICEF, recently stated, "A peace dividend is still waiting to be captured ... A world still that spends almost \$800 billion a year on the military must be able to reorder priorities and find adequate resources for development."

The arms race is a massive waste of material, human and natural resources, an enormous threat to the health of people and the greatest single cause of pollution to the environment. This is clearly revealed in the issue of land mines. The estimated 110 million landmines still buried in the ground of 64 countries each cost less than \$3 to make and up to \$1000 to clear. Often the same companies that manufacture and sell the mines offer their services to demine. New mines are being laid at the rate of 2-5 million per year.

The accelerated danger of nuclear war is present when we see U.S. attempts to get Russia to destroy its nuclear stockpile. This is especially frightening in view of the latest attempts to economically colonize that country. Money for weapons means little for health, schools, housing, education, human needs. We have to reorder our priorities to attack the root causes of war and conflict.

**THE ROLE OF THE UN** ■ The UN system spends surprisingly little on social and economic development less than \$10 billion, or about \$1.75 per human being on the planet. Global military expenditures equal about \$800 billion or about \$134 for every person on the planet. The current U.S. share of the regular UN budget is \$321 million only one fiftieth of one percent of federal spending or about \$7 per person. The U.S. currently owes \$1.4 billion in back dues to the U.N. which is facing a critical budget crisis.

The shift in the balance of world powers opened the way for the UN Security Council to be taken over by the imperialists. This was clearly demonstrated by the Gulf War when the U.S. government arm-twisted, blackmailed and used every form of pressure to influence the vote in the Security Council. The permanent members and others under pressure from them use double standards in the application of resolutions from itself or from the General Assembly. The shift of the UN mission from peace-

---

To consider the value of \$1 billion: If you had \$1 billion to spend and you spent it at the rate of \$1000 a day, it would take 3000 years.

keeping and peace-making to peace enforcing by military means is alarming, not only to the peace movement but to people living in the Third World. The United Nations is an essential international organization, but we oppose its misuse in the U.S. and we support the democratization of the Security Council.

The ultra-right attacks the UN from a different perspective. There is a bill in Congress, the UN Withdrawal Act of 1995 demanding that the U.S. withdraw from the UN and that the UN withdraw from the U.S. The bill has 12 sponsors and while it probably won't go far, it reflects another aspect of the influence of the right wing in Congress.

The last elections were won by a narrow margin. Peace forces must join together and with other forces vote against the ultra-right in the upcoming elections.

International solidarity is a critical issue. It is up to us to point out how the struggle for peace in the Middle East is the same struggle for jobs and peace at home; that the struggle for economic stability in South Africa is linked to economic justice at home. The right of Cuba or Vietnam or North Korea to determine their own form of government is related to our struggle for trade unions and the rights of working people. The fight for jobs and housing is a fight against the arms trade and for conversion – it is a fight against racism. Economic conversion is tied in with our demands for peace.

The world situation is more complex today than ever before. At a time when we need most to educate and provide answers, the peace movement is most weakened.

There is a lack of clarity and much confusion. No world socialist camp exists for back up support and in many cases former socialist countries are voting at the UN with the imperialists. In addition there is no world force uniting peace movements.

When the right opposes U.S. troops in former Yugoslavia and criticizes the UN it causes confu-

sion. The fundamental difference is simple: we oppose imperialism and put people, workers rights, the environment, health care, children's needs, and world peace before profits.

We are struggling to change national policy and national priorities and it is up to the Party to make these connections. The transnational corporations and the international financial institutions (the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank) are vivid examples of international solidarity – capitalist solidarity. We need to have international working-class solidarity. If the Party doesn't take the lead in this, no one will. The peace movement needs to incorporate economic demands and the overall issues.

To summarize, issues on our agenda include:

- to support coalitions working for disarmament, to slash the arms budget, to halt nuclear weapons testing, the production and sale of land mines and the arms trade;
- to support Cuba and an end to the embargo; work to defeat the Helms/Burton legislation;
- to clarify the imperialist nature of intervention;
- to support economic conversion;
- to point out how global economics impact on workers;
- to make clear linkages between militarism and its devastating effects on health and the environment;
- to make clear that peace is interrelated with labor, the U.S. economy, the elections and racism;
- to make the links between the economy, the military budget, foreign aid and how they affect the peace movement;
- to support democratizing the UN Security Council;
- to mobilize the peace sentiment to vote against the ultra-right in the elections;
- to link peace and solidarity issues with economic struggles. □

### Fishman. continued from page 5

we will not be able to open the doors and change quickly enough. Only that we will not be able to develop enough new leadership quickly enough to be able to bring the new members along.

Do we have a choice? A larger and stronger Communist Party means a stronger and more unit-

ed movement to defeat the inhumane, life-threatening Contract on America program of takeaways and cuts. A larger and stronger Communist Party means a stronger and more united working class to take on the union-busting policies of the multinational corporations.

A larger and stronger Communist Party is what history requires of us today "for a better life" in the future. □

## Vietnam Today

*Editor's Note: This interview with Comrade Bui The Giang, Director of the People to People Relations Department, Commission for External Affairs, Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, was conducted by Baham Azad.*

**Q:** Comrade Giang, I would like to thank you for giving us this opportunity to have a talk with you. Our Party, like Communists around the world, has great respect for the people and the Communist Party of Vietnam for the heroic struggles that led to the liberation of your country from imperialist domination.

**A:** I thank you for your kind words. But let me emphasize that when we fought, we fought with self-confidence because we knew behind us we had the support of friends and Communists all over the world. And, of course, we did not fight for ourselves only. We fought for the cause of all humanity. We won not only because of our own efforts, because of the bravery of our people, of the leadership of our Party, but also because of the support and sympathy given to us by friends and Communists all over the world. During our meeting with Comrade Gus Hall a few hours ago, I mentioned to him the words of Comrade Ho Chi Minh in his last testament, that he wished to live until the day of our victory, so that he could, afterwards, travel to other parts of the world to say thank you to all Communists and friends. Unfortunately he did not live until that day.

**Q:** Could you please give us an overall picture of the situation in your country?

**A:** We liberated our country in 1975 and after that we thought we would be able to immediately start rebuilding. But we were not correct. You may have heard about our war with the Khmer Rouge. They intended to, in their own words, reoccupy the land. This meant all the land stretching from the border between Vietnam and Cambodia over to Ho Chi Minh City and further to the

sea. They said that it was a part of Cambodian territory. We had to prevent that. Also, during the course of fighting them, we discovered the genocide they committed. Therefore, in response to the appeal of the patriotic front of Cambodia, we helped them liberate their country. Of course, we completely withdrew our forces from Cambodia in 1989.

Also, early in 1979, we had to defend our country along the northern border, because at that time China attacked us. It was only ten years after the liberation, in 1986, that we managed to embark upon a new course which we call the comprehensive renewal of the country. This lateness was due to the deterioration of the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries, the war with China, and the U.S. embargo against us. Also because of the encirclement of the Asian countries, our country was in a deep socioeconomic crisis.

But since 1986, we have made a gradual yet very profound improvement in our social, economic and political lives. This summer, we are going to hold the 8th National Congress of our Party. And we are now in the process of reviewing the past ten years. It is very striking that in the past ten years we have overcome the socioeconomic crisis. We have achieved quite a heartening economic growth rate. For example, during the past five years the average annual economic growth rate was 8.2 percent, which is quite high. Or last year alone the economic growth rate was 9.5 percent, which is very striking. Before 1986, every year we had to import about two million tons of rice from every possible source – from Thailand, Malaysia, India, and all over the world – but since 1989, we started to export. We are now the world's third largest exporter of rice, which is a considerable achievement. Also, we have completely eliminated the socioeconomic crisis.

Now we have come to a new stage of development of the country – industrialization and modernization. We now have a target for trying to turn Vietnam into an industrialized country within three decades. Some people say this is an over-ambitious target. We understand that to achieve this we must

try very, very hard – much harder than in the past. But we believe that it is a realistic target. We will try to achieve it.

In terms of foreign policy, we normalized relations with China in 1991 and since then the Party-to-Party, government-to-government and people-to-people relations have developed very vigorously. Every year we exchange top-level delegations with each other. Last year, the general secretary of our Party visited China. The year before, the president and chairman of the Communist Party of China visited Vietnam. And the year before that, Li Peng, the prime minister of China, visited Vietnam.

Also in July 1995, Clinton declared normalized relations with Vietnam. Just a week before that we signed a framework agreement with EU countries, which provides for cooperation and development between the two sides.

More importantly, this agreement has a very good, positive psychological impact upon those who are still wondering if it is beneficial to cooperate with Vietnam. On bilateral relations with other countries of the EU like France, the Scandinavian countries, Italy, and Great Britain we have also had increasingly positive relationships with them. We have diplomatic relations with 161 countries. We have also improved relations with other Parties. We now have relations with 188 Parties all around the world. Also, we encourage relations with NGOs as well. Last year, for example, we had about 380 international NGOs visit Vietnam.

**Q:** What was your experience after the collapse of the Soviet Union given your close socio-economic ties? Was economic and political pressure placed on you to change the nature of your system?

**A:** Economically and financially, we foresaw the situation of the suspension of aid and assistance several years before the collapse of the Soviet Union. We had already started to diversify our relations. Therefore, we did not face the shock of aid suspension like some other countries when the Soviet Union collapsed. Politically, we have always had in our mind a sense of vigilance against all the attempts of imperialism.

Cooperating economically with such Western countries like the USA, etc., we understand attempts for peaceful evolution. At the same time the facts

have shown that since 1975, when we liberated our country, up to very recently, almost every year we had to bring to trial at least one or two cases of evident schemes to sabotage the situation, to destabilize the country, and to overthrow the Communist administration. About two months ago, we brought to open trial a case whereby an American citizen came to Vietnam with two containers. One container had two bottom layers between which he had guns, bullets, and several other things. We discovered that and brought him to trial. This was only two months ago.

**Q:** I am sure you have to be cautious every time you confront such a situation.

**A:** Sure. For example, regarding the case I just mentioned, we informed the American Embassy in Hanoi. We told them that if they wished to come to witness the trial, we would not have any objections. It was an open trial. We conducted it with the presence of the Vietnamese and foreign press. We don't want to make a hulla baloo about that. But we don't want to make it secret. We want to present it as it is. We didn't blame it on the American government, because he has never said he had any connection with the government. But this at least shows the attempt of those ill-willed forces. So we are always vigilant against them.

**Q:** Have there been attempts in your country, whether locally or from outside, to put pressure on the Vietnamese government to share power with other, pro-Western forces? How have you managed to deal with this pressure?

**A:** I think in every country there are a lot of different voices. The same is true in our country. Although in our country the degree of differences may be lower compared to other countries. We are taking into consideration the fact that after the war, we had more than one million troops and public servants of the old regime in the South. Together with them were at least some seven or eight hundred thousand families and that was at the time when the size of an average family in the South was three to four times bigger than the average family size in the North. With the support of the American government, one soldier could have enough money to feed the whole family.

Once the Americans withdrew from our coun-



try, those families who before had lived on U.S. support now had to stand on their own feet. They were not happy with their new comrades who were revolutionary and Communists, and who were asking them to work for their own food.

Not only those people, but also many others expected a bloodbath after the Communist take-over – but there was no bloodbath. Some people went through what we call “dignity rehabilitation” in order to reintegrate them back into the community. We believe that they can become good human beings after they integrate themselves into the community and believe in the new society. And most of them did.

I have a very good old friend who was a representative of the first republic, the first pro-American regime in the South. And until the day of the liberation of Saigon, she was the vice-president of the Senate. Now she is a member of the Central Committee of the Fatherland Front. She is very active. And she told me during a meeting two or three weeks before I left for the United States, that she would like to become deputy to the National Assembly again in order to contribute to the country. And she is now 74 years old.

The majority of people, I believe, share the view that in Vietnam, at least until now, the Communist Party is the only legitimate and worthy party to lead the country. In fact, my parents-in-law were members of the Socialist Party. They were very dedicated members. Almost all members of the Socialist Party came from the intelligentsia. My parents-in-law were intellectuals.

But in 1990 or so, the Socialist Party dissolved itself. My parents-in-law were very happy on the one hand to join in the approval of the dissolution, because as they said, the Communist Party is the most deserving and worthy Party to lead the country.

At the same time, I understand there may be some kind of nostalgia for the past – it is understandable. But as I said, the majority of the population accept the leading role of the Communist Party at least until now. And because of that, the Communist Party is trying to renew itself and free itself from any kind of dogmatism and anything that is too rigid and cause the Party to lose the confidence and trust of the people. We are trying to fight those things. We are also trying to do away with all forms of corruption, bureaucracy, etc. And one of the measures to do that is to

recruit into the leadership of the Party those who are most popular, those who are most acknowledged and widely accepted by the population. In March 1994, we held a mid-term national conference of the Party. During that conference we elected 20 more members to the Central Committee, one of whom used to be just a specialist. Immediately, he was chosen to be minister of energy. This was something very unusual in our country because one must go through the ladder of hierarchy from bottom to top. There is also another person who used to be director of an electronic company. He is now a member of the Central Committee and at the same time he is the chairman of the Peoples Committee of Hanoi, the capital city. This is another measure to rejuvenate, renovate and renew the Party.

**Q:** In terms of the economic development of your country, obviously the conditions are different today as compared to what prevailed in the Soviet Union. What modifications have you had to make? How have you defined this? What is the relationship between the public sector and the private sector in your economy? To what levels and to what limits can the private sector can go? And how is your model different, for example, from that of China or Cuba?

**A:** It is a very interesting question. We believe that the private sector has a role to play in the economy. What we had before was a completely public sector. There was no private sector at all in the economy. And because of that, the public sector, the government, had to subsidize everything in the society. We believe that this is one of the reasons that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union because the state could not bear too heavy a burden, caused by an all-subsidized system.

So we do give some room for the private sector to play, to maneuver. For example, during the past ten years we have privatized about 8,000 enterprises out of about 13,000. But, the number is not as important as the quality, as the nature, of these enterprises. All enterprises that have been privatized are enterprises operating in the service sector, and small industries – handicraft for example. While all the main industries, like electricity, telecommunications, transport, etc., are all in the public sector. And we do not intend to privatize those industries. We have never had any intention

to privatize those sectors. Instead of privatizing them, we are now turning them into a kind of state corporation. And this is not a simple task. We have to consolidate and strengthen the operational capacity of these corporations so that they are strong enough to compete freely on the market with the domestic and foreign enterprises in their field. This is one of the things we are doing.

**Q:** So, the privatization is only limited to the service sector.

**A:** So far, in the small industries.

**Q:** How does it differ from that of China?

**A:** I think China is doing the same thing. But China is a very huge nation, a vast country. China has its own strategies and tactics. We never intend to follow that model because we are very different. Our national population is equal to the population of only one province in China. So we must have our different ways of carrying out reforms. Also, as a late comer to peaceful reconstruction, we have learned from both the successes and failures of other countries. For example, when we are carrying out the economic reform, when we allow for privatization, we also think of the rural and poor population. Therefore we launched a movement for the alleviation of poverty and elimination of hunger. We set up only two months ago a fund for the poor. We are trying to do everything possible to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, between the urban and rural areas, between the delta and modern areas. We must take care of the disadvantaged, the poor, women and children.

**Q:** Does your Party have now an overall assessment of what caused the collapse of the Soviet Union? What were the major causes of the collapse in your view?

**A:** It is extremely difficult to draw any concrete assessment of the Soviet Union because, I think, only the Soviets themselves can give the best assessment. Anyway, if we look at the researches of the Communists, not only in the Soviet Union and its republic, but also in other Eastern European countries, I think Communism had done many, many good things for the people. But here and there, now and then, because of some not well-

designed, well-intended policies of the leadership, the people would feel betrayed, which is a strong word – to use a softer word, people felt angry. That, together with the persistent attempts of those anti-Communist forces, led to the collapse of the Soviet Union.

**Q:** What is your view of the role of Gorbachev?

**A:** Well, it is difficult to talk about Gorbachev. Gorbachev was not very faithful to Marxist-Leninist principles, both domestically and internationally.

**Q:** There is another debate about the issue of collapse, over whether the internal factors in the system itself were more responsible or the external factors, like imperialist encirclements, the arms race, and other things that put heavy pressure on the Soviet system in terms of expenses, military costs, diversion of the funds from economic build-up to other things, etc. What is your Party's assessment?

**A:** I think the cause is a combined one. The attempts of the forces outside, resulting in weakening of the Soviet Union, like the arms race as you said combined with not very well-planned policies, and even not well planned organizational structures in the state, from center down to grassroots, etc. All these constitute a combined cause that led to the collapse.

**Q:** What is the future of socialism in the former socialist countries?

**A:** I believe that the awareness of the wrongdoings of the post-Soviet Union regime, and also the awareness of the correctness of Communist ideology, is increasing in Russia and other Eastern European countries. In that sense, they will have a better future in the elections.

**Q:** What do we have to put on our agenda?

**A:** There are several elements that we have got to think of in order to be on track again. First, we should think of our organizational structure as I said. We must make the Party, the government structure, efficient. Efficiency must be the first priority. By

**Continued on page 23**

# The Future of Canada

Communist Party of Canada

This is a time of an intensifying, multi-faceted crisis which is shaking the very foundations of the country. Every aspect of political, economic and social life of the Canadian people is coming under assault by the corporate attack. Chauvinist, narrow nationalist, and even fascist seeds are being sown. The very unity and sovereignty of the country is threatened. These are dangerous times indeed for all Canadians. While sounding that warning, we also note that the class struggle is intensifying and we must act on the very real possibilities for democratic and social advance present in the current situation.

In the wake of the October 30 referendum, the long-standing crisis of Confederation, rooted in the historic denial of Quebec's status as a nation within Canada, has reached a new, critical stage. The crisis is igniting sharp social divisions, reflected in the rise of narrow nationalism in Quebec and anti-Quebec chauvinism in other parts of the country. Political fragmentation, with its attendant loss of Canadian sovereignty, and the possibility of open conflict now stand as very real dangers unless a democratic solution, based on a new, equal and voluntary partnership of Quebec, the First Nations and the rest of Canada can be achieved.

At the same time, the Canadian economy is teetering on the brink of another recession. Both production and domestic demand are faltering under the impact of chronic unemployment, declines in the real living standards of the people, and a sharp curtailment of public spending which is causing a new round of mass lay-offs in both public and private sectors. The vicious, pro-corporate economic policies pursued by virtually all levels of government are exacerbating the crisis, destroying the social infrastructure built up over the last five decades, and undermining the economic security and democratic rights of working people, profoundly eroding their confidence in the future.

In seeking a way out of this crisis, the working class and its democratic allies are increasingly find-

ing it necessary to resist the bankrupt and ruinous policies of big business, their parties and governments, and to unite on the broadest possible basis around a far-reaching democratic alternative to those neo-conservative policies. Welding that unity, and promoting the fightback on the widest scale, is the main challenge before the Communist Party and left forces today. In the critical period which lies ahead, our Party must do everything possible to meet this responsibility squarely.

**THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION** □ The world capitalist economy is itself in deep crisis. Global capitalist integration – so-called “globalization” – continues apace, as huge transnationals and international banks, in their drive to maximize profits, tighten their stranglehold on world markets and resources at great cost to the rights and living standards of the peoples of the world, to the sovereignty of individual states, and to the natural environment.

But this process of globalization under conditions of monopoly control is wrought with contradictions. As multi-national corporations scramble to increase production and maximize returns through monopoly pricing strategies and the introduction of high technology, they are, in turn, destroying smaller domestic industries and creating mass unemployment and poverty. The gap between rich and poor, and between the wealthy and “less developed” countries, is becoming ever wider, accompanied by a worldwide crisis of “relative” over-production.

This crisis of relative over-production (where working people can no longer afford to consume the greatly increased volume of goods produced) is also affecting the economies of the major imperialist powers – Japan, Germany and the EEC, and the U.S. All their economies are faltering and, in some cases beginning to contract, giving rise to predictions of an imminent global recession.

Reactionary policies – such as “free trade,” deregulation, privatization and gutting of public services and programs – introduced by capitalist governments at the behest of international monopoly

---

Adopted at February 2-4 Central Committee meeting

capital are everywhere being met with growing resistance by workers, the unemployed, women, youth and students, pensioners, the poor and other sections of the people.

Of all these instances of class struggle, we should take particular note of two significant developments:

First, we acknowledge and applaud the tremendous struggle mounted by millions of workers in France against the right-wing Juppe government and its plan to cut social assistance, pensions and other social programs in that country as part of the "harmonization" demanded under the Maastricht Treaty. The militant character of the political strikes and mass mobilizations, initiated by the Communist-led General Confederation of Trade Unions (CGT), Force Ouvrieres (FO), and other unions, brought millions of workers, pensioners, and youths and students into the streets.

The second important development took place recently in Russia, where the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) topped the polls in the December 17 parliamentary elections, receiving over 22 percent of the popular vote. Communists-Working Russia received another 4.5 percent, and the Communist forces could have achieved an even greater result had there been a united slate. Together with their left allies, the Communists now hold a dominant, although not quite majority, position in the state Duma. The election results do not, in themselves, constitute a major shift in government power, due to the undemocratic nature of the Russian constitution. Their importance lies in the dramatic shift in popular opinion against the "shock therapy" policies of the Yeltsin regime in restoring capitalist relations in the former Soviet Union, and in the significant resurgence of the socialist forces.

We reiterate our international working class solidarity with all peoples and countries which continue to defend and advance socialism, and with all forces standing for peace and national liberation. We especially express our solidarity with the people of Cuba in defending the gains of their revolution in the face of the ongoing illegal and immoral U.S. blockade; with the Palestinian people and their just struggle for self-determination, including the formation of a Palestinian state on all the occupied territories; and with the South African people in their struggle to eliminate the last vestiges of apartheid, to consolidate democracy and to re-build their country.

We also pledge our support to the people of North Korea (DPRK), who have suffered great losses in production due to torrential flooding and have called for international humanitarian aid. We call upon the Canadian government to increase its humanitarian food aid to the DPRK, and will work to ensure that this and other food aid be swiftly delivered.

Emergency food aid should never be used as a political weapon to extract concessions from the DPRK or any other sovereign nation.

**THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS** ■ Of all of the aspects of the multi-faceted crisis currently gripping the country, the most determining and pressing is the constitutional crisis which affects the very future of Canada as it presently exists. It is appropriate, therefore, that we start – and center – our discussions on the domestic situation with this crucial question.

Despite the razor-thin victory of the federalist forces in the October 30th referendum on Quebec independence, the crisis over the future of Confederation, and Quebec's place within it, continues to mature. As the main resolution at our 31st Convention accurately noted:

... [The] election of a provincial Parti Quebecois government... has again brought the constitutional crisis to a boil and once more thrown the very future of a united Canada into question. Even if the independence option is rejected however, the crisis of Confederation will continue until a democratic solution, recognizing the democratic rights of the nation of Quebec and of the First Nations, is achieved.

We must, from the outset, note with alarm the deteriorating political situation in the country since the referendum, and in particular, the sharp shift to right, chauvinist positions taken recently by the Chrtien government. More than anything else, this rightward shift by the federal cabinet threatens to polarize the debate and undermine attempts to win.

The referendum campaign and the results have left Quebec bitterly divided, including divisions within the working class along national, ethnic and language lines. As our Party pointed out immediately following the vote, many of those who voted "No" did so out of fear of the economic ramifications of Quebec independence; others out of concern



for the protection of native and other minority linguistic and cultural rights, and the perceived potential threat to those rights in an independent Quebec. Of those who voted "Yes," many were convinced "sovereignitists;" many working people in Quebec saw a "yes" vote and independence as offering better chances to avoid the massive social cuts seen in Ontario and other provinces; others supported this option out of frustration with the string of failed constitutional talks; and still others hoped that a strong "Yes" result would shake the ruling circles in Ottawa and in English-speaking Canada generally into serious negotiations to re-define Confederation and to recognize Quebec's national rights and aspirations.

As we said then, it is our view that a substantial majority of the people of Quebec would ultimately support remaining in Canada if there was a just solution to the national question, one spelled out in a new Canadian constitution based on the equal and voluntary partnership of Quebec, the First Nations and the rest of Canada.

But the people of Quebec may not have an opportunity to choose this option, unless there is substantial political movement from across the country in favor of a democratic solution. Already, small groups of extremist elements have surfaced, and small outbreaks of violence have been reported. A further hardening or polarization of positions – both within Quebec and in the rest of Canada – will make it increasingly difficult to promote meaningful dialogue and mutual accommodation, and limit the "political space" for consideration of a democratic solution.

**PROPOSALS FOR SOLUTIONS** ▣ The referendum and the continuing crisis, however, have also led to the emergence of positive features. Thousands upon thousands of Canadians – in Quebec, English-speaking Canada and among the First Nations – are now actively searching for another, democratic solution to the crisis. Rejecting both chauvinist and narrow nationalist approaches, these people are seeking a lasting, just and equitable basis for renewing Confederation. It must also be pointed out, however, that most of these people also suffer a severe lack of understanding of the national question and the roots of the crisis of Confederation.

This movement finds reflection in growing support for a democratic process to resolve the crisis,

and specifically around the call for a Constituent Assembly (CA). Several organizations, including the National Action Committee on the Status of Women (NAC), and Constituent Assembly Now (CAN) have come out in favor of the proposal, an idea long advanced by our Party. Numerous academics, constitutional experts and political commentators have also taken up the demand, all of which is helping to advance this alternative into wide public debate.

It is noteworthy that even some sections of big business, concerned that there may be no other way out of the constitutional quagmire, are beginning to warm to the notion of a Constituent Assembly.

This increased interest in the proposal for a Constituent Assembly (CA) is highly welcome. It reflects a strong democratic impulse amongst broad sections of the Canadian people, and a strong desire to find a solution which could win broad legitimacy and support in Quebec, among the First Nations, and in the rest of Canada. There exists a broad diversity of opinion, however, on the nature of such a constituent assembly, on whether it should be elected or appointed, on its size, composition, and mandate, on ratification procedures, etc.

It therefore is vital that our Party spell out in greater detail our proposals for a Constituent Assembly, its composition, structure and terms of reference. We have already said that, in our opinion, a Constituent Assembly must be democratically elected, with equal representation from Quebec and English-speaking Canada, and with the strong participation of the First Nations; that the Acadiens and other national minorities be represented; that sectoral representation from labor, women, farmers, youth and students, pensioners, professional and business organizations, ethnic groups and other sections of society be included; that the Assembly's work be open and publicized as widely as possible. Genuine voluntary partnership among the nations and peoples of Canada means that the final draft of a new constitution would have to be approved by majority votes among the people of Quebec, the First Nations, and the people of the rest of Canada – in other words, achieving a full consensus on the changes proposed by such an Assembly.

Would there be a role for the federal and provincial governments in the work of the CA? For

municipalities? Precisely how would the members of the Assembly be elected? Would a new draft constitution be ratified through referenda, or through Parliament and the legislatures, or both? After opening the discussion at this meeting, we will work quickly over the coming period to prepare a Central Committee statement on this important question.

At the same time, we must spare no effort to mobilize support for the CA at the upcoming CLC Convention in May, and in other mass democratic organizations wherever possible.

As we said immediately following the referendum, "an opening has been created" to win a democratic solution to the crisis of Confederation. It would be totally wrong, however, to assume that this opening will exist for long. Events are moving swiftly; next year the 1982 constitution comes up for mandatory review, and if there is no significant movement towards meaningful constitutional change by then, the narrow nationalist forces in Quebec, under PQ premier Bouchard's leadership, will certainly move to hold another referendum, with much greater chances of success. It is therefore absolutely vital that the whole Party be seized with the utmost urgency of the situation, spare no effort to campaign for a democratic solution to the crisis, and work creatively and aggressively to promote the proposal around a Constituent Assembly. We therefore call upon the whole Party to place this question at the center of their political work in the coming period.

**ECONOMIC CRISIS** ■ The constitutional crisis has been sharply aggravated by the deepening economic crisis in the country as a whole, and it in turn impacts on the economic crisis, and deeply affects the fightback on the social and economic fronts. It is therefore vital that we turn our attention to this matter.

The short-lived "jobless recovery" in the Canadian economy is ending, although there is still growth in some sectors. The most recent estimates peg economic growth for 1996 at 1.8 percent (down from 2.5 percent in 1995). In Ontario, the economy is already shrinking. The sharp downturn is due primarily to high chronic unemployment, reduced real incomes for working people, and sharp cuts in public sector spending, all of which have caused domestic demand to contract. Even increased exports have failed to stem the downward econom-

ic trend.

Layoffs have affected all sectors of the economy – mining, fisheries, transportation, financial and other service workers – but none have been hit harder than the public sector. In the past year alone, over 86,000 government positions have been eliminated. Government payrolls have been cut by an unprecedented 7 percent in 1995 alone, and many more layoffs, especially in Ontario under the cuts instituted by the Harris government, are in store for 1996.

For those still working, real incomes have been stagnant or declining, with record numbers forced to accept "involuntary" part-time work, contract or "home" work. Even unionized workers have seen their meager wage increases (0.7 percent) lag far behind inflation (2.1 percent). In an attempt to compensate for lost income, people are going into debt as never before. Average household debt has now reached a record 89 percent of after-tax income, and outstanding credit card balances have surged by 13 percent.

The corporate drive to reduce wages, supported by most governments, has hit hardest at those least able to defend themselves: unorganized workers, part-time workers, women workers (whose wages have fallen further behind average male incomes), young workers, the unemployed and those on social assistance.

The decline in real income is forcing many working people literally onto the streets; for instance, foreclosures on CHMC-ensured mortgages jumped 17 percent this past year, and thousands more Canadians have been made homeless. The crisis is taking a heavy toll on small and medium businesses as well. Housing starts are at a 35-year low, while personal and business bankruptcies in 1995 set an all-time high, even compared to the 1991-2 recession.

Profit margins for the largest corporations however continue to soar, rising an average 21 percent in 1995. Bank profits increased 23 percent to an obscene high of \$5.2 billion (for the five main banks only), while energy, forest products, mining, and transportation industries also made record gains. As reported in *People's Voice*, while most of these large corporations have been increasing their profits, they have been destroying jobs at an unprecedented rate.

Thirty seven of the top corporations in Canada have shed more than 215,000 workers between 1988-

1995, while their combined revenues grew by \$32.1 billion over the same period.

Working people are growing increasingly angry at the record corporate profiteering, while hundreds of thousands of workers are displaced from production, and millions plunged into poverty.

This anger may force the federal government to slightly increase taxes on the big banks, or to limit their charges to customers.

This would be an important concession, but would not reverse the main trend, the growing polarization between the wealthy and the big corporations on the one hand, and working people (including many in the so-called "middle class") and the unemployed on the other. The warm reception given by people to our Party's "Jobs, Not Cuts! Tax the Rich!" protests outside banks, and the growing demands to hike corporate taxation attest to this widening anti-corporate sentiment among the working class and beyond.

The economic crisis is being exacerbated by ruthless government cuts to unemployment insurance, education, health care, child care and other social services and programs.

As the downloading of cuts – from the federal to the provincial to the municipal levels – takes hold, working people are feeling the impact in every province, in every city, town and village.

**ATTACK ON DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS** ■ The economic measures adopted by pro-corporate governments are increasingly being combined with political attacks on democratic dissent. This is particularly evident in Ontario, where the Harris government has combined its \$6 billion in cutbacks with a broadside attack on labor, civil and democratic rights. Under Bill 26, which was pushed through over massive protest, legislative powers are being removed from the elected Legislature and instead concentrated in Cabinet, and in the hands of individual Ministers. They have been accorded sweeping, arbitrary and unilateral powers to dismiss local governments, open the province to U.S.-style for-profit medicine, privatize public utilities and services, eliminate free collective bargaining in the public sector, and much more, while simultaneously giving themselves legal impunity, thus putting the government above the law. What has been exposed in the two-month battle over Bill 26 is the attempt to create a state within a state. The seeds of a future, sharp shift to the very far right – to fascism

– are being planted now.

In most provinces, labor rights are coming under increased attack, and public funding to community and non-profit organizations, such as women's organizations, tenant groups, popular coalitions, etc. chopped. The intention of these actions is all very clear: to weaken or destroy precisely those organized forces most capable of mobilizing public opposition to their agenda.

The gains achieved by women over the past few decades are a major focus of this right-wing attack. The wage gap between men and women is widening again, not least because of the elimination of pay and employment equity, in a general effort to drive women out of the workplace and back into their homes. Women are also bearing the brunt of government cutbacks. Slashes in subsidies are forcing child care center and women's shelters to be closed down; access to abortion is endangered by the increasingly violent anti-choice forces; and the courts are rendering a disturbing number of decisions chipping away at women's rights.

The political assault on democracy – and the fight to defend democratic, civil, and labor rights, must figure more prominently in the overall fightback against the corporate agenda. There should be no underestimation of the importance of this question: the attack on civil and democratic rights is part-and-parcel of the neo-conservative offensive against the working class, aiming to cripple the organized labor movement, including the Communist Party, the democratic movements, the social movements and all those forces which oppose the shift to the right.

The economic and political offensive is, as always, accompanied by an ideological offensive to win working people of the "wisdom" of the corporate agenda, or at least to neutralize opposition by convincing the people that there is no alternative to the current policy course. The central plank in the current ideological assault – the *raison d'être* for the wholesale privatization and gutting of the public sector – is, of course, the deficit and debt "crisis."

The epicenter of the fightback has now shifted decidedly to Ontario, brought on by the vicious, reactionary program of the Harris government. Barely a day passes without a protest, picketline, or public meeting being held in the large centers around the province, and many new forces – includ-

ing many who had voted for the Harris Tories only months earlier – are joining the fray.

Of particular note was the highly successful shutdown and 30,000-strong demonstration in London on December 11, and the recent protest of 40,000 people against education cuts held at Queen's Park.

As the fightback gains momentum, the labor movement is coming increasingly to the forefront. The OFL leadership, after some initial hesitation, is now playing more of a leading role.

Sharp divisions however, flowing out of the recent Fed convention and dating back to the split over the New Democratic Party (NDP) imposed Social Contract, continue to plague the labor movement, standing in the way of a united and militant fightback. Independent labor political action around labor's program is the key to mounting an effective defense against neo-conservatism, leading to a successful offensive as the next step. This is the task that must fully engage the whole labor movement today; not the issue of the NDP, which is really the issue of the nature and limitations of social democracy in relation to the working-class movement and its historic mission.

The December 11 Day of Protest in London Ontario was a very good start to the program of escalating action that delegates to the OFL convention forced the leadership to undertake last November. The London protest showed that workers are prepared, even anxious, to fight, provided there is leadership. This is so, even though the fightback is uneven. The point is it is growing, and growing quickly, fast outstripping the timid leadership of the right wing in the OFL leadership. Here the role of the left is decisive. A united left caucus within the labor movement in Ontario, and across Canada, that can win a left/center majority for escalating action leading to a general strike, is what we seek. A left caucus united around a militant fightback program and independent labor political action would make a qualitative difference in the fightback today. So far, we have been unable to develop an effective vehicle, in part because of our own weakness in the aftermath of the split in the Party, and in part because of general disorganization in the left. Yet, our partners in the left are also seeking an effective vehicle to mobilize the left and center forces, and we may find some new opportunities in the developing situation in Ontario, including in the preparations for the forthcoming CLC conven-

tion.

While the fightback is sharpest currently in Ontario, resistance is mounting in other parts of the country as well. To date, however, the fightback has been sporadic and lacking in consistent leadership, especially by the labor movement where the strike movement is at a low ebb. Part of the difficulties holding back the fightback spring from the difficult objective conditions: the high level of insecurity felt by millions of workers, including organized workers; divisions between those sections of the working class who are working more overtime and those who are unemployed or underemployed; the ideological confusion which still persists among broad sections of the working class and other oppressed groups; and the objective difficulties many labor and democratic organizations find themselves in (especially those organizations heavily dependent on government funding and suffering sharp cut-backs in their budgets).

The subjective weaknesses in the fightback must also be reviewed. Reformist and class collaborationist illusions still dominate in leadership circles within the trade union movement.

Many of these leaders still long for a return to "social peace," to buoyant economic growth, and to rising real incomes that characterized much of the post-World War period. But they – in common with most social democrats – have failed to comprehend the qualitative shift in capitalist strategy, and underestimate the nature and depth of the systemic crisis of capitalism. Such views, together with the old-style business unionism of some in the leadership, combine to have a deadening effect on the labor movement as a whole.

**TASKS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY** ■ The deepening of constitutional, political and economic crisis in Canada place an especially heavy burden of responsibility on our shoulders at this critical juncture. The coming period will test our Party greatly, and calls for a redoubling of our Party's efforts politically, theoretically, and organizationally if we are to play the role which we must demand of ourselves, both individually as Communists and as a collective whole.

The changed political situation – both internationally and within Canada – is creating much improved conditions for building our Party and extending its influence. As anti-Communism recedes, and as the corporate assault intensifies,



more and more people are receptive to our Party's views. Inquiries from interested people at Party offices has increased over the recent period, and new contacts, *People's Voice* subscribers, and new Party members have grown most where the level of public Party activity has been high. It goes almost without saying that where we are heard (in meetings), seen (in actions), and read (in our Communist press and leaflets), we attract interested people and they join, especially if asked. Of course, the opposite is also true.

As a revolutionary Party of the working class, we must pay special attention to strengthening the Party's base within our own class and in winning workers to our Party, especially from the organized section of our class, the trade union movement. We are also a Party of the future, which means that we must also work hard to attract militant youth to our movement.

We can report modest but important growth since our last meeting. Several new clubs have been formed, and new young members recruited. These are positive developments and must be built upon everywhere. We are now beginning to see more of our clubs undertaking independent public Party work. We must strive to ensure that every club follows this positive lead. Other measures to improve club life, including ensuring that each comrade is involved in an area of mass work, that clubs regularly checkup and discuss reports on mass and Party and press work, should also be

taken.

Our clubs and members are involved in a wide and growing range of struggles, from international solidarity to the fightback against the neo-conservative assault. As well as doing everything possible to strengthen the labor and democratic movements, we are carrying on our own Communist Party campaigns, with positive results. In the period ahead, one of our priorities will continue to be the "Jobs, Not Cuts" campaign; an updated version of the leaflet issued last October, and other material such as stickers, will be prepared for another round of public actions beginning in March. We will also continue our other priority independent campaign, for a just solution to the national question, including for a democratic Constituent Assembly. The work being done to win support for our views on these issues must be combined with stronger efforts to move unions and other people's forces into action.

A central, pivotal part of our mass independent work must be our work around the Communist press. The quality of our paper, and the breadth of its coverage, continues to improve with each issue, but we must admit frankly that the growth in circulation is not nearly what it should be.

This year is especially important, for this year we mark 75 years in the life of our Party, 75 years of continuous, dedicated struggle against fascism, reaction and war, and for peace, democratic rights, social advance and, not least, for socialism. □

### Vietnam, continued from page 16

streamlining, by recruiting the best people – really the best and the brightest people. As the second element, I would like to refer to what the Sixth National Congress of our Party talked about. And that is to take people as the root, to listen to the people. Because if, at any moment, we forget the words of our forefathers who said that the people are those who steer the boat, and are also those who can upturn the boat, then we would lose in our fight.

So we must be closer to the people, must stick to the people, listen to the people, be ready to serve the people. That is the second thing. The third element, I think, is unity: unity within your Party; within your own organization; within your own nation; and unity with other movements. Disunity

has brought about failures for many organizations, and for many countries as well. If we look back at the history of our Party and our country, for example, whenever there was disunity within the country, then foreign invaders came, successfully occupying our country.

Q: Do you think the Cold War is over?

A: I think you should have asked me if there is any Cold War in our minds. We still think that the struggle for socialism, for Communism continues.

Q: Has imperialism given up?

A: They never give up.

Q: Thank you. □

# Working-Class Culture & the Marxist Writer

---

Virginia Brodine

Writers, however great their talents, do not create solely from within. We are all children of our own time and place, products of our own culture. I use the word culture in its broad, sociological sense: "The sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another."<sup>1</sup>

The life and people we know give us the characters, the experiences, the way of living and working, of speaking, laughing, mourning, that bring our pages to life. Above all, they give us the values which provide the direction and the core of meaning in our work. They are our unseen collaborators. As the Irish playwright John Middleton Synge once truly said, "All art is a collaboration ..."<sup>2</sup>

The "group of human beings" with whom we identify sustains us. Our roots are in their past generations. Our present is in communicating with them. Our future is inseparable from theirs. For Marxist writers this "group of human beings" in a particular sense is the working class of their own country; in a general sense, the workers of the world.

This is quite a different view from that of the writer as the quintessential individualist, the artist separate from and even against society. That view comes from the culture which is dominant in this and other capitalist countries.

The dollar values of capitalist culture are antithetical to art. Creative talents are wasted in advertising, distorted for TV sitcoms, bought for the production of vicious propaganda.

The serious writer is driven into separateness. But to seek one's source solely within the self is to wind up in a *cul-de-sac*, conveying less and less to fewer and fewer people. Even the writer who relates to the dominant culture by standing outside it as critic is in danger of producing the rootless art of cynicism and despair if he has only his individual ground to stand on.

Take *Galapagos*, a novel by one of our finest writers, Kurt Vonnegut.<sup>3</sup> Vonnegut's fable is a wild

and wonderful way of bringing home to us the insanities of a human species that cannot seem to insure its own survival. But the very universality of his condemnation is its limitation. Although he has clearly not quite given up on the human race, where is the spark of hope? If the insanity is species-specific, it has no social origins and only a biological miracle can save us. Seeing the insanities of today's world with an understanding of their social origins, we can have a more realistic hope for their termination.

Marxism gives us more than this intellectual understanding. It makes us aware of another and more humane culture, a working-class culture which is capable of sustaining us, which gives us an inexhaustible source of material. We are never alone when we stand within this culture. We can speak of it and for it. It gives us the opportunity to create work which will belong to this culture and enrich it. It gives us a sweeping view, an historical framework within which all the stories of individuals and the groups to which they belong can unfold.

Working-class culture in the United States has had an historic development quite different from that of countries where the class was formed out of indigenous peasant and artisan elements. There the working class has had an unbroken tradition, a sustained attachment to one part of this earth, a more homogeneous composition, a single common language.

The various components of our class in this country have had to sustain the shock of the deprivation of a homeland – one which was forcibly taken from them in the case of Native Americans and from which they were forcibly taken in the case of African Americans; one which they left for compelling economic and political reasons in the case of European, Asian Pacific and Latin American peasants and workers.

This has usually meant the loss of native language and customs and of folklore – "the expressive side of daily living"<sup>4</sup> – which is part of every culture and one of its means of transmission. Community and even family bonds were sometimes lost, bonds which weave some of the small patterns that make

---

Virginia Brodine has written a new novel for International Publishers, entitled *Seeds of the Fire*.

up the larger culture. Particularly was the loss of these bonds true of those waves of immigration composed largely of young, single men, e.g. the first wave of Phillipine immigration to the west coast in the twenties and early thirties.

With the development of women's history in recent decades, has come a new awareness of the role of women in every society in the creation and transmission of culture. Until recently, the lives of most women and all workers have been largely ignored by historians. Even now, the study of our past is hampered because our class forebears left few of their own records. They were sometimes illiterate. They had little time to write, if they could, and little access to publication if they did. There are therefore few documents from which to garner the facts about the lives of working-class men of the past, and still fewer for working-class women. In a way, all our ancestors were undocumented workers.

There has always been a dichotomy in immigrant life: the effort to recreate family, community and culture in the image of the old country experience and the effort to adapt to what was perceived as "American." The development of a unitary working-class culture has also been impeded by mutual suspicion of other strangers in the land, and by the role played by religious and political organizations and institutions based on ethnic loyalty, claiming to stand above classes and unite people across class lines. For example, the Catholic Church and the Democratic ward organization in the nineteenth century Irish urban working-class neighborhood.

The capitalist drive to divide the working class against itself has many facets. Each immigrant group has been subjected to an initial effort to keep it in the lowest paid and most underprivileged sector of the working class, through the use of racism and other forms of discrimination and oppression. We saw this phenomenon in the past with Irish, Slavic, Italian, Jewish, and Chinese immigrants. We see it today with immigrants from Mexico and Central America. The grossest and most persistent racism has been perpetuated against African Americans and Native Americans. This has infected the working class, not only weakening its struggle but poisoning its culture.

#### **FORMATION OF WORKING-CLASS CULTURE ▣**

Although we have had a working class in this country since the early nineteenth century, we have thus not had a unitary working-class culture, but rather a

variety of working-class cultures with profound regional and ethnic differences, some more, some less infected with nationalism, racism, sexism and individualism.

Nevertheless, these cultures have had some important elements common to all which distinguish them from capitalist culture:

- A way of living based on owning some of the means of production, only one's own labor power;
- A daily struggle to survive by working and by constructing the other elements of family and community life out of the wages of that work;
- A value system which arises out of, and is constantly renewed by the collective nature of work and the need for collective action, in the struggle to survive and to improve the conditions of life and work; a value system that is less individualistic than that of the dominant, so-called "national" but really ruling-class culture.

These common elements are expressed at different times and places in many, many different ways. The economic facts of working-class life are the bones; the class struggle is the sinew of working-class culture. The flesh and blood comes from personal relationships within families and among fellow workers and neighbors and others. It comes from the particular work each man and each woman does and what that work means to the person doing it: pride in its characteristic skill, boredom with its peculiar monotony, exhaustion under its special demands. It comes from old loyalties tested and new loyalties developed, old customs persisting or being adapted or replaced. It shows itself in the turn of a phrase, in the grasp of a hand. It is heard in songs sung and stories told. It is taken in with food and drink and shouted out in play and celebration. It is renewed in the ceremonies of birth and marriage and death.

Our class culture develops slowly as the common elements become more decisive and more conscious. Its maturation process is repeatedly sidetracked by the perpetuation of the "American dream" of upward mobility. It is constantly weakened by the dominance of capitalist culture in the educational institutions and the mass media which educate each new generation. They bury our class history and make the transmission of our culture from generation to generation so difficult that it seems we must constantly begin to build it all over again.

The development of class consciousness, the

recognition of an identity of interest among working men and women of whatever occupation, of whatever level of skill, of whatever racial or national background, of whatever region of the country, is basic to a mature working-class culture. So is the recognition that this identity of interest confronts the antithetical interest of the capitalist class daily in every shop, systemically at all times and places. On this foundation a cultural unity grows. It is not achieved by the destruction of the manifold cultures out of which it comes. It is a unity in diversity, a multiracial, multinational culture built and transmitted by both men and women, enriched and fed by the variety, the strength and the flavor of its many roots.

The process is a complex one, full of contradictory trends, where the same wave that washed away some of the barriers between one part of the class and another also drowns some of the past's rich legacy. The study of the process could keep a corps of historians and sociologists busy for years and provide food for discussion at hundreds of conferences.

Important as such work can be, we need not wait for it. As writers, we can choose one particular small piece of the past or present of our class. If we know what to look for, what questions to ask, we can discover the process taking place and reflect it in our work.

We will find the language of the King James Bible, refracted by the music of the African past and the experience of slavery, singing hymns of liberation with very specific meaning to Black Americans. But these spirituals have a power and a changing symbolism that make them part of the culture of the whole class. "Didn't My Lord Deliver Daniel" is a gift of African American culture to every woman and every man who is struggling with the lions in a den whose mouth is closed up by a stone placed there by an apparently all-powerful authority.

Out of that same tradition came Martin Luther King's "I have a dream." The bedrock solidity of African American realism is part of the foundation of working-class culture. The soaring imagination of its prophecy is part of that culture's superstructure.

We will find that our immigrant past has something to say to our immigrant present and vice versa. The present wave of immigration from Mexico and Central America is both like and unlike the waves of the past. It suffers the same discrimination in new guises. A threat of deportation is used more

widely but no less brutally than in the Palmer Raids of the early twenties and the attacks on foreign born labor and progressive leaders in the fifties. The culture from which Latin Americans come is indigenous to the American continent as no other immigrant culture has been. It is a culture whose present vitality springs from its struggle against U.S. imperialism and therefore it has something special to contribute to the U.S. working class of which it is becoming a part.

**ROLE OF WOMEN** ■ We cannot write about any period or any struggle, we cannot understand our class at any time or place, whatever its racial or national background, unless we ask the right questions about the women. The failure to do so has marred the work of some Marxist writers in the past, for example, the novels of Howard Fast, in the period when he was influenced by Marxism. *Freedom Road*, for one, not only suffers from the lack of fully-rounded women characters and believable relationships between men and women, it is historically inaccurate in picturing African American women of the Reconstruction period as passive and insignificant in the struggle.

When we do begin to ask the right questions, we uncover fascinating material. Here in the Northwest, as on the iron range of Minnesota, one of the immigrant groups that played an important part in the development of our class was the Finns. In an article in *Labor History* on native-born and immigrant women in the Socialist Party, Sally Miller notes that "... the Finnish Federation led all other segments of the Party with a female membership of one-third ... the Finnish women were the one foreign language group to have their own newspaper."<sup>5</sup>

Miller rather casually attributes the high level of political participation by Finnish women to the Finns, "... family based activities, singing and gymnastic societies and social halls." While the two aspects of Finnish life were certainly related, I rather think Miller is confusing cause and effect. We will probably have to trace this larger role of women back in Finnish history to find its origin, but we already know that we should be looking for its effect on Finnish working-class communities and on the working class in general in the northwest, and in other parts of the country where Finns settled.

The more widely the class becomes aware of its foundation and of the many components of its cul-

ture, the better it will build. Culture is always in the process of growth and change. It is not with a finished culture that Marxist writers identify and which they seek to interpret. It is with this growing, changing, developing working-class culture. Writers responded to a period of vitality in the thirties, a period of growth in class consciousness, in militancy, in organization, in unity; a period in which our culture began to mature. Now we are at the beginning of a new period of working-class vitality, a new period of opportunity for writers. And I am confident that again writers will respond. The more capitalist culture is bankrupted, the more vital working-class culture becomes, the more songs and poems, the more plays and films, the more novels – the more working-class writing we will have.

**WRITERS OF A NEW TYPE** ■ Marxist writers are immersed in working-class culture with all its contradictions, with what is heroic and tragic in its past, what is exciting and what is stumbling in its present, what is problematic and what is certain in its future. It is the very contradictions that provide much of the drama we want to reflect. All the drama is not in the great moments of class conflict. It is also in the work itself, in the daily relations, frustrations and celebrations, in the building of a culture against the odds, in the growth of individuals under pressure, the achievement of class cohesion out of necessity and choice. There is so much depth and richness in our lives, so much passion and poetry in our struggles, awaiting the pens of workers who can become writers and writers who can become workers.

It is obvious that a worker, whatever his or her experience and grasp of Marxism, does not become a writer without learning the craft. It is perhaps less obvious that a writer without experience as a worker has something equally necessary to learn.

Intellectual mastery of Marxism and emotional identification with the working class are prerequisites, but one must be saturated in working-class culture in order to write from inside the class and its struggles, not from outside. To do so one must be – or must have been for at least part of one's life – a worker. It is not that one can write only about the particular work experience one has had. It is that workers spend so much of their lives working, and the rest of their lives is so conditioned by the work, that it has to be lived to be felt and recreated. Once that foundation is laid, one can tap the written resources and the memories and experiences of

other workers, and one's imagination can soar without losing touch with reality.

Then one will be ready for the task of a Marxist writer: to express what others have felt but have been unable to express; what others know but have been unable to articulate. In doing so, writers validate their feelings and make their knowledge more conscious, to make it possible for people to relive their own experiences with greater understanding and to gain new understanding by experiencing the lives of their class sisters and brothers of other times, other places and other backgrounds. In short, the task is to illuminate the meaning of our individual lives and the life of our class.

The Marxist writer of historical fiction has a particular responsibility to recreate the life of the past so truly and so vividly as to bring new juice up out of our roots to nourish the tree of our present culture and help ensure its future blossoming.

These generalizations seem obvious to me now. But I came by them slowly over a lifetime of living, working, writing and learning in struggle. I participated in the organization of women domestic workers and garment workers, went through periods of unemployment and strikes with my husband. I was involved in struggles for women's equality, for African American equality, for peace, to save our physical world from irreversible damage at the hands of militarists and profit-seekers, and above all and uniting all other struggles, for socialism.

**NOVEL'S BACKGROUND** ■ I began as a writer; necessity forced me to become a worker and the combination led me to Marxism. Although I have had a variety of work experiences, I was longest a labor journalist and then an environmental journalist. This made it possible for me to keep my craft tools sharp until the time came when I could return to the kind of writing I had always wanted to do – historical fiction. Although I was thus not unprepared in 1975 when I got back to the writing of fiction, working on *Seed of the Fire* has been the most intense learning experience of all.

I had to learn a great deal more about U.S. history than I ever knew before, especially the history of the early nineteenth century, the time when my first novel began. Then I had to find ways to convey some sense of the forces that were shaping our country and our class in those days. I had to assume that understanding of that period among my readers would be scanty at best and usually drawn from



school texts which equate capitalism with democracy and give the impression that history is made by presidents and generals.

Beginning my story with Irish immigrants, I knew that I had to acquire some knowledge of Irish history as well, and I did so. But as my story progressed I realized that I did not know nearly enough. Although the book begins with their departure from Ireland, how my Irish characters would react in their new surroundings and their new work relationships depended on their personal history in the particular part of Ireland from which they came. Twice I stopped writing in order to dig deeper into the history of County Cork, the second time for a journey there to get a feeling for the place as well as to seek some information I had not been able to find in the history books. I have discussed elsewhere my adventures in the creation of Mary Griffen, the Irish woman who is the protagonist of this first novel.<sup>6</sup>

**COMING TO OHIO** ■ My Irish immigrants came to Ohio in 1826, Dan Griffen to work on the building of the Ohio and Erie Canals, Mary to cook for the construction crew. Even after reading all available accounts of that canal project, there were hundreds of unanswered questions about the workers.

The Irish were a large part of the work force but by no means all of it. Some were Ohio farmers' sons or itinerant farm workers. Some were German immigrants. Some accounts speak only of the local workers, some only of the Irish. Did they work together? How did they get along with one another? Some were skilled carpenters and stone masons. What were the relations between them and the unskilled laborers?

Ohio was still a frontier state when work on the canal began. An important and frequently distorted or misinterpreted part of frontier life was the clash of Native American and European cultures, and the expulsion of Native Americans from their homes. What was the Native American history and culture of this part of Ohio and how did it relate to the building of the canal?

Ohio was a free state with a small number of free Blacks, mostly concentrated in and around Cincinnati, but scattered throughout the state. Did any of them work on the canal? What was their life? How did the Irish Americans and the African Americans see one another?

It took months of digging into canal records in the Ohio Historical Library in newspapers of the

time, from towns along the canal route and in many other sources, to get even partial answers to just some of these questions. To give me some idea of the unrecorded part of their lives, I read accounts of labor struggles involving Irish workers on canals in other states and Canada, of Irish immigrants in other places and other industries and at somewhat later times.

Then I talked with workers whose lives had some parallels with those of the workers in Ohio canal camps: R.B. Scales, an African American construction worker who began doing pick and shovel work in the south in the 1920s; Walter Johnson who stacked lumber in Louisiana before World War I, and who lost his deeply embedded hatred of whites in the Black-white unity of working and striking in St. Louis in the thirties. I tapped the logging-camp experience of Gordon Moir and he arranged for me to interview George Katzamanis, whose experience went back to the early years of this century. Other insights came from Anne Hildebrandt, the wife of a donkey engineer who lived with her husband in the camps, and from Beatrice Fotland, who worked as a waitress in the cookhouses. Mother Frankie Johnson, who grew up in the backwoods of Arkansas under frontier conditions, helped me understand women's work and children's lives under those conditions.

This was my material, these were some of my collaborators, this was the process that taught me in a new way what I had been learning all my life about our working-class culture.

I learned it not only in the research, but even more in the writing, in the course of dealing with a problem all Marxist writers face, whatever their medium theater and film as well as the novel. This is the problem of how to convey the relationship of the individual people to the social forces of their time, and as part of this, the relationship of the individual story to the mass movement of which it is a part: history shaping people and at the same time, people shaping history.

This problem has been with writers as long as novels have been written. As George Eliot put it, "There is no private life which has not been determined by a wider public life, from the time when the primeval milkmaid had to wander with the wanderings of her clan, because the cow she milked was one of a herd which had made the pastures here."<sup>7</sup>

This was part of a leisurely essay about the social changes taking place in England and in

"Treby parish" at the time of her story. But since Eliot's day, the craft of fiction has developed in such a way as to bring the reader more directly and continuously face to face with the characters and even inside their heads. Eliot's kind of essay is no longer acceptable to either reader or writer. We have to find other ways to pull the camera back and give the reader a wider view.

Then too, the Marxist writer today sees the relationship of the private life to the wider public life very differently, from the way readers are accustomed to finding it assumed or suggested or ignored. We have a different angle of vision, but we cannot expect our readers to stand where we stand. We have to stand with them and throw such a clear and searching light on our characters as they think and feel and move, that readers will begin to sense this relationship as we understand it.

John Howard Lawson in *Film, The Creative Process*, makes a statement relevant to the novel in this passage, although he is actually discussing three Soviet films:

Man is the center of the action; his character is shaped by causes of which he is not wholly conscious, and his decisions produce effects which react on him in ways he has not been able to foresee. His personality is not revealed solely in his decisions, but in his deepening consciousness of the forces around him. The action is not necessarily centered on a clash of personal wills; the conflict is on a larger scale and permeated the whole structure...<sup>8</sup>

I learned a great deal from Lawson. His books on playwriting and on film have helped me as a novelist. His lectures, sponsored by the League of American Writers in Hollywood in 1942, gave new insights into U.S. history. I was inspired by his example as one of the Hollywood Ten who went to jail because of his integrity as a writer and in defense of the civil liberties of all of us.

I also learned from the art of the film, as many 20th century writers have, the importance of the visual image, the need to make a scene visible to the reader's imagination in order to make it real.

But the film and the novel are very different media. Lawson was preeminently a screenwriter, and in pointing out the great potentialities of that art form I think he underestimated the novel. He has this to say: "The novel is concerned with what has happened. The theater asks what is about to happen. The screen tells us that what is happening is all

important because it is not isolated – it is part of the past and the future."<sup>9</sup>

I believe that the novel – in a different way, to be sure – can also make us feel that what we are reading is happening and can certainly give us the feeling that it is part of the past and the future. True, the novel does not have the film's ability to use visual images to give the audience what Lawson calls "the shock of recognition that explodes from each change in the situation."<sup>10</sup> He quotes the great Soviet film director, Sergei Eisenstein, as saying that the emotional structure of a film makes us "relive actually the moments of culmination and substantiation that are in the canon of all dialectical processes."<sup>11</sup>

**ROLE OF THE NOVEL** ■ The novel, however, also has an emotional structure which can build to the same end. It has a greater potential for depth of characterization than the film and for weaving the background tapestry, the cultural whole, out of which the individual story emerges. It portrays the accumulation of quantitative changes in people and situations which culminate in dramatic qualitative changes. Having absorbed the web of the culture that makes the character what he or she is, and having vicariously experienced the events that have wrought the small changes, the reader can "relive ... the moments of culmination and substantiation that are in the canon of all dialectical processes."<sup>12</sup>

This is not an easy time for a writer. It is harder for a serious novelist to get through the door of a publishing house than for the proverbial camel to get through the needle's eye. Films like *El Norte* and *Il Postino* are rare in our screen fare. The greatest advance in mass communication since printing – television – is in the hands of the hucksters. Magazines and newspapers require big money to start and big money to operate. Like the other media they are in the hands of big business, except for the saving remnant on the left. And even here, financial problems constrict staff and limit pages.

But when was the life of a writer – or of any artist for that matter, an easy one? The material is there; it is too exciting to ignore. The need is there; it is too great to deny. If we truly fulfill our tasks as Marxists writers, we will find ways to get to our audience and they will find ways to get to us. It won't happen spontaneously. How we can make it happen is another subject. □

continued on page 32

## Remembering Paul Robeson

Phillip Bonosky

*They don't let us sing our songs, Robeson,  
Eagle singer, Black Brother,  
They do: 't want us to sing our songs.  
They are scared, Robeson,  
Scared of the dawn and of seeing,  
Scared of hearing and touching.  
They are scared of loving  
The way our Ferhat \* loved.  
(Surely you too have a Ferhat, Robeson,  
What is his name?)  
They are scared of the seed, the earth  
The running water and the memory of a friend's  
hand  
Asking no discount, no commission, no interest,  
A hand which never passed like a bird in their hands.  
They are scared, Black Brother,  
Our songs scare them, Robeson.\*\**

Nazim Hikmet

### DEFYING MCCARTHY

Paul Robeson defied the Committee on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and the rest of the week. The fury launched against him for doing so stopped just short of supplying the mob with the rope and naming the tree. He was viciously baited and crude efforts were made to trap him with the "Are you now or have you ever been..." formula which he threw back into their faces.

Robeson had made his stand clear. After the frameup conviction of the "Eleven" at Foley Square he had said: "I stand firmly at the side of the convicted Communist Eleven... What happens to them is a deep concern to every American." Later, when Communist City Councilman Ben Davis was imprisoned, Robeson volunteered to stand his parole, to take over the expenses and responsibility that this entailed, but was turned down.

Even then they wanted to picture him as a pawn of sinister forces, as being too naive to see that they

were just "using" him. This was 1956. He exposed their real reason: "For many years I have labored [for the independence of Africa]... The other reason I am here today... is that when I'm abroad I speak out against the injustice against the Black people of this land..."

And then he was asked, in the coarse, gutter style of the inquisitors (who were for the moment unexposed crooks) whether or not he, as a member of the Communist Party – the context for the answer having been established by the Committee, that admitting membership in the "Communist Party" was equivalent to admitting being a Russian agent – he answered: "What do you mean by the Communist Party? As far as I know it is a legal Party like the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Do you mean a Party of people who have sacrificed for my people, and for all American workers, that they can live in dignity? Do you mean that Party?"

No, indeed, they didn't – they meant a Party of secret-meeting, underground-scheming types of men who wore their hat brims low, who trained men and women to overthrow the 11-million man army of the United States with an "army" of their own equipped with sharpened pencils...

And when they insisted on his walking into their booby trap he replied: "Would you like to come to the ballot box when I vote and take out the ballot and see?"

And further, countering the libelous image of the Communists – painted mainly by the press – that the Committee was depending on to sway public opinion, he said: "Gentlemen, in the first place, wherever I have been in the world... the first to die in the struggle against Fascism were the Communists. It is not criminal [to cite the Fifth Amendment]."

Robeson was doing no more in saying this than echoing what was already contained in the U.S. Army Orientation bulletin *Army Talk*, issued to soldiers in 1945 when it was still possible to do so. Said

\*A legendary Turkish lover, like Romeo. \*\*This poem was written in October 1949 from a Turkish prison where Hikmet spent 13 years for writing revolutionary poetry.

Phillip Bonosky is writing a new book on the Cold War from which this is excerpted.

this bulletin: "In their systematic destruction of all opposing groups, Hitler and Mussolini had the Communists first on the list. Among the early opponents of fascism, the Communists were in the forefront."

Brig. General. Evans T. Carlson: "Anyone who stands by the interests of all the people is labeled "red" so that the term has become a badge of honor, certainly to those who believe in the dignity and equality of human beings."

By the time Robeson appeared and spoke those words in defense of Communists, such a defense was taken to be *prima facie* evidence against him. Of course, after this magnificent defiance of the Committee – certainly, an example of courage to be included in a play written by Odets and directed by Kazan who specialized in heroes – Robeson's goose was cooked. But attempts to kill him outright had already been made, most notoriously by gangs of American Legion thugs at Peekskill, New York, in 1949 when he appeared for a concert. Ford's Harry Bennett had him down as a marked man for appearing on the picket line in the drive to organize Ford in 1941.

Today, of course, mountains are named after him. He is revered in Africa. He is honored all over the world. In America, safely dead, attempts have been made to remold his image into what is considered an acceptable form – that is, Robeson, who was goodhearted, an "amiable fool" an "innocent babe," who was used by wily manipulators around him. How many knew that Robeson had applied to stand parole for Ben Davis "convicted" Smith Act defendant?

#### A WRITER'S EVENING

One evening, in Alice Childress' home, where our workshop was meeting, we met Paul Robeson. He had been persuaded to sit in and give us his reactions. Childress began the session by reading what she had written in a movie script. When she was finished, the criticism began.

We usually toured the room asking each member for his opinion as we came to him. Once all were given the last word was left for the author – to adopt or reject.

When it came to Robeson's turn, he generally praised the script which dealt with a Black worker in his relationship to his job, his boss, but added that

Childress' main character might have made better answers to his boss when he was fired than she had him do, and then, where was the union?

Childress, in her reply, pointed out that she couldn't bring in the union because she knew, first of all, of no union fighting for the rights of her people, and so she couldn't describe such a thing believably. Secondly, his relationship to his union wasn't the story she was telling. Her story was the disintegration of a Black family because of economic reverses.

Paul then added that he had just traveled about the country, had sat in on discussions of the film *Salt of the Earth* then being made by a group of blacklisted Hollywood writers and actors, and this project was sponsored by the Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers Union. This film, he said, showed precisely that the fight for Black rights was being taken up by the union. This struggle was so vital that someone – if not Childress – must take notice of it and write about it.

He added that the struggle of Black people was bound up with the struggle of the working class, and that only in alliance with it could Black people finally win. Childress never produced the script, if she ever finished it, but would finally write a play called *Wedding Ring*, which dealt with the still-illegal love of a white Southern man for a Black woman. Such themes eventually became acceptable on national TV where this also appeared, now just called *Ring*, although a number of Southern TV stations refused to carry it. Robeson would go on to write, with Lloyd L. Brown, his political autobiography, *Here I Stand*, a prophetic statement of his position on the key problems of the day, especially outlining the necessary tactics African Americans would have to follow to win their elementary democratic rights – tactics that later they would indeed follow. This book was ignored by the *New York Times* for 16 years, with most of the bourgeois press following suit, as though what Robeson had to say was of no moment. The book was circulated by word of mouth, through the left and in the African American community, and is now a classic. But so powerful are the organs of bourgeois publicity, that despite the fact that many Blacks bought and read his book, most of them did not because a curtain of silence had descended around the name of Robeson, and this curtain covered him from view, even from his own people for a long time. His message had been: unity of Black and white

based upon the working class. This idea was not acceptable to the bourgeois press and its overlords.

We then passed on to another chapter of John Killens' novel-in-progress, *Youngblood*. It was a fine chapter, and except for some minor flaws the workshoppers recognized it as such. Paul said that it had reminded him of his own youth which he spent in Princeton, New Jersey. He had returned there lately, he said, and spoke to a teacher of his who had taught both himself and the little girl Killens' story had reminded him of. He was struck, he said, by how typical of all Blacks Killens' character was, in his feeling that the white world covered him always. He himself had been isolated from whites for a time in his youth.

After Robeson's death the curtain that had enclosed him lifted a trifle, and then began the declawing of the lion whom they feared so much when he was alive.

A so-called play, *Paul Robeson*, appeared in 1977, written by a Black writer, Philip Hayes Dean, with James Earl Jones playing Robeson. It aroused a storm of protest from everybody who had known Robeson, including his son, Paul Robeson, Jr., and his biographer, Lloyd L. Brown, for picturing Robeson, not as the conscious, uncompromising revolutionary that he was, but as a misguided, lovable Black entertainer, who was to be admired for his many achievements and for his courage in opposing discrimination against Blacks. But not for his ideological positions, especially his identification with the Communist Party of America and the Soviet

Union, as well as the rest of the socialist world. These "aberrations," one was asked to understand in the play and elsewhere were the weaknesses of an otherwise admirable, though somewhat naive, "entertainer." They should be indulged and he should be forgiven for following his heart and not – apparently these wiser thinkers dictated – the minds of, not himself but others. Therefore, giving him a new character altogether, it was now permissible to admire him and to accept his re-entry into American life.

There were many who hated Robeson, not for overt reasons, but for more subtle reasons. He made life morally uncomfortable for them. In a world which they claimed was totally corrupt in which every man had his price (therefore, how much are you offering me?), it was galling to know that there was at least one man who could not be bought, for his "price" was too high: freedom of his people. As long as he persisted in his uncorruptable ways, he was an accusation to all those who yearned for the riches of America into which they yearned to plunge under the waiver that since all men were corrupt, why should anyone remain pure? Therefore, for this reason, too, he was hated by some.

But his path demanded a special kind of heroism, difficult for a single, talented individual, but not for the masses. □

### Brodine, continued from page 29

1. This is the Random House Dictionary definition, Unabridged Edition, 1969.
2. John Middleton Synge, introduction to *The Playboy of the Western World*.
3. Kurt Vonnegut, *Galapagos*, Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence, New York, 1985.
4. Barre Toelken, "Occupational Folklore of the Northwest," paper presented at the Pacific Northwest Labor History Conference, Tacoma, Wash., June 21-23, 1985.
5. Sally Miller, "Other Socialists: Native-born and Immigrant Women in the Socialist Party of America, 1901-1917," *Labor History*, 24, No. 1:84-02, Winter, 1983.
6. Virginia Warner Brodine, "Fiction as History: Adventures in

the Creation of a Fictional Irish Woman Immigrant (1826)," paper presented at the Western Association of Women Historians Conference XVI, Pasadena, Caliph., April 14, 1984.

7. George Eliot, *Felix Holt the Radical*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1906, p. 72.
8. John Howard Lawson, *Film, the Creative Process*, Hill and Wang, New York, 1964, p. 302.
9. *Ibid*, p. 311.
10. *Ibid*, p. 297.
11. Serge Eisenstein, *Notes of a Film Director*, p. 61, quoted by Lawson, p. 297.
12. These words, written in 1986, were all too prophetic. My novel roamed the literary marketplace for 12 years before finding a publisher. Without International Publishers, it would probably never have seen the light of day.



#### **RUSSIA**

In a slap heard around the world, a distraught unemployed worker slapped Mikhail Gorbachev across the face while the former president was campaigning in Siberia. The man accused Gorbachev of being responsible for his joblessness. According to the Associated Press a startled and shaken Gorbachev cancelled his speech and immediately headed back for the airport.

#### **AUSTRALIA**

In mid-April Australia banned its military from using anti-personnel landmines and called for a global ban on the weapons. More than 25,000 people are killed each year around the world from landmine explosions.

#### **BRITAIN**

Over 6,000 public service union members held a one-day strike in March to protest budget cuts of £15 million and some 100 jobs. The rally took place on the Town Hall steps of the Borough of Hackney, London's poorest borough.

#### **CZECH REPUBLIC**

Led by the Young Communist League of the Czech Republic hundreds of youth marched in central Prague denouncing government plans to take the country into NATO and the European Union. It was the first street demonstration of Communists since 1989. The demonstration went ahead in spite of a week-long media campaign against it.

#### **RUMANIA**

More than 20,000 defense industry and engineering workers took to the streets in a number of cities in February demanding job protection and state support for their industries against the privatization steamroller.

#### **GERMANY**

The jobs of 22,500 workers of Bremen Vulkan, Germany's largest shipbuilder, were threatened when the company announced it was filing for protection against creditors. More than 2,000 workers spontaneously downed their tools in protest against the announcement. The closure of the company's yards in Bremen and Bremerhaven would lift unemployment to 20 percent. Currently unemployment is at 13 percent.

#### **CHINA**

China is concerned about Israel's massive military attacks in Southern Lebanon and the suburbs of Beirut, Foreign Minister spokesman Shen Guofang said on April 15th. "These attacks have once again encroached upon Lebanon's territorial integrity and state sovereignty and inflicted heavy casualties and loss of property which we deeply regret..." "We hope that the parties concerned will immediately halt their military actions and exercise restraint, lest the tensions be further escalated and the Middle East peace process be hindered," he said.

#### **VENEZUELA**

The International Monetary fund is forcing the government of Rafael Caldera to impose a new austerity plan. Inflation has soared to 24 percent in the first three months of this year. Reports say the plan calls for a sales tax hike of 16.5 percent and a five-fold increase of gasoline prices. About 80 percent of Venezuela's 21 million people live below the poverty line.

#### **AUSTRALIA**

Thousands of coalminers from all parts of New South Wales massed in front of Novacoal building in North Sydney in a solidarity demonstration in support of Vickery Mineworkers who have been on strike for six months. Banners proclaimed, "No forced 12 1/2 hour Shifts!" The miners struck when

the company tried to force them to work 12 1/2 hours and to give up the right to give unemployed miners preference in employment.

United Mine Workers president John Maitland, speaking at the rally, pledged all-out continued support to the strikers and warned the mineowners that any attempt to impose the conditions that CRA wants would bring an industry-wide shutdown. A message of solidarity was read from the International Federation of Chemical, Energy and Miners unions, which include the mine workers union of the U.S.

#### **JAPAN**

The results of the mayoral election in Kyoto, the former capital city of Japan, sent a shock wave through the ruling class. The candidate of the Association for a Democratic Kyoto to Serve the Citizen's Interests, Inoue, received 48.1 percent of the vote. He was supported by only one Party, the Japanese Communist Party. The winning candidate got 49 percent of the votes backed by five parties, the Liberal, Social Democratic and Harbinger ruling parties plus the New Frontier and Komei parties.

In a rural area in the town of Kubokawa, the candidate backed by the Communist Party was elected over the incumbent by a two-to-one margin. There are now 49 local municipalities where the JCP alone is the governing Party.

#### **VENEZUELA**

Two hundred thousand workers marched in cities across the country on March 21st demanding pay hikes, as teachers pressed for a national strike and government employees called for a two-day work stoppage. With inflation running at more than 16 percent, purchasing power has taken a steep nose-dive as the average monthly wage dropped to \$96 on the illegal market.

#### **KOREA**

A nationwide bus strike which would have brought transportation in five major cities to a halt was averted when the companies agreed to accept the demand of the unionized bus drivers for a 7.9 percent pay hike and a 50 percent raise in bonus pay. The settlement was reached on March 30.

#### **ITALY**

In national elections on April 21, the ex-Communist Democratic Party of the Left – the leading Party in the Olive Tree Alliance – won a majority in the Italian Senate and a near majority in the lower Chamber. The Communist Refoundation Party won 3 percent of the vote for the Senate and 6 percent in the lower house. The Olive Tree Alliance will have to work with the Communist Refoundation Party to gain a working majority. Fausto Bertinotti leader of the Communists said that his Party will fight for linking wages to increases in prices and will oppose attempts to privatize Italy's huge state sector.

#### **CUBA SOLIDARITY**

The arch-reactionary Helms-Burton bill adopted by Congress in March has been denounced all over the world as a weapon not only against Cuba but also against the right of other countries to free trade.

The bill tightens the 37-year old economic blockade against Cuba by targeting companies engaged in trade and investments in Cuba. The Non-Aligned movement (NAM) issued a communique saying "The NAM countries stand firm in their position to refuse any action of this nature against Cuba, a member of the movement."

Reaffirming its solidarity with Cuba, the NAM which represents over 100 countries, asks "the international community to take all necessary measures to avoid the harmful effects of the U.S. bill and protect the sovereign right of the members of the United Nations."

The European Union (EU) says, "It is absolutely impossible for other countries to accept the bill." Canada, Cuba's biggest Western trade partner, strongly opposes the bill which would cause big losses to Canada. The EU announced that it backs Canada's position 100 percent. Britain has endorsed that position. The Council of the Russian Federation says that Russia will defy the anti-Cuba law of the U.S. and continue to develop trade with Cuba.

*Nahn Dan* (people), leading newspaper of Vietnam, said in a commentary, "The bill is typical of Washington's policy of placing its laws above international law, giving itself the right to interfere while ignoring a country's sovereignty and the right of self-determination."

*International Department CPUSA*

### **ROBESON CENTENNIAL**

I read the article, *Art Labor and the Class Factor* by Norman Goldberg (February *PA*) with great interest and enthusiasm. While a young music student at California State University, Los Angeles (CSULA,) I had the opportunity to meet composer Roy Harris and his wife. The archives of Mr. Harris are housed at CSULA.

Unfortunately, composer William Grant Still was referred to only by the choral instructors. Instrumentalists like myself who studied the various American composers never knew that Still wrote music for orchestra. We never performed the Afro-American symphony. We heard all about Aaron Copeland, Samuel Barber, Morton Gould and Walter Piston – but not about William Grant Still.

It occurs to me that in addition to William Grant Still, many Americans have never heard of other famous African American cultural artists – specifically Paul Robeson, “the tallest tree in the forest.”

We have an opportunity to educate the American public about the legacy of this great cultural artist. April 9, 1998 will be the centennial of Paul Robeson’s birth. Previously, on the occasion of Robeson’s 80th birthday, a commemorative star was placed on the Hollywood “walk of fame.” This came about as a result of the hard work (class struggle) of cultural workers in Southern California. Imagine the dilemma of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce: Paul Robeson or Mickey Mouse!

This year, at the behest of the John Howard Lawson cultural workers club in southern California, a resolution was presented to the convention of our Party which reads in part:

With the 100th anniversary of his [Robeson’s] birth two years away, we believe that by using this time well, greater monuments to his great legacy will be built and millions more will learn about him. We see schools, streets, and parks named in his honor. We see a Paul Robeson U.S. postage stamp. And we know that once this process is begun, more people will bring more ideas, more possibilities, and more resources.

A committee to commemorate the Paul Robeson centennial should be established to begin the work now, so that in 1998 the centennial celebration will be a huge success. The campaign can unite the working class around demands such as civil rights, affirmative action, a shorter work week with no cut in pay, full employment, i.e. the Martinez Jobs Bill and cultural diversity because Paul Robeson championed these and many other causes. As Mr. Goldberg writes: “Greater support for working-class culture must be put on the agenda of the Communist Party in this new period. It has to be studied and mastered by cultural activists as well as Communists in general.” What better way to begin that study than by reflecting on the life and achievements of Paul Robeson?

*Joseph Hancock  
Los Angeles  
California*

### **ANC VICTORY IN SOUTH AFRICA**

It is a great pleasure to have an opportunity to write this letter.

In my province, the North West province, the ANC contested elections with three political parties, the National Party, the United Christian Democratic Party and the Pan Africanist Congress. The African National Congress and its Communist alliance won these elections in the entire province with 98.2 percent of the vote. All the conservative towns have Black councilors and mayors now. The former Bantustan leader Mangope was defeated in all the wards.

Throughout the country the ANC won all the major cities including Johannesburg, Capetown, Pretoria, Port Elisabeth and other towns.

*Mkhokheli Geinunkhonto  
Republic of South Africa*

Continued on page 37

## Our Living Revolution

Christopher Richardson

In 1967, celebrated as the "Year of Heroic Vietnam," Fidel Castro delivered a speech to the Cuban people honoring the veteran revolutionaries of Playa Giron. In this speech he states:

The pusillanimous, the weak-spirited, the pseudo-revolutionaries who thought that the first setbacks meant that the revolution had failed and that armed struggle was futile must wake up to a new reality. No blow, no setback has ever destroyed the faith, tenacity and firmness of true revolutionaries, nor will it ever, in any country.

There is talk today of the "death of Communism," of the "New World Order" dominated by liberal capitalism, of the "end of history," but these slogans amount to illusory rhetoric. The truth is that history continues, things change, and kingdoms crumble.

Every historic empire is confident of its own invincibility. The British Empire spoke of the end of history, and Nazi Germany believed itself to be a thousand-year Reich, but beyond the arrogant myths of "pan-Romano," "pax-Brittanice" and "pan-Americana" lies the truth: there has always been class struggle. For those of us who are the victims of trickle-down economics, the Communist revolution is still very much alive. It may be hard for some to imagine, but the American economic empire will someday be no more.

The real question is not whether to make a revolution, or why to make a revolution, or whether there will be a revolution at all. To Marxist-Leninists, and especially to the most oppressed groups, the reasons and justifications for revolution are becoming more and more obvious. The real question for Communists today is how to make a revolution.

There are some socialists who say that we should use "democracy" to make a revolution. Well, democracy is the whole idea of Communist revolution – people's power. But if they speak of our cur-

rent system of government in this country, then we are no longer speaking of democracy. Abraham Lincoln was no Communist, but he spoke eloquently of democracy when he said: "As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this to the extent of the difference, is no democracy."

We Americans live in a country of classes. The kings of the master class, the capitalists, control the means of production and gain great wealth at the expense of workers. They grow fat and lazy through our sweat, our energy, our labor. Workers are wage slaves, and those of us who are revolutionaries cannot water down the truths of Marxism. There is therefore for us no true democracy in America. Can there be a democratic revolution? It will have to be democratic, the people will lead it, but the struggle will not be won through our corrupt legal system, our sham democracy. We must not be fooled by capitalist propaganda.

Another consideration for revolutionaries is that ours must be an economic revolution, and not merely military or political. American power is centered on Wall Street, not in Washington. Its strongholds are the powerful oligopolies and the ideological myths that tie down oppressed groups. Washington was built for protest and is resistant to it.

If we want to get the country's attention, we should stop marching in the suburbs of our nation and start marching on the broad streets, on manicured walkways – we should march on Wall Street. Nothing will change in this country unless we hit where it counts, hit where the money is. As Marx said, everything else is dependent on economics. In this country, a small scale military revolution is not enough. It would fail miserably. There must be an organized mass movement with the full support of the working class.

Then the question becomes, "How do we wage economic revolution?" How can something as powerful and imposing as the capitalist power structure be weakened? We must outsmart and undermine the system. We must search for and exploit its every weakness. We must know the workings of our enemy better than the capitalists themselves. Marx,

---

Christopher Richardson is a contributor to *Political Affairs*.

though opposed to capitalism, wrote *Capital*, the greatest study every conducted of its workings. We must be an educated Party, bound together by complete solidarity and unwavering zeal.

Our revolution is alive and growing. All great movements have long and tumultuous histories, but the Communist cause has history on its side. As one Marxist once put it, "The Communist Party does not fear criticism because we are Marxists the truth is on our side." If we take action, if we carry the burden of true patriots, true revolutionaries, then history

will justify our endeavors. I end with a wartime challenge from honest Abe:

Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. This fiery trial through which we pass will light us down in honor, or dishonor, to the latest generation. We, even we here, hold the power and bear the responsibility. □

## letters, continued from page 35

### **FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION**

Twenty years ago, Comrade Fern Winston forcefully advocated a class approach in the struggle for women's equality. She wrote in *The World Magazine* that "trade unions in the main have failed to take up questions of special concern to women such as child care, special maternity benefits, special labor legislation." She also wrote about Black women that "household workers, nearly all women and largely Black women, have struggled for years to form a union without help from organized labor."

I would submit that not very much has changed for the better in this regard in the ensuing 20 years. In basic industry, women still face rank discrimination in hiring and promotion. Thus women in general, and particularly African American women, are largely confined to low-paying jobs in service industries which are mostly not as yet unionized. In 1974 there was a consent decree that took effect in the steel industry, which set some quotas in hiring for women. Because of this decree, some progress was made, but only minuscule; the quotas were very low.

In addition, the consent decree applies only to steelworkers represented by the United Steelworkers of America. For industry jobs involving other unions, practically no progress has been made.

While I have picked on the steel industry as an example because I am more familiar with this industry, I suspect that the situation may not be much better in other basic industries. I feel that it is incumbent upon our Party to pay particular attention to the question of women workers in basic industry, mapping out a plan of action which would include special attention to the special problems facing Black women.

I think the 1995 Labor Program, "Labor At the

Turning Point," while overall an excellent document, needs to be strengthened on this point. In doing this, the experience of members of CLUW would be invaluable. It is also important to address the question of organizing in the service industries (such as nursing home and hospital care), and other industries where the workers are largely women. Otherwise we will fail to address the needs of a very large and vital section of the working class.

*John Pappedmous*

### **WORKING-CLASS LESSONS**

I sure enjoy reading *PA*. You comrades in the Party are doing a wonderful job in putting out *PA* and in making Marx and Lenin live again. I thoroughly enjoyed the last issue dealing with the issues and policies for the 26th convention.

I've made a lot of mistakes in the past not knowing Marxism and Leninism as it is discussed by Party leaders now. I lived through the Browder period and all the developments and setbacks to this day. What I most regret is that I wasn't taught the practical Marxism to be able to play a proper role in the trade union movement.

I was the president of a mine and copper local of the MMSWU. I could have done a lot to lay the basis for the Party from militant union members and community organizations and could have taught the people to fight for a better life. Now the mines are all closed and the people have died.

I'm proud of you for emphasizing the role to be played by unions - it's producing results already. I look with great interest to the developing results. I can only be thankful for the Party and its leaders like Gus Hall who I met as a YCLer here in the '30s. With your kind of leadership we are sure to win victories in our class struggle and will find the road to socialism.

*Edwin Spiegell*



# FOOD FOR THOUGHT



Political Affairs keeps you in mental health with a steady diet of Marxist-Leninist thought and incisive comment, reflecting the views of the Communist Party, USA. Get it straight from the source all year 'round, get it now!

## SUBSCRIBE NOW!

Be fully informed on world and national events, economic issues, political, class, race, gender, and cultural questions. Stay healthy by subscribing to Political Affairs — for an enriched regimen of ideas and writing. Spread the health with a gift subscription for a friend.

### ORDER YOUR SUBSCRIPTION NOW



To: Political Affairs, 235 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10011

Enclosed please find \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in payment for the subscription indicated below.\*

\$18 for 1 year    \$32 for 2 years    \$46 for 3 years

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\* All funds payable in U.S. currency, drawn on U.S. bank. Foreign subs add \$2.50 per year for sea/land shipment.

### GIVE A GIFT TO A FRIEND



To: Political Affairs, 235 West 23rd St., New York, NY 10011

Enclosed please find \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in payment for the gift subscription indicated below.\*

\$18 for 1 year    \$32 for 2 years    \$46 for 3 years

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Donor's name \_\_\_\_\_

\* All funds payable in U.S. currency, drawn on U.S. bank. Foreign subs add \$2.50 per year for sea/land shipment.