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New Contradictions, New Forms of Struggle

GUS HALL

In the class struggle, as in nature, the emergence of new contradictions gives rise to new forms of movements. Therefore, for leadership to be effective it must at all times keep abreast of both the developing new contradictions and the new forms of the movements. Only by knowing the nature of the new contradictions can a leadership influence and stimulate the new movements that they give rise to.

For this reason these special issues of *Political Affairs* on the problems of the working class and the trade union movement are an important contribution to all who are involved in struggles, because in a capitalist society all old and new contradictions between the capitalist class and the working class in one way or another influence and affect all other contradictions and movements. This is so because the class contradiction is the primary one. It is the centerpiece to which all other questions are related. To deny this is to deny the basic nature of capitalism.

As state monopoly capitalism develops, the economic class exploitation becomes ever more sophisticated and complex, giving rise to new contradictions and new movements. The monopoly octopus develops new tentacles even while it refines and updates the old ones. When one of its tentacles is chopped off in the struggle, it grows new, more refined ones.

As capitalism decays and loses ground it does not adjust its lifestyle or its goal of making the maximum profits. Instead it seeks for new ways to hold on to and to increase its high cash intake. Basically it can do this only by a higher rate of exploitation. It is this drive of monopoly capital to increase its profits in the age of its decay that gives rise to the new contradictions.

From its profit point of view, U.S. monopoly capital is suffering from a number of negative developments.

For the peoples of the world the world revolutionary process is a liberating force. The building of socialism and the victories of national liberation are historic steps up the ladder of civilization. But for the U.S. corporations that same process is a stumbling block, a limiting and inhibiting force in their drive for profits.

The continuing shift in the world balance of forces makes it possible for the socialist world to increasingly influence world affairs from a position of greater strength. But in direct ratio, this shift cuts back the ability of imperialism to determine world affairs. The qualitative nature of this shift in the balance greatly adds to and sharpens old contradictions and gives rise to new ones. As the world balance of forces shifts against imperialism it threatens the cash balance of the U.S. multinational corporations who operate on the world scene.

The longer range consequence of this shift is to force the monopoly corporations to pay somewhat higher prices for raw materials they extract in the "Third World," and higher wages for the labor they employ in these operations. This continuing shift in the world balance of forces is, therefore, an inhibiting factor on the extra profits they seek.

Monopoly capital is never satisfied with its rate of profit. On its own it will never place any limits on its take. A new contradiction arises out of the fact that in spite of these negative developments, especially on the world scene, U.S. monopoly capital is determined to increase its corporate profits. This contradiction now molds and creates the issues of class struggle.

In dealing with the problems of today it is very important to keep one's eye on the ball; no matter how sophisticated, complex and many-faceted the system of exploitation becomes, there is one source from which monopoly capital siphons off the bulk of its profits. Capitalist ideology never gives up trying to hide this basic fact. The corporate executives, the controlling stockholders, the banks, the supermarket chains, the finance and insurance companies all get their share. But it comes mainly from the same wellhead, the exploitation of the working class. This remains true even though state monopoly capitalism has extended its exploitation to other sections of the people.

The state, of course, has many functions. But increasingly, under state monopoly capitalism, state aid in the exploitation of the working class has become the new and key tentacle at the service of corporate profits. It reaches directly into the worker's

paycheck even before the worker gets his hands on it. The hog's share of the taxes the state collects is funnelled into the pockets of Big Business through industrial war contracts, gifts, and numerous other so-called incentives. Taxes have become an important feature in the system of exploitation. It is a form of confiscation. Workers now pay two thirds of federal taxes. But even the taxes the corporations and the rich pay ultimately come from the same source—from exploitation.

Related to the questions of taxes and inflation is the escalation of the military budget. Each year the budget breaks all records, with 10-15 per cent annual increases. The expenditures for military hardware have reached a level where they have also given rise to new contradictions. It is a growing slice out of the economic pie, mainly cut from social services and social security programs. The military budget has become an important base of support of the multinational monopolies. As in drug addiction, the economies of many states have become dependent on orders for the military.

Most manufacturing firms operate with capital they borrow from the banks, and on which they pay interest to the banks. The banking system has itself become a huge operation that dominates the total economic complex. But again, the money for the interest the corporations pay, as well as the huge profits the banks make, comes from the same source—the exploitation of the working class.

For a long historic period borrowing and credit served as an economic stimulant. It was a method of capitalism living on the future.

But it has reached a point where it now also presents some new problems, some new contradictions, especially for the national, state and city governments. Even interest payments have become astronomical. And the holders of the short and long term bonds and notes demand payment. This has turned from an economic stimulant to an economic depressant.

Inflation has become an additional method through which the capitalist establishment drains off money that is in the workers' paychecks, which again creates new contradictions.

Automated technology replaces human hands. But in the hands of big business it also speeds up the human hands that are left on the job. And the end result is extra profits from higher productivity. For a long period of time the building of new automated equipment served as a means of expansion and

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therefore as an economic stimulant. But this has also reached a point where it does not perform in the same way, and has given rise to new contradictions and sharpened up some old ones.

One of the oldest instruments of extra profits for U.S. corporations has been and is racism. Under pressures of movements and struggles the racists have been forced to retreat in some areas. But they have not given up the use of this instrument. They have "refined" the use of racism, and it remains one of the most effective tools in keeping the working class divided and disoriented. It is an effective tool for extra profits for the corporations.

There is at present a new element in the current drive to cut the living standards of the working people. In the first place it is not a momentary phase that will pass. It is not something related to policies of a Republican or Democratic Administration. Therefore, the drive will continue during the Carter Administration. This drive is not caused by some momentary setbacks that capitalism has suffered; it is related to the long-term setbacks U.S. imperialism has suffered. Therefore, the drive is related to the fact that colonialism is on its last legs and imperialism can not dictate its conditions to the world. Monopoly capital is trying to expand the scale of its profits by a drive to intensify exploitation behind the propaganda slogan that "The U.S. cannot afford the present standard of living and therefore everyone must sacrifice." But of course one never hears the monopoly ideologues talk about the bankers or corporations making sacrifices.

It is in the context of this new, historic, objective framework and the new contradictions to which it gives rise that the policies of trade union leaders must be examined. Big Business' reaction to the new situation is to go on the offensive. They are demanding, and in many cases getting, a rollback in real wages and fringe benefits. Most of the new labor-management contracts provide "wage increases" that will not keep up with inflation, thereby guaranteeing a cut in the living standards of the workers.

The reaction of most of the top trade union leaders is to go on the defensive. Some of them, such as Albert Shanker of the United Federation of Teachers, are not only on the defensive but in headlong retreat.

They cover up their retreat by saying they are waiting for the Carter Administration to change things. They are waiting and hoping. But the waiting game in the class struggle is a losing game. Big Business is not waiting. They have their men in place. Their lobbies already have their hooks in the new Administration.

The Carter Administration cannot be influenced by "waiting." It can be influenced only by actions, pressure, protests.

In view of the new contradictions this moment gives rise to, what are the new movements it will stimulate?

The top trade union leaders may wait and hope, but the workers in the shops, the members of the trade unions, can not afford to wait. Therefore, the new situation will further stimulate militant rank-and-file movements in the trade unions. These are the key new movements the new contradictions will give rise to. The future of the trade union movement, the hopes of all workers, ride on the shoulders of the rank-and-file movements. Rank-and-file movements are the key links that can move the working class from its present defensive posture to an offensive one.

Monopoly capital is on the offensive in the economic sphere, but it is also on the offensive in the political and electoral arena. The working-class movement can not now win by going on the offensive only in the economic arena. In fact, it can not even wage an offensive on the economic front without going on the offensive on the political and electoral arenas as well. Political independence—political class independence—has become a historic necessity. More than at any previous time, and because of the new situation, the working class needs its own independent electoral forms. There is a need for a broad, people's, working-class based anti-Big Business party. And if there ever was a time when the people's movements and the working-class struggles needed a bigger revolutionary Marxist-Leninist party, it is now.

These are new contradictions and, as a result, new movements, and one of the indispensable elements of these movements is a bigger Communist Party.

The different levels of movements reflecting the new contradictions are inter-related and necessary. They are all necessary elements of a people's coalition that can fundamentally challenge and defeat the Big Business drive to cut the living standards of the people. A militant, organized, united working class is a key ingredient of all these movements.

Ferment in Organized Labor

GEORGE MEYERS

The ongoing crisis of U.S. capitalism and the greed of the giant monopolies for maximum profits guaranteed that there be no let-up in Big Business' attacks on the living standards of U.S. workers in the Bicentennial year of 1976.

A random glance at headlines in the trade union press for the last five months tells the story.

"Profits Climb 34% in Second-Quarter Surge."

"Labor Blasts Rise in Unemployment as Profits Zoom."

"Real Wages Decline Below '65 Average."

"New Unemployment Confirms Lag in Economy."

"Real Wages Keep Sliding as Living Costs Increase."

"Economic Drift Persists as Key Indicators Flatten."

Even with tricky corporate bookkeeping, after-tax profits in 1976 soared to a record 33 per cent over 1975 levels. The profits of the biggest monopolies were even higher. The airlines averaged a 322 per cent increase, railroads 147 per cent, ATT showed quarterly profits of over $1 billion. 1976 saw General Motors reaping profits of $7,000 per minute.

On December 7, the *New York Times* carried an article calling 1976 the "Year of Dividends." It began with the story of a retired oil company executive gloating over his take as a General Motors shareholder. "The fattest payout of its kind ever made by the giant automobile maker." The article continues, "Thanks to rising earnings [profits is a forbidden word in the *Times*]and improved cash-flow" a host of other companies have fattened their payouts to the nation's coupon clippers.

Why such obscene profits at a time when unemployment is well over the 12 million figure, and city after city is on the verge of bankruptcy due to lack of funds?

Here is the way this question was answered at a recent collective bargaining conference of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, AFL-CIO (OCAW). Discussing why the chemical industry was able to increase prices by 69 per cent and profits by 143 per cent when production was falling off, the union's research coordinator, Richard Leonard, gave the following explanation:

> The chemical industry exhibits many monopolistic characteristics. For example, the production of many important chemicals is concentrated in the hands of a small number of producers.
>
> Thus production can be controlled so that chemicals are always in short supply, and prices can be maintained at artificially high levels.

Monopoly control is responsible for the recent price hikes in auto, steel, rayon, aluminum and other industries at the same time that workers are being laid off.

The Year 1976 for Labor

The working class fought back in 1976. In the first 10 months of the year, strikes were up 38 per cent over 1975, although fewer contracts were up for renegotiation. Headed by long strikes in such industries as rubber and transportation (United Parcel Service), there were more strikes in auto, by public workers, the big rank-and-file strike of the coal miners, and many others.

But the corporations had the help of the federal government and the anti-labor decisions of the Supreme Court on their side. Abetted by the "no-struggle" policy of surrender on the part of many union officials, wage increases were held to an average of seven per cent. Even this totally inadequate figure applies only to the less than five million workers involved in contract negotiations. Perhaps another ten million received previously negotiated adjustments. The great majority of the 94 million in the work-force received not a penny in raises.

"Everything seems to be going up!" is a common complaint in the aisles of the nation's supermarkets. Inflated prices, coupled with inadequate wage hikes, are responsible for the downward spiral of U.S. living standards. The average worker's buying power is well below the level of 1965. For the unemployed, the situation is disastrous. This is especially true for Black and other minorities, who suffer double the unemployment rate of whites and are forced by discrimination to accept the lowest paying jobs.

Workers are being maneuvered into accepting contracts that run three years and beyond. This is

particularly true in the basic industries. Major contract expiration dates have been so judiciously spaced that while each union faces the combined force of monopoly capital, monopoly capital is able to take on one union at a time. Expiration dates for the powerful unions in steel, auto and electrical have been so divided that contract negotiations for these three industries come in three different years. Similarly, major contract negotiations are spaced throughout the year, again making unified action that much more difficult.

Prospects for 1977

In 1977 a new round of collective bargaining opens. Negotiations covering five million workers extend from January (OCAW) through late December (railroads and the United Mine Workers vs. the bituminous coal operators). The five million figure does not include contracts covering less than 5,000 workers, which the Bureau of Labor Statistics excludes from its consideration.

In March through July construction contracts expire. August is the big month with Communication Workers vs. AT&T, and the United Steel Workers vs. the basic steel industry.

The outcome of the elections for national officers and district directors in the United Steel Workers Union on February 8 will have a strong impact on the negotiations with Basic Steel that begin in the same month. (See article by Rick Nagin.) Rejection of the so-called Experimental Negotiating Agreement, which gave away the right to strike over contract settlements is a fundamental point of difference between Edward Sadlowski, the militant candidate for the union presidency and Lloyd McBride, a supporter of I.W. Abel's policy of collaborating with the steel bosses.

Sadlowski faces a gang-up of the steel magnates, agencies of the federal government, the discredited Abel machine, the Meany leadership in the AFL-CIO, and Right Social Democracy. The December 26 edition of the *New York Times* carried a quarter page ad paid for by the teacher's union in which Albert Shanker, national American Federation of Teachers president, attacked Sadlowski. Shanker's latest act of capitulation was to urge an end to collective bargaining for New York City workers, including teachers, for the duration of the crisis, no matter how low it might last. Shanker sees the Sadlowski candadicy as a "New Danger to Union Democracy." This is a sorry joke, coming from one of the most bureaucratic officials in the trade union movement. Shanker is concerned that if Sadlowski is elected, the union will be controlled by "outsiders." Interestingly enough, this was the very same argument used to justify the murder of "Jock" Yablonski for challenging the corrupt leadership of "Tony" Boyle as president of the United Mine Workers.

The Six Hour Day

With hard-core unemployment continuing to rise, the demand for the six hour day with no cut in pay has become a mass demand. Its widespread injection into the political arena by the Communist Party's presidential candidates, Gus Hall and Jarvis Tyner, has made a deep and lasting impact.

In spite of an enormous increase in workers' productivity, there has been no cut in working time in the last 30 years. In fact, "forced overtime" has virtually destroyed even the 40 hour week in industries such as auto.

The demand for a six hour day with no cut in pay is an idea whose time has come. Without it, millions of workers who have lost their jobs and millions of young workers who have never had a job have a bleak future in store. The demand for the six hour day is a plank in the fight against racism. While 20 per cent of young white workers are unemployed, over 40 per cent of young Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican and other minority workers are jobless. The percentage of unemployed women in relation to men is higher in both categories.

But the breakthrough still has to be made. The auto contract providing for more personal days off over a three year period is no "foot in the door," especially with the auto companies retaining the right to enforce compulsory overtime.

In relation to 1977 negotiations, steel union presidential candidate Ed Sadlowski has spoken out for a six hour day with no cut in pay. The Communication Workers are committed to a fight for the shorter work week. The last convention of the United Mine Workers adopted a strong set of contract proposals headed by the demand for a six hour day with no cut in pay, triple time for overtime, extensive improvements in health and safety controls, and the right of local unions to strike over unsettled grievances, particularly on the vital question of safety.

The Rank-and-File Movement

The increasing influence of militant, dynamic, rank-and-file movements is the most dramatic development on the trade union front as we go into the New Year. Their growing strength and power has drawn the wrathful fire of a ruling class concerned about its bloated profits. "Think tanks" representing the giant corporations, the federal government and top trade union bureaucrats have combined their resources in a bitter attempt to destabilize and destroy this historic upsurge.

U.S. Steel is at the head of the wolf-pack intent on destroying the rank-and-file movements in steel. The FBI has the gall to finger honest rank-and-file leaders in the face of multiple exposures of its illegal, anti-democratic crimes.

Attempts are being made to revive the Old Red Herring. Abel's hand picked candidates are hoping the herring's stinking carcass will cover the stench of their ties to the steel companies. With their leader in prison for murder, the Boyle gang is working the anti-Communist racket to the hilt in an attempt to do in rank-and-file control of the United Mine Workers.

Rank-and-file movements have emerged as a historical necessity in the U.S. trade union movement because this is the only country in the world whose top leadership is committed to the defense of capitalism at all costs—a top trade union leadership committed to the most vicious policies of U.S. imperialism.

Yet the rank-and-file movements continue to forge ahead in the face of intense opposition from the Right, and insidious attempts to wreck them by the ultra-Left, who would turn them into narrow sects dedicated to petty bourgeois radicalism. Some have achieved organized forms on an industry-wide scale. Others are more limited in scope.

Miners for Democracy was disbanded after the rank-and-file victory in the UMW. Events have proven this to be a serious error. Yet, rank-and-file pressure continues to be a major factor in that union. It was a rank-and-file led strike in 1976 that defeated the scheming conspiracy of the coal operators to destroy hard-won working conditions, using crooked judges and strike-breaking injunctions. This same rank and file saved the UMW Convention from disaster stemming from organized disruption and red-baiting by the Boyle forces, and division among the top union officers.

Well organized rank-and-file movements in steel give strength to the Sadlowski campaign. Loosely knit, uncoordinated movements in auto nearly rejected a thoroughly inadequate wage settlement. It was the rank and file that put the backbone in the rubber strike, the United Parcel Strike and many others.

Leadership Changes

As rank-and-file pressure builds at the grass roots level, important changes are taking place at higher echelons of union leadership.

George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO since its inception, is reportedly considering retirement. Meany is now in his 82nd year. In the past, Meany has made political hay by promising to retire to at least eight eager candidates for his job. At one time I.W. Abel thought he had the inside track. There was Joseph Bierne, the right social democrat, who has died, Albert Shanker of the AFT, several building construction officials and others.

At this writing, all the signs point to Lane Kirkland, the hand-picked AFL-CIO secretary treasurer. Until he was hired as Meany's assistant, Kirkland had no trade union experience whatsoever. He served as a ship's officer in the merchant marine during World War II, then went into Government service. Like Meany, he has the dubious honor of never having been in a strike, of never having led a strike. He shares with Meany a deep-seated hatred of detente and the countries of socialism, particularly the Soviet Union. Now identified with the right social democracy, Social Democrats, USA, he is a strong supporter of CIA and Pentagon attempts to revive the cold war and increase military spending.

Kirkland is "labor's" representative on the notorious "Committee for the Present Danger," led by Walt Rostow, chief ideologue for the war in Vietnam, who now sees our country in a "prewar situation." The *AFL-CIO News* prominently displayed a war mongering statement from this outfit in its November 20 issue. It began with the following statement:

> THE PRINCIPAL THREAT to our nation, to world peace, and the cause of human freedom is the Soviet drive for dominance based on an unparalleled military build-up.

On December 15, at a "National Conference to Examine Labor's Stake and Voice in a Changing

World Economy," Kirkland bitterly attacked the US-USSR Trade and Economic Council, which he described as "a private group composed of American free enterprisers and Soviet commissars, who meet with some frequency in the spirit of fraternity." Kirkland sadly described such a thing as "Madness. Madness."

Whether it's Kirkland or some one else who emerges as Meany's successor, at this stage there is little likelihood he would change policy. However, he will not have the dictatorial powers of Meany, leaving more elbow room for differences to express themselves.

And opposition is developing above and beyond the rank-and-file movements. The Coalition of Black Trade Unionists was definitely organized out of dissatisfaction with the AFL-CIO leadership and to demand that organized labor put up a better fight against racism in all its manifestations.

As a consequence of the AFL-CIO policy of sitting out the 1972 elections, a labor coalition was formed that included such AFL-CIO unions as the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Workers (AFSCME), Communication Workers, Machinists, Graphic Arts, the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE), and OCAW, along with the UAW, Mine Workers and the National Educational Association (NEA), from among the unaffiliated unions.

This coalition supported McGovern against Nixon in 1972 and backed President-elect Carter against both George Wallace and the war-hawk Henry "Scoop" Jackson, the anointed of the AFL-CIO bureaucracy, in the presidential primaries of 1976.

The coalition disbanded as a formal organization after the AFL-CIO endorsed Carter. However, the general direction of this grouping is for what is loosely called "a change in priorities." Primarily, it urges a reduction in military spending with more funds going for social needs.

While the UAW broke ranks and supported the B-1 Bomber Project, President Leonard Woodcock and General Counsel Steve Schlossberg of the UAW are members of the "American Committee on U.S. Soviet Relations." The Committee favors expanded agreements on detente, and argues that "improved relations help both nations and are the only sure path to reduced world tensions." (*UAW Washington Report,* 12/15/76.)

Other important changes are taking place in top union leadership. The entire top leadership of the steel union will change in June, no matter which slate wins the February elections. UAW's Woodcock faces mandatory retirement in May. Dennis, head of the Railway and Airline Clerks, has been removed by an inner-union "palace coup." Dennis is a notorious cold warrior in the top union bureaucracy. A new leadership is in the process of being elected in IUE. Pat Gorman, long-time secretary Treasurer of the Meat Cutters, and one of organized labor's most outspoken advocates of peace, has retired from his former office but still holds a position of leadership in the union. Machinists Union President Floyd Smith is due to retire this year. His most likely successor is W.W. Winpsinger, who refers to Meany as "an old fogey."

While such changes at the top do not represent any real shift in the AFL-CIO's basic orientation, they do indicate a fluid situation in which rank-and-file pressures can have an important impact.

Electoral Policy

The AFL-CIO top leadership is striving mightily to overcome its losses due to its past disastrous policies on the political front, epitomized by the Nixon-Meany-Mitchell golf dates, the phony "neutrality" position in the 1972 presidential elections, the campaign for a "veto-proof Congress," all of which left the main organ of organized labor "dead in the water."

Right Social Democracy was used by the Meany wing as a vehicle to give all-out support to Senator Henry Jackson in the 1976 presidential primaries. The Jackson campaign fell flat on its face when AFL-CIO members refused to vote for this avid warmonger.

Once the political wheel turned in favor of Carter, the trade union movement, with few exceptions, united in an unprecedented campaign to support the election of an untried candidate. Practically the entire membership was reached by phone and mail. Faced with obvious apathy on the part of many workers "turned off" by the refusal of either Ford or Carter to deal with their problems, the trade union machinery delveloped a massive campaign to get out the vote. The AFL-CIO mobilized over 120,000 "COPE Volunteers," had 20,000 phones in operation making over 10 million calls. Eighty million pieces of literature were distributed, along with 700 prints of COPE election films. Independent unions such as the UAW and NEA had their own machinery.

Organized labor based its campaign on two major issues: jobs and high prices, followed by demands for "tax justice," "health care," and "workers' rights," which included repeal of 14B of the Taft-Hartley Act.

As everyone knows, Black and other minority voters joined with organized labor in electing Carter president in a very close campaign. The issues were crystal clear to these voters—jobs and a roll-back of high prices.

Outraged cries of "doublecross," are already ringing from one end of the country to the other as President-elect Carter announces his cabinet picks. Black and women leaders are sharp in their denunciations. Ralph Nader, formerly a strong Carter supporter, now claims "Carter lied." Carter's liberal supporters bemoan the selection of James R. Schlesinger for a high post. But even with the appointment of a racist reactionary like Griffin Bell to the important post of U.S. Attorney General, there has been no reaction from organized labor.

As long as the trade union movement remains shackled to the two parties of Big Business, the Democrats and Republicans, it will remain virtually impotent in the struggle to reverse the disastrous drop in the living standards of its membership, of their deteriorating conditions of life. This is the big price workers have to pay for lack of any real expression of political independence.

Working-Class Ideology

The defeat of the dominant ideology of class collaboration in the trade union leadership is a prerequisite for the revitalization of the movement. As long as the concept that the preservation of the well-being of the corporations is essential to the well-being of organized labor reigns, there can be no real drive to organize the unorganized. No fundamental reforms can be won in the area of health care, or taxation, or trade union rights. The right to strike, to vote on contract settlements will be in constant jeopardy.

The drive against racism, the fight for a concrete program of affirmative action to guarantee the reversal of past and present racist policies in hiring and promotion will continue to be fought by the AFL-CIO Executive Council under the guise of challenging "reverse discrimination." The strength of the trade union movement will not be mobilized to guarantee women workers their rights.

As long as the AFL-CIO leadership rushes to support even the most dastardly schemes of U.S. imperialism in general and the Pentagon and the CIA in particular, there will be no fight to contain the multinational corporations, there will be less money for social needs and more for arms. Meany's opposition to detente with the Soviet Union leads in only one direction: toward a nuclear holocost.

The direction taken by organized labor is decisive to the nation as a whole. The last election demonstrated the potential power that lies in the strength of trade unions, in alliance with Blacks. Chicanos, Puerto Ricans and other minorities. This alliance is the foundation on which a mighty movement can be built that will effectively challenge the stranglehold the monopolies now have on our country.

Under the present AFL-CIO policies of collaboration and capitulation, the ability of the people to build such an alliance is seriously handicapped. A decisive change in policy is required. Such a fundamental reversal can not come from the top, although there are many honest union leaders who chafe under the Meany type of unionism.

The struggle to turn the trade union movement around starts at the grass roots with the rank-and-file movements reaching deep into the very fibre of the working class.

Such movements can never continue to grow spontaneously. The many rank-and-file struggles that continually surge up around us are important, but by themselves they are not adequate to the task. Stabilized rank-and-file movements with a Left orientation are required to give them leadership.

Class collaboration, like racism, is a capitalist ideology. An advanced, working-class ideology is the only force capable of taking it on successfully. Building a Left in the trade union movement can only come about as workers are won to the program and policies of the Communists. Therefore, the building of the Communist Party, the promotion of our press, particularly in the most decisive sector of the working class, the organized workers in steel, auto, mining, electrical and the other basic industries, and the building of the YWLL among working-class youth are the essential requirements for social progress in the United States.

Steelworkers at the Crossroads

RICK NAGIN

The International election in the United Steelworkers of America scheduled for February 8 is the most dramatic event confronting the labor movement today. The election is a battle of major proportions in the historic struggle to free the labor movement from the bureaucratic, pro-company policies entrenched in the top leadership of the AFL-CIO.

The two slates which stand opposed are headed by Lloyd McBride, the man chosen to defend the policies of the Old Guard, and Edward Sadlowski, the challenger and outspoken advocate of militant trade unionism.

It is generally recognized, however, that no matter who wins, the union will never be the same. The reason for this is the unprecedented, all-sided rank-and-file rebellion which has steadily mounted over the last decade and forced fundamental issues onto the center stage of this election. The sources of this rebellion are the steadily deteriorating conditions in the mills and the collaborationist policies of the top union leadership. These policies have included:

1. surrender of the right to strike in basic steel (known as the Experimental Negotiating Agreement—ENA)
2. cooperation with company drives to eliminate jobs and speed up workers (known as the joint company-union "Productivity Program")
3. acquiescence in racist seniority systems which have locked Black, Chicano, other minority and female workers in the hardest, hottest, most unhealthy and dangerous and lowest paying jobs
4. bitter resistance to back-pay compensation to the victims of this discrimination
5. acceptance of industry claims that urgently needed health and safety measures in coke plants, blast furnaces, foundries, smelters and sintering plants are "too expensive"
6. bureaucratic efforts to control the union membership through rigged elections, stacked conventions, secret contract negotiations and refusal to allow the membership the right to vote on contracts.

The Historical Setting

This list is far from complete, but it serves to illustrate the problems steelworkers confront in their union today. These problems did not originate overnight nor are they the sole responsibility of the current leadership of the union and its president, I.W. Abel. They have a history of at least thirty years. They are the legacy of all-around collaboration with Big Business in the full spectrum of social, economic and political questions. They have their roots in the Cold War, in the Truman-McCarthy period, in the expulsion of the militant, progressive-led unions from the CIO and the persecution of the Communists and other Left and progressive forces in the trade union movement and other areas of American life.

Recent books and films have begun to expose on a wide scale the vicious nature of this persecution as it was unleashed in cultural and intellectual circles, but nowhere was it so brutal, so violent and so debilitating to the life blood of this country as in the trade union movement.

Nick Migas, a Communist steelworker from Gary, Indiana, was severely beaten and thrown down a flight of concrete stairs when he stood as a delegate to the 1948 USWA Convention in Boston and challenged the timid wage policies of then union president Philip Murray. Ernie DeMaio, the International vice president of the progressive United Electrical Workers (UE), was attacked from behind as he stood at the podium of the 1949 Illinois State CIO Convention reading the official report of the Resolutions Committee, of which he was chairman. He was given a savage karate chop in the head by a man he had never seen before, a steelworker given the job of physically driving UE from the convention. The attacker was the man now running as the official family candidate for USWA president, Lloyd McBride.

Such are the origins of disease which the rank-and-file movement in steel has begun to cure, and it is this process which gives the USWA election its dramatic quality.

Despite every hardship, the Left and the Communist Party in the first place never stopped fighting to win the trade union movement back to class struggle policies. Even in the darkest days, when the Party was virtually "underground," it continued to aid the struggle in steel.

In 1953, with the Korean War still on, the Rosenbergs about to be "legally" murdered, and with

much of the Communist leadership in prison for their thoughts, the Party published a 100 page book, *Steel Labor's Road—To Economic Security, Peace and Democracy.* The book exposed the deteriorating conditions in the mills and the vast war profiteering of the steel monopolies and offered specific programs for strengthening the union's hand and breaking the chains of the Cold War. The programs offered are in many cases still on the agenda of the USWA, including such demands as a six-hour day, plant-wide seniority, the right of the membership to ratify contracts and independent political action by labor.

The book was written by Jim West, a long-time leader of the Party's work in steel, particularly in the Chicago-Gary area and Ohio, and reflected the close attention the Party paid to the basic industrial workers even under the most difficult of conditions. The work of West and many other Communists throughout this period and into the present contributed to creating conditions for the re-emergence of a militant rank-and-file movement.

It is a highly significant feature of the present movement in steel that there is a growing respect for the Communist Party and the long-term commitment it has demonstrated to the building of a strong steelworker's union.

Recent Party election campaigns have had a profound impact in this regard. In 1972 and especially in 1976, massive distributions of campaign literature were conducted in steel mills across the country. This material set forth the programs offered by the Party and highlighted the role of its general secretary and presidential candidate, Gus Hall, as leader of the 1937 Little Steel Strike, a founder of the USWA and outstanding leader of the U.S. working class today.

In the 1972 campaign a very important 63 page pamphlet, *It Takes a Fight to Win*, by Gus Hall, was widely distributed. This pamphlet exposes in full detail the treachery behind the so-called "Productivity Program" instituted in the 1971 basic steel contract. In 1976 another pamphlet was issued—*The Class Struggle in Steel*, a reprint of a *Political Affairs* article by Art Shields, showing the key contributions Communists have made at every turning point in steelworker history. These include the historic roles of Communists like Pat Cush in the 1892 Homestead Strike, William Z. Foster as the national leader of the 1919 Big Steel Strike, and the roles of Benjamin Careathers, Gus Hall and sixty others of the original 200 full-time staff of the Steelworkers Organizing Committee in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

A second piece of literature reprinted articles from the *Daily World* on the life and death struggle of coke oven workers for healthy working conditions. This included the testimony of George Meyers, National Labor Secretary of the Communist Party, at the coke oven standard hearings held by the Department of Labor in 1975 and 1976. Both Meyers and this author, speaking on behalf of the Party's Steel Commission, presented evidence concerning the technology for pollution-free coking which was developed in the socialist countries and is in effect today in many capitalist countries as well. The testimony pointed to the greed and racism of the steel barons as the chief obstacles to introducing these practices into the United States.

A third election piece was an open letter from Gus Hall to the steelworkers on the occasion of last summer's USWA Convention. At that convention some 20,000 pieces of Communist literature were distributed. These were warmly accepted in the face of an intense campaign of red-baiting drummed up by the Abel machine inside the convention.

For the past three years the *Daily World* and *People's World* have paid special attention to all aspects of the mounting struggle in steel. The papers have published monthly steel editions during this time which have been distributed in massive quantities at the gates of major mills from Sparrows Point, Maryland, to Fontana, California.

Steelworkers have shown great appreciation for the continuing contribution the Party is making to the struggle. Both in and out of the mills, the Communists and their close allies have shown themselves to be the most consistent, responsible and effective fighters. As a result, there is a growing understanding of the need for the Party and of the fact that building the Party is key to any serious, principled and permanent rank and file movement.

The programs promoted for decades by the Party and other progressive elements in the USWA have been injected to an unprecedented degree into the current union election campaign. It is this fact which gives the election its distinctive quality.

Much credit must be given to advanced rank-and-file formations such as Ad Hoc, National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee, Trade Unionists for Action and Democracy (TUAD) and its publication, *Labor Today*. Ad Hoc, a national Black rank-and-file caucus, has fought since its founding in 1964 for full Black representation in the union, an end to

discrimination in the mills and for advanced rank-and-file demands.

National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee, since its founding in 1970, has fought for the unity of all rank-and-file forces in the union and initiated important struggles for the right to strike and against racism. Its newsletter has rallied thousands of steelworkers throughout the United States to advanced class struggle programs and has exposed the treachery of the top union leadership every step of the way.

TUAD and *Labor Today* have also consistently called for a class struggle approach throughout the labor movement and have stressed particularly the need for independent rank-and-file organizations and for a breakaway by labor from the two Big Business political parties.

It has thus been the pioneering work of the Communists and the progressive rank-and-file formations which has prepared the ground and set the stage for the current electoral struggle. In many areas it has been the local and district committees of National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee, Ad Hoc and other formations such as Rank and File Team (RAFT) and the National Mexican-American Steelworkers Caucus which have been the launching pads for the Sadlowski campaign.

More importantly, it is the ongoing work of these committees, their commitment to maintain their independent organization and their insistence on injecting the basic issues into the campaign that insures that the USWA will never be the same no matter who wins the election.

The Contending Slates

A changing of the guard is also going on in a number of other major unions and probably within the AFL-CIO top leadership itself, but nowhere are such clear policy questions at stake as in the USWA.

The struggle as to who would be the official standard bearer for Abel's pro-company policies was resolved on the eve of last summer's USWA convention in Las Vegas. Abel, the third USWA president and the last member of the union's original International Executive Board, will retire June 1, along with Walter Burke, the secretary-treasurer, because of age requirements in the union constitution.

John Johns, the vice president and the man long regarded as Abel's heir apparent, was ousted from the running after a bitter struggle within the "official family." McBride, the lackluster 60-year-old director of St. Louis-based District 34, emerged the winner. He heads a slate which has been formally endorsed by Abel and consists of four incumbent district directors and a Black staffman appointed to fill a second vice president post established at the convention.

Sadlowski, the 38 year-old reform director of Chicago-Gary District 31, heads a slate including one Black and two white staffmen and a Chicano local union president. Sadlowski became a focus of attention in the labor movement in 1974 when he toppled the corrupt, dictatorial machine which had controlled the largest district in the USWA since the founding of the union. He proceeded to show himself to be a trade union leader of a new type, such as has not been seen in the steel union leadership since the early days of the CIO. Outspoken in his rejection of company-style unionism, Sadlowski has displayed strong working-class instincts, demonstrated a deep knowledge of labor history and associated himself with broad people's movements and independent political initiatives. These have included fights for lower utility rates, the shorter work week and support for candidates challenging the Democratic machine of the late Chicago mayor Richard Daley.

Considerable attention has also focused on Oliver Montgomery, running with Sadlowski as one of the candidates for vice president. Montgomery has been an outstanding leader in the fight of Black workers for full equality in the shops, the community and the union.

He has been an organizer of civil rights demonstrations, tenants movements, job marches and other community struggles and is a national executive board member of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. He has been a respected leader of the labor movement in Youngstown, Ohio, where he worked in a steel mill for twenty years, and in Pittsburgh, where he now works in the USWA Contract Research Department.

In recognition of his contributions, the reform slate has held a series of testimonials to Montgomery in key steel centers across the country. These have drawn broad forces in the labor and Black liberation movements. For example, Jesse Jackson, head of Operation PUSH, and James Davis, head of Ad Hoc, have spoke at these affairs and are campaigning for the slate.

Jobs and Equality

The clash between the Abel-McBride team and the

Sadlowski-Montgomery slate has significantly raised the level of the mounting struggles waged by rank-and-file steelworkers in the past decade. These struggles have centered mainly on four questions: jobs, ending discrimination, the right to strike and union democracy. These are also the issues which have been injected into the campaign.

The problem of jobs is exemplified by the fact that between 1955 and 1975 the work force in the basic steel industry was slashed by 200,000. In each of those years the same amount of steel—117 million tons—was produced, but, according to the American Iron and Steel Institute, in 1955 there were 519,000 basic steel workers and in 1975 only 320,000. A similar crisis confronts workers in other metal industries—can, aluminum, copper, foundries, fabricating, etc.—organized by the USWA. The elimination of jobs meant speedup, neglect of health and safety, job combination, contracting out of jobs to non-union shops and increased ability of employers to promote racism and division among various groups of workers. All of this has been sold as a program to "increase productivity" so as to "save the steel industry" from foreign competition. The official union leadership, including the members of the Abel-McBride team, have actively promoted this "productivity program," in effect calling on steelworkers to accept job elimination as a means of job protection.

The job elimination drive, however, has met explosive resistance from the rank and file. There have been innumerable, mostly unreported work slowdowns and other job actions, as well as a whole series of unauthorized strikes in major steel mills involving thousands of workers. Many locals now refuse to meet with the so-called "Employment Security and Plant Productivity Committees" established in the 1971 and 1974 contracts. Last summer's union convention was confronted with resolutions submitted by dozens of locals demanding an end to the productivity program altogether and the launching of a drive for a thirty hour week at forty hours pay.

The Sadlowski-Montgomery slate has endorsed both of these stands and the pressure for a shorter work week has been such that this demand was formally adopted by the union's Wage Policy Committee at its meeting last December.

Discrimination against Black, Chicano, other minority and women workers has been the source of some of the most militant and far-reaching workers' struggles conducted by the rank and file since the founding of the union. The main form of discrimination has been for the companies to assign minority and women workers to departments with the hardest, most dangerous and unhealthy jobs. Under an obscure wage calculation system these jobs are assigned the lowest hourly rates of compensation.

In the past decade a whole series of battles have been waged for the right of Black and all other workers to have access to job openings in any department, to freely enter crafts, to be compensated for pay lost through discrimination and for the revamping of wage rates in hazardous and difficult areas. It has been primarily Black workers at large mills of Bethlehem Steel and U.S. Steel who have led this fight, which has received broad support from civil rights and women's organizations as well as from Ad Hoc and National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee.

The union leadership joined the companies in bitterly resisting this struggle every inch of the way. However, after a number of important court decisions the companies and the union felt compelled to sit down with the government and draw up the 1974 Steel Industry Consent Decree. This was a limited first step, making certain concessions and aimed at stopping the struggle. It established a standard for most of the steel industry, including partial seniority reform, affirmative action in hiring and apprenticeships and token back pay compensation.

But the struggle is far from over. The companies and union leadership, including the Abel-McBride team, have sought to make the seniority reforms under the Decree as limited and complicated as possible. At the same time the companies have tried to whip up fears and racist movements among white workers despite the fact that these workers enjoy the new expanded seniority rights as much as Black workers. The union leadership has also joined with companies not covered by the Decree in actively resisting efforts to extend even the partial reforms and particularly back pay to workers in these firms.

The rank-and-file movement has fought against all these company drives. Sadlowski has endorsed the principles of the Decree while criticizing it for not going far enough. He is currently battling Inland Steel, which is not under the Decree and is refusing to meet its standards, including back pay. In this struggle Sadlowski has stood up to the angry opposition of misled white workers.

Aside from the fight for access to jobs and back pay

there has been a stepped up struggle to eliminate the outrageous health and safety hazards in coke ovens and similar departments where minority workers are concentrated. The conditions responsible for a cancer epidemic among coke oven workers have led to job actions, strikes, demonstrations and mounting pressure on federal agencies.

The union has responded be establishing a Coke Oven Conference headed by Joseph Odorcich, one of the McBride candidates for vice president. A seasoned demagogue, Odorcich continually issues bombastic public statements on coke oven conditions while readily acceding to every company scheme to maintain the status quo.

This is true of the extremely inadequate coke oven standard issued last year by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. The standard ignored recommendations of an OSHA advisory committee and extensive evidence presented by rank-and-file steelworkers, scientists and the Communist Party. It makes no reference to the clean coking technology developed in the socialist countries and demands no specific control over the worst cancer agent in coke oven emissions. Even this weak standard is too much for the steel companies, who are currently suing to throw it out altogether.

It cannot be said that either slate has adequately dealt with the specific on-the-job problems faced by Black, Chicano, other minority and women workers. These questions have thus far been injected into the campaign primarily by the independent activity of Black caucuses and rank-and-file committees.

Membership Rights

The right to strike ha become a major issue in the election campaign and has been a central demand of the rank-and-file movement ever since 1973, when Abel unilaterally surrendered this right under the notorious "Experimental Negotiating Agreement" (ENA). This agreement requires that unresolved issues in basic steel contract talks be submitted to binding arbitration.

The members of the Abel-McBride team have long been active supporters of ENA, defending the official line that it protects workers from layoffs. This position greatly contributed to the union leadership's inability to act when the steel companies issued layoff notices by the tens of thousands in 1975 and again in late 1976.

The Sadlowski-Montgomery slate has made ENA a major campaign issue, condemning it in their program as a scheme "which stripped the muscle out of our collective bargaining" and demanding that it be submitted to a vote of the membership.

The Abel-McBride forces sought to counter this issue with an official union mailing to the entire membership of a pamphlet extolling the supposed virtues of ENA. This seems to have has little effect, however, since the Sadlowski-Montgomery slate won heavily the nominations of basic steel locals under ENA, including in McBride's home district. These nominations were a resounding repudiation of ENA by the workers directly affected.

McBride then began hedging and saying that ENA should be reviewed in 1980. The steel industry then jumped into the fray in a frantic effort to salvage ENA. On December 17, J. Bruce Johnston, vice president of U.S. Steel and chief negotiator for the industry, took the unusual step of injecting himself openly into the USWA election campaign with an impassioned defense of ENA as a "great thing" for steelworkers and chiding McBride for not being more vigorous in his support for the no-strike deal. Johnston threatened that if ENA were removed the companies would seek to limit wage increases even below the three per cent guarantee in the no-strike deal.

The rank and file has also long demanded the right to strike when companies violate contracts, particularly on health and safety issues. Neither slate has as yet endorsed this position although both have called for strengthening the grievance procedure. McBride has put forth the positive concept that in all disciplinary cases workers should be presumed innocent until proven guilty, rather than being forced to file grievances after receiving unilateral punishment by the company.

It is in the area of union democracy that the Sadlowski-Montgomery slate has placed its greatest emphasis. A whole series of long-standing problems have forced this onto the center stage.

The first is the question of full representation of minorities and women within the union. Mounting rank-and-file pressure together with the impending election challenge finally forced the union administration to reorganize the top officers so as to guarantee a Black vice president. This was a historic step and the first break in the lily-white character of the union's International Executive Board since its founding.

It is significant that the demand for a Black vice president was first voiced at a USWA convention in

1944 by George Edwards, a white worker from Lorain, Ohio, and currently a co-chairman of National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee.

The winning of this demand thirty two years later immediately brought the question of Chicano representation to the fore. This was especially true when the convention created an additional office by dividing the post of secretary-treasurer. Sadlowski responded with a Chicano running mate for secretary while McBride filled both positions with non-Hispanics.

It was also pressure from Sadlowski that forced Abel to appoint a Black women to the staff in District 31—the first in the union's history.

Sadlowski has issued strong statements declaring racism a bosses' tool incompatible with trade unionism and has promised to set up a special union department on women. Members of his slate have also declared that the largely undefined post of vice president (human affairs) would carry important responsibilities.

A second issue concerning union democracy is the right of the membership to vote on contracts. This right is largely absent in the United States part of the union, particularly in basic steel, can and aluminum. The practice in these industries, in essence, has been for Abel and a few attorneys to negotiate and sign the contracts.

The demand for membership ratification of all contracts has been long-standing in the rank-and-file movement and is the main issue on which the Sadlowski-Montgomery slate has campaigned. The Abel-McBride team vigorously opposes the right of the membership to ratify contracts.

A third issue is the union's anti-Communist clause barring Communist Party members from membership or office in the union. The true purpose of this clause, however, is not only to eliminate Communists, the most consistent and principled fighters for rank-and-file trade unionism, but also to threaten and intimidate all progressive movements in the union, and therefore it infringes on the rights of all union members.

The Sadlowski-Montgomery slate is now faced with one of the most intense red-baiting campaigns in the union's history. McBride has repeatedly and falsely charged that the reform group has been endorsed by the *Daily World.* Despite some initial weakness on this question, Sadlowski has taken a forthright stand blasting the red-baiting as a company tool and demanding that the anti-Communist clause be eliminated.

Seeking to bait Montgomery while he spoke on a radio talk show in Gary, McBride called in and demanded to know when Montgomery would repudiate the alleged "endorsement" by the *Daily World.* "I'm not repudiating anybody, McBride," Montgomery shot back, "until you repudiate the steel companies."

Broad forces within the USWA have been greatly encouraged by the vigorous manner in which the red-baiting has been dealt with, which has greatly diminished its effectiveness. There is now widespread contempt for the red-baiting and growing understanding of its role in clouding the real issues. There is also growing sentiment for elimination of the anti-Communist clause, a position long endorsed by the Canadian section of the union.

The role of the Canadian steelworkers within the union has also come to the fore in this election since the Abel-McBride team includes Lynn Williams, director of Ontario District 6 as a candidate for secretary. Williams is the first Canadian to seek top International office in the union and his candidacy is strongly opposed by progressive forces in Canada as an effort by the "official family" to tie Canadian steelworkers to the policies and structure of the U.S. labor movement.

Canadian steelworkers have waged a mounting struggle for autonomous relationship with the USWA, a struggle which Williams has bitterly opposed. Canadian steelworkers are now looking for Sadlowski to differentiate himself from the Abel-McBride team's policies in their country. The reforms Sadlowski has projected for the U.S. are generally already in effect in Canada.

For Honest Conventions

A final demand has been for open, honest, democratic elections, conventions and collective bargaining. It was the fraud Sadlowski exposed in the 1973 District 31 election which guaranteed his victory in the rerun and catapulted him to prominence in the union. He is more than anything else a symbol of the fight for union democracy.

His program calls for an end to stacked conventions and an end to the use of staff against the membership. The USWA administration has always been able to control the biennial union conventions with a machine of some 1000 staff representatives and other union employees who are appointed by the International president and who are not answerable

to the membership. They function as an administration machine.

There has been a growing demand to bar these and other ringers from being seated as delegates. The extreme to which the administration has gone is exemplified by the three directors running with McBride, all of whom provided credentials at recent conventions to their confidential secretaries who are not members of the union.

Last summer's 18th Constitutional Convention in Las Vegas was an object lesson. Because of the upcoming election and the mounting rank-and-file rebellion the Abel forces pulled out all the stops. Every step was taken to intimidate the delegates and isolate Sadlowski. There were threats, bullying and even violence. The Abel-McBride team launched a phony group called SMART (Steelworker Members Against Radical Takeover) which issued daily red-baiting sheets.

The danger of a split within the official family was averted on the eve of the convention when Johns was forced to withdraw as a presidential condidate and a deal was struck to expand the number of officers so as to incorporate Johns' running mate on the McBride ticket. Sadlowski, on the other hand, did not yet have a slate and was ill-prepared for the machine onslaught.

Nonetheless, rank-and-file rebellion simmered throughout the five day gathering. Delegates rose at every opportunity to protect the lack of democracy and to demand action on serious problems confronting workers in the mills. Many pointed out how much the union's hands were tied without the right to strike. It was only through repeated use of the mechanical majority that the rebellion was kept under control.

The convention produced two important results. On was the appointment of a Black vice president. The man chosen, Leon Lynch, a staff representative from Memphis, however, was not the choice of the Black workers or even of the Black staff. He was chosen because of his connections with the A. Phillip Randolph Institute and other Right-wing social democratic undertakings. He had not been active in the fight for Black representation and could be counted on to accept a symbolic role in the official family. Lynch immediately became a candidate on the Abel-McBride team.

The second major outcome was the adoption of a resolution on collective bargaining which reflected an unprecedented outpouring of rank-and-file resolutions submitted by locals throughout the union. Some 2500 resolutions were submitted to the resolutions committee generally expressing the rank and file's contract demands. These were "summarized" in one resolution which did not actually endorse the demands but did call for their referral to the union's Wage Policy Committee and the various industry conferences. Thus, the call for a thirty hour week, for an end to "productivity" programs, for the right to strike on health and safety, for the right to ratify contracts, for voluntary inverse seniority on layoffs and many other questions were placed on the agenda of the union.

The Election Battle

In October Sadlowski announced his slate at a press conference in Pittsburgh and then the fight for nominations began. At this writing the full results of the nominations are not known, but certain patterns have emerged.

As expected, McBride won the endorsements of the overwhelming majority of the locals. He claimed some 3000 nominations, while Sadlowski claimed over 500. However, Sadlowski won in the larger locals. For example, in the three Western Pennsylvania districts Sadlowski won nomination by only one out of every six locals. These locals, however, had 51 per cent of the members.

In the Youngstown District 26 Sadlowski was nominated by one-third of the locals, but these locals represented 75 per cent of the membership. Similar results were obtained in Cleveland District 28, Baltimore District 8, Minnesota District 33 and, of course, District 31.

Sadlowski's strength showed up most strongly in basic steel and in the Great Lakes basic steel districts. In large parts of the union, however, including the South, the West and most of Canada, the nominations went solidly for McBride.

A close election is shaping up. Since the slate was announced there have been a series of very succesful rallies for Sadlowski and Montgomery. These have grown steadily in size and increasing numbers of workers are showing up to volunteer in storefront offices set up around the country. McBride's campaign, however, is a purely top-down operation relying primarily on staff and machines in control of local union executive boards.

The steel corporations, the government, the AFL-CIO bureaucracy and the mass media have focused considerable attention on the USWA election and are

well aware of the implications a Sadlowski-Montgomery victory would have. The USWA, with 1.3 million members, is the largest union in the AFL-CIO. It represents the vast majority of the workers in the highly monopolized basic metal industries which are central to the entire economy. A victory for the reform forces would have its immediate effect on this year's contract negotiations in these industries. Some 700,000 USWA members in steel, can, aluminum and non-ferrous metals industries face contract expirations in 1977.

"Many steel executives," the *Wall Street Journal* reported on December 21, "are clearly worried that the election of Mr. Sadlowski would disrupt the stability of labor-management relations." McBride, on the other hand, would not disturb the cozy relations the steel barons have enjoyed with the USWA's top negotiators. According to the November 23 issue of *Purchasing*, an industry publication, "McBride believes that a return to union militancy is anachronistic. Today's bargaining, he maintains, is pragmatic, not ideological, is couched in management language, and in not conducted in a bruising Sadlowski manner."

The ruling class has launched an all-out drive to stop the Sadlowski-Montgomery slate. Not since the Truman-McCarthy period have such unlimited funds, cadre and government agencies been unleashed to intervene in the internal affairs of a union. There is little reason to doubt the charges of Sadlowski and Montgomery that the steel corporations have provided the McBride campaign with considerable sums.

The FBI is providing the Abel-McBride team with materials from its discredited files for the red-baiting attacks on the reform slate and its supporters. The CIA is working through the Social Democrats USA, its cadre organization in the top AFL-CIO bureaucracy. Within the labor movement the SDUSA is coordinating a wide fund-raising and propaganda drive against Sadlowski.

After the story broke in the *Daily World*, Murray Finley, president of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union and a leading member of the SDUSA, admitted appealing to the fifty members of his union's executive board to pour money into McBride's campaign. Lane Kirkland, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO and the man expected to replace George Meany as president of the labor federation, has also been exposed as an active fund-raiser for McBride. But the activities of Kirkland and Finley are only the tip of the iceberg.

In a desperate effort to distract from the vast fund-raising machine fueling his campaign, McBride filed a widely publicized suit charging that Sadlowski was receiving funds from "employers." While the deliberate impression was left that this somehow involved steel bosses, the only people named were a number of small businessmen and professional people who attended a fund-raising party for Sadlowski. McBride's suit is also a back-handed recognition of the rank-and-file upsurge since for the first time he is trying to appear to be against the employers.

Much of the propaganda campaign against the Sadlowski-Montgomery slate is being orchestrated by individuals in the USWA public relations department. Elements like Paul Feldman, editor of the SDUSA monthly newspaper, were brought into the union public relations department expressly for this purpose. Feldman and other union personnel are up to their necks writing scurrilous material for McBride, often using SMART as a front.

They are also busily trying to get this stuff into the mass media. As a result, reactionary, anti-labor columnists like Ralph De Toledano, Evans and Novak and Victor Riesel have written lengthy attacks on the Sadlowski-Montgomery campaign. The mass media generally label Sadlowski with the usual code words: "insurgent," "dissident," "malcontent," etc., aimed at inspiring fear, deflecting attention from the issues and creating the impression that he speaks for only a tiny minority in the union.

Phony "left" groups have also been brought into the situation. Some are openly attacking the reform slate for not being "revolutionary" enough while others are intent on doing an inside job. They are particularly working in the basic steel areas where the McBride stategy is to narrow the margins of an expected Sadlowski victory.

Candidates of the Trotskyite Socialist Workers Party, in last November's election, for example, got on radio and television in major steel centers and urged steelworkers to vote for SWP candidates for public office and for Sadlowski in the union. Working within the union campaign, they succeeded in obtaining mailing lists of steelworkers who had contributed to Sadlowski and proceeded to send these workers unsolicited subscriptions to the *Militant*, the Trotskyite newspaper.

Such activities aimed at narrowing and isolating the Sadlowski campaign have also been the hallmark of Maoist and other sectarian elements who have

offered their services to the campaign. These forces continually push their newspapers on workers attending campaign rallies and meetings, speak in the name of the campaign at petty sectarian demonstrations and in other ways further McBride's red-baiting aims.

The incoming Carter Administration has also begun to move against the Sadlowski-Montgomery slate. The Carter forces are seeking to use their influence with some Black leaders to split off support of Black workers. Some members of the Black Congressional caucus who are close to Carter have reportedly agreed to speak at a McBride rally in Chicago the week before the election.

All of these forces are being set in motion only because of the mass appeal the Sadlowski-Montgomery slate has demonstrated. The slate has won support from growing numbers of steelworkers, Black and white, and a broad spectrum within labor and progressive circles generally.

For a Stronger Rank and File

The campaign is, in fact, a coalition, including liberals, social democrats, more advanced forces, including Communists, and large numbers of other honest trade unionists without definite political ideas who are seeking union reform and are moving in the direction of class struggle policies.

While the coalition is united in a common struggle to defeat McBride, the varying forces disagree on many things. In some cases problems have arisen because extreme careerist elements have pushed their way into the campaign. There is continual pressure from the liberals, represented by attorney Joseph Rauh and other elements of Americans for Democratic Action, to downplay anti-company issues in favor of purely internal union questions.

These forces have little inclination to combat red-baiting and strongly oppose any fight against racism. The liberals have promoted the usual bourgeois ethnic bloc electoral strategy. They want the Black workers organized spearately with the aim of delivering Black votes, but without the possibility of building Black-white unity, which would inevitably lead to raising fundamental class questions.

The liberal pressures have shown their effects in the slate's printed literature, which, for example, contains not a word relating to the problems of minority workers and discrimination. This kind of weakness has had disturbing consequences in terms of undermining support for the slate among minority workers, and the Abel-McBride team has been quick to exploit this situation in a number of areas.

For such reasons it has been essential for the various rank-and-file committees to maintain their independent organizations, newsletters and activities while playing an active role in the campaign. By fighting for principled positions these groups have greatly strengthened the campaign, building unity of Black and white and all honest forces and continually involving new forces who are seeking solutions to the real problems steelworkers face.

A powerful lesson has been drawn from the experience of the United Mine Workers, where, after the defeat of the Boyle machine, the rank-and-file organization Miners for Democracy disbanded. This opened the new reform leadership to attack by wreckers of all stripes, threatening the gains won by the rank and file and weakening the union in the face of the coal operators.

There is no doubt that even more extensive "destabilization" efforts would be unleashed against a reform leadership in the USWA. Thus the long struggle for a fighting, democratic steelworkers' union has reached a new level in the course of the USWA election campaign, but it is far from over. Many problems need to be worked through and serious dangers lie ahead.

The broad rank-and-file movement which has allowed the Sadlowski-Montgomery slate to emerge is also the key to widening the struggle and protecting the union. The best guarantee that this process will unfold in a strong, permanent manner is the building of the Communist Party. The recent decisions of the Party's Central Committee calling for renewed commitment to industrial concentration are crucial in this regard. The decisions call on the entire Party to sink its deepest roots in the basic industrial working class upon which the future of our country depends.

The moment is at hand for the widescale building of Communist shop clubs and shop papers. The need is also to build community clubs in the dozens of steel towns and cities across the country and for even greater distribution of the Party's press and literature in these areas and at plant gates.

The implementation of these decisions will go far towards a transformation of the trade union movement and the political life of the country. This often slow and difficult work has already had far-reaching consequences and is responsible, more than anything else, for giving correct guidance to the mounting class struggle in steel.

1976 Auto Contract—Best Deal Ever—For the Company

ARMANDO RAMIREZ

On November 12, 1975 in a speech before the Economics Club of New York, General Motors Chairman Thomas Murphy laid down his main guidelines for the 1976 contract negotiations in the auto industry. He said, "the historic test will be whether these agreements make even further commitments to cost without commensurate provision for productivity improvement."

Later in the same speech he stated the following: "those who sit at the bargaining tables. . . must recognize that a rising level of national productivity is the basis—the only basis—for a rising standard of national well-being. This is a fundamental fact of economic life that all must recognize and act upon. When *compensation* per man-hour rises significantly more than *output* per man-hour, then unit costs are inflated and great pressure is put on prices and profitability."

Then he called on American labor to "waken to and act upon a basic truth: only as we improve the *output* of an hour's labor can we prudently increase the compensation which that labor has earned. . . The fair balance of productivity and compensation must become a national mission for management and labor alike."

These statements set the framework for the negotiations for all the auto corporations. They were out to get a whole lot and give little or nothing. And they expected the union negotiators to cooperate in putting over this drive for ever-increasing, record profitability at the expense of the auto workers.

As if to emphasize their high expectations of a very cooperative attitude on the part of the UAW leaders, Murphy had this to say in a speech to the Economics Club of Detroit in April 1976: "I have said before and I want to repeat today, we in General Motors have a high respect for the intelligence and the far-sightedness of our employees, and for the union leaders they have chosen to represent them. If our evaluation in this regard is accurate—and we are sure it is—then it should be obvious why we are so confident that an equitable settlement, without any shutdown, will be achieved in 1976."

When General Motors handed down a whole series of "take-away" proposals for the new contract in July, the union leadership should not have been as "shocked" as they professed to be, because the set of demands of the auto magnates was completely in line with the proclaimed aims set forth by Murphy some eight months earlier. Their aim was to cut labor costs and to give the companies virtually unrestricted rights to drive for increased productivity and profitability, to maintain the record-high level of profits even at a production level of 7 to 7.5 million cars per year, one third below the peak level of production.

The "Take Away" Proposals

The following is a summary of the "take away" proposals:

General Motors proposed to limit the Annual Improvement Factor (AIP) wage increase to the per cent increase in national productivity. That would have meant that the AIP increase would have been 2.8 per cent instead of the 3 per cent in the current contract. Tieing the AIP to national productivity and not to productivity increase in the auto industry, which officially is 7.7 per cent, the workers would in effect be taking a wage cut.

GM proposed to eliminate the right to strike over production standards and over health and safety issues. They wanted all these grievances to go to arbitration before they could be struck. In addition, they wanted to cut the number of stewards and union representatives in the plant, to force the union to "assume an appropriate share of the burden of its cost" and to put further limits on the amount of time union representatives could spend investigating and processing grievances.

The new hires were to come in for a special shafting. They would hire in at "rates being paid in the labor market for entry level jobs." That could mean hiring in at two to three dollars an hour under the prevailing base rates in the auto industry. Imagine the huge profit bonanza the companies would make with a revolving pool of thousands of "new hires" on

this basis. New hires are currently paid 48¢ an hour less than non-probationers, but get a refund at the end of ninety days if they work every day. On top of this, the company proposed that they not get any fringe benefits for a period of ninety days and not get full wages or benefits "until an employee acquires a significant period of employment." That could mean several months or several years.

Then the companies demanded the unrestricted right to schedule as much overtime as they wanted. Under the guise of "providing a greater incentive for attendance" Vacation Pay Allowance would be only for full weeks worked and eligibilty for holiday pay would be tied more tightly to attendance.

In addition to these "take aways," GM proposed that the workers pay part of the cost of fringe benefits, especially hospital insurance premiums and other costs that would total more than three per cent of the existing contract. A precedent for this had been set in the preceeding contract. In that contract the cost of a new dental plan was paid by the workers with money that was diverted from their Cost of Living Allowance (COLA).

After the Ford Motor Company was chosen as the "target" company against which the UAW would bargain first, it also presented the union with a list of "take away" proposals. They followed the pattern laid out by GM.

Class Collaboration in the Auto Industry

In its opening statement accompanying the "take away" proposals, GM continued its appeal to the UAW leadership for class collaboration. The corporation, attempting to counter rank-and-file pressure for job security to become a paramount issue in the approaching negotiations, declared that "we believe that General Motors, its employees and the UAW clearly have a strong, common interest in making sure that General Motors continues to be a profitable company. . . This is the only way that job security can be achieved." In other words, "what's good for General Motors is good for the workers."

This policy of "working together" is not new to the American labor movement. It is carried out by such "leaders" as George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, whose whole philosphy is based on cooperation with the bosses and who boasts of having never walked on a picket line. It is carried out by I.W. Abel, president of the United Steelworkes of America, who gave the steelworkers ENA and gave the bosses struggle-free contract negotiations. It is carried out by Albert Shanker, president of the American Federation of Teachers, who proposes that there be no contract negotiations by the government employees of New York City for the duration of the city's financial problems. In the auto industry, it is carried out by Leonard Woodcock and his fellow social democrats in the leadership of the UAW, who gave the auto corporations the "best contract ever."

From the time of its birth, the UAW has established a tradition as a fighting, militant union. Its rank-and-file has been in the forefront of many struggles fought and won by the working class. However, since before the McCarthy period, when Left forces were purged from the leadership of the union, this militancy has been given mostly lip service by the union leadership. It is the rank and file that have retained that tradition of militancy. They have forced the struggles that have won relatively high wages and good fringe benefits from the corporations.

The corporations have been able to grant these gains and to still reap huge profits. They have been able to do this by increasing productivity through speedup and automation, and also by super-exploitation of workers in plants in foreign countries. In both of these areas, the possibilities of super-exploitation are shrinking because of the strengthened trade unions in other capitalist countries, the successes of the national liberation movements, the growing rank-and-file resistance in the auto plants in the U.S. and the fact that the levels of workpace are reaching the threshold of human endurance.

The union leadership has failed to resist the corporations' attempt to achieve higher and higher productivity at a cost to the workers of greater and greater speedup and an increase in their workload. This has caused the loss of many jobs, as more cars are produced by fewer workers. It has resulted in worsening health and safety conditions. The union leadership has failed to resist the auto corporations' attempt to suppress and discourage the filing of grievances that deal with speedup and work load. This is especially true at GM plants, the pacesetter for the whole auto industry. According to many old-time auto workers, the speedup that existed at the time of the infamous sweatshop days at Ford before the union was organized is surpassed today in all the auto industry.

The rank-and-file workers have never accepted this class collaborationist policy of their leaders. By means of strikes, grievances, walkouts, and demon-

strations they have fought against and shown their opposition to these tactics. In the months preceeding negotiations, this organized rank-and-file pressure increased.

The culmination of this activity came at a demonstration of over 1,500 rank-and-file auto workers held in front of Cobo Hall in Detroit, site of the UAW Special Collective Bargaining Convention. It was at this convention, held March 18-20, that the goals of the union for the coming negotiations were to be set. The demonstrators were led by caucuses from the skilled trades, production workers, local unions and the retirees. Their main demands were for a shorter work week, a big raise in pay and a Cost of Living Allowance plan for pensioneers.

This demonstration, and those preceeding it, served notice on the corporations and on the social democratic leadership of the union that the workers would no longer "give" on working conditions. The speedup and the work load are now so great that they can not be increased without causing great danger to the health and safety of the workers, thereby increasing the rank-and-file's already militant demands for solutions to these problems.

The rank and file, faced with a permanently reduced work force, rising unemployment and ever-increasing inflation, were demanding real solutions to their problems. They asked the union leadership to fight for a shorter work week and a big raise in pay. At the aforementioned Special Collective Bargaining Convention, the union leadership did everything possible to keep these demands from being presented. The leadership, lead by Woodcock, once again asked the membership not to tie its hands with specific demands. They argued that they could better bargain if they could remain "flexible."

In the UAW's Collective Bargaining Program the leadership's approach to these aims was stated as being "not wedded to one or another narrow approach, but [we] are willing to consider a wide range of alternative solutions. It is not necessary for us to present our proposals in the context of rigid, non-negotiable demands. Rather, we are prepared to be flexible as to the means—but firm in our intention to achieve our goals. We will negotiate to achieve a settlement without the need for a strike."

So it was that the leadership came to the bargaining table opposite the Ford Motor Company, placing no specific demands on the table, only "areas of negotiation." Their campaign was aimed at defeating the "take away" proposals by negotiating only on company proposals. By so doing, they hoped to be able to claim a victory merely by defeating these proposals and without any real gains being won for the workers.

When the Ford Company refused to rescind its "take away" proposals a strike became inevitable. During the strike, which lasted four weeks, the union leaders continued their defensive tactics. And though they called on their members by press, radio and television to defeat the "take away" proposals, they did not at any time during the strike call any meetings, rallies or demonstrations to mobilize support. They had no desire to arouse the fighting spirit of their members, nor to give the membership a chance to express their real demands.

The settlement was narrowly accepted by the membership because they believed that further struggle was futile without the cooperation and help of the union leadership, who were calling this the greatest settlement ever negotiated and who were obviously not willing to struggle any longer.

The struggle to reject this settlement and why it failed will be discussed at the conclusion of this article.

The Ford Settlement

Before we examine the settlement that was negotiated between the UAW and the Ford Motor Company, we must consider the economic situation of both the auto workers and the auto corporations that existed prior to the strike and settlement. For over two years preceding the settlement, this country and the whole capitalist world suffered under the worst recession since the Great Depression of the 'thirties. None have suffered more than the auto workers, who lost over 200,000 workers through layoffs, most of whom have not yet returned to work. Inflation consumed the workers' wage increases and destroyed the pension incomes of retirees. Over 60 per cent of workers eligible to retire under "30 and out" have not done so because of inability to live at the current pension rate.

The auto corporations, on the other hand, had not suffered at all. They continued to make profits even in the leanest year. In the nine months preceeding the settlements, they made superprofits.

For the first nine months of 1976, Ford Motor Company declared profits of $812.5 million. This was a record for that period and an increase of 400 per cent over the same period of 1975. Chrysler Corporation made $303.4 million for that same period. This was more than for any full year in its prior history.

General Motors, the industry giant, made profits of $2.1 billion. This was more than 300 per cent over the same period of 1975. For the "Big Three" auto corporations, these superprofits totalled $3,215,900,000.

Keep these figures in mind as you read a summary of what the workers got in the Ford settlement:

A 3 per cent increase for each year of a three year contract. This is not an improvement, as a 3 per cent Annual Improvement Factor had already been won in previous contracts and would have continued simply by extending the old contract. In addition to the 3 per cent, 20 cents was given in the first year. Again, if the old contract had been extended, 9 cents would have been added in September anyway under the Cost of Living Allowance plan. This is a net gain of 11 cents in new money over the next three years. The skilled tradesmen, who had conducted a long and well organized campaign to achieve parity with the building trades (this would have meant an increase of about $2.00 per hour), were granted an additional 25 cents to 35 cents an hour.

In response to the growing movement for a shorter work week, the company granted 13 new days off over the three years of the contract. However, 5 days off are lost in the new contract at Christmas time because of calendar schedule. That leaves 8 days off over three years. This will do absolutely nothing to help fight the growing unemployment in the auto industry.

The retirees, whose pensions were being wiped out by inflation, were granted a bonus of $600 at the expense of those working. New retirees will be excluded from this and those retirees with less than 30 years of service will receive proportionately less. The money for this bonus will be paid for by the active workers, who will lose one cent per quarter for six quarters out of their COLA. The company was glad to grant this bonus because it gave them good publicity and cost them nothing.

Probationary employees will now have to wait three months instead of two to become eligible for Blue Cross and accident and sickness benefits. In this case, the union leadership was unsuccessful in defeating a "take away" demand.

There was some gain for unemployed workers as more money was added to the Supplemental Unemployment Benefits Fund by the company. However, this gain was offset by cutting the amount of benefits paid to unemployed workers. The deduction factor used in calculating SUB benefits has been increased from $7.50 to $12.50. This will mean a loss of $5 for unemployed auto workers each week. Here, again, the leadership gave in order to "gain."

In the past the auto corporations had always been able to compel the auto workers to work overtime with few restrictions. This overtime helped to eliminate jobs and, coupled with speedup, was detrimental to the health and safety of the workers. In the previous contract some restrictions were won along with a promise from the union leadership to continue the struggle to achieve completely voluntary overtime. Instead, the leadership of the union has given up some of those restrictions on forced overtime in this new contract. Again, this is another "take away" setback for the workers.

There were other minor "take aways" suffered by the workers, such as an increase in cost of medical prescriptions from two dollars to three dollars. The company was given the right to hire part-time employees for Mondays and Fridays. These part-time workers are a source of cheap non-union labor for the company. They will receive no fringe benefits or overtime pay for Saturday or Sunday work. By having these part-time workers available, the company does not have to hire full-time union men during peak periods of production.

These are all of the bad features of the new contract that have come to light so far. However, when the new contract is published in full, if past history is any indicator, we can expect to find hidden in the fine print and in "letters of understanding" further setbacks for the workers. Even if there are no other hidden "take aways" in this contract, from what we know of it now, there can be no other conclusion but that it is the cheapest contract ever negotiated by the UAW and the best deal ever for the company.

The Struggle Ahead

Although this stand pat, no gain contract has been ratified, it was not accepted without a struggle. Nor was it accepted because the membership was in agreement with this settlement, or because the membership was complacent and willing to accept any terms.

Their willingness to struggle was demonstrated time after time. It was demonstrated by the strike vote that surpassed 90 per cent in every shop. It was demonstrated before the strike by countless actions of the rank and file. In the three years preceeding the strike, there were 56 authorized strikes in the General Motors division alone. These strikes on working

conditions and speedup were forced by the rank-and-file union members against the will of a leadership that was always seeking to compromise with the company.

The militancy of the workers was demonstrated by the growing number of rank-and-file movements within the UAW. These movements were organized to fight for a shorter workweek, no forced overtime and a Cost of Living Allowance plan for retirees.

These demonstrations of willingness to fight continued right up to the eve of the strike. On the fourteenth of September a rally of 600 auto workers was held in front of the "Glass House," the world headquarters of the Ford Motor Company. Here, once again, skilled tradesmen, production workers and retirees voiced their demands.

Indeed, the three year period preceeding the settlement was one marked by increasing militancy on the part of the rank and file. This increasing militancy reflects the same feelings that have sparked the mass rank-and-file movements in the coal and steel industries. It reflects the same surge of dissatisfaction that is affecting the whole American labor movement. It is a resentment against monopoly capitalism which is placing the burden of a depressed economy on the working class and against a labor leadership that is in retreat.

The union leadership was able to win ratification of this contract, which does nothing to alleviate the worsening economic conditions, because the rank-and-file movement within the auto industry is at the present time weak and divided. Without confidence in their class-collaborationist union leadership and with a weak and divided rank-and-file movement, the workers were forced to conclude that further struggle was useless.

The workers, speaking individually, did voice their opposition to the settlement. At the many informational meetings that were held by local unions to discuss the new contract offer practically all of the members that spoke were against it. Only the local leaders supported the settlement, and in many instances they agreed with the members but pushed for acceptance saying: "You better take it. It's all we can get, otherwise we'll be out 'till Christmas and still not gain more."

The vote to ratify the Ford contract was the closest ever of a national settlement between the UAW and the auto corporations. The production workers voted 35,192 to 22,026 to accept. The skilled tradesmen, who had won the right to veto the contract with a separate vote, accepted it by a slim margin of 489 votes, 8,957 to 8,468.

The ratification of this contract was a double blow to the working class. Not only would Ford workers have to live with it for three years, but, as always, it set the pattern for the whole auto industry. Shortly after the Ford contract was signed, GM and Chrysler signed almost identical contracts.

The struggle around the contract negotiations and the strike were excellent opportunities for the forces on the Left to have helped build a successful movement that would have united the rank and file. That this was not accomplished is a reflection of the weakness of the Left and the lack of clarity on the importance of this task. A rank-and-file movement that will successfully challenge the class collaboration between the social democratic leadership of the UAW and the auto corporations will not be built without a qualitative strengthening of the Left and the Communist Party in particular in the auto shops. And this can only be done through a policy of industrial concentration.

Industrial concentration can not be left to our comrades in the shops. These shop comrades must bear the brunt of the struggle and must begin the task of recruiting new members from the shops into our Party, a task which has been neglected for too long. However, the task of building such an important movement cannot be left to them alone. Our whole Party must be organized to help them at the shop gates and in the communities where the auto workers live.

We must begin now the task of building a movement that will give answers to the problems still facing the auto workers. Even with a do-nothing contract now in effect, the issues around which a rank-and-file movement can be built are still present. In fact, the opportunity is greater than ever. Resentment is growing as more workers become exposed to the effects of the do-nothing contract.

New layoffs had already begun even before the last corporation had signed the new contract. Many plants have closed completely for one or two weeks. By December 1, there were 1,443,000 unsold cars standing in dealers' lots. We can expect the layoffs to continue as our new President-elect, Carter, has forecast a long term future of high unemployment.

The movement for a thirty hour week at forty hours pay is the best answer to the unemployment problem. The workers in the shops are ready to join in such a movement. A movement for thirty for forty

was already in existance before negotiations began. Workers from over a hundred different locals came together to fight for a shorter work week. The corporations and the union leadership saw the danger of this growing mass movement. Before the movement could solidify, its leadership was cut off from the main body. Frank Runnels, president of Cadillac Local 22 and one of the key leaders of this movement, was indicted on a charge of corruption dealing with workmen's compensation. After this, the movement temporarily ceased to grow. Nonetheless, this strangled movement for the shorter work week shows the potential that exists. This issue must be raised again, along with other solutions for the workers' problems.

The task is to see to it that these issues, in the form of resolutions, are discussed by local memberships in the preparations for the upcoming UAW Constitutional Convention to be held in Los Angeles in May of 1977. The struggle must begin now to elect delegates who will fight for the implementation of these resolutions at the convention.

This task and the whole struggle to unite the rank and file into a mass movement should be waged wherever there are auto workers. But we must begin the task of concentrating our forces and our efforts in the Midwest, where the auto industry and the auto workers are concentrated.

Within a radius of 200 miles around the city of Detroit are located nearly half of all the auto plants in the country. Of the 290 bargaining units in the UAW, Michigan has 132. Ohio is next with 35. Then comes Indiana with 18 and Illinois with 8. Illinois also has 31 agricultural implement units. It is also in the Midwest that the key plants are located. Such plants as Delco in Indiana, Saginaw Steering Gear and Chevy Gear and Axel Foundries in Detroit supply the the whole auto industry with parts.

The UAW represents a total of 1.7 million workers. About 200,000 to 250,000 of these workers are Black. Chicano and Puerto Rican workers comprise a total of 100,000. Women make up 200,000 members. Of the 1.7 million members, 680,000 are auto workers. More than half (351,000) of these live and work in Michigan.

The vast majority of these 680,000 auto workers are production workers. It is among these production workers that we must concentrate our effort to build a broad mass rank-and-file movement. Only a movement coming out of the ranks of the production workers can hope to unite all of the auto workers.

The skilled tradesmen have built a strong, well-organized caucus, the Independent Skilled Trades Council. They have organized thousands of skilled tradesmen into caucuses that have held big rallies and demonstrations. However, these actions have largely been aimed at the union leadership as the main enemy. Their thrust has been at changing the union leadership. But, without a strong rank-and-file movement among the production workers that will push for real solutions to the needs of the auto workers, any change in leadership will be meaningless. Only when a strong rank-and-file movement exists will will *any* leadership respond to the demands of the auto workers. An attack that focuses mainly on changing the leadership diverts the struggle from the task of building the necessary mass movement among the production workers, focussing on fighting the corporations. If such an organized, unified movement had already been in existence, the do-nothing Ford contract would have been rejected despite the present leadership.

By the very nature of their jobs, many skilled tradesmen develop a narrow craft outlook that tends to makes them factional and divisive. Some of them have tried to gain concessions from the union leadership by threatening to leave the union and to form an independent craft union. This has led them to attack the union as the main enemy instead of exposing the union leadership's weaknesses by attacking the corporations. The auto corporations have purposely hired and promoted white and male workers almost exclusively in the skilled trades in order to devide them from the production workers. This has made the skilled tradesmen more susceptible to racism and sexism. Because of their skill and higher pay, they often assume an elitist posture, expecting to lead the production workers in the struggle.

The production workers, on the other hand, because of the nature of their jobs, are already working together. Black, white, men and women are organized in the same departments and plants. They work together on the same assembly lines and have the same common enemy, the boss.

It is these forces, Black and white, men and women of the production departments that must be brought together into a broad mass movement that will unite all the rank-and-file members of the UAW. When this is done, then that mass movement will turn this union around and make it once more into a fighting instrument of the working class.

A Convention of Illinois Labor

CHARLES WILSON

The 19th Annual Convention of the Illinois State Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, held September 20 through 23, 1976, in Springfield, Illinois, was, for a number of reasons, an event of major significance.

More than 2000 delegates were in attendance. Black and women delegates numbered less than 100 in each category. Latino representation was even smaller.

The framework within which the Convention was held was set forth quite well by an open letter to the delegates by the Illinois Communist Party, headlined: "Welcome Delgates to the 19th Annual Convention, Illinois State AFL-CIO." About 700 copies of this letter were distributed. On the back page of the four page folder were pictures of Gus Hall and Jarvis Tyner, candidates for president and vice president, as well as pictures of the state candidates of the Illinois Communist Party, led by Ishmael Flory for Governor.

The letter opened:

> Your 19th Convention is being held at a crucial period in the history of our country. It is being held when the working people of our State of Illinois, as well as in the country as a whole, are faced with massive problems.
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> The Convention meets during a time when the people of our country have the responsibility of electing a president, and the people of Illinois a governor. In addition, of course, all of the other officials to be elected must be voted upon.
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> This is a year of major contract negotiations.
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> This is the year when the very existence of organized labor is being threatened by the passage of Senate Bill 1.
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> This is the year of continuing mass unemployment. Over 10 million workers are out of work (AFL-CIO's method of calculation). More than 232,000 are unemployed in Illinois. The brunt of the unemployment is being felt by our Black brothers and sisters. As noted in the *AFL-CIO News*, 8/14/76, under the heading "Back-to-Back Recessions Hit Black Workers Hardest," "When unemployment among all Americans rose as high as 8.9 percent in 1975, it was 13.9 percent for non-whites."
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> This is the year when in our own State of Illinois, Governor Walker vetoes aid to public schools. The Governor's action reduced public school aid to $1,202,500,000 or $63,000,000 less than Walker himself requested in his budget message last March and $84,000,000 less than the legislature appropriated.
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> In Cook County alone close to 1200 teachers have been fired and 14 elementary public schools have been closed in the 1976-77 school year.
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> This is the year when the construction industry still remains in crisis. Not because the people of Illinois and the nation don't need homes, schools, hospitals and mass transit. It exists because 120 billions of dollars that could be used for this direly needed construction are wasted instead on B-1 bombers and maintaining an overkill ratio of 10.
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> This is the year when racist violence by swastika-waving nazis and Ku Klux Klanners against Black citizens of our State, and the nation, is growing. Boston, Mass., Louisville, Kentucky, Detroit, Michigan are such examples nationally.

The open letter goes on to further develop this framework. It delineates the do-nothing role of the two old parties of Big Business. It projects the whole idea of workers running for public office, and describes how the Communist Party is doing just that. And it presents the electoral program of the Communist Party.

It is against this backdrop, which challenges the labor movement to undertake new forms and levels of activity, that the significance of this Convention can be measured.

This was, of course, in certain respects a typical election year convention. There were speeches from politicians running for office from the beginning of the convention to the very end. What stood out was the fact that the delegates were still politically locked into the reward your friends, punish your enemies, syndrome. And overwhelmingly they believed that they found their friends in the Democratic Party. The Carter-Mondale ticket was seen as their friend, the friend of labor. Walter Mondale addressed the convention on its third day. Except for the first day, it was the only time that every delegate was present. The convention hall was packed. Significantly, however, even though the public were invited via the press and radio to hear Mondale, the balcony where they would have been seated was practically empty.

The Carter-Mondale ticket was overwhelmingly endorsed. So was the Illinois Democratic ticket led by Michael Howlett for governor.

But the commitments made by the politicians to obtain this support, however demagogic, can be used in the post-election period as a lever for action on the issues. Certainly a thundering demand on the part of the trade union movement, directed to the Carter Administration, should be made calling for delivery on this declaration by Mondale in his speech to the delegates:

> If you want tax reform, IF YOU WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT, if you want to end inflation, if you want decent housing, if at long last we want to deal with the health crisis, if we want to deal with America's real problems, we have to have a people's president back in the White House, and that means Jimmy Carter.

But without the intervention of a number of the more advanced delegates at that convention, organized around a number of resolutions reflecting class struggle trade unionism and based on some key issues, the convention would very well have been, by and large, one of election hoopla.

Shorter Work Week

One of these key issues, made urgent by the growing unemployment, is shortening the work week with no reduction in pay. A resolution calling for "a massive petition campaign for one million signatures" as a means of putting pressure on the Congress "to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to provide a shorter work week with no reduction in earnings" was unanimously endorsed by the convention delegates.

This resolution was presented by Jack D. Spiegel and Paul Penio, Shoe Workers Joint Council No. 25; John Van Eyck, Actors Equity Association; Sam P. Sloan, Furniture Workers No. 18-B; Frank Guzzo, Steelworkers No. 1033; Ruth Levitoff, Textile Workers, United No. 444; John Chico, Steelworkers No. 65; Morris Davidson and Jorge Camargo, Meat Cutters No. 43-1; Elena Marcheschi, Painters No. 350; and Robert Merbin, Meat Cutters State Branch.

The body of the resolution described the acute unemployment situation, and pointed to some of the causes, such as automation and mechanization. It described the special hardship unemployment wreaks on Black and other minority workers.

In addition to its call for amending the Fair Labor Standards Act, it also called for "Organized Labor bodies to place the demand for a shorter work week with no cuts in wages as a major demand in negotiations with companies."

Delegates Jack D. Speigel, Shoe Workers Joint Council No. 25, and Bernard J. Grosse, Machinists Lodge No. 1000, spoke in support of this resolution. Stanley L. Johnson, president of the Illinois AFL-CIO, in commenting on the proposal for the collection of 1,000,000 signatures, observed that 250,000 signatures had been collected by the AFL-CIO in support of the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill. After adoption, the resolution was referred to the AFL-CIO.

What adds to the significance of the passage of this resolution is the fact that a similar resolution failed to pass at the 18th Convention only a year earlier. The position then taken by those opposing it was that this was something that could be dealt with only on a union by union basis. And this despite the fact that a petition calling for amending the Fair Labor Standards Act was signed in advance by some 300 of the delegates attending that convention, as a result of its having been circulated by some of the more advanced trade unionists.

Labor Candidates

Another highlight of the convention developed around a second resolution which was presented by the same group of delegates who presented the shorter work week resolution. This one called upon the convention to "encourage trade unionists to seek political office" in "national, state, and local legislative bodies."

The resolution pointed to the lack of any workers in the governmental bodies of the country. It described the fact that these bodies are geared in the main to the interests of Big Business. It declared that "the ability of COPE to counteract this dangerous trend [the erosion of progressive labor legislation by both parties] and to influence political decisions has diminished as disillusioned union members fail to turn out [to vote]."

Delgate Jack D. Spiegel made a dramatic speech in support of this resolution. He contrasted the U.S. to countries like England, France, and Sweden, where labor, in each country, has its own political party. He pointed to the Black Congressional Caucus and to the hundreds of Black elected officials fighting to advance the interests of Black people in particular, as

well as the interests of working people in this country. "But where is the block of trade unionists in the Congress?" he asked.

"Ford has betrayed the American people," he asserted, "But people are wondering whether a Carter administration will deliver, in terms of the massive problems."

"What we have in Congress are the representatives of big business. But what if," he dramatically asked, "we had 50 Stanley Johnsons [Johnson is president of the Illinois AFL-CIO] and Bob Gibsons [Secretary-Treasurer of the Illinois AFL-CIO] representing us in the halls of Congress? What a helluva difference that would make in terms of legislation to meet the needs of the working people in our country." This was greeted with loud applause. Stanley Johnson, who was presiding at the convention, with a broad smile thanked Spiegel for the nomination. This was responded to by the delegates with laughter.

Morris Davidson, one of two delegates at the convention who was a candidate for public office, also spoke in support of the resolution. Davidson ran as an independent candidate for state representative in the eleventh legislative district.

Delegate Earl Wilson, Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks, spoke in favor of the resolution and called for support for a member of his union, also a delegate to the convention, Marie Fese, who was a Democratic candidate for Congress from the 14th Congressional District in Illinois.

A number of other delegates also spoke in favor of the resolution. It was adopted unanimously.

Other Resolutions

Another resolution presented by the same group of delegates listed previously called for the enactment of laws that would curtail and control inflation. The resolution pointed to the "mostly wasteful" $115 billion dollar arms budget as one of the principal causes of inflation, and called for its reduction. A number of other proposals, including the imposition of price and rent ceilings, were contained in the resolution. This resolution was also adopted.

A resolution introduced by John Van Eyck and joined in by the same group of delegates called for support for a Labor Theater Project, which was established by his union. The resolution outlined all of the reasons for support of a Labor Theater, and delegate Van Eyck spoke in support of the resolution. It too passed.

A resolution introduced by Sol Brandzel, Chicago Joint Board, ACTU; Harry E. Conlon, Graphic Arts No. 245; and Charles Hayes, Vice President of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters & Butcher Workmen, as well as Vice President of the Illinois Federation of Labor, called for the appointment of a representative of labor to the Illinois Commerce Commission. Further, it commended the work of the AFL-CIO affiliates which formed the Labor Coalition on Public Utilities and urged affiliates to join and cooperate with this coalition.

Delegates Hayes and Conlon spoke in support of this resolution. They pointed to the exorbitant prices that people have to pay for utilities, as as Hayes pointed out, "particularly those people in low and fixed income categories." Conlon called for representation on the board so that the people that pay the utility bills will get a fair shake. This resolution was passed.

There was an unexpected reaction in the resolutions committee to one proposed resolution also introduced by the Jack Spiegel delegate coalition, that called upon "this Convention to support or initiate the orderly transfer of the ownership of Illinois public utilities from corporations to the public ownership through the franchise-established procedures." It called for a board composed of trade unionists and community representatives.

The resolution lost in committee on the grounds, enunciated by three of the delegates, that public workers do not have the right to bargain collectively or to strike. Further, they objected to public ownership because of the developing corruption and governmental bureaucracy. This certainly was different from the expected objection that public ownership is "socialism" or "communism."

The fact that, as the resolution points out, "presently 20 per cent of power in our country is provided by 3,000 publicly owned utilities with cost of 30 per cent less to the consumer" could not offset the delegate opposition.

A number of resolutions were introduced in support of ERA (Equal Rights Amendment), all of them calling for blanket endorsement. One resolution, however, introduced by Ruth Levitoff, while calling for support for ERA, also resolved "that this Convention go on record to promote legislation which would retain and extend the protection of working women and their children." It then listed a number of these areas, including health, child care, paid pregancy leaves, forbidden compulsory overtime, and others. While the merit of the resolution

was recognized by the report of the Civil Rights Committee, it nevertheless called for support of its position on ERA. This was concurred in by the convention.

Other resolutions passed by the convention included: The right to strike and bargain collectively for public employees (a number of resolutions were introduced on this issue); support for the Farm Workers and Proposition 14 (which, unfortunately was subsequently defeated by the California electorate); support for the Harrington Youth Jobs Bill; support for day care centers; support for the Kennedy-Corman National Health Bill; a comprehensive resolution having to do with the problems around and improvements of unemployment compensation, and support for the Humphrey-Hawkins bill.

The anti-detente, anti-Soviet position of George Meany found its reflection in this convention. A resolution proposed by the same group of delegates who proposed resolutions in support of the reduced work week and for labor candidates declared "that we at this convention call on our Congressmen, Senators and other candidates for public office to pursue co-existence, reduction of arms, and expansion of trade and cultural relations between our country, the Soviet Union and East European countries." It was defeated. The Resolutions Committee called for its defeat with the following comment: "We fully support the national AFL-CIO position on foreign policy and this resolution suggests possible differences."

This position was not challenged from the floor. The explanation given for not having made such a challenge was that to have done so at that particular time could have caused problems in terms of the passage of other key resolutions. One could argue the merit of such a position. But there can be no argument about the fact that the lack of such a challenge was a weak point of the covention.

No resolutions that dealt with the problems of Black workers specifically were introduced, although these problems were mentioned in other resolutions. This was a major weakness of this convention, which certainly needs to be corrected at the next convention. This of course must be an ongoing struggle from the last day of the 19th Convention to the first day of the 20th Convention.

Black participation on the floor of the convention, with the sole exception of Vice-President Charles Hayes, was absent.

All of the officers of the Illinois AFL-CIO sat on the podium. In addition to the one Black, Vice-President Hayes, there was one woman, Vice-President Dorothy Dufeur, Hotel and Restaurant Employees, who also sat on the podium.

The Convention voted to send a telegram expressing solidarity to the Ford workers, members of the UAW, who were on strike against the Ford Motor Company at the time.

Into the Arena of Struggle

More than 500 copies of a special four page supplement to the national rank-and-file publication *Labor Today* were distributed to the delegates. The article on the front page featured the remark by George Meany: "If a federal judge finds the Constitution is being violated and orders busing as the only way to obtain quality education, then there must be busing." The inside spread dealt with the Humphrey-Hawkins bill, and more particularly what was needed to strengthen it. The back page had to do with *Labor Today*'s position on "Labor's political independence and the '76 elections." It spoke to "big business control of the two major parties" and to "the current bankruptcy of the two party system" which, it said, "is illustrated by the fact that despite overwhelming Democratic majorities, Congress has voted to override fewer than 10 of Gerald Ford's 60 vetoes." The editorial called for election of workers to office.

This *Labor Today* supplement was distributed by representatives of the National Coalition for Trade Union Action and Democracy. Many, many delegates were seen reading this *Labor Today* supplement.

About 500 copies of the *Daily World* were distributed to the delegates by Communist Party members.

The significance of this convention, will, of course, be tested by the degree that the decisively important resolutions that were passed by the convention are brought into the arena of struggle.

The fact, for example, that the resolution for a reduced work week with no reduction in pay and calling for the collection of one million signatures in support of amending the Fair Labor Standards Act was referred by the convention to the AFL-CIO means that the Illinois AFL-CIO is left uncommitted to conduct such a petition campaign. Here, it would

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The "Long Strike" in Rubber

MARC BEALLOR

At exactly midnight, April 20, 1976, sixty thousand rubber workers walked off their jobs in the plants of the "Big Four" of the rubber industry—Goodyear, Firestone, Uniroyal and Goodrich.

The strike went on for more than four long months—the longest strike in the history of the United Rubber Workers. It was a hard fought battle for these heroic workers, whose meager benefits ran out after only one month on the picket lines.

In order to assess this strike it is necessary to look at where the rubber workers stood before April 20. The United Rubber Workers (URW) is considered to be in many ways a "sister union" of the United Automobile Workers. That is because the rubber and automobile industries are so closely related. In the past, the auto and rubber workers kept more or less apace in their contracts. But in the past few years the rubber workers fell far behind their brothers and sisters in auto in a number of areas.

The biggest difference was in pay. Whereas in 1965 rubber workers were averaging $3.59 an hour, and auto workers $3.37, in 1975 rubber workers were averaging $5.87 an hour while auto workers were up to $6.72. By 1976 the differential was $1.65.

One of the main reasons for this is that the rubber workers did not have a cost-of-living clause in their contract—the only major industrial union in the country without one.

The other reason is that at the time of signing of the previous contract in 1973 Nixon's Phase III wage controls were in effect. Rubber workers were forced to settle for a six per cent wage increase with no cost of living escalator. Rubber workers were very bitter over this and were waiting for the 1976 negotiations to "get even."

Also, workers in non-tire plants (such as those making conveyor belts and other rubber products) were receiving substantially less than workers in the tire plants.

All the rubber companies were showing big profit gains. In the first quarter of 1976 Firestone's profits registered a 13.1 per cent increase over 1975; Goodyear a 97.7 per cent increase; Goodrich a 145.9 per cent increase and Uniroyal a 62.5 per cent increase (*United Rubber Worker*, May 1976).

Another big concern of the rubber workers was job security. Workers in the Akron area, where the rubber industry is concentrated, have seen thousands of jobs disappear over the past two decades. The trend in the rubber industry, as in many industries, is to build new, modern plants, especially in the South, and to reduce jobs in the older, less productive plants.

Between the 1970 and 1973 contracts, Goodrich initiated its now famous "HEY MAC" Campaign. MAC stood for Make Akron Competitive. The supposed intent of this campaign was to protect jobs in the Akron area. Its real intent, however, was to try to get the workers to accept a program of speedup and job combination.

The HEY MAC campaign consisted of about twelve proposals by Goodrich to do away with certain job classifications and other work procedures. The company threatened a massive loss of jobs in Akron if the rubber workers didn't accept them. The union accepted many of the proposals, but that didn't do much to protect jobs at Goodrich. Since the HEY MAC campaign, hundreds of jobs have gone by the boards. Akron rubber workers did not forget HEY MAC, and it was on their minds during the 1976 strike. It should be noted that since World War II, 12,000 jobs in the rubber industry in Akron have been lost.

Even with the spreading of plants throughout the country, Akron remains the center of the rubber industry, with 12,000 out of the 60,000 workers in the Big Four located there. In addition, General Tire, the fifth largest producer, has a plant in Akron as have numerous other producers.

Contract Issues

The main demand of the URW going into the strike concerned wages. The union's key demand was for a $1.65/hour increase *for the first year of the contract alone.* That would bring them up to parity with the auto workers. Along with that was the demand for an uncapped cost-of-living clause.

Another key demand was for an increase in pension benefits, including a provision for 30 years and out.

Important, too, was the demand to wipe out the wage differential between workers in tire plants and those in non-tire plants.

Other demands were for increased dental and medical coverage, life insurance, vacations, etc.

But the big issue was wages.

The companies had some demands of their own to make. Their main demand was that the union accept certain work-rule changes. The companies claimed that the contract's "restrictive" work rules were causing productivity to lag and making U.S. rubber plants "uncompetitive." Of course, what the companies had in mind was speedup and job elimination. Among the work rules considered "restrictive" by the companies were breaks and lunch periods!

The companies made this a big issue by saying that they wouldn't agree to any of the union's demands unless the union first gave in on the work rules.

More was involved in this struggle than meets the eye. This was not an "ordinary" contract struggle, nor did it come at an "ordinary" time. This is a time of a deepening of the general crisis of capitalism. It is a time when U.S. imperialism is being forced to retreat around the world. The U.S. multinational giants—among which are counted all of the Big Four rubber monopolies—are no longer guaranteed the right to plunder and exploit foreign lands and labor at will. And so they strive to intensify their exploitation of U.S. labor.

And 1976 was not an "ordinary" year for labor. The Teamsters Union, early in the year, had staged their first nationwide truck strike, emerging victorious. Following the rubber workers' contract in 1976 would be the contracts of the electrical workers in the General Electric and Westinghouse companies. Then would come the crucial auto workers' contract in September. And not long off in 1977 the steelworkers contract expires.

The rubber workers were seen as leading the way for the industrial unions in 1976. They were the pacesetters. Monopoly capital recognized this. The auto giants recognized this. And so a major effort was launched by monopoly capital to set the rubber workers back, to force them to settle for terms to the liking of the companies. If the rubber workers could be held to a small settlement, it would be that much easier to deal with the electrical and auto workers later in the year.

The Strike Strategy

As the April 20 strike deadline approached, it became clear that the companies were digging in. A strike looked imminent.

The Big Four, acting in unison, made their first contract offer—$1.05 over the three years of the contract with no cost of living clause. This insulting offer was completely rejected by the union.

On April 20, just hours before the midnight strike deadline, Firestone made an offer of $1.15 an hour along with a cost-of-living formula that amounted to almost no formula at all. URW President Peter Bommarito called it a "slap in the face."

About two months before the contract deadline, the URW leadership had made a historic decision. They picked Firestone as the target company, but for the first time in the union's history, decided to strike all four companies at once.

Why did this decision come in these 1976 negotiations? For one thing, it was more apparent than ever that the Big Four were acting as a Big One. There was a definite united front to beat back the union. The companies had already sent out signals letting it be known that they were out to set the rubber workers back. They were out to take away gains the union had won in the past.

Second, there was an awareness by the union leadership that to strike one company alone was not going to be effective in light of the "united front" of the Big Four. Hitting one company, even the biggest, would not make that great a dent in tire production—and that was crucial because the pressure had to be put on the auto giants as well. Even with all the unionized plants of the Big Four shut down, only 60 per cent of domestic tire production would be curtailed. And the companies had all built up large stockpiles in preparation for the strike.

Third was the militancy of the rank-and-file. The rubber workers were angry over what they considered a raw deal in 1973 and over the ruthless drive of the companies for increased productivity, with the resulting elimination of thousands of jobs. In Ocotober 1975, at the URW convention, the anger of the rank and file surfaced and resulted in the election of a completely new executive board, save one. Among the new executive board members were three Blacks, a Chicano, a French Canadian and a woman for the first time in the history of the union. It was clearly a mandate for change.

In addition to the decision to strike all four companies, a decision was made to launch an international boycott against Firestone. Again, this was based on the estimate that the companies were "out for blood" and that it was going to take a real fight to win. It reflected the new level of militancy in the union.

Solidarity in the Ranks

No sooner had the strike begun than Judge Sam Bell, at the request of the rubber companies, issued an injunction against "mass picketing" of the plants. Pickets were limited to a maximum of six at the main gates and two at the other entrances.

On April 25, URW President Bommarito flew to Geneva, Switzerland, to attend a meeting of the International Confederation of Chemical and General Workers' Unions. Bommarito is president of the Confederation. At the meeting he appealed for support for the U.S. rubber workers, specifically for support of the Firestone boycott.

This was of extreme importance. It was a recognition of the need for international labor solidarity against these multinational giants. All of the Big Four have extensive world-wide operations.

Goodyear, for example, employs 150,000 workers at 138 production facilities around the world. Foreign operations accounted for 30 per cent of Goodyear's total profit in 1975. (*Economic Notes*, 4/76.) Firestone also has extensive foreign holdings, including in Africa where it operates the world's largest rubber plantation in Liberia.

Further very important expressions of international labor support were the two day sympathy strike called by the Peruvian National Rubber Workers Union and the overtime bans imposed at Big Four plants and subsidiaries in Sweden, Norway, the Federal Republic of Germany, Turkey, Italy, Britain and Ireland.

Around the time that Bommarito flew to Switzerland, Goodyear and Firestone announced they were cutting off all Supplementary Unemployment Benefits to those URW members who had been layed off prior to the stike. The companies claimed that since there was no contract, they weren't obligated to pay the benefits.

This greatly angered these strikers and only increased their determination to fight.

On May 3, in defiance of the court injunction, mass picketing took place at a number of the plants in Akron. Company photographers took pictures of the pickets and a number were hauled off to jail, charged with violating the injunction. The mass picketing was another demonstration of solidarity against the companies.

The boycott campaign against Firestone was slow in getting off the ground. On May 8, the URW called a mass rally in the Akron Rubber Bowl to officially kick off the boycott. Rallies were held simultaneously in a number of other cities.

On the picket lines morale was high. There was a tremendous determination to win a decent contract. It was voiced from one picket site to the next that "we'll stay out 'til Christmas if we have to." The ranks were solidly united. A high level of unity was evident at many picket sites, where Black and white workers huddled together around wood-burning barrels on many a cold night.

Even when strike benefits ran out on May 20, only one month into the strike, morale remained as high as ever. One of the factors that had had to be considered in striking all four companies at once was the small strike fund. It was known that, in the case of a strike against all the Big Four, the benefits were going to run out fast. That was a decision that had to be made. In fact, the URW called a special convention in Chicago in July to request a dues increase to bolster the strike fund, but at the last minute it was decided not to request the increase.

So the strikers had to make do as best they could on whatever they had managed to save before the strike. Food stamps were available and the union had a program to aid strikers in obtaining assistance. Rubber workers and their families were bitter when, at the Republican National Convention, Earl Butz remarked "I am getting tired of feeding [with food stamps] able bodied men who walked off a job paying $6 an hour in Akron, Ohio and went on strike."

But the big thing that the URW members had going for them was the tremendous solidarity in the ranks. They were determined to win. The companies sensed this and did all they could to try to break that unity.

In late May Firestone began to place full page ads in the *Akron Beacon Journal* and ten other newspapers in rubber centers, under the headline "Nobody Wins." The ads were an attempt to convince rubber workers and their families that the strike was going to permanently hurt the industry and cost them their jobs. It was, in the view of those long active in the rubber union, an open attempt to foster a back-to-work movement. It fell flat on its face.

At around the same time, Goodyear sent letters to all its employees threatening more layoffs unless the workers immediately returned to work.

Many attempts like these occurred throughout the strike. But they were unable to break the rubber workers' resolve.

Meanwhile, solidarity messages began coming in

from other sections of the labor movement. Many unions passed resolutions on the rubber workers' behalf. On May 13, the appearance of Henry Patrick, secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers, on the picket lines in Akron had an electrifying effect on the rank and file. Many of the workers in Akron come from coal mining areas in Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia.

A couple of weeks after the contracts expired at the Big Four plants, the contract at General Tire expired. General is the fifth largest producer. The biggest General locals in Akron and Waco, Texas are covered by one contract. In order to strike, both locals had to agree. For some reason, the local executive board in Akron was against striking and worked out an agreement with the company to work on a day to day basis until agreement was reached with the Big Four.

This decision to keep working at General had a demoralizing effect on those on strike. It was like a stab in the back. On June 21, pickets from struck plants organized a mass picketing at the General plant in Akron and shut it down for a day. Nevertheless, thereafter General kept on working.

On June 16, Mansfield Tire and Rubber in Mansfield, Ohio, was struck by about 1,200 workers. On July 1 all the plants of Armstrong Rubber, the nation's sixth largest producer, were struck. On June 29 General Tire's Wabash, Indiana, plant was struck by 1,500 workers. This was followed by strikes at General Tire plants in Logansport and Marion, Indiana, involving about 1,600 workers. This swelled the strikers' ranks to about 68,000.

On June 23 about 2,000 rubber workers and their families marched through Akron in a show of strength and solidarity. The march ended in a mass rally in downtown Akron. The march was joined by a large contingent of striking workers who had come from Detroit. Marches were held in other cities as well.

Sitting Tight " 'Til Christmas"

Sensing the growing unity in the rubber workers' ranks and faced with their failure to foster a back-to-work movement, the companies decided on a new tactic. Over the July 4th weekend, Labor Secretary Usery announced he was calling the concerned parties to Washington to try to reach a settlement. After a much-heralded weekend of marathon talks, Firestone broke off negotiations after the URW rejected what Firestone brazenly called its "final offer." Firestone's "final offer" was a mere 15 cents over its previous offer of $1.15 over three years.

At this point all negotiations broke off. It was becoming more and more apparent that the Big Four were being frustrated in their attempts to force a "cheap settlement" on the URW. The Big Four at one point attempted to hold separate negotiations with some of the key locals in an attempt to reach independent settlements and split the ranks. This ploy also failed.

As Firestone, the target company, adamantly refused to budge off of its "final offer" in July, Christmas trees appeared on a number of picket lines as a symbolic gesture of the workers' willingness to "stay out 'til Christmas or 'til Hell freezes over."

On August 1, 34 strikers were arrested at the Akron Goodyear plant for violating the picket injuction. Several hundred had massed at the plant gate in a show of solidarity. When the police arrived on the scene, the workers sat down in the street.

On August 4, more than 100 pickets blocked trucks and trains from entering the Goodrich plant in Akron after two pickets were hit by a truck entering the struck plant.

On August 3, several hundred Goodyear workers and their families demonstrated in front of the company's Akron headquarters. They dumped letters on the steps of the building. The letters were from Goodyear Board Chairman Charles J. Pilloed, and had been sent to Goodyear workers.

The whole first week of August the *Akron Beacon Journal* was full of photographs of police carrying off strikers arrested after mass picketing at the plants in defiance of the court injunction.

On August 9, 700 pickets massed at the Firestone plant.

The rubber workers were flexing their muscle.

The Settlement

On August 12, it was announced that a tentative pact had been reached. The agreement was an industry-wide one covering some of the basic issues such as wages and pensions. Local agreements, however, would have to be negotiated before the membership could vote. The agreement was approved by the union bargaining committee on August 15. The tentative agreement contained, among others, the following provisions:

Wages. An 80 cent increase the first year, 30 cents the second year and 25 cents the third year. At Firestone the first year increase was 88.8 cents—the

additional 8.8 cents being to make up for a "carve out" that Firestone did not receive in 1973. Goodrich workers received 84.7 cents, also to make up for a carve out.

Cost-of-living. A one cent an hour increase for each .4 point increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). In 1978 it would be a once cent increase for each .3 point increase in the CPI.

Pensions. The basic pension of $10/month multiplied by years of service was increased to $12.50/month over the life of the contract. Goodyear workers, who were behind the workers of other companies, were brought up to parity. However, 30 and out, a major demand, was not reached.

Pensions for those already retired were inceased by $1 a month times years of service.

Increases were also won for skilled workers, for company payments into the SUB fund, life insurance, and medical coverage (dental surgery was added, but a dental plan was not included). Also established was a joint union-company program on occupational health research, to be jointly financed. Rubber workers have been exposed to great amounts of cancer-causing chemicals such as polyvinylchloride and benzene.

How did the rank-and-file react to this settlement after four months on the picket lines? There was general disappointment over the first year wage increase. The URW's demand had been for $1.65 for the first year to catch up with the UAW. Eighty cents seemed a far cry from that.

There was also disappointment in not getting 30 and out, especially among the older workers.

Many were disappointed about not getting full dental coverage, a growing expense for union families.

However, the winning of an uncapped cost-of-living clause, the first such clause in a URW contract, was seen as a big victory by the workers. This had been the source of greatest opposition from the companies.

And even though many expressed some disappointment, there was a general feeling that they had won—the Big Four had been beaten. After a tough struggle, the companies had been forced to abandon their "take away" demands, while at least some of the workers' important aims had been realized.

Negotiations continued with each company separately to achieve the Master Agreement. Talks at Firestone were snagged by the company's continued push for "work rule" changes. They wanted to trade off concessions with the union. The company also demanded lesser settlements for so called "distressed plants"—plants that the companies claimed were not profitable operations.

At Goodyear a snag in negotiations was brought on by the distressed plant issue and also by the company's insistence that 20 workers fired at its Marysville, Ohio, plant not be rehired. The workers had been fired in the early days of the strike, accused of vandalizing plant equipment.

Stumbling blocks at Goodrich and Uniroyal included the "distressed plant" issue and also the issue of "carve out" pay at Goodrich.

On August 24, the 126th day of the strike, Goodyear became the first company to reach a settlement. The settlement included lesser terms (especially pay) for workers at two so-called "distress plants" in Massachusetts and Vermont. The union also gave in on the 20 workers fired in Marysville—they would not be rehired.

On August 28, a majority of Goodyear locals ratified the pact.

On August 30 the pact with Firestone was ratified. Uniroyal settled in early September, but at Goodrich workers returned to work while negotiations continued. A final settlement was not reached at Goodrich *until early December.* At that time a new strike deadline was set by the union and the company finally settled.

The Role of the Communist Party and the *Daily World*

The Communist Party's role in the strike was largely in the area of mobilizing support for the rubber workers. Many Communists were instrumental in winning support, both moral and financial, from their local unions. Many helped organize activities in support of the Firestone boycott. The *Daily World* was the best source of information on the strike and through it workers in the steel mills, auto plants and other industries were kept informed of the rubber workers' struggle.

This was indeed an important contribution to the strike.

The *Daily World* was regularly distributed on the picket lines in Akron. The paper was distributed at least once a week, sometimes more, to all the picket sites in Akron. As the strike went on the *Daily World* came to be known and read by many of the most active union members.

One of the problems in the strike and a source of great concern among the strikers was the lack of adequate support from the rest of the labor movement. This grievance was commonly voiced in discussions with the striking workers.

True, there were many resolutions and donations, and these were extremely important. But the ranks of labor were not *mobilized* in support of this important battle. This can be most clearly seen in the lack of activity in support of the boycott.

The Firestone boycott did have an effect—about that there can be no question. But it could have been much more effective. Few, if any, central labor bodies, including in Akron, organized boycott activity. The URW itself, loaded down with the job of organizing the strike, was not able to really get the boycott off the ground.

Conclusions

As pointed out earlier, the ruling class was hoping to deal a setback to the rubber workers. They figured a defeat for labor in rubber would be the opening wedge for dealing severe setbacks to the auto workers and to the steel workers, whose contract expires in 1977. Thus, it was more than just the rubber monopolies that the rubber workers were up against. The rubber workers were upholding the cause of all labor.

True, the rubber workers did not achieve all they had set out to win. But, they did make significant gains, especially with the winning of an uncapped cost-of-living clause. Considering what they were up against—the united front of four of the largest multinational concerns, supported by powerful sections of monopoly capital—the rubber workers succeeded in wresting some major concessions from the employers.

Furthermore, it was clear that what won this strike was the tremendous solidarity of the rank-and-file. The willingness of the rubber workers to hold out for four months without strike benefits, many having to go hungry, some losing cars or homes, was what won the strike. Several veterans of rubber workers' struggles felt that the morale of the members in this strike was higher than it had ever been. The morale was a real factor.

The fact that almost a complete sweep of the URW Executive Board had been made in 1975 was a mandate from the rank and file for a new kind of unionism, a more militant unionism. The rank and file was fed up with an approach to the companies that only resulted in further loss of jobs and deterioration of working conditions.

International solidarity was a very important factor in winning this strike. This is an important lesson. The fact is that the cooperation of the unions in plants of the Big Four in various countries—their refusal to work overtime during the strike—prevented the rubber monopolies from using tires made in those plants to make up for their lost production. As it was, the auto companies were forced to ship out new cars without spare tires. It wouldn't have been long before they would have run out of tires. The sympathy stoppage in Peru and the international support for the Firestone boycott made it clear to the companies that they weren't dealing with U.S. rubber workers alone.

Rubber workers are still faced with many pressing problems. One of the big issues will continue to be the loss of jobs in the older plants, especially in Akron. The companies will attempt to shift more of their production into non-union plants, particularly in the South. Michelin, the French tire company, has opened a huge plant in South Carolina that is unorganized. The URW will have to reckon with the increasing number of rubber workers who are unorganized.

The shorter work week will also once again have to be put on the rubber workers' agenda. Without a shorter work week, jobs that have been lost, and continue to be lost, will not be regained. The rubber workers had won a shorter work week in the 1930s. At that time they won a contractual 6 hour day, 36 hour week. However, that was given up in most plants in the past decade. Some of the plants still operate on a 6 hour day, but they are the exception.

To achieve these goals a more militant stance will have to be taken against the companies. This requires a total break with the policies of the Meanys, Abels, Shankers, et al.—the beginnings of which have been sown in this notable strike. An organized rank-and-file movement is needed among the rubber workers which can transform the URW into a consistently militant, fighting union.

And a strong Communist Party among the rubber workers will go a long way towards advancing the goals of class struggle trade unionism.

For a Just Peace in Northern Ireland

BETTY SINCLAIR*

The struggle for democratic rights opened in Northern Ireland as far back as September 1968. In a population of 1½ million, some 500,000 were continually discriminated against in the allocation of jobs and houses. The reactionary Stormont Unionist (union with Britain) refused to follow British legislation (1948) which gave a universal vote in local government elections. (The discrimination practiced was most felt at the local level, and the Unionists feared losing political control under one-man one-vote system. Still in effect, too, was the Special Powers Act, a draconian measure, dating from 1922 and renewed each year until 1933, when it was made a permanent measure on the Statute Book. This Act, which denies all civil rights and includes measures for internment and the denial of the right of habeaus corporus, is said to be even worse than South African legislation. The Civil Liberties (Special Powers) Act was, in 1922, an "emergency measure" and, needless to say, it remained in force until the British assumed direct rule in Northern Ireland after March 1972, at which time that government brought in the Emergency Provisions Act, which proved to be even more harsh than the Special Powers Act!

The demands of the first Civil Rights marchers were modest indeed: one-man one-vote in local government elections, no discrimination in the allocation of jobs and houses by local authorities, and the repeal of the Special Powers Act.

The Unionist Administration resisted the demands until November 22, 1968, when some concessions were granted, but not one-man one-vote. The campaign waged by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) met with a good response. Some little concern was expressed in British government circles about the Northern Ireland situation and Prime Minister O'Neill (N.I.) expressed the wish to go beyond these concessions. He met with much opposition inside and outside the ruling Unionist Party. In the February 1969 general election, called to test his strength, his party won a majority in the Stormont Parliament. But by that time the "ultras" were showing their hand. The Rev. Ian Paisley, who then had no political party, came to the fore and, after the general election, water and other installations were bombed by his adherents to cause the maximum difficulties in Belfast. O'Neill was forced to resign in May 1969 and Chichester-Clarke, of the landed gentry, became Prime Minister.

Thus Northern Ireland witnessed the first acts of violence—perpetrated by the Unionists. But the police maintained that the acts had been carried out by the Irish Republican Army (IRA)!

Chichester-Clarke was forced by the continuing pressure for democratic rights to make further concessions, including one-man one-vote, when new legislation was worked out for local government. Again the Unionist ultra-Right acted. Assisted by the armed police and "B" Specials (the latter always known as the fully armed "private army" of the ruling Unionist Party) forces of the Unionists, in which Paisley and others actively participated, launched a pogrom against the Catholic areas in August 1969. Nine people, all Catholics, were killed and hundreds of Catholic families in "mixed areas" were driven from their homes. At first, the houses were burned down. Later the ultra-Unionists preserved the houses and forced Protestant families to occupy them. Thus began the segregation of the people—the worst to happen in Europe since the end of the Second World War.

The British (Wilson Labor) Government stepped in. Home Secretary Callaghan (now Prime Minister) came to Belfast with a reform program which went much further than any proposals of the Unionists. But he entrusted to the Unionists the task of carrying out the reforms. It was stated that more progressive (reform) legislation went through the Stormont Parliament in some 50 days than had gone through in the previous 50 years. Included in the reform program was the disarming of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the disbandment of the "B" Specials. The latter decisions hit the Unionists very hard and, on October 11, when the Hunt Report concerning same was published, the ultras of the Unionist fought a night-long battle with the RUC

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and the British Army in the protestant Shankill area in Belfast. The first policeman was killed . . . and not by the IRA! The genesis of violence always lay with the Unionists and their Administration.

At this stage, the Provisional IRA came into the struggle to "defend the Catholic people." They adopted a policy of offense, while the Official IRA adopted a policy of defense. Before the former mounted armed struggle, the mass media in Britain and Ireland, with the exception of the *London Daily Telegraph* and the *Belfast News Letter*, came out against the Unionist Administration, leaving the latter very few friends. This joining of the forces for reform was sidetracked by the actions of the Provisionals, since the Unionists were able to claim that action must be taken against such acts of violence. Chichester-Clarke was unable to continue his Premiership and Brian Faulkner, of the Unionist Party (a bitter and reactionary politician who claimed to have defeated the IRA campaign of 1956-62 waged in Northern Ireland against the RUC, "B" Specials and the Establishment) became Prime Minister. (The usual order of prime ministers reigning for 20 years or more was shattered.)

Faulkner's policy was for "law and order," but by this time the forces in opposition to the Unionists refused to have the RUC in their areas. The British troops had been welcomed at the height of the 1969 pogrom as a defense against the Unionist ultras. But when the Wilson Labor Government lost the June 1970 general election in Britain and Northern Ireland, the Heath Tory Government came to power, and the policy on the use of the British armed forces was drastically changed. (The Commander-in-Chief in Northern Ireland of the British Army had previously warned that the "honeymoon" between the troops and the Catholic people could not continue.) On July 3 (a Friday evening), the British Army deployed some 3,500 troops in sealing off an area containing some 40,000 Catholic residents under a phony curfew (later declared to be legal under common law). The people were held in their homes at gun point and tanks were deployed in all the small streets. Men and women on their way home from their places of employment were refused entry to their homes. Shops had to close and entire areas were left without the necessities of life, i.e. bread, milk, etc. The "curfew" lasted until that Sunday afternoon, when Catholic women from all over Belfast arrived, over 3,000 strong, with food for the beleaguered people. They carried the goods in prams and defied the British soldiers. While the British armed forces had the "run" of the whole area, they ransacked homes, destroyed much and were accused of looting homes and shops. It was "open season" for the so-called "peace keepers."

Again it was the forces of the Establishment, this time the British, which engendered the violence and added grist to the mill of the Provisionals. All efforts by the trade union and labor movement and the NICRA to bring order out of the chaos created by the "men of order" were resisted by the Stormont and British Establishments. The violence continued. The deaths became more frequent. The drive to force Catholic families out of their homes continued. The polarization of the population between Catholics and Protestants neared completion. All attention was focused on the violence of the Provisionals, with few or no admonitions against the violence of the Protestant paramilitaries. Then came the drive for internment. On August 8-9 the RUC and British Army went in and "arrested" some 400 men and boys (old and young) in the Catholic areas—at 4:30 am—and many were subjected to the most inhumane treatment and torture. (This year, 1977, the British Government was indicted at the European Court of Human Rights on this count.) The violence escalated. The Catholic population and their political leaders ended any form of cooperation with the Stormont Government. Payment of rent, city rates, gas and electric bills, etc., were stopped. The harrassment of the people in Catholic working-class areas by the British armed forces increased in intensity.

Demands were made for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland, the withdrawal of British troops to their barracks, the ending of internment and repeal of the Special Powers Act and an economic aid program to assist the already much-damaged economy. All these were resisted. On January 30, 1972, a peaceful Civil Rights march being conducted in Londonderry was attacked by a commando unit of the British Army and fourteen men and boys lost their lives. All Ireland—outside some virulent Protestant areas—declared the days until the mass burial took place a period of national mourning. The British Embassy in Dublin was burned by an indignant and enraged populace.

In March 1972, the Heath government dismissed the Stormont government. It was legally entitled to do so under the Government of Ireland Act (1920) of which clause 75 states that despite all provisions of the Act giving Northern Ireland a local administra-

tion, the British Parliament remained "supreme over all persons and things" in Northern Ireland. The Unionists were left without a parliament. The powers of local government were severely curtailed under new legislation. The police were disarmed and the "B" Specials disbanded. Direct rule from Westminster was introduced and a Northern Ireland Office, manned by a Secretary of State and British civil servants came into being.

The Unionists were effectively shut out from all control of affairs. But so also were the rest of the people, who had no democratic organs by which to make their will known. The British government continued to use the existing reactionary legislation, refused to end internment or bring in a Bill of Rights. They sought a military solution of the problem and, at the same time, tried to bring middle class Catholics and Protestants into line with a new act, the Northern Ireland Constitution Act of 1973, to create a "power-sharing" administration—which would have little or no power! Following a 1973 referendum on going into the Republic of Ireland or staying within the United Kingdom (a certainty for the latter course), an election was held for an Assembly and an Executive. The latter was to be picked by the Northern Ireland Secretary of State, the Tory William Whitelaw. The election resulted in a majority of Unionists—of varied hues—being elected. Instead of one monolithic Unionist Party there were now three, the Paisley Democratic Unionist Party, the Craig Vanguard Unionist Party and the Faulkner Official Unionist Party. An Alliance Party of middle-class Catholics and Protestants had been set up and obtained a number of seats. The main opposition party, the Social Democratic and Labor Party, led by Gerry Fitt, also obtained 17 seats. The Executive was duly chosen by Whitelaw, and became operative in January 1974.

But the ultra-Unionists struck back. In May 1974 the latter called a "strike" under the auspices of the shadowy "Ulster Workers' Council" to bring down the Executive, and their armed forces were allowed to paralyze the economy of Northern Ireland by sheer intimidation and brute force. Workers, some 90 per cent of whom had gone to work on the first day of the "strike," were ordered out of their places of work, while the British Army and RUC stood by and allowed the ultras to operate without let or hindrance. Appeals by the members of the Executive, including Faulkner, were disregarded by the now British Labor Government, under Harold Wilson, and the Northern Ireland Office under Secretary of State Merlyn Rees. The Faulkner Unionists "threw in their hand" and the members of the party of Fitt and the Alliance Party in the Executive were told that they could "go home." (It was stated late that the Commander of the Army had made it known that he was not prepared to act against the Unionist ultras, whatever the opinion of the British government.)

The Executive was finished. Any hopes entertained by the "middle of the road" politicians that the British government was concerned to meet and defeat *all* reactionary and paramilitary groupings were dashed. Military rule became the order of the day, including paramilitary rule by the various factions. This affected *all* working-class areas, especially in Belfast.

A further political "solution" was evolved. The electors would be given the opportunity to elect a Consultative Convention whose members would discuss and work out a "solution." Needless to say, the majority returned was again Unionist and, by this time, the three parties were grouped under the Ulster Unionist Loyalist Council (UULC), with Paisley playing the leading role. The duly elected Convention began discussions. But to no avail. The Unionists wanted back "their own Parliament" and control of the security forces, including the units of the British Army! A program containing such proposals and other related matters on the economy was finally bulldozed through the Assembly during a few months in 1975 and 1976. The proposals were not acceptable to the British Government—nor to any of the progressive forces in Northern Ireland. The proposals were finally rejected by the British government and Parliament, and the Consultative Convention Act of 1975 ceased to have any meaning.

* * *

The military solution has no possibility of success. The political solutions have failed abysmally—and perhaps were never intended to succeed? Direct rule would appear to be only solution for the British government for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, the situation goes from bad to worse. To the daily and horrifying violence is added the effects of the economic crisis which has hit Northern Ireland very hard. Northern Ireland has the highest unemployment rate in the capitalist countries of Western Europe, the highest incidence of families existing on social security benefits, the most severe housing problem, the highest number of persons who

suffer from sickness and the greatest percentage of persons living below the poverty line. Wages paid in industry and commerce—and the services—are some 25 per cent below those paid in Britain. The gross national product and income per head are only three-quarters of that in Britain. Public services, transport, gas, electricity are heavily in debt because of high interest charges and consumer debts, which mount to many millions of pounds. The difficulties in the public services have been added to by the "economy" cuts enforced by the British government. The latest "mini-budget" put through by Chancellor Healy will further aggravate the situation. The inflationary spiral grows by leaps and bounds—most goods are imported from Britain and extra charges are made for transport costs. Public (national) indebtedness has grown at a fantastic rate, as the British government continues to add her cash "aid" to the public debt. Promises of economic aid, made many times in the past few years, are now no more than a pipe dream. British spokesmen state that, "things being what they are in Northern Ireland," they cannot afford to spend more than they are now, and the North will have to accept its share of the burden of the economy cuts. Some 78 per cent of industry is in control of outside multinationals. Banking is all controlled from Britain, as are the building societies and finance houses. Britain's colony in Western Europe(!) is in a bad way.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions Northern Ireland Committee, in February 1976, proposed a six point program to end the crisis—now military, political and economic—as follows:

1. The right to live free from violence, sectarianism, intimidation and discrimination.
2. The right to security of employment and well-paid work.
3. The right to associate freely and to advocate political change by peaceful means.
4. The right to good housing accomodations.
5. The right to equality of educational opportunity.
6. The right to adequate social services to protect the well-being and living standards of the aged, the young, the sick, the unemployed and the socially deprived.

Neither the British government nor any section of the mass media have evinced any support for the program or the efforts of the trade unions—representing some 265,000 Catholic and Protestant workers—and appear fearful of attempts to seek working-class solutions. Their concern is to solve the problem along Catholic-Protestant sectarian lines. Leaders of the European Trade Union Confederation, including a big contingent from the British trade union movement, converged on Belfast on November 20, 1976, for a demonstration and meeting. Little or no publicity was given to either the guests or the rally.

On the other hand, the Peace People Movement—led by three Catholics from Belfast, Betty Williams, Mairead Corrigan and Cairin McKeown (formerly a journalist with the *Fianna Fail* newspaper) has reviewed the utmost publicity. The demand of the movement is for "peace," without stating how peace can be obtained and under what conditions, and not pinpointing the causes of the violence. The movement has begun the publication of a journal, in the first issue of which McKeown called for a "Northern Ireland identity," which runs counters to the wishes of the progressive forces in Ireland. A "Northern Ireland identity" means that the North will continue to be ruled from Westminster, the country will remain divided, and multinational corporations will continue to dominate the economy and politics *of the whole of Ireland*—as they have since 1920.

Many people ask why Britain stays in Northern Ireland. The above is part of the answer—a divided country enables such interests to control the economic life of all the people of Ireland. Britain also has a military reason for remaining—the people and the area boost her prestige within NATO and can be used as a "proving ground" for weaponry against the "enemy" and, not least, a "proving ground" for weapons and ways of fighting against working-class urban unrest. Imperialism never lets go—it has to be thrown our lock, stock and barrel. Mr. Mason, now Northern Ireland Secretary of State, told the British House of Commons, November 26, that there was no truth in the rumors of impending withdrawal "of Army or of economic resources. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom and will remain so unless a majority of the population [i.e. the Protestant majority of Northern Ireland only] decide otherwise in a referendum." Mason welcomed the "peace movement" and went on to say: "There is a growing recognition among the people that it is in Northern Ireland itself that a solution to the problems must be worked out and *that this solution must be of a kind which enables everyone to share a Northern Ireland identity.*"

The people of Northern Ireland, especially those

who adhere to the Unionist cause, have always called themselves "British." Now there is a change of emphasis to considering themselves "Northern Irelanders." But, in essence, there is no difference. Control would still be exercised from London in all spheres. The Irish identity of the people would become a thing of the past—neither possible nor practical while British imperialism has any kind of a foothold in the country. The age-long aspirations of the vast majority of the Irish people for a united, free and independent country would be put on a very "long finger" and Britain would continue to have an arbitrary right to decide when or if the unity of the country was to be established.

In the meantime, democratic rights are being eroded in Britain and the Irish Republic—as well as in Northern Ireland—because of the situation in the North. People are being "accustomed" to accepting repressive legislation—denuding their rights—under the pretext of "defeating the IRA."

In the Republic there have been valuable finds recently of oil, natural gas, gold, silver, copper, etc. and a French company has been given license to seek for uranium. Ireland is no longer a "poor country." But of course, the multinationals are in for the loot. Last May the American organization Business International organized a secret meeting in Trinity College, Dublin, which was attended by members of the Irish government and shadow ministers of the Fianna Fail Party. The latter were quizzed about the policies and intentions of the various Irish political parties. The questions put were: Do you expect a united Ireland this century? If you do, under what conditions might this be brought about and, in your opinion, what difference, if any, would it make to the foreign-owned companies now established in Ireland?

Ireland is a pronounced anti-Communist country. What reasons are there for not joining NATO now?

Ireland more than any other country is attempting to attract foreign investments. Do you see in this any ultimate threat to your national sovereignty? Are you in favor of any political limitations now? Can you conceive that at some point in the future this friendly attitude to foreign investors would be reversed, as is happening in other countries?

To force foreign companies investing in Ireland to bring in more foreign currency, will there be any restrictions on their domestic Irish pound rate borrowings?

At what point do you think that Irish sovereignty would be adversely affected if the present large element of foreign investment continues? Are you in favor of political limitations in this field?

Some key industries are state owned. There is talk of more state participation outside the fields already covered, and very recently the establishment of a State Trading Company. How far will the state be competing with private enterprise and to what extent would this development be compatible with the EEC's principles of free competition? Also, is it considered possible that both participation and the competition it will engander may be detrimental to the need to attract foreign venture capital?

The men of the Business International asked many questions, but the people of the Irish Republic do not, as yet, know how responsible government ministers and leaders of the opposition answered. But the dangers are great. The Northern Ireland problem is not a local one. Its effects are felt all over the country and the world. Peace—yes. The people need it and desire it. But not the peace that would push ever further away a just solution for the whole of the Irish people.

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seem, is an opportunity, both for those who brought this resolution before the convention and for other trade unionists, to put pressure upon the state body to set the example and act, without waiting for the national body to act. This is the kind of initiative that would help to bring into being a national petition campaign around this demand.

The framework within which this 19th Convention of the Illinois AFL-CIO was held, one in which "the working people of Illinois, as well as the country as a whole, are faced with massive problems," continues to exist. These problems will become even more acute. Add to this the developing rank-and-file movements and we have the basis for bringing into the arena of struggle, for organizing action around those key resolutions passed at this 19th Convention.