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STEEL CRISIS and FIGHTBACK

TWO WORLDS OF IDEAS
GUS HALL

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RICK NAGIN

RANK AND FILE: POWER BASE
FOR PROGRESS
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LESSONS OF THE GREAT STEEL STRIKE
WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

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Theoretical Journal of the Communist Party, USA

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From the Editors to You . . .

Political Affairs traces its lineage to the magazine *Workers Monthly*, consolidated from three other Left-wing periodicals in 1924. It has continued since then to be, in essence, a workers' magazine. This is true not only of content and outlook.

Our chief editor is a former steelworker. Gus Hall was chairman of the strike committee that led the Little Steel strike of 1937. A worker as editor! In a monopoly-dominated society this is almost unique. Capitalism wants the control of publication, like the control of production in general, exclusively in its own hands or those of its hired pens.

Many of our contributors to this issue are also steelworkers. Workers writing—and being published—this too is nearly unheard of! Companies wanting to hire people have long hung out the sign, "Hands Wanted." And it is only hands they want. They dread that their employees will engage in the questioning, analysis, examination of problems and experience which we encourage.

And so to a great degree this is a product *by* steelworkers as well as *for* steelworkers. No other magazine could make such a claim.

But for us this is not new. The most prolific contributor to these pages until his death in 1961 was William Z. Foster, leader of the 1919 steel strike. One could find in *Workers Monthly* and its successors, the *Communist* and *Political Affairs*, the chronicle of the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union, the great organizing drive of the 1930s and other struggles of the American working class. And so this steel issue adds to a long record of fruitful partisan concern for the problems facing steelworkers.

This concern arises because the Communist Party, USA is a party of the working class, Black and white, men and women. We look at all questions—of politics, economics, culture, ideology—from this class perspective.

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Two Worlds of Ideas

EDITORIAL COMMENT
GUS HALL

There are two basic ways of approaching almost everything in life, including a steel mill.

When a steelworker enters the gates of a steel mill he or she is concerned about the eight hours of hard work ahead, the gap between the wages and the high cost of food and rent, how to protect his or her health, how workers produce much more value than appears in their paychecks, and how to resist speed-up, bosses' harassment and in general the 8-hour drag, as well as being concerned about the company biggies who never enter the mill.

When the bosses enter the same steel mill their thoughts are on how to produce more steel, how to speed up production while cutting wages, how to hide unsafe working conditions, how to divide the ranks of the workers, how to create suspicions and division among Black, white, Chicano and Puerto Rican workers so they won't unite. For them the bottom line is profits.

These are two different approaches, two opposite self-interests, two different worlds in the same steel mill. These two opposite self-interests create an irreconcilable contradiction between the workers and the bosses. The steelworkers and their corporate bosses are parts of two opposing classes in our society—the working class and the capitalist class. The very rich one per cent are interested in getting even richer, and the great majority are interested in making a decent living. The two opposing class interests and the approaches to life are not limited to the steel mills.

The same opposing, contradictory class interests cast their shadows over all phases of life—culture, thought, philosophy, theory and social behavior. One can not escape the class struggle.

Life does not permit even neutrality between these two approaches. In the contest between higher corporate profits and higher wages and better working conditions there is no really neutral ground. In the abstract one has three choices: to support the boss and higher corporate profits and lower wages, or to support and be active in the struggle for higher wages and better working condi-

tions, or to be silent. Silence and inaction may appear to be neutral. But, in fact, silence is support for the corporate drive for higher profits. The boss does not mind passivity or neutrality. In fact he likes it.

So life in a steel mill, like life in general, does not leave room for real neutrality. How can one be neutral about the escalating prices, taxes, rents, bus fares, medical expenses?

Political Affairs is the only working-class theoretical and political magazine in the U.S. All workers can and should study theory and philosophy. They are closely related to the problems of everyday living. Big business spends billions of dollars commissioning people to develop logical-sounding theories and philosophical concepts that defend and justify the robbery and exploitation of workers.

All theory and philosophy are basically partisan. They either explain and support the position of the workers or side with the bosses. Those who support the capitalist system often attempt to cover up their partisanship. Those who are on the side of the boss try to hide the fact that they are partisans of the corporate interests because no workers would accept their ideas if they came out openly and said, "we are for lower wages and higher profits." They hide the truth that they defend the idea of more production with fewer workers and lower wages.

Political Affairs proclaims its working-class partisanship from the rooftops. We are for truth and objectivity, which are on the side of the working class. We are openly working-class partisans and that is how we approach all questions. That is how we approach questions of trade union policy. We believe a union leader must choose between serving and fighting for the interests of the workers, or playing footsie with the corporation executives. When one collaborates with the corporations one can not serve the interests of the workers. So we advocate a militant, fighting trade union policy.

And that is how we see socialism. It is an extension of the class struggle between the two self-interests to the level of political power. The socialist countries are lands where workers are the dominant

Gus Hall is general secretary of the Communist Party, USA.

political force.

That is how we approach the struggle against racism. Racism is unjust and immoral. But in a more basic sense it is an instrument of the corporations to divide the ranks of workers in order to make it possible for them to make extra profits and to prolong their political rule.

Because the theoreticians and philosophers who defend capitalism and exploitation of workers are forced to hide their real intentions, their philosophical and theoretical writings are difficult to read and understand. Much of it sounds like gobbledygook because it is gobbledygook. It is fraud concealing fraud. Workers find it difficult to study such theory and philosophy because it is wrapped in falsehoods and its real purpose is concealed. Because we are partisans of the working class our theoretical and philosophical concepts are clear, truthful and understandable.

Science probes beneath the surface of things to get at their inner, essential meaning. Frequently the meaning of a thing is very different from its superficial appearance.

For example, the earth looks flat to the casual observer. But science teaches us that it is spherical. As you read these lines it would appear that you are motionless. But science informs us you are actually moving at great speed because the earth revolves around its axis as it orbits the sun. It appears that the sun is moving around the earth, when actually the earth is moving around the sun.

The differences between superficial, casual appearances and reality are not limited to the movements of celestial bodies. It is the same in everyday life. When a boss tells a worker, "I have your interests at heart," or "we are one big happy United States Steel Corporation family" it is clear that these are surface expressions, and do not correspond to reality.

There is a body of science that probes beneath appearance to the essential reality of the physical world. There is also a body of science that probes and explains the economic and political world. Marxism-Leninism is such a science.

The science of Marxism-Leninism probes beneath the surface of economic and political developments and explains their inner, essential meaning. Marxism-Leninism gets at the inner truth of things. And

knowledge as a reflection of the objective world is a very important matter for workers. Knowledge of the laws of development enables us to explain why a relationship or process is necessary or inevitable.

For example, Marxism reveals and explains the truth that corporations make profits only by paying the workers less in wages than the value of the products the workers produce—by exploitation. Big business-commissioned theories try to make it appear that corporations make profits by clever management, by selling at higher prices, etc. Marxism refutes such falsehoods as "the cause of inflation is higher wages" or the logical-sounding bunk that "everyone gains from more production," or that "corporate profits are a necessary feature of life."

Political Affairs probes and explains why the U.S. Congress, the President and the Supreme Court have in the past and continue to pass laws, issue executive orders, and make judicial decisions favoring big business, and why they will continue to do so until the workers, Black and white, unite with the people, and especially with people who are victims of racial oppression, and organize a new people's party that will stand up to the profit-hungry corporations.

We explain why young people are increasingly left on the economic sidelines, out of the work process; why there are millions of young people who never have the opportunity to be on any payroll.

We explain why big business is for closing plants and laying off workers, and how they aim to increase profits even while producing less.

We probe such questions as why the new level of technology and automation has not benefitted the workers.

There are hundreds of magazines, newspapers, television commentators and college professors who approach everything from the viewpoint of defending big business and the system of capitalism. Thousands of books and articles are written supporting and defending the corporate interests.

Political Affairs challenges their ideas. Therefore, in order to get the other side—your side—of ideas, theories and philosophical concepts, you should read *Political Affairs*. □

The 1978 Steelworkers Convention

RICK NAGIN

The 1978 United Steelworkers convention, opening September 18 in Atlantic City, comes at a critical juncture for the U.S. working class. From the Bakke decision to the defeat of the Labor Law Reform to the gutting of the Humphrey-Hawkins bill, labor faces a massive reactionary offensive in all phases of society.

This drive is a well-organized, highly financed and dangerous effort by the monopolies to place the full burden of the deepening capitalist crisis on the backs of working people. It includes massive unemployment, soaring inflation and growing tax burdens for workers while big business rakes in record profits.

It includes the new anti-labor assault in the legislative and political arenas orchestrated by the "New Right" with the clear aim of undermining and destroying unions.

It includes the spreading social crisis, especially in the cities where most workers live, as the escalating war budget monopolizes badly needed public funds. In all of this oppressed national minority workers and their communities suffer the worst consequences.

Steelworkers and steel towns have been special victims of the monopoly offensive. The USWA convention will coincide exactly with the first anniversary of the shutdown of Youngstown Sheet and Tube's big mill in Campbell, Ohio, near Youngstown. The anniversary is fateful, for all unemployment and other benefits going to the laid-off workers expire after 12 months.

The Campbell shutdown was only the most dramatic of a whole series of plant and departmental closings in various locations, which terminated some 20,000 jobs. Similar shutdowns hit workers in copper and other metal industries organized by the USWA.

In recent months the steel industry has participated in the overall economic "recovery" with production levels rising to above 90 per cent of capacity. However, the effect on employment has been practically nil. At its low point last February the industry produced 9.6 million tons of raw steel

with 330,000 production workers. According to the last available figures production in May had risen to 12.3 million tons, while employment was still only 338,000. That is, since February, production has risen 28 per cent, but employment only 2.4 per cent.

The fact is, the companies have simply changed the form of their attack on the workers. The shutdowns have been followed by an all-out crackdown. The sharp rise in production with practically no increase in employment has been accomplished through massive speedup, job combinations, harassment, forced overtime, neglect of health and safety, contracting out of jobs and general violation of the contract.

Grievances and accidents have soared to record levels. U.S. Steel admitted that grievances in its Chicago-area plants are running 50 per cent above last year's levels. At the company's plant in Clairton, Pa., the figure is 100 per cent. The union safety committee at USWA Local 1845 (Bethlehem Steel, Los Angeles) reported 15 lost time injuries in May, a new record for this 900-member local.

Wherever they can, the companies have used racism to grease the wheels of this campaign. This is also reflected in the grievance figures. At Local 65 in the South Chicago plant of U.S. Steel, the grievance committee found that 90 per cent of grievances over harassment and punitive disciplinary actions involved Black and Chicano workers, although they are only 60 per cent of the work force.

Grievances are not the only measure of the rising tension, as workers search for ways to resist the company attacks. Slowdowns and other job actions have occurred in major mills such as at Bethlehem Steel in Burns Harbor, Ind., and J & L Steel in Aliquippa, Pa. An unauthorized strike by 4400 workers closed Republic Steel's plant in Warren in July. The reasons given for the walkout were safety hazards and a pile-up of unresolved grievances. At the same time another unauthorized strike involving 3500 aluminum workers closed Alcoa's smelting and fabricating operations in Tennessee. The issue was the company's use of outside contractors to undermine union jobs.

Strikes have now become widespread in metal

Rick Nagin is steel coordinator, Communist Party, USA.

fabricating industries, where a real union-busting drive is underway. The companies have forced take-aways of previously hard-won gains and forced numerous locals into long and bitter strikes, some of which have lasted over a year. Settlements have included a three-year contract with no wage increase imposed by ARCO-Anaconda Brass. ARCO, a giant oil and metals conglomerate, reported record profits last year of \$717 million.

All these bitter realities—the shutdowns, crack-downs and strikes forced on steel and metal workers as well as the general anti-labor offensive—form the backdrop of the USWA convention. The delegates coming to Atlantic City will have these hard problems weighing on their minds and they will be seeking meaningful solutions. The degree to which they are able to agree on such solutions and gear the union up to fight back against the companies will be the measure of success of this convention.

A Bankrupt Position

Unfortunately the top union leadership does not share this outlook on the crisis facing steelworkers and the need to organize a fightback at the convention. In fact, judging from his past performance, we must fear that USWA President Lloyd McBride will try to take the heat off the companies at the convention and argue that the crisis is not the companies' fault at all but is caused by outside forces—foreign imports and government trade policies.

We can expect that McBride will call on the delegates to cooperate with the companies and support them in their efforts to reap bigger profits.

“For steelworkers,” McBride said in a front-page interview in *American Metal Market*, July 19, “the bottom line is to be employed by an industry that is profitable and competitive.” In the same article he reaffirmed his support for the no-strike “Experimental Negotiating Agreement” (ENA) in basic steel on grounds that strikes “devastate corporate profits.”

“The union movement under our free enterprise system is the only way to advance the interest of the membership,” McBride told the Dist. 34 conference last spring in Kansas City, Mo., where 1500 members of Local 13889 have been on strike since May 1, 1977, against Hussman Refrigerator. In the

same speech he charged that those who want “to take a whack at the steel industry” are “blinded with venom.”

McBride's approach is different. “Harmony,” “understanding” and “unity” are his goals in relations with the monopolies. In a joint action with George Stinson, president of National Steel Corporation, McBride has invited Pres. Carter to a Dec. 2 “labor-management prayer breakfast.” The purpose of this disgraceful event, according to their letter to Carter, is to create “a new harmony” between labor and management and “a furthering of the ‘value of the person’ concept, a new direction in today's society toward increased industrial productivity through a framework of unity.”

There is serious question, however, whether McBride can put over his view of things on the convention. For one thing there is growing disunity in his own ranks and serious reservations about his class collaborationist policies.

This is in sharp contrast to the 1976 convention in Las Vegas where a well-organized blitz was launched against Edward Sadlowski, who was soon to announce his candidacy for president on a reform platform. So powerful was the administration's thrust, which enjoyed the full force of I.W. Abel's outgoing machine, that it swept into its orbit a wide sector of Center forces, who otherwise would have supported Sadlowski or at least remained neutral.

This time no such unifying factor exists, although McBride is trying desperately to keep the ghost of that election alive. He has filed a suit against “outside liberal foundations,” which he claims were the base of Sadlowski's support. It is these and other “outside groups,” not steel companies, which threaten the union, he says. He has promised “to take care of” these forces at the convention.

The charge that the union is threatened by “radicals” and “outsiders” has been made at each of the past two conventions. On each occasion, Maoist and other ultra-“Left” fringe organizations were on hand to provide the administration with well-orchestrated provocations. While the same can be expected in Atlantic City, the charges are beginning to have a hollow ring and the gravity of the crisis has become too serious to ignore.

For these reasons signs of division have begun to

appear on the union's International Executive Board. At first, it was just Jim Balanoff, the rank-and-file director replacing Sadlowski in the Chicago-Gary district, who opposed McBride. Then Linus Wampler, director from the Minnesota Iron Range, hardened his opposition after McBride grossly mishandled the big strike of iron ore miners.

Then other directors began to take unorthodox positions. In March Frank Leseganich of the Youngstown district issued a call for nationalizing the steel industry. In April Charles Younglove of the Detroit district joined with Balanoff and a broad array of Left and Center forces to endorse the First National All-Unions Conference for a Shorter Work Week.

In June Robert Petris, director of the western District 38, made an open break when he rose at his district conference in Spokane, Wash., and called for the right of the membership to ratify contracts. The conference endorsed this demand, despite the non-concurrence of the resolutions committee and the presence of McBride and other top officers.

Then later that month McBride was for the first time defeated by a vote of 14 to 11 on the Executive Board over a principled question of bargaining strategy with the steel industry. McBride had proposed telling the industry now about the union's future contract demands. But other officers and directors said that was no way to bargain and that contract demands should certainly not in any case be discussed with the companies before the union's Wage Policy Committee even heard about them.

The directors evidently are feeling more keenly than McBride the beating the union is taking at the hands of the companies. They are directly involved in the strikes that are being lost and they see the sharp decline in the union membership, which now hovers around a million. Many of them also were shaken by the failure of AFL-CIO policy to win such limited measures as the Labor Law Reform and the Humphrey-Hawkins Bill.

A Fresh Rank-and-File Breeze

While the administration forces are beset by doubts and division, the rank-and-file movement on the other hand is larger, better organized, more united and possesses a greater sense of purpose than ever before. The reason for this is that the rank-

THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S PROGRAM

1. **Emergency federal funds to guarantee full wages and benefits to all laid off steelworkers until their jobs are restored.**
2. **Federal takeover of all shut down steel plants, with guarantees that workers and the communities have decisive say over management.**
3. **Complete, specific affirmative action programs against discrimination. End all racist hiring, and promotion practices.**
4. **Federal investigation and action to end special harassment and discipline against minority and female steelworkers.**
5. **Create more jobs in steel:**
 - A. **A 30 hour work week with 40 hours pay; no forced overtime.**
 - B. **Slash the military budget to release funds to pay for constructive peacetime use of steel, such as: Federally financed housing program for 3 million quality, low-rent units each year; build or re-build mass transit; modernize railroads and bridges; build educational, health and recreational facilities, especially in the inner cities, and in rural areas where needed.**
6. **Protect existing jobs by a federal law prohibiting further layoffs. Reject any demands from the steel corporations for wage cuts.**
7. **Strict control over steel prices to guarantee demand and prevent corporate gouging of federal purchases.**
8. **Open new markets for steel. Repeal the Jackson-Vanik amendment. End all trade restrictions against the socialist and developing countries.**
9. **Unite steelworkers world-wide through greater international trade union cooperation; re-affiliation of the AFL-CIO with world trade union bodies.**
10. **Force U.S. steel corporations to invest more at home by prohibiting their investment in low wage, repressive countries such as South Africa and Chile.**

and-file movement has fought and led a whole series of major battles since 1976, including:

- the International election campaign (ending in Feb. 1977), in which the reform forces won a majority in basic steel and in the large locals in all sections of the union;
- the unprecedented mass opposition to the 1977 basic steel contract, which saw numerous major locals pass resolutions of condemnation and local presidents refusing to sign it;
- the four and a half month strike by 16,000 iron

ore workers in opposition to the basic steel settlement;

- dozens of other hard fought strikes and contract battles waged throughout the metal industries;

- the District 31 conference of October 1977, which rejected the steel industry campaign against foreign imports and adopted a rank-and-file program;

- the mass solidarity movement in support of the coal miners' strike despite resistance and, at times, open opposition by top International officers;

- the emergence of organized reinforcements to the rank-and-file movement in the form of women's caucuses and renewed activity of Black caucuses, especially in District 31;

- official participation by 24 steel locals and two district directors in the All-Unions Conference to Shorten the Work Week;

- this year's conferences of Districts 23, 26, 31 and 38, which adopted basic rank and file programs;

- a new level of political consciousness stemming from participation in struggles for pro-labor legislation, affirmative action and women's rights, as well as mass disaffection from the Carter Administration.

Through all these struggles the rank-and-file movement has gained in numbers, influence and experience. It is also more united on program and better organized. Rank-and-file meetings have taken place in a number of areas in preparation for the convention. One such meeting held in May in Youngstown brought together local union officials and rank-and-file leaders from Buffalo, Western Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana. A common program of struggle was hammered out and further meetings are scheduled in the Chicago area.

As a result of the Youngstown meeting the National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee called for unity behind a five point program, including the shorter work week, establishing the right to strike and the right to ratify contracts, the right to strike over health and safety, support for affirmative action and retaining the present referendum method of electing International officers.

The committee issued a petition supporting this program and a set of 20 sample resolutions dealing with the various aspects of organizing a fightback against the companies, advancing union democracy

and political action. The committee has also drawn up other literature explaining its position on the issues and expects that many delegates and entire slates will run and be elected on rank-and-file programs.

As *Political Affairs* goes to press, locals throughout the United States and Canada are meeting to hold elections of delegates and debate and adopt resolutions to submit to the convention. The outlook is that the five point program of National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee will win wide acceptance and that portions may even be adopted by the convention. We can also expect that headway will be made on some more advanced questions, which strike more deeply at the roots of bourgeois ideology.

These questions include eliminating the clause in the union constitution barring Communists from membership, principled support for affirmative action including quotas, nationalization of the steel industry and independent political action. These questions are expected to be debated in locals and at the convention far more extensively than ever before.

The convention itself is expected to be the scene of intense rank-and-file activity. The various caucuses plan to hold meetings, issue newsletters and sponsor hospitality rooms.

In this period the Communist Party is also fighting to present its views and programs. Gus Hall, the Party's General Secretary, has spoken and written extensively on the steel crisis and his speeches at public rallies in Youngstown, Buffalo and Pittsburgh have received wide attention. Copies of these speeches as well as his report to the June meeting of the Central Committee are being mass distributed at steel mills throughout the country together with weekly distributions of the *Daily World* and *People's World*.

The deepening understanding by steelworkers of the nature of the crisis they confront and their growing determination to put an end to it give strong grounds for optimism. There is good reason to hope that the United Steelworkers of America will emerge from its 19th Constitutional Convention stronger, more united and better able to defend its members from the escalating monopoly attacks.

Steel Rank and File: Power Base for Progress

John Hampton

When John L. Lewis of the CIO and Myron Taylor of the U.S. Steel Corporation sat down to sign the first significant contract in the mighty steel industry in 1937, it did not mark the beginning of the union. It was the culmination of many years of hard work by selfless, sometimes forgotten volunteer organizers. It was these dedicated workers who risked their livelihood, and often their very lives, in the struggle for the unionization of one of the nation's most important industries, steel.

With all of his invaluable assistance, including a \$1 million contribution from the treasury of the United Mine Workers, which he led, John L. Lewis did not organize the steelworkers. Nor did Philip Murray, the union's first president, nor I.W. Abel, who joined after the real fights had already been won, nor "Tuxedo Dave" MacDonald, who had the union presidency handed to him on a silver platter. Lloyd McBride wouldn't have touched the dynamic union of the '30s and early '40s, powerfully influenced by the rank-and-file, with a ten foot pole.

* * *

In the '30s, as the nation began recovering from the worst phases of the Great Depression, and the steel mills began rehiring, Black and white workers, native and foreign born, began forming small rank and file groups in the steel communities for the determined purpose of building an industrial union in steel. Some had gained experience in the great steel strike of 1919, led by William Z. Foster. Others got their experience in the historic struggle of the coal miners in the early 1920's. Others had gone through the thankless task of trying to organize steel on a craft basis. Many had no prior trade union experience but were completely convinced of the need of a trade union by the brutal conditions imposed by the steel magnates in the mills. These rank and file groups marked the real beginning of the present mighty steel union.

Steel company magnates and the reactionary

John Hampton is a life-long steelworker and a rank-and-file leader.

leaders of the American Federation of Labor, with their elitist craft union contempt for production workers, were complacent in their conviction that the steel industry could never be organized. Most white steelworkers were foreign born—Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, Finnish, Czech, Italian. Many could barely understand English and conversed in their own languages. Black workers were deliberately segregated into the dirtiest, lowest paid jobs in this low-paid industry. Back-breaking work loads and sickening fumes and dust in the mills kept the steelworkers in a general state of exhaustion. Many lived in dreary company towns, policed by company sheriffs, coal and iron police, the Pinkertons, and the Baldwin-Felts gun thugs who "kept order," and kept out union organizers.

Yes, "Big Steel" and "Little Steel" said it couldn't be done. Tom Girdler, the head of Republic Steel, said he would go and pick apples before he ever recognized a union. But the rank-and-file movement in steel proved it could be done. It united native and foreign-born white workers in a solid bond with Black steelworkers in a mighty campaign. Industrial unionism was victorious in steel, even at the cost of the lives of many workers.

Many, if not most of the leaders of the rank-and-file were either Communists or members of the Young Communist League. As the steel industry became organized, they were elected to local union office as a natural thing. Some, like Gus Hall, now General Secretary of the CPUSA, became steel union organizers. Sixty members of the first Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) were members of the Communist Party. Their dedication, ability, and commitment were vital factors in guaranteeing the success of the union's organizing drive in the face of the adamant, brutal resistance of the powerful steel companies.

* * *

When the steel union was first organized, democracy prevailed in the union on the shop floor. The local unions and the militant shop steward systems were the heart of the union. There was a minimum

of one shop steward for every twenty-five workers. Each local settled its own grievances without "step four," where the International representatives now take control. There was little or no arbitration of grievances. When the companies tried stalling tactics, there was likely to be a strike, formal or informal, departmental or plant-wide. As a result of this method of handling grievances there was a very little back-log of unsettled grievances to clog the grievance machinery.

Shop stewards collected the union dues on the job and turned them over to the financial secretary, who sent the International share to union headquarters in Pittsburgh. If dues payments in the mill fell off due to company pressure, a "dues inspection" was organized. A dozen or so union men and women stood at the mill gates and checked cards. If stamps were not up to date the worker either paid up or missed a day's work. (Very few days were lost this way.)

Democracy prevailed at union meetings. Members voted on everything, including confirmation of appointments to standing committees. All union representatives were elected and subject to recall. The membership formulated contract demands, took strike votes, and voted on contract settlements.

How did we get into the present fix where everything is controlled from above and the top union leadership is more concerned with profits of the steel companies than the welfare of their own members?

* * *

The seeds of our present problems were planted almost at the beginning. The top officers and directors of SWOC were all appointees of John L. Lewis and came from the UMWA. When the United Steelworkers of America (originally abbreviated USA) was formed in 1944, all these officers were incorporated into the new union. Many of the younger, militant rank-and-file leaders who played such a prominent role in organizing the union were in the armed forces.

It has taken years for actual steelworkers to penetrate the top level of union leadership in significant numbers. In the meantime, all avenues of rank-and-file control of our union have been effectively blocked. Only now, as the result of the new rank-and-file upsurge in steel, are we beginning to break

through with a few leaders responsive to the desires of the membership.

But we must look deeper into the real reasons the rank and file lost control of their local unions, and are just now beginning to find their way onto the International Executive Board after all these years.

We must never forget the role of the steel companies in the initiation and development of the policies that greatly weakened the democratic and fighting traditions of rank-and-file unionism.

It's easy to overlook or underestimate the influence of the Industrial Relations Departments set up in all steel mills. But they have a powerful voice in day-to-day operations. This department can and often does over-rule production superintendents. It makes the decisions on how to handle grievances, how to "handle" the union. "Former" FBI and CIA agents are members of its staff, with the job of providing stool-pigeons and company agents in every department of the mill, not only for the purpose of spying on the workers, but to promote red-bating, racism, anti-women and anti-union propaganda.

"Think tanks" made up of representatives from company industrial relations departments develop short term and long range company strategy for dealing with the union. In this new anti-labor offensive, many are planning how best to "do in" the union—destroy it.

Their guiding principle has been to work to separate the union membership from the union leadership, and vice versa. Wherever possible they aim to smuggle company agents into positions of union leadership at all levels, from the shop steward upward.

A second principle, actually part of the first, is to weaken the fighting ability of the membership. Many short term advantages have been passed up to achieve this end. For examples, steel companies signed the agreement to check-off dues without too much objection, once they got agreement from the top union leadership to gut the shop steward system. "Now," the company claimed, "there is no need for a large shop steward system to collect union dues." They sent the money directly to the International, to be doled out to the local unions. And any rebellious local had trouble collecting its share.

The drastic limitations placed on the number of

shop stewards sharply reduced membership contact with the Union. Unsettled grievances on speedup, job combinations, health and safety, discharges and other penalties began piling sky high. In most cases they were either ignored or "horse traded" away at higher union-management levels. This alone has lined the pockets of the steel magnates with billions upon billions of dollars of superprofits over the last thirty years.

The industrial relations department has constantly worked to undermine the authority and effectiveness of the shop stewards and grievance committees. Gradually the role of the union president has become dominant, so that the companies have now reached the point of dealing with only one individual on many union issues. "Why can't you and I sit down and settle this question sensibly?"

This applies even more at higher union levels. Since 1944, steel union members have not had the right to vote on strikes or to ratify contracts. This is in line with the company objectives of keeping the membership on the sidelines.

A recent tactic being perfected by corporate "think tanks" is the widespread hiring of agents-provocateur into the mills under ultra-Left disguises. The role of this disgusting element is to red-bait the Communists from a "super-militant" position, to disrupt and disperse rank-and-file movements, and to prevent at all costs the development of Left-Center coalitions in the trade union movement. These "super-revolutionaries" have no trouble holding jobs, while honest militant workers are constantly hounded.

A prime weapon of the companies in their efforts to weaken rank and file control of the union has been the institution and promotion of racism. Black workers were and are hired into the worst departments, and attempts made to freeze them there by racist seniority systems. Traditionally, in many mills, jobs for Black and other minority workers were limited to the coke ovens, gas engine rooms, janitors, etc. Some minor improvements have been made as a result of the civil rights struggles.

Progressive union leaders, Black and white, have always fought corporate racism. Historically, Communists have demanded plant-wide seniority systems as in the best interests of all steelworkers. Black, as well as Chicano, Puerto Rican and other minority workers were always part of the leadership

of local unions where progressives had influence. But it took years of struggle to get a Black steelworker onto the staff of the International Union. Even the Civil Rights Committee of the International was chaired by a white man until recently. And only at the last convention did the long, hard struggle of Black steelworkers, supported by progressive whites, result in a Black union member being finally elected to the International Executive Board.

The purge of Communist and other left-wing steelworkers was the most devastating blow ever levelled against policies of trade union militancy and the democratic right of the membership to elect officers of their own choosing. In the steel industry alone, red-baiting was used to remove thousands of the most loyal trade unionists from office—not only Communist Party members, but any worker who believed in fighting the steel bosses. Many of these workers lost their jobs through collusion between the company and corrupt union officials. The brutal purge of militant trade union activists took place in the Cold War period initiated by President Harry Truman, falsely proclaimed by former CIO and Steel Union president Phil Murray as a "Friend of Labor." Truman resorted to use of the strike-breaking Taft-Hartley Act more than any other president.

The smashing of the Left in the trade union movement was a deadly blow to the high ideals and goals of the CIO, which went rapidly down hill to become captive to the Right-wing leaders of the AFL. From its beginning, the AFL-CIO was tightly controlled by craft-minded officers completely dedicated to collaboration with the big monopolies.

The Steel Union is just beginning to recover from this blow. In spite of an illegal and undemocratic anti-Communist clause in the Constitution, the Left, including the Communists, is again a force in the United Steelworkers of America.

* * *

In spite of all problems, the steel union membership has never stopped fighting back. The Dues Protest Committee actually elected Don Rarick president over Dave MacDonald, but was counted out. Out of this struggle came RAFT (Rank and File Team), which gained national recognition for a period, only to smother in the embrace of the ultra-Left. The rank and file elected I.W. Abel as International President on his sacred pledge to end "Tuxedo

Unionism," only to see him turn his back on them almost as soon as he took office.

The Ad Hoc Committee of Concerned Steel Workers (Ad Hoc) is a rank-and-file formation of Black steelworkers which has forced several important reforms in relation to Black steelworkers and has made a major contribution to the ongoing rank-and-file upsurge that is challenging the class partnership policies of the McBride leadership. It was the rank-and-file movement of Black steelworkers that forced adoption of the Consent Decree, which, even with its limitations, was a blow to racism and a significant contribution to the unity of all steelworkers.

The National Steelworkers Rank and File Committee (NSRFC) has emerged over the last ten years as an important Left formation within the Steel Union. It has focused the attention of steelworkers on class issues. In the process, it has established a Left force in the union to which the Center can relate. NSRFC has carried on a principled fight against racism and red-baiting. It has been in the forefront of the fight for the rights of women steelworkers. It was among the first to expose the dangerous connotations of the Experimental Negotiating Agreement as a sell-out of the membership in Basic Steel, and defended the Consent Decree against racist attacks from within the Union.

The growth of the women's movement in steel, with active women's committees in many local unions and along district lines, has added new dimensions to the overall struggle of the rank and file. Women steelworkers, in their struggle against discrimination, are contributing to the struggle for better conditions for all workers, and are providing a spur to the whole rank-and-file movement.

The work of the Communist Party among steelworkers and their families over the years, and the emergence of a militant rank-and-file movement with a program of class struggle trade unionism has created conditions for the Center forces to regroup in steel. Steelworkers Fight Back, which was organized around the rank-and-file slate headed by Edward Sadlowski and Oliver Montgomery in the last International Union elections is a clear-cut reflection of this development. In those elections, Left and Center forces put aside differences and

united around a campaign that saw the rank-and-file slate carry almost all the big locals in the USWA.

The Left and Center are again coming together around issues that are bound to emerge at the coming Steel Union Convention in Atlantic City beginning September 18. Such issues as the demand to eliminate the so-called Experimental Negotiating Agreement, for a more democratic union structure, including the right to vote on contract settlements, are already shaping up.

Class collaboration policies projected by the present top union leadership are bankrupt. The future of the union is in the hands of those steelworkers who are patiently building alliances based on the rank-and-file movements. This process is already producing leaders at the local level, and its repercussions are reaching into the International Executive Board, where important differences with class collaboration policies are beginning to develop.

There are many signs of the fruition of the rank-and-file movements in steel. The struggle against the last contract in basic steel; the bitter strike of iron ore miners in Minnesota and Michigan; the election of a Black vice-president; the magnificent support rank-and-file steelworkers gave to the coal miners in their recent 110 day strike.

The strengthening of a Left-Center alliance in steel is the only guarantee that the progressive developments already in the making will continue; that the rank and file struggle for militant, democratic trade union policies will end in success. Without a Left, the Center forces who see through the bankrupt policies of company-minded union officials like Lloyd McBride will be trapped. The only way out for them is alliance with the Left. And there can be no Left without Communists. Therefore, the building of the Communist Party in the mills is a component part of the development of a Left-center coalition around issues of mutual agreement. The tremendous progress made by steelworkers in the early days of the CIO shows this is the way to go. The upcoming convention of the USWA in September can be the next milestone on the road toward building the kind of coalition which can turn our union around.

A Few Basics on the Steel Crisis

EDWARD BOORSTEIN

The U.S. steel industry is in crisis. Within the last two years, one plant closing has followed another and 60 thousand steel workers have been laid off. And the end is not yet. The economy is now in the recovery phase of the business cycle and this obscures what is happening beneath the surface in the industry. The corporations that run the industry are planning to "rationalize" it—to carry out mergers, consolidations, the elimination of old plants, the building of new modern plants, and to lay off still more workers. This program, which has already gotten under way, could put an additional 150,000 steelworkers out of work.

To cover up the true causes of the crisis, the steel corporations and their mouthpieces put out a steady flow of hogwash. Everybody is responsible for the crisis except the corporations themselves. The workers are responsible because their wages are too high and their productivity too low. The government is responsible for pressing costly environmental standards. Foreign imports are responsible.

Hogwash makes a bad medicine, and swallowing it won't cure the steel industry, but only make it worse. The sickness—the terrible problems that the corporations dump on the steelworkers—can only be solved if its real causes are understood and dealt with.

There are two basic causes. One, the industry is run for private profit by corporate monopolies. And two, the economy of the United States is being run according to distorted priorities which reduce the demand for steel.

Private Profit

As Edgar Speer, the chairman of U.S. Steel, once frankly put it, the business of the steel industry is not to make steel, but to make money. This fact is fundamental. It affects everything. Profits are the only thing the corporations truly understand.

The companies act ruthlessly on the basis of what will give them the highest profits. They fight for low wages. They press for speedup and increased pro-

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ductivity. They tighten plant discipline, harass workers, carry out crackdowns—all to get the workers to speed up to the limits of human endurance. They introduce new machinery and equipment to increase productivity. Then taking advantage of the speedup and the new machinery and equipment, they lay off workers by the thousands without a second thought.

Forced overtime, which has been growing across the years, is another example of how the desires and interests of the workers don't count for the companies. When it comes to calculating costs and their effect on profits, the companies measure everything very carefully. They often can make more money forcing already employed workers to work overtime than by hiring new workers. It doesn't matter that many unemployed steelworkers would be overjoyed to do the work. It doesn't matter if already employed workers don't want the overtime. The company saves money by forced overtime—for example, by not having to pay for training and breaking in-time and not making additional payments for social security taxes and fringe benefits.

In their coldblooded disregard of workers' interests, the companies respect nothing, not even the health and very lives of the workers. Because health, safety, and pollution standards cost money, the companies fight them. They fight the new coke oven standard while polluted coke batteries spread cancer to steel workers and others for miles around. As was recently discovered, nearly half the foundry workers in U.S. Steel's South Chicago plant suffer from silicosis. The companies neglect to install safety switches and railings and other safety equipment—and so workers are burned, maimed, and killed.

These actions are nothing new. Steel companies have been acting this way for over one hundred years. But now the companies have a new public relations argument to hide their greed. Excessive wages, low productivity, and unreasonable pollution standards are responsible for the crisis and the layoffs—and that is why the companies are against them.

This argument is a phony. The steel crisis has been developing just as the wages of foreign steel workers have been catching up to those of American workers. Labor productivity in the U.S. steel industry—according to President Carter's Council on Wage and Price Stability—is the highest in the world. Japanese steel companies, COWPS shows, spend more on environmental protection than American companies.

One thing keeps being proved over and over again by company actions: there is a basic conflict of interest between the corporations and the workers. The interest of the corporations is in profits. The interest of the workers is in higher wages, job security, shorter hours, no speedup, and health and safety standards that will truly protect them. These two sets of interests can not be reconciled. There has to be struggle between the workers and the corporations.

Monopoly

A second fundamental fact about the steel industry is that it is run by monopolies—a small number of gigantic corporations monopolize the steel market of the United States. This is fundamental because monopolies make money by changing artificially high prices, even though this means restricting production and jobs. Monopoly means fewer jobs.

When there is true competition in an industry—that is, when there are a large number of companies—no single company, or group of companies can raise prices by restricting production and reducing the flow of goods to the market. The price is set by the market. Any company that tries to charge above the market price will simply not be able to sell its product. Each company makes the maximum profits by producing as much as it can and selling at the market price.

With monopoly, the situation is different. Now, single companies, or a few companies acting in collusion, can make prices artificially high. Of course, higher prices mean reducing the amount of goods sold. But this doesn't bother the companies. It is the amount of profits, not the amount of goods sold, that count for the monopolies. And they can make bigger profits by selling less steel at higher prices than more steel at low prices.

For decades, the U.S. steel companies have been

pushing prices ever higher despite the fact that this restricts consumption. Higher prices cause some people who would like to buy a steel product to do without. They cause some users of steel to shift to other materials—plastic, aluminum, etc. They cause some customers to obtain their steel through imports. Monopoly prices lose to the U.S. steel industry millions of tons of possible sales each year. But the industry keeps pushing the prices higher because it makes bigger profits that way.

Steel Imports

One of the biggest hullabaloo's raised by the companies is on steel imports. Imports, say the companies, are responsible for the crisis and the layoffs. This argument seems to have a certain plausibility, but it is a company trap.

First, who is responsible for the imports? The answer is the U.S. companies. These companies came out of World War II cock of the walk. The U.S. steel industry was the most advanced in the world. It produced more steel than the rest of the world combined. It was dominant in the world's export markets. The U.S. companies used this situation not to advance the industry, but to charge top prices and gather monopoly profits. The result was a severe weakening in the position of the U.S. industry. While U.S. steel exports stagnated, those of Japan and other countries soared. Not only were the U.S. companies outcompeted in foreign markets, but Japan and the others moved into the U.S. market itself. It was the unwillingness of the U.S. companies to forego monopoly profits from monopoly prices that enabled the foreign companies to gain their foothold in the American market.

Second, although imports are important, they can not explain the steel crisis. In 1975 and 1976, imports were actually much lower than they had been in many previous years. In 1977, they were 19 million tons compared to about 18 million tons in 1968, 1971 and 1972. This small difference of 1 million tons in imports doesn't explain anything.

Not only are imports not the cause of the steel crisis, but restricting them is not a solution to it. The United States is a big exporter of steel products. It exports over \$50 billion of machinery and equipment, most of it made of steel. Restriction of steel imports by the United States creates the danger of retaliatory action by the countries affected. A

trade war could result which would cost additional hundreds of thousands of U.S. workers their jobs.

The big U.S. steel companies, true to their monopoly nature, are mostly worried about imports because the foreign competition hinders them in jacking up prices. Early this year a system of so-called trigger prices on imports—which prevents them from being sold below a certain level—went into effect. Have the companies tried to use this to recapture some of their lost market here from the foreign competition? No. They have simply taken advantage of it to raise their own prices. They have raised their prices several times this year, almost as much in the first three months of this year as in the whole of last year. The trigger price system is not designed to help the steelworkers. It won't create the jobs the workers need. It is a system whereby the government enables the steel corporations to raise their prices.

Distorted Priorities and Weak Demand for Steel

Along with the monopoly nature of the industry, the second basic cause of the steel crisis is the stagnation in the demand for steel in the United States. The U.S. steel industry has been growing only weakly. Steel production in 1975 was less than it was in 1955. Steel production in 1976 and 1977 was less than it was ten years earlier. The reason the steel crisis became acute in the last few years is that the recession that began in 1973 brought a drop in the consumption and production of steel of 35 million tons. This drop is much more important than the imports. And it gives a clue to what will happen when the next recession hits.

The weak growth in the U.S. demand for steel is not due to a lack of need for it. It is due to the distorted priorities by which the U.S. economy is being run. A hundred and thirty billion dollars is budgeted to go down the drain as military expenditures, while the basic infrastructure of our economy is being allowed to decay.

Our cities are decaying. They need more housing, schools, hospitals, and childcare and recreation centers.

Many of our cities need mass transit systems.

Our railroad track and roadbeds, interstate highway system, bridges, water supply and sewage systems and dams are not being properly maintained or rebuilt when necessary. As a result, there were

8,000 train derailments last year; every other day a bridge collapses some place; dams break and overflow.

While the military expenditures use very little steel per dollar, the sorely needed expenditures on the infrastructure would use enormous amounts of steel.

“Rationalizing” the Industry

Obtaining import restrictions is only part of the company strategy for meeting the steel crisis—the short-run part. Over the longer run, the corporations plan to meet the situation of stagnating demand and fierce foreign competition by restructuring the industry, by “rationalizing” it.

Mergers like those between Lykes-Youngstown Sheet and Tube and LTV-Jones & Laughlin are not isolated events, but part of a process. The companies are considering more such mergers. They plan through mergers and consolidations to be able to close down the less efficient, less profitable older plants and concentrate operations in the best older plants and in new ones. U.S. Steel President David Roderick has called for an industry-wide shakeout, and one of his assistants, William Rosch, has talked of reducing the number of steel companies to only five.

The steel corporations are discussing how much capital spending they will have to undertake to modernize the industry. Some, such as Thomas C. Graham, president of Jones & Laughlin, have argued that minor spending and more effective management (through mergers and consolidations, etc.) would mean a big improvement in profits. But even they admit that eventually major capital spending will have to be undertaken. Others are more “radical.” Chairman Speer of U.S. Steel has argued for a program of building “greenfield” plants—plants built from scratch in what are now green fields—that would eliminate 40 to 60 per cent of labor costs. Speer argues against making sizable expenditures on existing plants. He wants brand-new ultramodern plants that would combine the entire steelmaking process into one continuous operation, using advanced computer systems.

Regardless of the particulars of how the “rationalization” is carried out, it is being done in the interests of the companies, not the workers. It is being done in the interests of profits. And mergers

and consolidations—reducing the number of companies—are increasing the degree of monopoly in the already highly monopolized industry. For the workers, the mergers and the building of new modern plants means further massive layoffs. Eventually, the number of new layoffs, on top of those that have already taken place, could reach 150,000.

At the moment, the temporary increase in steel demand, brought about by the stage of the business cycle we are in, has eased the pressure on the companies. But with the next downturn the pressures on the industry will once again increase, the companies will accelerate their plans for “rationalization” and layoffs.

Class Collaboration

The situation in the steel industry cries for fighting actions by the United Steel Workers in defense of workers’ interests. A workers’ program for the industry can only be based on an understanding from the workers’ point of view of the causes of the industry’s problems. But instead the USW has been engaged in collaboration with the monopolies.

Under Abel the USW entered into the Experimental Negotiating Agreement (ENA) in which it gave up the right to strike. Abel boasted about the statesmanlike character of this action, about how the steel industry had become an “island of stability” under ENA. The developing steel crisis shows how wrong Abel was. Giving up the right to strike has left the union disarmed—which would always be wrong, but is especially harmful in a period when fighting action is as strongly called for as the present.

McBride continues the same line. He serves as a mouthpiece for the monopolies, promoting their explanations and their solutions to the industry’s problems. Here is an example: “For the past several years, our steel industry has not been permitted to operate at peak capacity because a share of their market has been allocated, apparently by our government, to foreign producers. . . . Because of a wariness of the future, steel has little incentive to expand and little capital to modernize.”

The villain is foreign imports. The industry just needs better “incentives.” It just needs “a little capital.” By mouthing this company line on imports and the need for “incentives” for the com-

panies, McBride is simply helping support the trigger price import restriction which doesn’t do anything for the workers, but helps the companies charge monopoly prices and gain monopoly profits.

What needs to be done? To see that modernization is carried out in line with the interests of the workers, not the monopolies. To fight for a setup in which the workers would participate in the control of the industry. To fight for a turnaround in the country’s priorities to increase the demand for steel. To fight for guarantees that if there are any laid off workers—although with the right policies and measures there needn’t be any—they all receive retraining and new jobs at equal pay and benefits. And to lead this fight is the job of Lloyd McBride and the other union leaders.

The term class collaboration is not just a fancy word. Facts show the great damage that McBride’s class collaboration policy has meant for workers.

The Solution

Steelworkers are confronted with a number of immediate problems: eliminating ENA and regaining the right to strike; banning forced overtime and shortening the work week; ending all discrimination against minorities and women within the industry; enforcing pollution limitations and other health and safety standards; strengthening union democracy. But even beyond these, more fundamental solutions would require three main things.

1) The nationalization of the steel industry.

2) A drastic reduction in the military budget and the use of the billions saved for a gigantic program for the rebuilding of the decayed or neglected parts of the U.S. economy.

3) The elimination of the restrictions on trade with the socialist countries, which costs the loss of millions of tons of lost sales of steel and steel products.

The steel monopolies can not be trusted with the job of getting the steel industry out of the mess it is in. They are the ones who led it into the mess. If the job of modernizing the industry is done according to the standards of private profit and monopoly, it will mean disaster to the workers. It will mean mass layoffs, mass unemployment, a big series of ghost towns in what were once going working-class communities. It will mean great damage to the economy of the country as a whole.

Continued on page 28

The Struggle Against Racism in Steel

MIKE BAYER

The Bakke decision by the Supreme Court, which is based on the infamous fraud of "reverse discrimination," makes it urgent to review the status of the fight against racism in the steel industry. It is a moment, first of all, to sound the alarm against any attempts to use the Bakke decision to undermine the limited victories won against *real* discrimination against Black workers and women by the steel monopolies five years ago (Aug. 1, 1973) in the Fairfield decision.

This article will concentrate on Basic Steel, in which discrimination has a number of peculiarities requiring concrete examination. The primary question is discriminatory patterns in job placement and promotion.

Basically, the relative conditions of Black workers have not greatly changed in the post-World War II period. The relative gains for Black workers, and the greatest blows against discrimination, were accomplished mainly during the period of the organization of the CIO and the first contracts. This was also the period of greatest advance for white steelworkers as well. The retreat from a class struggle approach by the USWA leadership under Dave MacDonald, I.W. Abel and Lloyd McBride and the failure to continue the fight against discrimination in the mills are two sides of the same coin.

It is easy for a new generation of workers to underestimate the qualitative leap in the conditions of the U.S. working class, especially Black workers, achieved by the organization of the CIO. The benefits accruing to workers were enormous, not just in winning the right to organize, but in all aspects of their working lives. For instance, in the steel industry from 1935 to 1939, wages increased 27 per cent. This was done without speedup, and in a period without substantial inflation.

During this period the positions of Black steelworkers in relation to their fellow white workers advanced. This advance was the result of a conscious policy of the CIO to end the companies'

policy of discriminating against Black workers.

The steel companies had been following a policy of restricting Black employment in the industry, especially in skilled jobs. The wage differential between Black and White steelworkers by 1935 was such that Black steelworkers earned only 79 per cent of what white steelworkers earned. The organization of the CIO changed this dramatically. Not only were more Blacks hired as the mills were organized, but by 1938 Black steelworkers had closed the gap in wages by almost one third, earning 85 per cent of what white workers got.

It was the CIO's policy of demanding across the board money increases rather than percentage increases which was primarily responsible for this change. They also fought for higher pay scales for the lowest job classifications, where most of the Black workers were concentrated. For instance, ". . . the 1937 wage increases increased average wages by 10%, but that of common labor by 19%." (Ed Greer, *Racism and U.S. Steel*)

Also, the development of seniority programs, grievance procedures, and job classification systems were especially important to Black workers. They had suffered the most from the companies' total control of promotion, discipline and pay rates. At the time, any seniority system was a giant step forward.

The impact of the CIO on Black steelworkers was probably best summed by Joe Cook, Black president of the Valley Mold Lodge (Chicago) of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) who told a reporter early in 1940,

Has the CIO played fair with us Negro workers? Well, look at the new clothes our children wear; the homes that we are paying off since the SWOC enrolled us and showed us how to fight for decent wages and better working conditions. See how the white and colored steelworkers get along together since they started wearing the union buttons. (Philip Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker*, International Publishers, New York, 1976, p. 232.)

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It is important that Blacks did not make even so basic an advance as being welcomed into the CIO after years of exclusion by the AFL unions simply out of altruism of either the leaders of the CIO like John L. Lewis or their fellow workers. The fact is that the CIO could not have been organized on the jim crow basis of many old AFL craft unions.

Some 85,000 Black workers were employed in the steel industry at the time, and they joined enthusiastically in building the SWOC. Foner points out that it was the Black coal and steel workers in Alabama who led the fight to organize in that state. In some areas in Pittsburgh, Gary and Chicago Black steelworkers signed up for the union in even greater proportion than their white brothers.

The proportion of Black workers in Basic Steel has since grown greatly. In 1940 Black steelworkers numbered some 95,000, 5.9 per cent of the work force, the highest concentration of Black workers in industry. In 1950, Blacks had advanced to 13.1 per cent of the work force. Since then Black workers have further increased their share of the jobs in Basic Steel.

While there are relatively more Blacks working in steel today, some other indicators are the same as 30 years ago or worse.

Discrimination Continues

It is necessary to stress the *continuing* problem of company discrimination, because there has been a campaign by the steel companies to shift the focus to other factors, the key one being the union. They admit to discriminatory practices in the past, but claim that since the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964 their hands have been clean. It is the seniority system, they say, which the union insists on enforcing, which perpetuates the effects of discrimination today.

It is true that there are aspects of the seniority system which do perpetuate the problem. This will be dealt with later. But, to blame the seniority system exclusively is to ignore reality.

Bethlehem's Burns Harbor, Indiana, plant is a good case in point. This mill was opened after 1964; all of its employees were hired after the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Except for a very few workers transferred from other Bethlehem plants, the work force was recruited and shaped solely by the de-

sign of Bethlehem Steel.

This mill was built in practically all-white Porter County, but it is less than 10 miles from Gary, Indiana. Gary was already at that time over 50 per cent Black. Moreover, Black workers in Gary had been working in the steel mills of USS, Inland and Youngstown Sheet and Tube for three generations. If Bethlehem wanted trained steelworkers, they would naturally hire Blacks.

However, of the workers hired during the first six years the mill was open only 8 per cent were Black. Within the mill only 3.5 per cent of the craft workers were Black. Both Inland Steel and Youngstown Sheet and Tube, which are farther from Gary than Burns Harbor is, had at least triple this percentage of Black workers. Even in the coke plant and blast furnace at Burns Harbor only 13 per cent of the work force was Black.

Struggles by Black workers in that mill; the national court suits by other Black workers against Bethlehem at Sparrows Point, Lackawanna and against United States Steel at Fairfield, Alabama, and the national Consent Decree signed by the companies, the government and the USWA, have resulted in the proportion of Blacks in the mill rising to 15 per cent, still less than half that of other area mills.

Within the work force the patterns of discrimination remain clear. Today, among craft workers only 6 per cent are Black. (Only 15 per cent of Black workers are in the craft jobs while 41 per cent of white workers have these jobs.) Among laborers, Blacks account for 27 per cent and among janitors 43 per cent.

Almost half (44 per cent) of Black production workers are concentrated in departments employing only one-third of the mill's production workers. These have generally either inferior working conditions (coke plant) or low money jobs (shipping).

A great lesson of the CIO was that steel could not be organized without the Black workers. When Black workers and white workers fought together they made significant advances in their conditions. But after WW II, the Murray-MacDonald-Abel leadership increasingly abandoned any struggle for the rights of Black workers. Related to this was their drive to bar Communists from the industry. Communists from the beginning had been the force

in the union which most consistently raised the question of Black-white unity as a principled question. Communists worked to make sure that jim crow conditions were not tolerated in the new union. The Murray-MacDonald drive to oust the Communists took this into account and conducted a racist campaign accusing the Communists of "discrimination in reverse" against whites. This was especially done because Communists advocated Black representation in the top leadership of the union. This opportunist campaign to inflame racism among white members of the union was a conscious policy. In line with this, in 1948 the leadership refused to recommend changes in the seniority system even though a union committee had found that it was helping perpetuate discrimination in the mills. The attack on Communists was extended to all progressive forces in the union, including the Black workers.

Black Representation

While MacDonald, Abel and McBride have led the USWA down the path of class collaboration and engendered splits within the union based on racism, steelworkers have been fighting back. A successful assault on the policies of the industry and the discriminatory practices of the International require a unified fight by Blacks and whites throughout the union. For most of the '50s the fights Black workers conducted were based on influencing local conditions where they were a numerically sizable factor. This was especially true in District 31.

The Left, which supported equality for Black workers, remained a factor in this area during most of this period and Blacks here became the balance of power in most of the basic locals. Black grievancemen and local officers were elected within these locals.

During this period too, Black workers attempted to fight within the union for a change of policy at the national level, both in respect to dealing with the company and in terms of Black representation. This fight met with little success, because Blacks were fighting without sufficiently strong allies.

The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s combined with the obvious bankruptcy of the MacDonald leadership began the process of change. Most steelworkers were fed up with the leadership.

When the Abel challenge to MacDonald surfaced, many rank and filers were ready. This was especially true of the Black workers. Abel saw this, and recognizing that he could not win without Black votes he made a number of commitments to Black leaders, especially in terms of Black representation.

At the same time, the mass civil rights movement had been changing the atmosphere in the country. More and more whites, including white steelworkers, were realizing that there was a special problem of racism in this country, that it was wrong, and that changes needed to be made. This helped generate a climate in which the demands of Black steelworkers for an end to second class status and the demands of all steelworkers for an end to the sell-out policies merged. The result was that I.W. Abel became president.

But, once again, Black steelworkers found their hopes dashed on the rocks of opportunism and racism.

As a result of these experiences many Black workers decided that a more organized expression of this struggle was required. While groups of Black workers had always existed within the steel mills, the Black caucus movement now became a general feature. Most of these caucuses came into existence around the problems which Black workers faced on the job, especially discriminatory employment practices and racist harassment. At the national level "Ad Hoc," a union-wide Black caucus, came into existence.

These caucuses became a spur to the developing rank-and-file movement. In many instances, as at Republic Steel in Chicago or USS in Gary, these caucuses actually were transformed into multiracial caucuses. More often, the example they set to the other workers gave them encouragement to begin organizing in their own interests. These shop Black caucuses and the Black-and-white rank-and-file caucuses became the core of a united rank-and-file movement by the late 'sixties.

Black workers' experiences convinced them that the question of fighting the racist policies of the companies was inexorably linked with the question of attaining Black representation in the union leadership, especially the top leadership in the International Executive Board. Just as the action of the Murray leadership in the 'forties to forestall any guarantees for Black representation on the

Executive Board signalled the collapse of the USWA's commitment to the struggle against racism then, it was the refusal in 1968 of I.W. Abel to come across on his commitment to help elect a Black district director which signalled that his promises of 1964 had been discarded.

It was not until 1976, and the threat of a united Black and white rank-and-file challenge for the leadership of the Union around the candidacy of Ed Sadlowski, that the International machine gave in and slated a Black, Leon Lynch, for vice president on the McBride ticket.

Some Victories

During this period Black workers were also fighting the companies. Feeling the strength of the civil rights movement which had brought about the Civil Rights Act of 1964, lawsuits were filed at many mills. Three decisions are most important: on Bethlehem at Lackawanna; the labor department decision on Bethlehem at Sparrows Point, Maryland; and the suit brought by Black workers at USS's Fairfield, Ala., plant.

The Lackawanna decision was the first by a U.S. Appeals Court, which firmly established the company's responsibility for segregation in the mills. It also pointed out that the seniority system, based on departmental rather than plant seniority, perpetuated this discrimination. The judge ordered that all Black workers be allowed to transfer to other jobs on the basis of their plant seniority.

The Sparrows Point decision of then-Labor Secretary Luther Hodgson extended this concept to include rate retention for Black workers who did transfer to departments from which they were formerly excluded. It also established an affirmative action program with quotas for minority employment in the crafts.

The final decision, Fairfield, went even further. The court found that Black workers who had been discriminated against were entitled to back pay to make up for what they had been cheated out of by the companies' discrimination.

These three decisions marked a major breakthrough for all steelworkers, Black and white. They opened the door to the removal of racial disunity.

In order to counter the effect of these decisions the companies, the government, and—to their everlasting shame—the Abel leadership came up with

the Consent Decree.

They could not pretend that the Lackawanna, Sparrows Point and Fairfield decisions had never existed, and were therefore forced to include in the Consent Decree the principles which had emerged from these prior decisions: plant wide seniority, affirmative action, rate retention on transfers and payment for what Black workers had been deprived of by years of company discrimination. That they were forced to retain these principles was a great victory because it established the legitimacy of the key elements needed to end racist practices in the steel mills. But, the Consent Decree leaves much to be desired.

On plant-wide seniority the kicker has always been that few workers will take a substantial pay cut to transfer. Rate retention is therefore key. But, under the terms of the Consent Decree rate retention is limited to two years and Black workers are not allowed to "leapfrog" within new departments on the basis of their plant seniority. The result has been to continue "locking" Blacks into less desirable departments.

On affirmative action to open the skilled trades to Blacks the Consent Decree transformed quotas into "goals." In fact it even undermined these by saying, "No company's compliance status shall be judged solely by whether or not it reached its goals and met its time-tables and implementing ratio. Rather, . . . compliance . . . shall be determined by reviewing the extent of the Company's good-faith efforts. . . ." The provisions of the Consent Decree also make a mockery of the back pay provisions. If a Black worker had been employed by the steel companies for ten years in 1974, he was paid on the average \$13,600 less than the average white worker during that period. But the maximum award under the Consent Decree was less than \$800. To add insult to injury, part of that money came from the workers' own dues because the Consent Decree held the union, and therefore the members who pay the dues of the union, including Black workers, equally guilty. Black workers were also compelled to relinquish further claims for past discrimination.

It is important to keep a perspective on the Consent Decree. It has both positive and negative features.

Wherever Black workers were strong enough, especially where multiracial rank-and-file

movements were also strong, it was possible to use the principles embodied in the Consent Decree to make some advances in the fight against discrimination.

But it is also true that the Consent Decree was collusion on the part of the government, the companies and the union to dilute the victories won in the Lackawanna, Sparrows Point and Fairfield cases, and to "cut their losses." In that sense it continued the dirty business of racist discrimination.

Naturally, the companies have also tried to disguise their attacks on the work and other conditions of all workers under the cloak of the Consent Decree, falsely charging that the Consent Decree "made them do it." Such hypocrisy needs to be unmasked. The companies are calculating that they can dupe the white workers into fighting the just, if partial, concessions won towards equality for Blacks, and thereby split and weaken the union.

However, there are good indications that the companies are miscalculating. Objectively, developments of the last decade move in the direction of re-forging the Black-white unity of the CIO period. This clearly emerged during the last International election campaign. Tens of thousands—the majority—of basic steelworkers came to the point of rejecting the collaborationist policies of the top leadership. Local rank-and-file forces won office in many major locals on a program of democracy within the union and fighting the companies. The most conscious elements, the Left and especially the Communists, have emerged in the course of this struggle as indispensable to the rank-and-file movement. A special role is now being played by the Center forces, who in response to developments in the economy and union are emerging from the domination of the Right wing to join with the Left in creating a majority movement. This augurs well for the struggle against racism in steel.

Probably the clearest expression of this development can be found in a leaflet which was issued during the 1976 election campaign. This leaflet was

issued by an ad hoc coalition in District 31. It included Black, Latin and, most importantly, white signers (in fact, a majority were white). It called for a program to "abolish company discrimination . . . to . . . put the Unity back in our Union." They issued the program because they found the "leadership . . . less willing to fight (while) the steel companies have escalated their campaign of divide and rule." After detailing the nature of the racist assault of the companies they called for a full program to eliminate racism in the mills and changes in the union so that "leadership at all levels of the union . . . reflect the racial and sexual composition of the membership." This statement was signed by over 120 members of the USWA, most of them in the leadership of local unions.

The rank-and-file movement continues to consolidate and expand its base. Part of its appeal to the membership is that it represents an attempt to recreate the unity the USWA once had and which the workers know is needed more than ever today.

But, there remain obstacles to overcome. Opportunism on this question, the basis for which is the influence of racism, including on leading figures, is a wire which can trip the progressive forces in the USWA.

It is the responsibility of white workers, the most advanced Left workers in the first place, to avoid that being repeated. They must demonstrate that they are willing to take up the fight on hiring and promotion.

White steelworkers will have to take up the fight to modify seniority systems in order to overcome the effects of discrimination.

Most especially, they have to demonstrate that in the workers' own house, the USWA, the second class status of minority steelworkers will be brought to an end.

These are not purely "moral" questions. These steps are not only right, but necessary. As the CIO made history by putting Black organizers in the field in the 'thirties, it is time to make history again.

The Communist Party and Steelworkers

JIM WEST

The saga of steelworkers' struggle to organize against the corporate steel giants is inseparable from the history and the role of the Communist Party. Many myths have been fabricated to erase or obscure this fact. For example, there is the myth that Philip Murray (an associate of John L. Lewis in the United Mine Workers and later the first president of the United Steelworkers of America) was riding in a train in 1937 with David J. McDonald (later to succeed Murray as USWA president) when he suddenly got the inspiration to organize the basic steel industry. Such myths were concocted by hired pens of Murray and McDonald and the steel companies.

The myths are not a simple case of not knowing the truth. They are deliberate attempts to hide the truth about Communists and the rank-and-file and the lessons to be learned from their role in the long and arduous conflict to rise from the depths of 60 to 80 hour work weeks and subsistence pay checks. There is a direct connection between the anti-Communist clause in the USWA constitution and these company-serving myths and aims.

The struggles of steelworkers for union organization go back a century. They were marked by such hard-fought battles as the 1892 five-month strike at the Homestead-Carnegie plant, which was brutally smashed by company thugs and state police, with the loss of many steelworkers' lives.

These struggles either ended in failure to organize or in weak company unions such as the old Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin workers, which took in only skilled workers. Most strikes were spontaneous struggles waged without a comprehensive strategy and plan. Nonetheless, they were powerful testimony to the deep, class instincts of the workers and their aspirations for a better life.

Out of these setbacks and partial victories and the daily struggle on the job a Left trend arose among steelworkers. Eighteen years after Homestead it became the base from which William Z. Foster led the Great 1919 Steel Strike.

In the Left trend were many Left-wing, anti-war
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Socialists and militant I.W.W. members who joined with other socialist-minded workers to establish the Communist Party in 1919. Foster too shortly became a Communist, the leader of the Party's trade union work and subsequently its national chairman and presidential candidate.

In preparation for the steel organizing drive, Foster based himself on the rank-and-file Left trend. He won the backing of the Chicago Federation of Labor, the most powerful base of the old AFL. The Chicago Federation was under the leadership of a Left-Center coalition. Without this coalition, without the ceaseless, special efforts of the Left and much of the Center to unite the native born, Black and white, with the foreign-born (who at that time made up the majority of the production workers, the lowest-paid, the unskilled and semi-skilled) and without the strong support of the Left and Center forces in other unions and in many communities, the 1919 strike would have been but another in a long series of unsuccessful struggles producing no lasting gains.

But this strike was different. It was the first nearly industry-wide strike. It resulted in abolishing the 12 hour day. And, while it didn't succeed in establishing the union, it showed that the steel trust was not invincible, and could be compelled to deal with the workers. That is why history records it as "the great steel strike of 1919."

What explains the difference?

The difference is to be found in the strategy advanced by Foster and the Left: reliance on the rank and file; the Left-Center coalition policy and the development of the strike support movement. To boil it down to its essence: class unity in every sense. This is the great lesson of the 1919 steel strike. It was this which made possible the *lasting* gain of a substantial reduction in the hours of work. Also the 1919 strike took place shortly after the Russian Revolution. This great event helped spur among steelworkers the ideas of unity, struggle, organization. It was insufficient class unity due to the betrayal by the Samuel Gompers Right-wing AFL top leaders,

who sabotaged solidarity and failed to rally the labor movement in support of the strike which accounts for the failure to establish a lasting union.

The lessons of the Russian Revolution, together with the steel, packinghouse and other strikes, showed many strike leaders and workers, Foster among them, the need for a special class organization of workers dedicated to forging class unity, to the alliance of the working class with other victims of monopoly power, to the goal of socialism.

Such an organization was the Communist Party. Foster and others soon joined. What Foster and his co-workers had learned from experience coincided with the principles upon which the Communist Party is based.

The Communist Party arose as an objective necessity. The experiences of struggle, the lessons of life in the steel industry all pointed towards this need. It was imperative to have a force which understood the class struggle, the nature of the enemy and the line of march to the future to insure that unions could be organized, maintained and strengthened.

From the time of its birth, the Communist Party's history is intimately bound up with the history of steelworker's struggles. It is inseparable from every *lasting* gain of steelworkers to this day. The close association of the Communist Party with steelworkers is symbolized by William Z. Foster and Gus Hall, who played a leading role in the "Little Steel" strike of 1937.

The 18 years from the 1919 strike to the 1937 organizing strikes which gave birth to the USWA were marked by persistent, tireless work of Communists to unionize this basic industry.

When the AFL and the Amalgamated refused to organize the steel and metal workers, the Communists and other Left forces built the Steel and Metal Workers Industrial Union in a number of key fabricating plants. They established rank-and-file organizing committees in the basic steel plants, where they had to work in clandestine conditions in defiance of company thugs and threats of dismissal. Within some Amalgamated locals, such as U.S. Steel's South Works plant in South Chicago and in the Jones & Laughlin plant in Aliquippa, Communists, including some in leadership, worked to break down the barriers to union membership for the foreign-born and the unskilled and semi-skilled.

Assisted by the Young Communist League and the International Workers Order (a Left-led fraternal organization based largely among the foreign born) the Communists concerted their efforts toward the single goal of establishing an industrial union for all steel and metal workers. The main impetus came from the rank-and-file organizing

Working on the shop floor and in the communities Gus Hall, Jack Johnstone, Pat Cush, Ben Carreathers, Al Lewis, Joe Dallet, Charles Doyle, Nick Migas and many other Communists forged the unity of the rank-and-file. From this base they took the initiative in skillfully applying the Left-Center unity strategy first developed by Foster in 1919. Carrying armloads of signed union pledge cards, rank-and-file delegations persisted in meeting with John L. Lewis, until he was finally convinced that steel could be organized.

Lewis established the Steelworkers Organizing Committee (including some 60 Communist organizers) to get the job done. Thirty-nine years after Homestead and 18 years after the 1919 strike, the job did get done. The open shop fortresses were conquered. Unionism at long last came to steel. Without the Left-Center coalition, without Left-led rank-and-file organizing committees, without the solidarity of such powerful unions as the UMWA and the CIO, without the YCL, IWO and other Left and Left-Center led organizations, without the unity of the working class, Black and white, employed and unemployed, native and foreign born, skilled and unskilled, this job could not have been done. Ben Carreathurs, a Black Communist leader from Pittsburgh, brought together a coalition of major Black organizations in support of the organizing drive.

Within this mighty array, the Communist Party played a special role to make the concerted drive possible. Without a class strategy, a plan, and tremendous organizational work it couldn't have been done. In all this, the Communist Party made fundamental and lasting contributions.

Was steel organized as a result of a bright idea that came to Murray like a bolt out of the blue on a train ride? To palm off this myth for the truth is an insult to the memory of many steelworkers who gave their lives at Homestead and at South Chicago in the Memorial Day Massacre (Communists among

them) in the long struggle to organize steel. It is an insult to the thousands of steelworkers who endured maimings, firings, deprivation of all kinds to organize steel. And it is a dishonest attempt to deny the role of Communists and the Left.

The Left-Center coalition, spurred by rank and file initiatives, brought unionism to steel. But it did not uproot all class partnership and racist ideas, policies and practices. The founding of the steel union was marred by adoption of an undemocratic constitution, patterned after the UMWA, which shut out the voice of the rank-and-file in policy making. And it was flawed by the election of an all-white top leadership, excluding Black and other minority workers from office.

Within the framework of Left-Center unity, the Communists and the Left continued to fight for class unity, for class struggle policies, for democratic unionism and against racism.

At the first convention following the founding convention of the union, a white delegate, a Communist, took the floor to call for the election of Blacks to top office as essential to advancing the unity of Black and white against the companies. The struggle thus begun was finally won in the most recent election of a Black vice-president. Over the years, the struggle for full and complete equality, fully supported by Communists, Black and white, has resulted in the election of a growing number of international representatives, the abolition of the North-South wage differential and the opening of many skilled jobs for Black workers.

In a number of steel towns Communist steelworkers took the fight for equality into the communities, as in the case of the "Beachhead for Democracy" in Gary in 1949, a coalition struggle to open the public beaches to the Black people of Lake County, foreshadowing the great civil rights struggles of the 'sixties. Today that struggle is carried forward by the rank-and-file movements in support of affirmative action policies and programs.

At the 1948 Convention of the union, Nick Migas, a Communist and a leader in the large Inland Steel local, took the floor to challenge the class partnership wage policy of Murray.

Denied the floor repeatedly, Migas printed and circulated his statement to the delegates. The *Boston Herald* wrote, "There was nothing grossly

disrespectful to Murray in the statement Migas had circulated." (May 14, 1948.)

Reporting what happened when Migas was finally given the floor, the *Daily Worker* (May 17, 1948) wrote:

A delegate to the CIO steel workers convention, Nick Migas, was slugged pretty badly by strong-arm officials who had been whipped up to a fever pitch of anti-Communist hysteria by union president Philip Murray . . .

Why was Nick Migas slugged?

He wrote a leaflet about wages and contracts (which) urged a wage increase of 25 cents an hour . . . that the steel union follow the example of the miners and refuse to be hog-tied by two-year "no-strike" contracts which give the steel companies all the advantages in wage negotiations . . . a publicity campaign to win public support and to . . . cooperate with all other unions for wage increases.

For these crimes, Nick Migas was slugged. Instead of heeding Migas' call for a real, fighting wage policy, the convention voted to make it illegal for Communists to represent local unions—a sort of miniature Mundt Bill and Taft-Hartley law.

The Migas incident is a solemn warning that profound changes are taking place within the CIO and in the steel union, changes which flow from the love-feast which the CIO has been having with Big Business.

The anti-Communist clause in the union's constitution dates from that period, when the Murray-McDonald leadership became part of the cold war and caved in to McCarthyism. This was the period of the break-up of the great Left-Center coalition which had built the CIO, the period in which 11 Left-led unions were expelled from the CIO.

But this period also proved the courage, integrity and dedication of the Communists to the principles of democratic unionism, to the interests of the working class and to class unity. Years later, after the McCarthy period and after the trade unions had been put on the defensive and lost their forward momentum, a number of the Center leaders recognized the truth at last and publicly acknowledged that the biggest mistake that had been made was to expel the Left-led unions and to freeze Communists out of union leadership.

The struggle for unity of the working class waged by Communists was from the earliest years an all encompassing one. Thus, the 1953 Communist program in steel advanced a plank "for the right of women, Negro and white, to work in the industry at all jobs for which they are physically able; against 'female wage rates'; for equal pay for equal work." (*Steel Labor's Road*, page 59).

Today, a new generation of Communists, working side by side with veteran Communists, is helping to build rank-and-file movements and promote Left-Center unity. With a rich history and tradition to reinforce them, they carry forward the struggle for democratic unionism, for the unity of steelworkers against the assaults of the companies, for unity of the working class against monopoly exploitation and oppression. Their influence is evident in the trends, demands and levels of struggle in the industry.

Throughout these years, the Communist Party maintained organization in the steel industry, despite the temporary loss of organization in a number of plants. Leaflets, shop papers, the *Daily Worker* brought the message of the Communist Party to the plant gates and communities. In the worst days of McCarthyite repression, *Stainless Steel Truth* in Pittsburgh and *Mahoning Valley Steelworker* in Ohio, were issued by Communists. Pamphlets and books for steelworkers such as *Everybody Can Be Rich and Still Be Honest*, and *Steel Labor's Road* were distributed in 10,000 and 20,000 copies. The steel industry was the first to receive special attention of the *Daily World*, with special steel editions.

The Communists in steel towns actively promote the Party's policies of independent political action, election of workers to public office and for a new, labor-based anti-monopoly party.

Everything the Communists stand for is in accord with the interests of steelworkers, from the day-to-day economic grievances to the right to strike and to vote on contracts, to affirmative action to end all

racist and sex discrimination, to the 30 hour work week, to democracy and world peace.

Repression and anti-Communist clauses have not destroyed the Communists in steel. Nor will anti-Communist masquerades, such as the company-serving and promoted attempts to discredit Communists through the activity of phony "Left" groups ("the crazies") such as the National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) which also parades under the name of the U.S. Labor Party, the so-called "Revolutionary Communist Party" and sundry other Maoist and Trotskyite splinters which have cropped up like so many weeds. The members of these groups have no trouble in getting and keeping jobs in steel despite their loud provocations.

While the division and confusion they can cause should not be underestimated, their very existence is a sort of back-handed tribute to the prestige of the real Communists who have always been an integral part of steelworkers' struggles and whose existence is feared and hated by the steel industry owners.

That is why the Communist Party is indispensable, and why there will always be a Communist Party among steelworkers. For the burdens of exploitation and oppression can be lifted only by the solid unity of the whole working class, and this requires an organization whose principles are working-class solidarity and dedication.

But the elimination of the anti-Communist clause is necessary to restore control of the union to its membership. It would herald the return of democratic unionism, lift the intimidating atmosphere of red-baiting which enables bureaucratic, company-serving union leaders to stifle the voice of the rank-and-file.

The steelworkers will sweep away the anti-Communist clause and with it the class collaboration policies which prevent the USWA from doing the job the members want done. The USWA will once again take its place in the front ranks of the forward march of the working class.

A Case for Nationalization

PAUL KLAUSEN

Steel producing communities across the United States were rocked by a crisis in 1977 unlike any that had occurred in decades. From August 1977 to January 1978, Bethlehem Steel, U.S. Steel and Youngstown Sheet and Tube announced massive permanent layoffs totalling some 20,000. Other companies, including Jones and Laughlin, Alan Wood and Kaiser also laid off workers. In less than six months over 25,000 steelworkers' jobs were terminated.

The steel industry claimed that the major cause was an influx of imported steel. The solution they demanded was for the government to restrict foreign imports. They also urged the government to ease pollution and other health and safety standards which require additional expenditures, reduce taxes and allow them to raise prices at will. Industry executives claimed such a program would improve profitability and—incidentally—save steelworkers' jobs.

Some points of this company agenda have been implemented by the Carter Administration and have served to improve industry profitability. For example, the *Wall Street Journal* (July 26, 1978) reports that U.S. Steel profits for the second quarter of 1978 are \$117.3 million, a jump of 54 per cent over a year ago. U.S. Steel is the industries' biggest producer. For other companies the reported increases in second quarter profits were: Armco, 71 per cent; Allegheny-Ludlum, 44 per cent; National Steel, 26 per cent; Republic, 41 per cent; Inland, 15 per cent; Wheeling-Pittsburgh, 218 per cent; Bethlehem, 143 per cent.

But these steps have failed miserably to protect jobs. The number of steelworkers employed in production and maintenance has tended to fall for the past twenty years, and more reductions are threatened. According to the American Iron and Steel Institute (as cited in the Report of the Officers of the United Steelworkers of America to the 18th union convention, August 1976), steelworker employment dropped from 466,000 in 1965 to 358,000 in 1975—

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a loss of over 100,000 jobs in ten years. And the job loss rate is picking up. In 1973 the "Experimental Negotiating Agreement" was signed, with the promise that it would "stabilize the industry" and thereby save jobs. Yet in the five years since ENA was signed an additional 80,000 jobs have been lost.

As for the future, U.S. Steel Chairman Edgar B. Speer predicted at the 1978 AISI convention that 150,000 more jobs could be lost by 1985 due to "modernization."

Modernization of the steel industry, like any industry, is inevitable. But how will it be done? Under the current system, companies have a free hand to do it by throwing tens of thousands out of their jobs and pulling the rug out from under the economies of steel communities across the country. Thus far, neither the steel industry nor the government has done anything to guarantee the jobs of steelworkers, or to insure their retraining and reemployment. Nor has anything been done to rebuild deteriorating steel communities.

However, if the steel industry were publicly owned and run by bodies dominated by industry workers and community residents, this could not happen. A variety of forces are increasingly coming to realize that it is private ownership, monopolization and operation for profit that are the root cause of the crisis. Therefore they are considering with greater care the arguments for such a form of nationalization, which the Communist Party also supports. To accomplish this would require a movement on the scale of the organization of the CIO, the civil rights movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement. But private industry has shown that it can not or will not run the steel industry to serve the nation. It is time someone else did.

The Question of Jobs

The benefits that could accrue from the nationalization of the steel industry are many. Jobs could be saved. Federal pollution guidelines could be met. Modernization could be carried out without disrupting the lives of hundreds of thousands, and steel communities could be stabilized. Steel town govern-

ments could become more democratic without the giant private corporations around to run things. And the power of the monopolies which are ruining this country would be weakened. Many other countries have nationalized or partly nationalized their steel industries, with various degrees of democratic control, but in every case the workers are better off for it.

Certainly nationalization under the current system would not solve all of the problems. Many government officials are beholden to, or under the influence of, the giant corporations. Thus, the size of the gains made for working people under a nationalized steel industry would depend on the degree of control they have in key decision-making bodies.

The industry's threats to the well-being of its workers have never been clearer. Outgoing AISI Chairman Edgar Speer recently urged the nation's top steel executives to undertake a major modernization program. He called for new, ultra-modern, integrated steel works to be built. These facilities would combine the entire steel-making process into one operation, utilizing large blast furnaces, continuous casting and advanced computer systems. Many would be "greenfield" plants—brand new—and would replace existing older facilities. Speer predicted that such facilities could produce steel "with perhaps forty to fifty per cent less labor input per ton." (Chairman's Report, 86th AISI General Meeting, May 24, 1978.) Nothing was said about what would happen to the estimated 150,000 steelworkers who would lose their jobs.

Armco President Harry Holiday said at the same gathering that the industry would need \$6.2 billion annually in 1978 dollars, "or the staggering total of nearly \$50 billion by 1985," in order to expand or replace its existing facilities. He estimated that 30 million tons of capacity would be added: 18 million through expanding and upgrading existing locations, the other twelve million through the construction of "greenfield" plants. Such a "modernization" program would surely entail both layoffs at existing facilities and the scrapping of whole additional old plants.

In addition to the very evident threat to jobs this poses, the steel companies are also striving to generate funds for new investments by saving money

through the relaxation of pollution standards, new tax breaks, elimination of foreign competition (which will give a new spurt to inflation), and, above all, by reducing payrolls.

The steel executives demand the government intervene on their behalf, but decry government regulation to improve health and safety conditions or eliminate company discrimination against minorities and women, and they emphatically reject any other form of public control. The cost of this in human terms has been tremendous.

The Import Hoax

The steel industry constantly tries to peg its problems on "cheap foreign steel." Take Bethlehem Steel, the number two producer, which laid off over 12,000 workers at over 8 locations last year.

Ten years ago Bethlehem Steel complained that import competition was preventing the company from maximizing its profits. Then Chairman Edmund Martin told stockholders, "The rapid increase of steel imports has held down Bethlehem's growth and depressed its earnings." Martin continued, "competitive conditions have thus far made it impossible to increase prices sufficiently . . . Bethlehem's profit margins remain unsatisfactory." (1968 Annual Report.)

Yet, in the very same report Martin said: "For Bethlehem Steel, 1968 was a better year than 1967." Profits in 1968 were up to \$160.5 million, while profits were \$130.4 million in 1967. Imports increased by 57 per cent (to 18 million tons) in 1968 over 1967, and Bethlehem made \$30 million more in profits!

From 1968 to 1977, imports increased only 1.3 per cent, to 19.3 million tons. How could such a slight increase in imports account for such a drastic change from \$160 million in profits in 1968 to a reported loss of \$448 million in 1977? Obviously, there are other factors that explain Bethlehem's problems.

Bethlehem unintentionally revealed a more fundamental cause in a full page ad in *Time* magazine, August 8, 1977 (ten days before announcing the layoffs at Johnstown and Lackawanna): "Most foreign steelmakers are either owned, subsidized, financed, aided and/or protected in one way or another by their governments. They don't have the

same pressure we do to operate profitably or generate capital . . . *During periods of slack demand, foreign steelmakers push to maintain high production rates and high employment.*" (Emphasis added.)

Bethlehem criticizes foreign steel companies for their ties to government, but admits that foreign steelworkers have greater job security due to the role of government. Martin wrote in Bethlehem's 1967 *Annual Report*: "Ours is the only steel industry in the world that operates as an entirely private industry. In every other country, developed or developing, the steel industry is looked on as an arm of government policy and receives assistance from its government or is owned partially or entirely by the state."

The main problem with the steel industry in the U.S. is that it is privately-owned and monopoly-controlled in a world where this is outdated.

The Nationalization Record

Lewis Foy, Bethlehem's current chairman, told the annual meeting of the Executives Club of Chicago in March of 1977 that the French steel industry is partially government controlled and had recently asked for and apparently received \$600 million to upgrade facilities.

"The situation is pretty much the same in Belgium, Sweden and even West Germany where the government is helping out by picking up part of the tab for laid-off workers," he said. (*Buffalo Evening News*, Mar. 31, 1977.)

In Japan, many laid-off steelworkers have been retrained and reemployed under job guarantees won by Japanese trade unions.

Belgium steelworkers won a shorter work week by one hour and reduction in retirement age from 60 to 58 recently after staging a nationwide strike to protest steel industry lay-offs. The new gains are expected to help keep more steelworkers on the job.

A group of Canadian union editors from the steel and mine unions travelled to Sweden recently and learned about the job security of Swedish workers. Marc Zwelling, editor of *Miner's Voice*, wrote an article for the Canadian edition of the USWA newspaper, *Steel Labor*, June 1978.

Wrote Zwelling: "A Youngstown Sheet and Tube can shut its Campbell Works in Ohio and ditch

5,000 breadwinners. International Nickel can exterminate 2,400 jobs in a day in Northern Ontario. But in Sweden the rules are different. Sudden layoffs aren't tolerated. It's virtually impossible to lose your job before you have another."

While steelworkers in Europe and Japan have more security than North Americans, they too are suffering under the economic crisis that is affecting the capitalist world. They do have better security due to stronger and more class conscious trade unions, and government control or partial ownership of the steel industry.

Steelworkers in the socialist countries are in an entirely different situation. First, there is no unemployment in any industry. Workers and farmers are in the majority on every governing body from the local city government to the national level. In the Soviet Union in 1976 there were 498 blue-collar workers and 271 collective farmers in the 1,517 seat Supreme Soviet, the national governing body. (*USSR Statistical Yearbook*, 1977, Novosti Press Agency, Moscow.) Steel production steadily increases and is used to meet the need for new housing, schools, hospitals, railroads, mass transit, cars and consumer goods.

Crude steel production in millions of short tons increased in the USSR from 127 in 1970 to 161 in 1977. In the U.S. it dropped from 132 to 125. Nationalization of every industry and workers' control of all aspects of society are the cornerstone of a socialist society.

While the USSR produces steel for human needs, the U.S. industry produces it for private profit. Several months after Bethlehem Steel announced the shutdowns at Johnstown and Lackawanna, Chairman Lewis Foy told the *U.S. News & World Report*: "The facilities we shut down were the least profitable."

Health and Safety

Another advantage of public ownership of the steel industry is that it would permit rapid compliance with pollution controls and other health and safety measures which the steel monopolies now flout. It would take the profit motive out of this corporate criminal behavior.

In the above-cited interview, Foy boasted of how Bethlehem blackmailed government regulatory

agencies to get an extension of time to meet pollution limits at its Johnstown plant. "I told the government: 'If we're going to reopen that plant and spend 35 or 40 million dollars just to clean it up, then we've got to have some leeway on environmental expenditures there. Otherwise, we'll shut it down.'" They were given a two year moratorium on the regulations. Shortly after, Bethlehem shut down a large part of the facility and permanently laid off half of the 8,000 employees.

It has been cheaper for Bethlehem to violate anti-pollution laws than to comply with them. From June to September 1977 Bethlehem was indicted ten times for pollution violations. To date it has been found guilty in seven of these cases, and this is only the tip of the iceberg, since most violations go unprosecuted. Six of the seven convictions resulted in fines averaging a mere \$383.

The real cost of pollution is in the destruction of human life. Steelworkers suffer from certain kinds of cancer and other diseases much more frequently than the national average, as do steel community residents. Black and other minority workers have the highest rates of cancer as they are assigned disproportionately to work in the most unpleasant jobs.

A report titled "Mortality in a Select Population of Steelworkers" shows that steelworkers at Bethlehem's Sparrows Point plant die of cancer at a rate 27 per cent higher than for the city of Baltimore as a whole. Further, the report reveals that Baltimore residents have a lung-cancer death rate 60 per cent higher than the rest of the nation. (*Daily World*, Oct. 6, 1977.) Other steel-making centers also have higher than average cancer rates.

Weakening Monopoly Power

Privately owned steel companies exert a tremendous influence over local governments. A good example is Lackawanna, N.Y. Bethlehem Steel is the major industry in Lackawanna. It employs nearly half of the workforce, and the rest of the local economy—stores, services and shops—are dependent on the plant.

In an interview with the *Buffalo Evening News* (May 15, 1976) Lackawanna City Attorney Eugene E. Burke said: "Let's face it. I work for the plant. We all work for the plant."

This has been the case for decades. The *News* recalled, "In 1933, Mayor Walter J. Lohr raised the assessment [on Bethlehem Steel] \$10 million. In protest the plant refused to pay any taxes."

In 1969, City Assessor John J. O'Hara tried to increase the plant's assessment \$17 million. Bethlehem threatened to close its plant. It went to the state legislature "which passed the Machinery Exemption Act to lower the assessment," according to the *News* article.

The *News* wrote that Lackawanna depends on Bethlehem for about 70 per cent of its property taxes. Yet the amount is so small that Lackawanna is one of the poorest communities in the country.

Yet Lackawanna is not untypical of small and medium sized steel cities. They were once openly company towns, from homes to schools to government, and even today often more nearly resemble corporate despotisms than democratically run cities. And even on the state and national levels, as the above story and the influence of the steel industry in the Carter Administration indicate, the steel industry is a power to be reckoned with. It constantly demands and often gets bailouts and privileges for its big stockholders, creditors and executives at the expense of its workers, taxpayers and the public. Nationalization would be a serious blow to this concentration of corporate power.

Perhaps the most brazen example of the callousness of the steel executives was when they took pay raises last year while condemning tens of thousands of steelworkers, their families and others to extreme financial hardship. *The Wall Street Journal* reported that the top executives in six major steel companies they surveyed all gave themselves pay raises in 1977. (Mar. 28, 1978.)

Edgar B. Speer, chairman of U.S. Steel, raised his salary from \$325,000 to \$372,972. Lewis W. Foy, chairman of Bethlehem Steel, raised his salary from \$252,000 to \$296,000. Yet, these raises are only for base salaries. Foy's total take-home pay, based on incentive awards, went from \$338,141 to \$406,982. Foy "earns" in one year what it takes the average steelworker decades to make.

Under capitalism, the companies are driven to make ever bigger profits. Eventually, with the blessings of the government, the larger companies swallow the "smaller" ones—as in the case of Lykes

merging into LTV. This reduces competition, increasing monopoly power to arbitrarily control prices, wages and other policies. There can be no resolution of the problems facing steelworkers, their families and their communities through this process.

That is why the idea of nationalizing the steel industry is picking up steam. District 31 of the United Steelworkers of America came out for nationalization at its district conference in June 1978. A growing number of local union officials and members are looking towards nationalization as the only solution to job security.

Nationalization with worker and community control would not result in the establishment of

socialism. But it could take one sector of our nation's economy out of the hands of private profiteers. It would enhance the possibilities of that industry being governed to satisfy the legitimate demands of the workers, and to produce steel for the roads, housing, transit systems, hospitals and other facilities America so badly needs rather than to line the pockets of the industry's owners.

Of course, so long as capitalism exists the old owners of the industry and the other monopolists will strive to operate the industry for *their* benefit, and to maintain their control in new forms. The struggle of the workers and other anti-monopoly forces would need to continue. But it would be strengthened.

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The operation of the steel industry should be according to standards which take into account the interests of the workers, the community, the economy and people as a whole. The monopolies can no more do this than a tiger can become a vegetarian and live on lettuce. Their method is to close down plants—and the hell with what happens to the workers and the community. This method of the monopolies doesn't really lower costs—it just transfers them. It places tragic costs on the workers and their communities while it positions the monopolies for fat future profits.

The monopolies will of course raise their standard howl at the threat of nationalization—the government can't run anything well. The answer to this is: look who's talking. Under nationalization, the steel industry could be run by representatives of the workers, the public and the government. There is no reason to assume that they couldn't run it well. They couldn't possibly run it as badly as the monopolies have.

Some may ask, why will nationalization solve the problem? There are countries like Britain which have nationalized, and they still have layoffs. This concern is right. Nationalization is necessary, but by itself it won't solve the problem. The demand for steel has to keep growing, otherwise there will still be problems. That is why it is necessary to accompany nationalization with a massive program for the rebuilding of our cities, for the construction of mass transit systems in the many areas that need them, for the fixing-up and then proper main-

tenance of our railroad track and roadbed, our road and highway system, bridges, water supply and sewage systems, and the like.

The third element in a steel program—the elimination of restrictions on trade with the socialist countries—is also important for building steel demand. As Gus Hall has mentioned in a pamphlet on steel, the socialist countries “are growing fast and steadily. They are building railroads, subways, pipelines, ports, factories, and new cities. All this eats up steel. Ending the ridiculous and self-defeating U.S. restrictions would create billions of dollars in orders for steel products, and hundreds of thousands of jobs.”

With nationalization and such a re-building program, the steel industry could be brought back to health. Such a program would of course not only benefit the steel workers and their communities, but the working class and people of our country in general. It would benefit everyone except the monopolies and the militarists.

The Need to Fight

To get such a program through will not be easy. It will take struggle. But there really is no choice—a weaker program will simply not do the job.

The steel workers have to fight united—Black, white, Chicano, Puerto Rican, and the others. They must not allow the poison of racism sown by the monopolies to divide them. The problems of the steel industry can only be solved satisfactorily if the workers use their strength. And they can only be strong if they are united.

Notes by a Woman Steelworker

ANTONIA FIELDING

The wash house for women in our area consists of 12 lockers jammed into an area no bigger than 6' by 6', a toilet, a tiny face bowl, a urinal (which really isn't doing the women too much good) and a shower that gets everything but the person using it wet. For a real shower, try using the toilet on a rainy day. The roof directly over it leaks right on your head. (I've heard of speed up and job combination, but this is ridiculous.)

The above letter, signed "Stuck in a Pit," was printed in a Midwest rank-and-file newspaper. Totally inadequate and sometimes downright disgusting sanitary facilities are only one of the unacceptable conditions that steelworker women refuse to have forced on them.

Several years ago, a Women's Committee was formed at a Bethlehem Steel plant when the company refused to back off a deliberately vindictive policy of forcing pregnant workers on unpaid maternity leave the moment their pregnancy was discovered. Even some nonpregnant "suspects" were pushed out in these dragnets. All medical coverage for the victim and her family was terminated. The Women's Committee, backed by the local leadership, has instituted a multi-million dollar suit against Bethlehem on behalf of the women at that plant.

It is evident that practices such as these are not a result of mere negligence or just a hangover from "old-fashioned" ideas.

The message in refusal to provide necessary sanitary facilities is clear: there still is no "permanent" place for women in the steel industry as far as the steel corporations are concerned. But as long as they are there, degrading policies in relation to pregnancy are meant to set women apart from other workers, to make them second class citizens.

One woman found that many extra duties, such as lifting heavy trash barrels and crawling into small places were added to her normally sedentary job when management became aware that she was expecting. In the very comprehensive health care plan negotiated with the steel companies by the United Steelworkers of America the *only* disability with any limitations for sick pay is pregnancy. Sick pay

is limited to a maximum of six weeks, while other disabilities, including even sports injuries or alcoholism, have full coverage. (Is it just a coincidence that there were no women on the negotiating committee that negotiated this contract?) One steel company demanded that pregnant women report weekly to the plant hospital so it could verify their pregnancies during the six weeks of paid leave, implying that it suspected women would deliberately get pregnant and then get abortions in order to collect the six weeks sick pay!

The law and the courts are clear that it is illegal to arbitrarily force a pregnant worker onto maternity leave. However, the current Supreme Court, which seems to be making an all-out effort to make a name for itself as supremely anti-labor, anti-Black, anti-female and anti-progress, ruled last year that it is "legal" to arbitrarily exclude pregnancy from sick pay or insurance plans and that this does not constitute discrimination against women! (Presumably pregnant men would also suffer loss of coverage.)

Steelworker women in the Chicago-Gary area launched a vigorous lobbying campaign for passage of HR 6075 and S995 which would correct this situation and clearly lay out the facts of life for the Supreme Court. In the spring of 1977, a busload of steelworkers travelled to Washington, D.C. to lobby and testify at Senate hearings. Subsequently, resolutions were passed in scores of labor bodies from local unions to the Illinois AFL-CIO. Hundreds of signatures on petitions and postcards to Congress were collected. (S995 passed the Senate, and HR 6075 passed the House. However, opponents in the latter managed to tack on a divisive anti-abortion amendment.)

Women Steelworkers and Affirmative Action

The monthly newsletter put out by a group of Black workers in a U.S. Steel plant stated:

Several superintendents and foremen in the mill have stated that they don't feel women are "equipped" to work at U.S. Steel. But industry owners feel and have always felt that women are "equipped" to work in sweat shops and miserable plants like J.P. Stevens where they're paid nearly nothing. Black women were said to be "equipped" to pick cotton from "can't see" in morning to "can't see" at night when their only pay was a lash across the back. But women are declared "ill-equipped" to earn \$7 an hour . . . U.S. Steel feels ALL women are "out of place" earning a wage with which they can comfortably support their families . . .

Most women steelworkers are the sole supporters of their families. The money they make is just enough to put the food on the table. They just can't afford to have happen to them what happened to their sisters 30 years before. Then, women, who made up 10 per cent of the steel work force during World War II, were systematically purged from what was suddenly unsuitable work.

It has been clearly illegal since the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited employment discrimination due to sex, for the steel corporations to refuse to hire women. Yet it was only since the 1974 Consent Decree, when quotas were instituted as a result of mass struggle and legal action by Black workers as well as women that significant numbers of women made it through the steel mill gates.

The fight for their very jobs—the right to be there—is still the root concern of women steelworkers. An astronomical percentage of women workers (especially Black women) are fired during the probationary period (which by coincidence was doubled from 260 to 520 hours shortly after the Consent Decree was instituted). The steelworkers contract gives management the prerogative of firing probationary employees with no just cause. The only protection is a vague anti-discrimination clause. Neither the government nor the union has any mechanism to check up on how many women are fired or to what jobs they are assigned after the required 20 per cent are hired.

Apprenticeships and Affirmative Action

When it comes to rights, one steel mill axiom holds true, "Apprentices are lower than whale 'excrement.'" For the duration of a three or even four year apprenticeship, the worker is subject to all kinds of arbitrary "evaluations" and disciplinary measures. Naturally, this weighs particularly heavily on those whom management didn't want to hire in the first place—the minority and women workers.

Many have found themselves held back from advancement because of poor grades on "attitude." Files, which the workers themselves can not see but which are used to evaluate their work, are kept on all apprentices.

The Consent Decree calls for 50 per cent of new apprentices to be minority and female, but again, there is no provision as to how many must be graduated into skilled journeymen and women. It should also be pointed out that in many instances the 50 per cent quota, while an improvement, is still quite inadequate, for example where the minority population of a plant is greater than that number. Also, by lumping women and minorities together, the companies have room to do a lot of maneuvering; many cases have been reported where the "minority" quota in a particular craft which management is seeking to preserve as "all-white" will be filled by white females.

Women in the USWA

While women now make up only a small percentage of the work force at most mills and are still virtually non-existent in others, particularly in the South (such as U.S. Steel's Fairfield works, which has yet to hire females), their recent participation in union affairs makes them an important force in the rank-and-file movement.

Women's caucuses have sprung up in plant after plant, taking up not only the questions of maternity leave, sanitary facilities, and probationary employees, but also entry of women into the crafts, sexual harassment, and greater representation for women in the union itself.

Although women make up over 10 per cent of the membership of the United Steelworkers of America (the majority in non-basic steel industries such as can and fabricating), there is not one woman on the

International Executive Board. The staff, numbering in the hundreds, has less than a dozen women. The situation at the local level is often the same.

Out in front of the women steelworkers' movement have been the women in District 31—the Chicago-Gary area. A district-wide women's caucus there, formed less than 2 years ago, claims over 100 members and states as its purpose "the fight for full equality in the workplace and in the union." A parallel development has been the establishment of local women's committees in the majority of the big steel mills that line Lake Michigan from South Chicago to Gary.

These forces, supported by rank-and-file and Black groupings, raised the issue of the discriminatory firings of probationary women so incessantly that the local office of the EEOC (Equal Employment Opportunities Commission) took action in a number of cases and workers were put back on the job. It was also "discovered" that, despite the severe limitations, grievances could be filed and sometimes even won in such cases.

Not lacking in imagination or boldness, the caucus began appearing with colorful shirts, banners and literature at all union functions, calling for greater representation for women, the establishment of an International Department of Women's Affairs and conferences of and for women steelworkers.

Such conferences have already been held in 3 districts of the steelworkers union: District 29 in Detroit, District 27 in Canton, Ohio, and District 31, where over 200 attended the lively two-day affair.

Women's participation is nothing new in the steelworkers union. In the early days of the union women workers joined in organizing. In an interview with the *Gary Post Tribune*, 83-year-old Minnie Kenney, a 50-year veteran of Youngstown Sheet and Tube's East Chicago plant, remembers helping to organize the union for the women in the Tin Mill. "The (tin) sorters used to be all women . . . the men were already organized, but we women weren't in it (yet)." She recalls walking the picketlines with 50 or 60 other women.

The women's auxiliaries also played an indispensable role in "unionizing" the steel communities, signing up both auxiliary and union members and raising issues such as inadequate sanitation and public education in the neighborhoods surrounding

the mills.

The ERA

In July of this year, both the International office and District 31 of the USWA sent buses to the massive ERA demonstration in Washington, D.C.

The steelworker contingent in this action, along with the other labor contingents, was outstanding for its high level of Black participation. Black women have been emerging as especially outspoken and dedicated leaders, not only among the women but of the union overall.

Women steelworkers responded all-out to the call for the ERA, realizing the necessity to defeat a new offensive launched by employers against the very principle of women's equality. But women steelworkers are also making a unique contribution in insisting on concrete struggles against all forms of discrimination on the job.

Sometimes discrimination can be carried out in the name of equality. Conniving bosses have often assigned extremely heavy or dangerous jobs to women workers, forcing them to choose between their health and their jobs. Any protest is countered with "you wanted a man's job." A real question yet to be faced up to by either the women's or trade union movement is the elimination of protective legislation and the shameful failure of laws and often collective bargaining agreements to set maximum lifting and other safety standards. This gives the bosses a powerful weapon to superexploit women in the name of equality.

It appears that rather than discouraging or silencing the women workers, consistent company harassment is coming up against an unexpected militancy engendered by the women's movement and the rank-and-file movement. Organization at all levels is the outcome of a profound understanding of the need to stick together—an injury to one is an injury to all—and the crying need for a stronger, more unified, fighting union.

A crucial test is coming up when the Consent Decree expires. Will the implementing ratios be made a part of the contract, or will they be dropped? Women steelworkers, who were outspoken and united in their opposition to the Bakke decision, know there is no way on earth they would have gotten their jobs without the quotas. The women *will* be heard.

Steelworkers and Socialism

J. C. WEBB

Steelworkers like socialism. That is true around the world. In the countries where they have it, they defend and help build it. In countries where they don't have it, many militant steelworkers look forward to the day when they will. What about in the United States? What would socialism mean for steelworkers here? The best way to answer this question is to look at where steelworkers already have it.

In October 1917, workers and farmers made history in Russia. They took power into their own hands. Led by the Communist Party, which included many steelworkers, and with the active support of the metalworkers and other unions, they began the difficult job of building a socialist country.

Build they have. They have gone from being a backward country whose main economy was agriculture to the number one steel producer in the world. And from a trade union movement that in 1917 numbered in the thousands to a mighty metalworkers' union that today has over 3.3 million members.

In the Soviet Union there is no unemployment, and most prices are the same as they were ten years ago. In the Soviet Constitution there is a section that does not exist in any constitution of a capitalist country. It is not in our Bill of Rights, yet it covers the most important right of all. It says, "Citizens of the USSR shall have the right to work, that is guaranteed employment and remuneration for their work in accordance with its quantity and quality, including the right to choice of profession, type of occupation and employment in accordance with their vocation, abilities, training, education, and with reference to the needs of society." The section further states that there can be no discrimination against anyone on the basis of race, sex, nationality or religious belief. Further, that section makes equal pay for equal work the law. The problem under socialism is not unemployment but too many jobs and not enough people to fill them. Imagine, factories having to compete to keep workers instead

of workers competing to keep jobs!

The difference in the employment situation is as basic as the difference in the two economic systems, socialism and capitalism. The day after the October Socialist Revolution in 1917, the Petrograd Trade Union Council and the Central Council of Factory Trade Union Committees issued an appeal to all working people. "We call on you to immediately stop all economic and political strikes." The workers responded immediately, they stopped striking.

They understood that the socialist revolution was theirs. They knew that now the factories, the big landed estates and the natural resources of Russia belonged to the workers and the poor farmers, that is to the people as a whole. No longer would a handful of capitalists take the profits from industry. Now the profits would be used to improve the lives of the working people. In short, now the people who made the wealth would share the wealth.

The rich capitalists and landowners began to lose their economic and political power and by the 1930s they no longer existed as a class. They had either gone to work like everyone else or had fled to capitalist countries in the hope that they could continue to live off the work of other people.

There are two basic groups in the Soviet Union today—the working class and the collective farmers. These have developed from their own ranks the technicians, engineers, managers and other experts it takes to run an advanced industrial country. Together the people in the socialist countries are building toward a classless communist society.

This means that steelworkers are to be found in all levels of the Soviet government—from the Supreme Soviet, which is the highest government body, equivalent to our Congress, to all levels of city and regional governments. Steelworkers are also to be found at all levels of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

In short, the Soviet Union is a country led and run by the working class and their collective farmer allies. In a workers' country, the workers come

first. Think of the burning needs of steelworkers in this country—they read like a list of the benefits of socialism. In the Soviet Union all medical care is free. Education is not only free at all levels, but many students receive regular stipends to live on. There are day care centers for children of working parents at virtually every large factory, and parents at smaller works can use the same facilities. Hundreds of millions of square feet of new housing is built every year. Rents and utilities are limited to 3 or 4 per cent of income.

Most of the biggest factories, those with over a thousand workers, have what are known as Houses of Culture or Palaces of Culture. This is an institution that workers in capitalist countries would find hard to believe. The Palace of Culture is run by the trade union and financed primarily by profits or social consumption funds from the factory. Many are equipped with swimming pools and sports stadiums. They offer auditoriums for plays and musical shows, movie theaters, a broad range of classes from public speaking to ballet to crafts. They illustrate that under socialism the lives of workers, and not profits, are the most important product.

Apart from the material benefits socialism is bringing, there is also the quality of life it produces. This shows in dozens of ways. As anyone who has been there can testify, cities in the Soviet Union are safe at any hour of the day or night and there is no urban decay, arson for profit or burned out buildings. Or to take a different aspect of life, older people do not feel unwanted and insecure in the Soviet Union. They have adequate pensions, need not worry about the cost of medical care or feel themselves a burden on their children. And there is the immeasurable benefit of socialist democracy—of the development of the individual (as well as the social benefit) that comes from directly participating in the governing of society.

There are, of course, many items of consumer goods in which the Soviet Union is behind the United States. But ten or twenty years ago the Soviet Union was much, much further behind. It is catching up fast.

There is still another factor that makes the life of a steelworker under socialism superior to life as a steelworker under capitalism. The Soviet Union is a

nation with over a hundred different nationalities and races. Before 1917 the ruling classes in Russia, like the capitalist rulers of the United States today, had developed the use of racism and national divisions for the purpose of being able to divide and rule to a fine art. For instance, many times when the Czar wanted to take the heat off himself and his oppressive policies, pogroms against Jews would be organized. Mobs of thugs, petty shop owners and aristocratic military officers would descend on Jewish neighborhoods to destroy property, to loot and to beat, rape and murder the residents.

Today you will never hear news of "race riots" or about the busing question in the Soviet Union. You won't hear about ethnic purity or block-busting. On the job in Soviet mills you will see dark complected workers from Central Asia working side by side in any job classification with light skinned Russians. All shades in between are found in industries, classrooms, playgrounds, universities, scientific laboratories and legislatures. In fact, the highest legislative body, the Supreme Soviet, consists of two houses. In one, the Soviet of the Union, representation is apportioned on the basis of population. In the other, the Soviet of Nationalities, representation is based on republics, regions and other areas which reflect the Soviet Union's constituent nationalities. All laws must have the agreement of both houses. Thus all legislation reflects the will of the entire population and guarantees that all the nationalities have equal rights in every respect—political, economic and social.

In the Soviet Union brotherhood and good relations between different peoples are not merely a question of laws, but are a way of life. Friendship clubs are organized in every mill and factory. The Soviet people spend much time learning about other people's cultures and countries. People from the U.S. who visit are often amazed at how much Soviet people know about our country and how little we know about theirs.

Try to imagine, for instance, U.S. Steel organizing Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Asian, Native American Indian and white steelworkers from all over the country to work together for a day to pour a "Friendship Melt," and then donating the steel to an African country to build a hospital. Well, it hap-

pens in the Soviet Union.

What about Soviet unions? A common slander is that they are company unions, or run by the state. What the fundamental choice boils down to is: the right of unions to strike and fight back under capitalism (though that right is under constant attack in our country) or the right of the workers—including through the unions—to run the whole show under socialism.

In the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries the trade union movement has power at every level. They have power in the administration of industry from top to bottom. The unions are in on every important decision that has a direct or indirect bearing on the lives and well-being of working people.

Lenin, the leader of the October Socialist Revolution, called unions "one of the main creative forces for a new society." The Russian unions were forged in the heat of revolution. Then they began the hard job of building a new economic and political system while fighting against the intervention of thirteen hostile countries. They had no blueprints, no models, to follow. There were no other socialist countries to get help from. They went from a situation where the unions were tiny sectors of the population to today when they are over 113 million strong (98.9 per cent of the industrial and office workers). Is it not a bit ridiculous to say that unions with this origin and background and influence have been tamed?

In the Soviet Union, the factories are owned by the people as a whole; there are no bosses to fight with. Socialist factories have managers (who must

answer to the unions on many questions), but who nonetheless have power to direct production. What happens when arguments arise? No one can be fired without permission of the union. If the manager says "he goes" and the union says "no," he stays. If the union decides that the manager is at fault, they can have him removed with little trouble.

In matters of health and safety the unions have the power to change or shut down any facility they deem unsafe. Management is criminally liable for unsafe conditions. In a widely discussed case in the early 'seventies, a motor blew up in a factory killing two workers. Several people in management including the director of that industry, were put on trial. Negligence was proved, and the managers were convicted.

Now that the cold war barriers which so long barred Soviet unionists from visiting the U.S. (the State Department refused to issue them visas) have begun to be torn down, the time has come to begin a real exchange of information and ideas between workers and unions in the two economic systems. The trade unions and people in the socialist countries do everything to make it possible for U.S. workers to visit and see what real living socialism means. Several hundred thousand Americans visit the socialist countries every year. Such exchanges can help to improve friendship and understanding between our peoples, help cement peace, advance cooperation on mutual problems (health and safety, pollution, etc.), and develop international solidarity of the workers against the multinationals, and bring closer the day when workers here, too, will have the whole pie.

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contrary they are keeping a large crew of organizers at work in an educational campaign, devised to maintain and develop the confidence the steel workers have in themselves and the unions. Then, when the opportune time comes, which will be but shortly, the next big drive will be on. Mr. Gary and his associates may attempt to forestall the inevitable by the granting of fake eight hour days, paper increases in wages and hand-picked company unions, but it is safe to say that the steel workers will go on building up stronger and more aggressive combina-

tions among themselves and with allied trades until they finally achieve industrial freedom. So long as any men undertake to oppress the steel workers and to squeeze returns from the industry without rendering adequate service therefor, just that long must these men expect to be confronted by a progressively more militant and rebellious working force. The great steel strike of 1919 will seem only a preliminary skirmish when compared with the tremendous battles that are bound to come unless the enslaved steel workers are set free.

Lessons of the Great Steel Strike

WILLIAM Z. FOSTER

The great steel strike lasted three months and a half. Begun on September 22, 1919, by 365,600 men quitting their places in the iron and steel mills and blast furnaces in fifty cities of ten states, it ended on January 8, 1920, when the organizations affiliated in the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers voted to permit the 100,000 or more men still on strike to return to work upon the best terms they could secure.

The steel manufacturers "won" the strike. By forcing an unconditional surrender, they drove their men back to the old slavery. This they accomplished in their wonted and time-honored way by carrying on a reign of terror that outraged every just conception of civil and human rights. In this unholy task they were aided by a crawling, subservient and lying press, which spewed forth its poison propaganda in their behalf; by selfish and indifferent local church movements, which had long since lost their Christian principles in an ignominious scramble for company favors; and by hordes of unscrupulous municipal, county, state and federal officials, whose eagerness to wear the steel collar was equalled only by their forgetfulness of their oaths of office. No suppression of free speech and free assembly, no wholesale clubbing, shooting and jailing of strikers and their families was too revolting for these Steel Trust* hangers-on to carry out with relish. With the notable exception of a few honorable and courageous individuals here and there among these hostile elements, it was an alignment of the steel companies, the state, the courts, the local churches and the press against the steel workers.

The following is a chapter from the book, *The Great Steel Strike and its Lessons*, published in 1920. The author was uniquely qualified to write such a book as secretary-treasurer and moving spirit of the National Committee to Organize Iron and Steel Workers, which conducted the Great Steel Strike of 1919. In 1921 Foster joined the Communist Party and for the next forty years was one of its most outstanding figures. He contributed energetically to the successful steel organizing campaign of the 1930s, providing in his writings the main lines of strategy and organizing methods employed.

Upon the ending of the strike the steel workers got no direct concessions from their employers. Those who were able to evade the bitter blacklist were compelled to surrender their union cards and to return to work under conditions that are a shame and a disgrace. They were driven back to the infamous peonage system with its twelve hour day, a system which American steel workers, of all those in the world, alone have to endure. In England, France, Italy and Germany, the steel workers enjoy the right of a voice in the control of their industry; they regularly barter and bargain with their employers over the questions of hours, wages and working conditions; they also have the eight hour day. One must come to America, the land of freedom, to find steel workers still economically disfranchised and compelled to work twelve hours a day. In this country alone the human rights of the steel workers are crushed under foot by the triumphant property rights of their employers.

Who can uphold this indefensible position? Are not our deposits of coal and iron immeasurably greater, our mills more highly developed, our labor force more numerous and more skilled than those of any other country? Who then will venture to assert that American workingmen are not entitled to exercise all the rights and privileges enjoyed by European workingmen? If the steel workers of England, or France, or Italy, or Germany can practice collective bargaining, why not the steel workers of America? And why should the steel workers here have to work twelve hours daily when the eight hour day obtains abroad?

There are a hundred good reasons why the principles of collective bargaining and the shorter work-day should prevail in the steel industry of America, and only one why they should not. This one reason is that the industry is hard and fast in the grip of absentee capitalists who take no part in production and whose sole function is to seize by hook or crook the product of the industry and consume it. These parasites, in their voracious quest of profits, know

neither pity nor responsibility. Their reckless motto is "After us the deluge." They care less than naught for the rights and sufferings of the workers. Ignoring the inevitable weakening of patriotism of people living under miserable industrial conditions, they go their way, prostituting, strangling and dismembering our most cherished institutions. And the worst of it is that in the big strike an ignorant public, mis-educated by employers' propaganda sheets masquerading under the guise of newspapers, applauded them in their ruthless course. Blindly this public, setting itself up as the great arbiter of what is democratic and American, condemned as bolshevistic and ruinous the demands of almost 400,000 steel workers for simple, fundamental reforms, without which hardly a pretense of freedom is possible, and lauded as sturdy Americanism the desperate autocracy of the Steel Trust. All its guns were turned against the strikers.

In this great struggle the mill owners may well claim the material victory; but with just as much right the workers can claim the moral victory. For the strike left in every aspiring breast a spark of hope which must burn on till it finally bursts into a flame of freedom-bringing revolt. For a generation steel workers had been hopeless. Their slavery had overwhelmed them. The trade-union movement seemed weak, distant and incapable. The rottenness of steel districts precluded all thought of relief through political channels. The employers seemed omnipotent. But the strike has changed all this. Like a flash the unions appeared upon the scene. They flourished and expanded in spite of all opposition. Then boldly they went to a death grapple with the erstwhile unchallenged employers. It is true they did not win, but they put up a fight which has won the steel workers' hearts. Their earnest struggle and the loyal support, by money and food, which they gave the strikers, have forever laid at rest the employers' arguments that the unions are cowardly, grafting bodies organized merely to rob and betray the workers. Even the densest of the strikers could see that the loss of the strike was due to insufficient preparation; that only a fraction of the power of unionism had been developed and that with better organization better results would be secured. And the outcome is that the steel workers have won a precious belief in the power of concerted action through the unions. They have discovered the

Achilles' heel of their would-be masters. They now see the way out of their slavery. This is their tremendous victory.

No less than the steel workers themselves, the whole trade-union movement won a great moral victory in the steel strike and the campaign that preceded it. This more than offsets the failure of the strike itself. The gain consists of a badly needed addition to the unions' thin store of self-confidence. To trade-union organizers the steel industry had long symbolized the impossible. Wave after wave of organizing effort they had sent against it; but their work had been as ineffectual as a summer sea lapping the base of Gibraltar. Pessimism regarding its conquest for trade unionism was abysmal. But now all this is changed. The impossible has been accomplished. The steel workers were organized in the face of all that the steel companies could do to prevent it. Thus a whole new vista of possibilities unfolds before the unions. Not only does the reorganization of the steel industry seem strictly feasible, but the whole conception that many of the basic industries are immune to trade unionism turns out to be an illusion. If the steel industry could be organized, so can any other in the country; for the worst of them presents hardly a fraction of the difficulties squarely vanquished in the steel industry. The mouth has been shut forever of that insufferable pest of the labor movement, the large body of ignorant, incompetent, short-sighted, visionless union men whose eternal song, when some important project is afoot, is "It can't be done." After this experience in the steel industry the problem of unionizing any industry resolves itself simply into selecting money and men to do the job.

The ending of the strike by no means indicates the abandonment of the steel workers' battle for their rights. For a while, perhaps, their advance may be checked, while they are recovering from the effects of their great struggle. but it will not be long before they have another big movement under way. They feel but little defeated by the loss of the strike, and the trade unions as a whole feel even less so. Both have gained wonderful confidence in themselves and in each other during the fight. The unions will not desert the field and leave the workers a prey to the demoralizing propaganda of the employers, customary after lost strikes. On the

Continued on page 34

'The Romance of American Communism'

SIMON W. GERSON

Vivian Gornick, *The Romance of American Communism*, Basic Books, New York, 1977, 265 pp, \$10.

This is a curious book that has won for itself a claque of devoted admirers and set off a storm of bitter attacks from the Right. Best known for her feminist writings, author Vivian Gornick here advances the thesis that there was a "romance" to American Communism, a "passion" that held about a million Americans in thrall for forty years. (The figures are Vivian Gornick's, as is the past tense.)

Her announced search is for inner motivations, and in her quest Gornick travelled all over the country to interview scores of people, most of them ex-Communists, for their personal histories. If there is a real living present Communist in her book, and there may possibly be one, he or she is buried in the repetitive litanies of 40-odd ex-Communists.

Perhaps that explains why Gornick was given a substantial advance, quoted prior to publication, praised in the august *New York Times Book Review* and her book promptly made an alternate selection of the Literary Guild, thus guaranteeing a wide and instant audience. Could it be that the ideologists of the literary world saw in the Gornick book a subtler weapon than the stale God-has-failed type of ex-Communist confessional?

But then how account for the savage assault against Gornick by the Right-

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wing Social Democrats and cold war liberals among the *literati*?

This can only be explained by the inherent contradictions in the book and elements of ambivalence in Gornick's own attitude. Willy-nilly, out of the mouths of her characters come expressions of profound respect for the Party, albeit tinged with self-justifications. And despite Gornick's clear bias against the Communist Party, she perforce pays tribute in her own way—but always, it must be remembered, to the past. For the present Communist Party and its members Gornick has little use. In fact, at one point one of her characters—all, incidentally, given pseudonyms—expresses the hope that "another Communist Party" might arise.

Her preoccupation with the nostalgic past and her theme, expressed in the lush prose of her publisher's jacket blurb, is that thousands of Americans joined the Communist Party and went through "the one, great, unforgettable and irrecoverable romance of a lifetime." Her publisher's language as well as that of Gornick herself savor of her classless feminist writings with its accent on the individual psyche. The legendary passion of Virgil's character, Paris, for Helen of Troy is for Gornick the analogy supreme. She writes:

Marxism was for those who became Communists what Helen was for Paris . . . (T)he ideology set in motion the most intense longings, longings buried in the unknowing self, longings that pierced to the mysterious, vulnerable heart at the center of incoherent life within us, longings that had to do with a life of meaning. These longings haunted the Communists, arising as they did out of one of the great human hungers, a hunger that finally had a life of its own; so that while at first the Communists fed the hunger, at last the hunger fed off them. That hunger became, in short, a passion, a passion that was in its very essence both compellingly humanizing and then compellingly dehumanizing.

Not politics, not the class struggle, not an understanding of the exploitative dynamics of capitalist society, not the comradeship of battle against a common enemy, none of these stoked the passion that fired Communists—only "the longings buried in the unknowing self"! What escapes Gornick is that Communists draw moral sustenance not from some vague "longings" but from a many-sided comprehension of the class society they live in and their role in it. The realization of "self" by a Communist is precisely in making his or her contribution to a total collective effort.

But her excursion into psychoanalytic jargon is probably Gornick at her obscure worst. A talented writer, she describes movingly her early upbringing in a Jewish working-class home. Both her parents were garment workers and Party sympathizers and she herself was briefly a member of the Labor Youth League. She writes lovingly if patronizingly of the Bronx tenement apartment in which each family member "identified himself or herself with the working-class movement" and "each one came individual alive."

But her cozy world was shattered, she insists, with the publication in April 1956 of the famous Khrushchev report which, she tosses off airily, reduced the Party to "a small sect off the American political map." From her own statement, therefore, we must conclude that her own "disenchantment" began at the ripe age of 20.

Some time in the early '70s she conceived the notion of writing the present book. She professes no use for the standard confessional literature of an Arthur Koestler and his ilk and expresses contempt for the "intellectual humanist [who] writes about the Communists in such a way as to make the J. Edgar Hoovers of this world nod with pleasure." Nor does she care for those who throw around the "armored word . . . 'Stalinism.'"

Gornick sets out to correct a histor-

ical deficiency and once and for all have the grotesque media-derived images of Communists "dispelled from the American psyche, to allow the actual flesh-and-blood shape of individual Communists to emerge, in its finite reality, from the shadows of imaginings about the unknown."

Does she succeed in that laudable objective? Hardly.

Her very approach militates against an accurate picture. How can she portray "the actual flesh-and-blood shape of individual Communists" when she begins with a stubborn bias, since for her the Communist Party is now "off the American political map"? Her case studies are almost wholly ex-Communists. (The fact is she did interview some current Communist Party members, but she—or her publisher—eliminated these.) Thus the reader is led inevitably to the conclusion that whatever was good about U.S. Communism died somewhere about 1956.

Gornick reveals a vast ignorance not only of politics generally but of the Communist Party in particular. If she was really seeking to know why people have left the Party—instead of looking for answers to fortify her preconceptions—she might have discussed the question with present Party people, among others. Reference to "turn-over" can be found in Party literature. It's a vexing question that has been candidly discussed in Party circles for years. Instead, Gornick got her interviewees to engage in soul-searching, no small part of it rationalizations tilted towards mistakes, real or alleged, committed by the Party.

Nowhere does Gornick engage in thoughtful discussion of the enormous social, legal and economic pressures that American capitalist society summons against Communists and many other rebels. She appears blissfully unconscious of the various forms of repression that make it difficult for Communists and others of the Left to

function politically. Did she ever interview a Communist steelworker about his problems of job security? Hasn't she ever heard of the government's sustained program of disruption of Left organizations? Doesn't she know about the notorious COINTELPRO (the FBI's Counter Intelligence Program) designed to harass, disrupt and discredit Left organizations, to promote discord on the Left and demoralize individuals?

Apparently she doesn't know or doesn't care overmuch. To boot, and despite her disclaimers, she does not hesitate to lard her interviews with Koestlerian language about "dogma" and "apparatchiks," etc., some of which are used by her characters and others of which she uses herself.

Notwithstanding all this, *The Romance of American Communism* cannot be considered completely negative. Reflecting Gornick's ambivalence, there are obvious contradictory trends to what this reviewer feels is the book's essentially anti-Communist Party thrust.

Thus, a number of the exes she dug up speak proudly of their time in the Party. One puts it so: "They were great years, the best of my life; they gave me meaning and focus, and nothing like this is ever gonna come my way again." Another, whom Gornick describes as a retired book editor who was victimized by the House Un-American Activities Committee, says: "For myself, it was the best life I could have had. I feel that as a Communist I lived at the heart of my times."

And in her own words Gornick pays tribute to the Communists in industry. She writes:

...they most certainly did exert tremendous influence on the growth of worker consciousness in this country and contributed vastly to the development of the American labor movement. Throughout the Thirties and Forties, wherever major struggles were

taking place between American labor and American capital, it was almost a given that CP organizers were there. In the fields of California, in the auto plants of Flint, in the steel mills of Pittsburgh, in the mines of West Virginia, in the electrical plants of Schemectady, they were there. They fought for the eight-hour day, the minimum wage, worker compensation, health and welfare insurance. And for one glorious moment—during the brief life of the CIO—they brought genuine worker politics to the American labor movement.

It was undoubtedly a passage of this sort as well as some of the wistful admissions of the exes that brought rabid foam to the lips of the obsessed anti-Reds in the literary fraternity. Typical was the outpouring of critic Hilton Kramer in a thinly-veiled attack on a favorable review. He termed the Gornick work "a particularly odious book" and charged that "it represents a travesty of some of the most hateful history of our time—a history that Miss Gornick rapturously embraces" (*New York Times Book Review*, 4/2/78).

Irving Howe adds his bit of bile in the *New York Review of Books* (4/6/78) while Marion Magid, managing editor of *Commentary*, is predictably venomous, proclaiming that "she [Gornick] ends with a ringing affirmation of their politics" (*Commentary*, Feb. 1978). Theodore Draper, a professional ex-Communist, complains sourly in the Social Democratic *New Leader* (3/13/78): "Since Gornick's ex-Communists generally look back at their years in the party as the best and brightest in their lives, the stories of their disillusionment, typically set off by the Khrushchev revelations, never carry as much conviction as their testimonials to the 'wonderful' life in the movement."

Particularly galling to the literary anti-Communist mobsters must have been the two closing paragraphs of the Gornick book:

For better or worse, radical politics—full of sorrow and glory—embodies the stirring spectacle of human beings engaged, alive to the beauty and rawness of self-creation.

American Communists were caught up in the magnificent sorrow. They gave themselves to it passionately, with a wholeness of being. For this I honor them, and I am grateful to them.

Obviously this is a book filled with contradictions. Whatever Gornick's motivations—and she cannot be regarded as naive—her book has become something of an ideological club with which to beat the Communist Party. The *New York Times*, which puffed the book in its pre-publication phase, and the Literary Guild are hardly friends of the Communist Party.

On the other hand, from the evidence before us, the hard-core literary anti-Red phalanx was bitterly unhappy over the book. For them, past or present Communists are disciples of the devil and must be cast into the outer darkness for all time. For Gornick or her characters to say anything good about Communists is, in Ms. Magid's phrase, "a ringing affirmation of their politics."

Gornick's book is, of course, no such affirmation. But in its own way and possibly contrary to her own—or her publisher's—intentions, the book at points turns into its opposite and does shed some true light, even if limited, on the work and lives of U.S. Communist. For the cold war *literati* this will never do. Their obsessive creed is anti-Communism—past, present and future—expressed in the halls of Congress by the likes of Senators Daniel Moynihan and Henry Jackson and in the media by characters of the Kramer-Howe-Draper-Magid stripe.

Gornick earns a nod for the enemies she has made; she merits searing criticism for her confusion, obscurantism and almost irrational bias against the present Communist Party. She still has far to go if she is to carry out her

avowed purpose "to allow the actual flesh-and-blood shape of individual Communists to emerge in its finite reality from the shadow of ignorant imaginings."

To accomplish this she would do well to study the *living* Communist Party and its total history and development. She will discover that the fires of that passion she once saw were not banked twenty years ago; they continue to burn wherever the class struggles rage.

As a presumed supporter of social justice she will perhaps then see that her enemy is not the CPUSA. It is that corporate-financed band who march under the pirate banner of anti-Communism, the main ideological weapon of reaction against peace, the welfare and democratic aspirations of the people. □

REVERSE THE BAKKE RULING

COMMUNIST PARTY, USA

The Supreme Court's five to four decision in the Bakke case is a racist ruling—and will so be seen all over the world. This vicious act, masked in hypocritical phrases, in fact upholds exclusion against Blacks and promotes division between Black and white.

Facing a new economic depression, the U.S. ruling class is seeking through its corporate-controlled high court to divert the white workers from the real enemy and make the Black workers the enemy.

The decision is a craftily calculated blow against the struggle for economic, political and social equality and Black-white unity. It continues a trend of attacking all the historic advances made in struggle by the Black people and their allies, particularly seeking to dismantle the civil rights gains of the 1960s and reverse the 1954 Brown deci-

sion against segregated schools.

In the context of the 1970s it is a virtual Dred Scott decision reaffirming Justice Taney's infamous words that Blacks "had no rights which the white man was bound to respect." Acquiesced to by the Carter Administration—notwithstanding its hypocritical calmor about "human rights"—the decision in fact follows essentially the position outlined by the Justice Department in its first brief to the court. The Carter Administration, which hailed it, is guilty of complicity in this decision, an updated version of the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson case in which the Supreme Court enunciated the notorious "separate but equal" doctrine which, in fact, meant segregated and unequal.

The Bakke decision gives legal sanction to the hoax of "reverse discrimination" is transparent even when measured by California standards of medical education. That state has a 25 per cent Black and Brown population—but only three per cent Black and Brown medical students. The Bakke decision thus upholds a quota system of 97 per cent white and three per cent Black and Brown—and the three per cent will dwindle if the decision is permitted to be implemented.

But Bakke is far more than an attack on affirmative action programs in higher education, where Blacks and other minorities have long been systematically excluded. It is a new form of racism. It is a key element in a wide-ranging assault on affirmative action programs everywhere, particularly in industry, in jobs, upgrading and promotion for Blacks and women. It is particularly devastating to the Black youth. It tells the Black youth who are already virtually locked out of industry and education that there is no hope for equality of opportunity.

The Bakke decision is part of the ultra-Right drive to reverse the growing trend of Black-white unity, especially among the organized workers. It is part of the larger pattern of the big

monopolies' offensive against labor and the living standards of the working people. It is designed to perpetuate racism as a system, for without racism monopoly capital can not keep the workers divided and weakened. And for monopoly capital, racism means super-profits.

Thus the decision is an attack on the entire working class, Black and white, and has already encouraged new attacks on affirmative action programs in various plants. It has accelerated reactionary efforts to disrupt affirmative action agreements between unions and employers in industry.

Significantly, the decision follows the shelving of the labor reform law in the Senate. Clearly, unless the Bakke decision is reversed, it will weaken further the entire labor movement in its struggle to maintain its hard won gains. It, therefore, must be fought by our entire multiracial working class as a danger to its living standards as well as a peril to democracy.

No white worker should believe for a minute that the racist majority which adopted the Bakke decision mean him or her any good. Destruction of the rights of the Black people means sooner or later destruction of the rights of all workers. The whole history of segregation has demonstrated that lower wage levels, worse working conditions, poorer schools and housing inevitably drag down the living standards of white workers.

On the other hand, where racist barriers have been broken and Black-white unity established, the workers have been strengthened in their fight to improve their working and living conditions. All history demonstrates the profound truth of Karl Marx's classic statement that "labor in a white skin can not be free so long as labor in a Black skin is branded."

No one should be deluded by the decision's language acknowledging the permissibility of using race as an element in determining an applicant's qualifications. This was just a hypocri-

tical verbal concession to the powerful movement for equality here and to world public opinion, particularly in Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is related to neo-colonialism and opens the door to new forms of segregation.

The decision, particularly Justice Powell's pivotal opinion, reflects a new form of "benevolent" racism devised by the ruling class. It implies a "tolerance" for a sharply limited number of Blacks—but only within the limits set by white supremacists who will accept a sprinkling of "diversity," as developed in the so-called Harvard Plan which eliminates all quotas and relies on the good will of admission officers. By rejecting the means—that is affirmative action programs with defined quotas—Powell has rejected the ends—the goal of genuine equality sought by the Black people. He thus craftily strengthens a masked form of racism.

To accept the idea that the decision is a "mixed bag" composed of both good and bad elements is a dangerous illusion and is in effect a coverup for the decision's basic racism. By striking down the specific means—the numerical quota for minority peoples set by the University of California at Davis—the court majority gave the substance to the racist forces and only the shadow to the Black and other minority peoples.

To rely on a few phrases in the decision for support of affirmative actions without quotas is to try to climb a rope of sand. The objective must be a complete reversal of the Bakke decision by a higher court—the court of active public opinion and mass action.

The basic issue presented by Bakke can not be resolved by the court's decision. As was said about the Dred Scott case, the Bakke case will not be decided until it is decided rightly, that is, until affirmative action programs with clear-cut quotas are firmly established and the present exclusionary policies against Blacks and other national minorities and

women are ended.

The sharp division in the court indicates the pressures that have been developed in opposition to racism in the country—and what still can be done. There are powerful forces aligned in the fight for affirmative action as was reflected in the dozens of briefs submitted to the court. These forces need to be speedily united on a common position to reverse the Bakke decision.

Labor should speak out promptly, opposing the majority decision, supporting the eloquent minority opinion of Associate Justice Thurgood Marshall and backing the steel union in the Brian Weber case—labor's own Bakke case. A cascade of resolutions should pour forth from union locals, executive boards, membership, caucus and committee meetings.

Civic and religious leaders and organizations should speak out promptly against the court majority decision and for stepped-up affirmative action and against local anti-affirmative action suits pressed by some police and firemen's organizations.

Student action should be organized on every campus to block retreats on affirmative action and instead to demand new advances.

International opinion about this denial of human rights as expressed by the International Commission of Jurists' condemnation of the majority opinion should be mobilized.

Reversal of the Bakke decision is crucial for the working class and for general democratic advance. We Communists will join with all democratic-minded persons, irrespective of political views or affiliations, who are prepared to do battle in this epic struggle.

The struggle to end exclusion and to win affirmative action programs with teeth must go on. Victories can be won, Bakke decision or no. The masses of people, Black and white, will have the last word.

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